



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

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(9 June 2014 to 10 July 2014)

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Table of Contents

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

Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sittings

Monday 9 June 2014

Matter of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy.....	1
-----------------------------	---

Ministerial Statement

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation	4
--	---

Executive Committee Business

Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014	8
--	---

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15.....	10
--	----

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	16
--	----

Finance and Personnel	22
-----------------------------	----

Executive Committee Business

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15 (<i>continued</i>).....	29
---	----

Budget (No. 2) Bill: First Stage	52
--	----

Tuesday 10 June 2014

Executive Committee Business

Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014	53
---	----

Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage.....	55
--	----

Oral Answers to Questions

Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	68
--	----

Justice	73
---------------	----

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	80
--	----

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage (<i>continued</i>).....	85
--	----

Adjournment

Cancer Services: South Belfast	116
--------------------------------------	-----

Monday 16 June 2014

Assembly Business	121
Executive Committee Business	
Justice Bill: First Stage	121
Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Consideration Stage	121
Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014	122
Committee Business	
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage	123
Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion.....	123
Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014.....	137
Oral Answers to Questions	
Regional Development	139
Enterprise, Trade and Investment.....	144
Committee Business	
Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014 (<i>continued</i>).....	151
Private Members' Business	
North Coast Transport Infrastructure.....	158

Tuesday 17 June 2014

Committee Business	
Petition of Concern: Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion.....	167
Assembly Business	
Public Petition: Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen: Closure.....	168
Ministerial Statements	
British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting.....	169
North/South Ministerial Council: Environment	172
Executive Committee Business	
Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Further Consideration Stage	175
Committee Business	
Work and Families Bill: Extension of Committee Stage	175
Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage	176
Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process	178
Oral Answers to Questions	
Agriculture and Rural Development	183
Culture, Arts and Leisure	190
Committee Business	
Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (<i>continued</i>)	197
Private Members' Business	
Integrated Education: Article 64	204
Adjournment	
Bangor Health and Well-being Centre	213

Monday 23 June 2014

Assembly Business	219
Ministerial Statement	
Zero-hours Contracts	220
Executive Committee Business	
Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.....	225
Committee Business	
Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014: Prayer of Annulment.....	227
Private Members' Business	
Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam	227
Oral Answers to Questions	
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	234
Education	240
Private Members' Business	
Key Stage Assessments	247

Tuesday 24 June 2014

Assembly Business	261
Ministerial Statements	
Apprenticeships/Youth Training	261
Schools: Capital Projects	269
Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health.....	276
Oral Answers to Questions	
Employment and Learning.....	281
Social Development.....	287
Question for Urgent Oral Answer	
Education	294
Executive Committee Business	
Justice Bill: Second Stage.....	297
Adjournment	
Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh.....	320

Monday 30 June 2014

Assembly Business	
Public Petition: ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria.....	329
Public Petition: Detoxification Provisions: Foyle	329
Executive Committee Business	
Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage.....	330
Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014	343
Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014.....	344
Assembly Business	345
Oral Answers to Questions	
Environment.....	345
Finance and Personnel	350
Executive Committee Business	
Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion.....	357

Tuesday 1 July 2014

Assembly Business

Public Petition: Loane House, Dungannon	359
Committee Membership.....	359
Assembly Commission Membership.....	360

Ministerial Statements

Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report	360
Improving Unscheduled Care	367
North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes	372

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests.....	375
--	-----

Oral Answers to Questions

Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	387
Justice	393

Ministerial Statement

Tourism: Public Consultation	400
------------------------------------	-----

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment.....	403
------------------------------------	-----

Adjournment

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast	415
--	-----

Written Ministerial Statements

Education

Capital Investment Advancing New Schools in Planning.....	WMS 1
---	-------

Environment

Taxis Act (NI) 2008: Implementation	WMS 1
Northern Area Plan 2016: Planning Appeals Commission Report	WMS 3

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On.....	WMS 4
--	-------

Social Development

2014 Annual Report on the Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government.....	WMS 6
---	-------

Committee Stages

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Reservoirs Bill.....	CS 1
----------------------	------

Committee for Justice

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill.....	CS 13
--	-------

Written Answers

Friday 13 June 2014

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 1
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 1
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 6
Department of Education	WA 7
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 13
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 16
Department of the Environment.....	WA 21
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 23
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 26
Department of Justice	WA 42
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 56
Department for Social Development	WA 60
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 62

Friday 20 June 2014

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 65
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 77
Department of Education	WA 79
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 88
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 91
Department of the Environment.....	WA 99
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 105
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 111
Department of Justice	WA 120
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 129
Department for Social Development	WA 147
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 154

Friday 27 June 2014

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 155
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 157
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 160
Department of Education	WA 166
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 198
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 205
Department of the Environment.....	WA 208
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 241
Department of Justice	WA 251
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 256
Department for Social Development	WA 264
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 278

Friday 4 July 2014

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 281
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 285
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 288
Department of Education	WA 288
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 318
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 322
Department of the Environment.....	WA 331
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 344
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 349
Department of Justice	WA 366
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 379
Department for Social Development	WA 388
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 396

Revised Written Answers

Department of Education	RWA 1
Department for Employment and Learning.....	RWA 1
Department of Justice	RWA 2
Department of the Environment.....	RWA 3

Official Report (Hansard) Indexes

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

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Monday 9 June 2014.....	MOP 1
Tuesday 10 June 2014	MOP 5
Monday 16 June 2014.....	MOP 11
Tuesday 17 June 2014	MOP 17
Monday 23 June 2014.....	MOP 29
Tuesday 24 June 2014	MOP 35
Monday 30 June 2014.....	MOP 41
Tuesday 1 July 2014.....	MOP 45

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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sitings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 9 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Matter of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy

Mr Speaker: Mr Jim Allister has been given leave to make a statement on the farming tragedy in Dunloy, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. Other Members will know that, if they want to be called, they should rise in their place and continue to do so. All Members will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order or discuss any other matter until this item of business has been dealt with by the House.

Mr Allister: I am sure that we all recall the great cloud of despair and sorrow that descended on the Province in the autumn of 2012, when three members of the Spence family tragically lost their life. Sadly, on Saturday afternoon, we had a revisiting of such horrendous circumstances, this time in the constituency of North Antrim and made all the more poignant by the fact that the primary victim of the tragedy was but an eight-year-old boy who lost his life. His father is fighting for his life after they were overcome by the unseen killer of noxious gases from a slurry tank. I am sure that the hearts of us all go out to that family: to the devastated mother, Simone, and the boy's two elder sisters, Isobel and Alice, and, of course, our thoughts are very much with the father, Bertie, as he struggles to overcome what has beset him.

I am sure that it is the prayer of us all that he will recover because that family will need the strength and support of a father in the coming weeks and months.

Our thoughts today are also with the community in the Knockahollett area and the Ballyweaney Church community, the Presbyterian church to which the Christie family were attached. Tomorrow it will host a very sad event.

Our thoughts are also today with Knockahollett Primary School, which faces the first of many sad days. Yesterday, when I spoke to the principal and he talked about young Robert, it was clear that he was exactly the sort of young boy that any one of us would be privileged to have as a son or grandson. A great void will be felt in the family, first and foremost, and in the wider community and in the school community, where they will also have to cope with the fact that the two elder girls are pupils. When they return to school, they, too, will need all the pastoral care and love that a country primary school excels at. I have every confidence that that will be provided to them.

I am glad to have the opportunity to raise this issue. It is also important to reflect on the scale of losses on our farms. Many take farming for granted but it is a dangerous

occupation: 40 people have lost their life in six years. That is a sobering statistic, and I think that we all would exhort that the maximum care and attention be given to all things in the agricultural field.

Mr Storey: It is with a great sense of sadness and loss that we stand in the House today to recall the tragic events that unfolded on Saturday morning on a farm on the Ballynaloob Road in the constituency of North Antrim.

How true are the words of scripture:

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow."

As a community in Ballymoney, we were being thankful and appreciative of our farming community at the annual agricultural show. It was only as the news began to pass through the show that the sheer horror of all that was taking place began to descend upon us. Little did we think what was going to be the story that would unfold.

At the outset, I extend my sincere sympathy and that of my colleagues to Bertie and Simone on the death of their much-loved and cherished son, Robert Thomas Stephen Christie, and to his sisters, Isobel and Alice, and the wider Christie family circle, we offer our sincere sympathy and our continued prayers.

I worked with Robert's mother, Simone, prior to coming to this House, in what was then the Lovell and Christmas bacon company. Many happy days were spent there. I know that, today, as a mother, her heart is breaking. We continue to pray for Bertie's life to be preserved as he makes, we trust, a recovery. As a parent and a grandparent, I cannot begin — nor can anyone in this Chamber today — to imagine the sorrow and the heartbreak that have descended on the Christie home.

I had the opportunity yesterday afternoon to spend some time with the principal of Knockahollett Primary School, Mr Gerry Black. I pay tribute to the North Eastern Education and Library Board, in the person of Mr Ray Gilbert, for all the help that he gave yesterday afternoon in ensuring that the staff of the school, in the best way possible, could prepare for what they had to deal with this morning as they visited the classroom in the absence of Robert. I pay tribute to and remember in our thoughts the minister and congregation of Ballyweaney Presbyterian Church as they prepare for the funeral service tomorrow, and those members of Ballinaloob Gospel Hall whose afternoon Sunday school Robert attended.

Let us not be unmindful of the huge work and dedication that was shown by our emergency services: the Coastguard, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Police Service, Post Office service staff, and the Causeway and

Royal Victoria hospitals. We are very quick, sometimes, to be critical; it does us all well to be thankful for what they have done.

I want to leave the House with words that we would all do well to contemplate, even as we consider the funeral tomorrow and the days that lie ahead. Human comfort is so many times limited, but when we turn to the word of God, it tells us in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 33:

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms".

It is our prayer that the Christie family may know those everlasting arms today and in the days, weeks and months that lie ahead.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I rise to add to the messages of condolences for the Christie family. The events of the weekend sent shock waves throughout the north Antrim area, the local community in Knockhollett and Dunloy, and the farming community across the North. The tragedy echoes the accident a number of years ago involving the Spence family and highlights, as the proposer of the debate said, how dangerous farms can be.

Many people do not realise how dangerous slurry tanks are. I spoke recently to a constituent whose father was overwhelmed when dealing with slurry and has been shaken and nervous about carrying out that farm duty ever since. Nobody should underestimate how dangerous the farm place is.

Like other Members, I commend the emergency services for their swift actions and efforts on Saturday, and for their ongoing efforts to save the life of Bertie in hospital. The small community in Knockhollett is tightly knit. I travel through it frequently. The Ballynaloob Road is a short road from Dunloy and The Drones to Ballycastle that I frequently use. It will forever be etched in my memory for, unfortunately, the events of the weekend.

They will be in all our thoughts and prayers as the school and Church community there struggle to deal with what is an unimaginable loss for many of us, particularly those of us with young families. It must be an unbearable loss for any family to suffer. Our thoughts and prayers are certainly with the family and community in Knockhollett in the time ahead.

Mr Byrne: As agriculture spokesperson for my party, I very much sympathise with the Christie family on the tragic loss of young Robert and hope that his father will recover. I commend Mr Allister for bringing this notice to the Chamber.

Obviously, farming is a dangerous business. One of the sad things is that young boys love to be around the whole farming enterprise, and that is what is so heart-rending for those in the farming community. All I can say is that our prayers and sympathy are with the family and community in the Dunloy area. Going forward, I hope that these farm accidents will lessen. The Farm Safety Partnership offers some hope for the future, but that is for another day. We totally support the expressions of sympathy and condolences to the family.

12.15 pm

Mr Swann: I thank Jim for bringing the matter to the House to allow us all to express our sympathy and support for the Christie family.

No family should ever have to go through the pain of the loss of a child in any circumstance, and especially not in circumstances like this. Our thoughts and prayers will be with the Christie family in the difficult days that lie ahead, and tomorrow, at the funeral of young Robert in Ballyweaney Presbyterian Church, where the family will get a chance to say a final farewell to their son.

However, we have to bear in our thoughts that, at that time, Simone, Isobel and Alice will be going through a very difficult day without the presence and guiding hand of husband and father, Bertie, as he recovers. Everyone in the House hopes that Bertie recovers to full strength and can come back to his family. We all must realise just how fragile the thread of life is when we are talking about somebody as precious, bubbly and vivacious as young Robert was, as has been described by his headmaster and the pastor who looked after his Sunday school. As we all recognise, farms are a dangerous place, but, as we all know in Northern Ireland, they are also a family place. We remember and think of the Christie family at this time.

Mrs Cochrane: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I echo the comments that have already been made and extend our sympathy to the whole Christie family following the terrible circumstances at the weekend. We hope that Bertie can make a full recovery. Yet again, we are focused on a farm tragedy, made all the worse because a young child was involved. We have had similar tragedies in recent times, and many ask how these accidents are still able to happen. Unfortunately, the situation is that there is no such thing as a safe slurry tank, and we all need to recognise the dangers that our farmers put themselves in on a day-to-day basis. Our thoughts and prayers will remain with the Christie family and the wider community in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Mr McCallister: I want to associate myself with the very many comments and expressions of sympathy that have been made in the Chamber, from all sides. Mr Allister, quite rightly, in bringing forward the matter, highlighted several things, including the support that the family will need, tomorrow at the funeral and in the days, weeks, months and years that lie ahead. We hope and pray that the husband and father makes a full recovery.

The statistic that Mr Allister quoted to highlight the dangers of farming was that 40 lives have been lost in six years. That is a startling statistic, and I say that as someone from a farming background who was in full-time farming for a number of years before coming to the House, and I say it as a father.

The pain and sense of loss that the family must feel today is something that no one should have to face. There is a break in the natural cycle of things when burying a child, particularly a child of such a tender age. It must be devastating for any family and community to face up to. As colleagues have said, it is vital that the schools, the Church and all the surrounding community stand with the family and support them in the time ahead. I am sure that the family is very much in the thoughts and prayers of the entire House. On my part, I will keep them in my thoughts and prayers in the months and years ahead.

Mr Frew: I commend the Member for bringing this forward as a Matter of the Day. My heart, my thoughts and my prayers are with the Christie family today. They are a very well-known and respected family in the area and in the wider north Antrim area. My thoughts and prayers go to Bertie as, hopefully, he will recover, along with his wife Simone and daughters Isobel and Alice. I pray, Lord, that they get through this not only in the next few hours and days that follow, with the help and support of the community and everyone joining with them, but in the lonely times when, hopefully, Bertie will recover and everyone is away from the house and they are left with their own thoughts. They still have to work the farm, and our thoughts and prayers will be with them always. Their wider family circle reaches far, even to my home village of Broughshane, where they have extended family who have also experienced tragedies of the same ilk. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them also at this very sad time.

Our thoughts and prayers should be with the emergency services who were able to react but, sadly, were not able to save eight-year-old Robert's young life. We should commend their work and their professionalism. Our thoughts and prayers should also go to the professionals and the workers of the Health and Safety Executive because they will have to investigate this incident. We should also acknowledge the work that the Ulster Farmers' Union has done lately with the farm safety partnership in trying to raise awareness of the dangers of the farm. This is one of the most difficult and most lethal health and safety issues on-farm. This is a killer that sneaks up and which you cannot see, smell or hear.

Although questions will be raised, we should reflect on the loss and pain that the family must bear now. Our thoughts and prayers will be with them forever.

Mr McMullan: Today is a day of tragedy. As my party's agriculture spokesperson, I want to convey our deepest sympathies and condolences to the Christie family, who have lost an eight-year-old child only on the threshold of life. That child had everything to live for, and now we have lost him. It is every parent's worst nightmare to have to bury your own child. I had the experience of that with my sister.

We know the dangers of working on a farm. It is one of the most dangerous places that anybody could work and here we have another example of that. We pray that Bertie Christie makes a full recovery and returns to the family, because they will need the head of the house there for guidance in the days, weeks and years ahead. My party's deepest sympathies and condolences go out to the family today.

Mr D McIlveen: I, too, rise to extend my deepest sympathies to the Christie family at this time, when I do not think that any of us can fully see the depths that this family has now been plunged into. For all of us who live in a rural constituency and who represent a rural constituency, whenever we hear of an incident on a farm such as this, our hearts always sink when we think of the impact that it has on a farming community, which is more than a community; the relationship that farmers have with one another is more like a family, particularly in an area such as this. To hear that it was affecting the North Antrim constituency made it all the more poignant for those of us who have the privilege of representing that area.

We wish Robert senior a speedy recovery. We hope that he will return to full health and strength as quickly as possible.

We extend our deepest and sincerest sympathies to Simone, Isobel and Alice as they try to get on with life in the aftermath of this terrible and immeasurable tragedy.

My colleague Mr Storey quoted scripture as a form of comfort. I do not believe that, in my three years here, that is something that I have ever done. However, when I thought about the family and the depths to which they had been plunged, one verse came to mind. It is Psalms chapter 116, verse 15, in which David says:

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

I believe that little Robert, although his life on this earth was cut far too short, is now with his God in heaven and has an eternity to enjoy in a much better place than here. Although the Christie family's lives on this earth will never be the same in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy, I hope that they can take credit and comfort from the fact that their little boy is in a much better place.

Mr Irwin: My sympathy goes out to the Christie family on the tragic death of their son, Robert. I, probably more than most in the House, know the awful pain that comes from losing a child, having lost a young son myself just over 17 years ago. My thoughts and prayers are with the family in the days ahead. They will be very difficult for the family. We hope and pray that the Lord will be with them and be their guide through those difficult days.

Mrs Foster: I just want to add my voice of condolence and sympathy to the Christie family. I did not know little Robert Christie, but when I looked at the photographs of him, I felt as if I did, because I, too, have a young boy who is mad about farming and who would spend all his days on the farm if he could. When I looked at the little photograph of him sitting on a tractor, my heart just broke as I thought of the pain that the family is going through now. He is the youngest child and the only son. There will be very many difficult days ahead. I hope that the Christie family find great comfort from their faith. I hope that they find great comfort from the fact that the community will rally around them. I pay tribute to the school, the board and the emergency services.

As Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, I also want to pay tribute to those from the Health and Safety Executive who will investigate the matter. I never like to get a phone call from the chief executive of the Health and Safety Executive at the weekend. Unfortunately, that is what I got on Saturday afternoon. When I saw his number, I knew that there had been a tragedy somewhere in Northern Ireland. When it involves a child, it is always much more difficult to take in and deal with.

Children on farms can be particularly vulnerable. We will continue to work with local schools and the Farm Safety Partnership. This is not a day for looking at what needs to be done about farm safety. However, I will say this: there is a lot of information and advice out there on safe farming. I ask that people stop for a moment and think safe, because the consequences are too painful to think about, as indeed the Christie family have to deal with now and for the rest of their lives.

Ministerial Statement

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will inform Members of the outcome of the public consultation on future consumer representation arrangements in Northern Ireland.

In October 2012, DETI commissioned an independent review of the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland to ensure that the council's consumer advocacy role in Northern Ireland is delivered by the most appropriate body or bodies; is structured and positioned correctly in government or otherwise; is operating efficiently and effectively; and is fit for purpose in moving forward with the Executive's consumer and wider economic aims.

During the review, a number of stakeholders were consulted on their views of the council and areas for potential improvement. The review concluded that the Consumer Council has been responsive to consumers and effective as an organisation. However, it also concluded that the political and consumer landscape has changed significantly since the council was formed in 1985 and that the continued existence of the Consumer Council may no longer be essential to consumers, nor may it be the most cost-effective mechanism for consumer representation in Northern Ireland.

12.30 pm

The review recommended the abolition of the Consumer Council and the transfer of its functions, apart from the regulated industries function, to Citizens Advice NI. That recommendation is reflective of the recent changes that have been made to the consumer landscape in Great Britain, where Citizens Advice has assumed responsibility for consumer representation.

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

Following consideration of the review report and its recommendations, I decided that there should be a public consultation on the future arrangements for consumer representation in Northern Ireland. I launched the consultation with a statement to the Assembly on 14 October.

Three main options for the future delivery of consumer representation in Northern Ireland were presented for comment. Those were: the continuation of the current Consumer Council model of an arm's-length body of the Executive to represent the consumer; the establishment of an independent consumer representative body outside government; and the abolition of the council and the transfer of the consumer representation role, including the regulated industries role, to an existing non-government advice body or bodies.

In addition to seeking written responses, six public meetings were arranged at venues across Northern Ireland. The consultation closed on 17 January 2014, and I can now advise the Assembly of its conclusions. A total of 286 written responses were received during the consultation. I thank those who took the opportunity to provide their views either in writing or at the public meetings. I have now had the opportunity to consider

carefully the issues that were raised. The consultation responses, records of the meetings and a report providing an analysis of the issues that were raised are being made available on the departmental website.

Overall, the consultation demonstrated strong support for the retention of the current non-departmental public body (NDPB) model for the delivery of consumer representation in Northern Ireland. There was minimal support for the transfer of the consumer representation function to Citizens Advice, as recommended in the independent review of the Consumer Council.

Concern was expressed that the changes that have been made to the consumer landscape in Great Britain, with the transfer of the consumer representation role to Citizens Advice, have not had the opportunity to bed down yet and that an assessment of their impact and effectiveness would be required before Northern Ireland should consider adopting a similar approach. However, while there was support for the retention of the NDPB, there was also a view that there was scope to improve the current representation model, and respondents highlighted the need to reform and streamline its role and approach.

Some concerns were raised about the Consumer Council's visibility and accessibility, particularly outside greater Belfast, and about the level of awareness on the part of the consumer regarding the current consumer representation roles and structures in Northern Ireland. The need for greater collaboration and partnership among advice and consumer representation bodies in Northern Ireland was also raised.

Strengthening the consumer representation body's independence was a recurring theme in the consultation, with some respondents asking that Northern Ireland's consumer representation body be given the same powers of access to information as those enjoyed by Consumer Focus in Great Britain, though without being specific about what advantages such changes could bring. Suggestions were also made regarding the departmental sponsorship of the body and the status of the body as a possible non-ministerial Department.

Taking into account the responses that were received to the public consultation and the issues that stakeholders raised during the review of the Consumer Council, I have decided that Northern Ireland's consumer representation role should continue to be delivered by a non-departmental public body and that the Consumer Council should continue to operate as that NDPB. However, that does not mean that there is no room for improvement. On the contrary; the review report and the subsequent consultation exercise identified areas for improvement where changes could be made to ensure that the consumer is better served when it comes to representation and advice. Therefore, in retaining the Consumer Council as Northern Ireland's regional consumer representation body, my Department will take forward a number of improvement actions, which I will now outline.

The council's key priorities and objectives, structures and funding for 2014-15 and subsequent financial years must be focused on issues that are of regional significance to the Northern Ireland consumer, with a clearer focus on the outputs that are to be delivered.

Detailed annual work plans will be agreed with the council to support the funding provided by DETI and DRD. The

size of the Consumer Council board will also be reduced to levels consistent with the size of the boards of many other NDPBs. A communication strategy for consumers will be developed to explain and raise awareness of existing consumer representation bodies in Northern Ireland and to provide clarity on their respective roles and responsibilities.

My Department will work with the Department for Social Development to ensure greater collaboration between the consumer and advice sectors, with the aim of improving effectiveness of representation and value for money. An operating protocol will be agreed with the council in consultation with DRD and DSD to reflect and underpin the new operating arrangements.

In conjunction with my Executive colleagues, I will give further consideration to the sponsorship arrangements of the council. However, I am not aware of any situation in which the council's representational role has been compromised as a consequence of the current DETI sponsorship role.

I have noted the desire expressed for the council to be given similar statutory powers for access to information as enjoyed by Consumer Focus in Great Britain. The council currently has such powers for energy, water, sewerage, postal and transport services. During the consultation, no specific evidence was presented to indicate that the council has been impeded in its role through inability to access information or by a lack of cooperation by organisations that it has investigated. In the absence of such evidence, there is currently no basis for pursuing the legislative powers being sought. Furthermore, the introduction of such a statutory power could be viewed as counter to the general approach to deregulation and the easing of red tape burden.

All arm's-length bodies are subject to periodic review to ensure that ministerial priorities and statutory commitments continue to be delivered in the most cost-effective manner. The review of the Consumer Council and the outcome of the consultation on the future delivery of consumer representation has been a continuation of that process of ensuring value for money in the use of public funds. The council will continue to be subject to periodic review over time, and we will continue to learn from the experiences and evaluation of the reformed consumer landscape in Great Britain and from developments elsewhere.

I recognise that the review and consultation has created uncertainty for the staff of the Consumer Council and for its board, and I commend their commitment in continuing to serve the needs of Northern Ireland consumers during this time. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Mr McGlone (The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas. I thank the Minister for her statement. In her concluding remarks, she referred to the uncertainty that the review has created among staff. We in the House should take this opportunity to place on record our compliments to those staff for their work.

That leads me on to my next point: resources. As we know, in times of recession and difficulties, issues such as poverty, fuel poverty and general consumer issues become much more of a priority and a focus for many

families. Indeed, people are getting it very tight at the moment. Therefore, what guarantee will the Minister give about financial resources for the Consumer Council to carry out that work?

The statement refers to statutory powers and that there was:

“desire expressed for the council to be given similar statutory powers for access to information as enjoyed by Consumer Focus in Great Britain.”

The Minister referred to the absence of such evidence. Could she please clarify what attempts were made by her Department or those acting on behalf of her Department, including Mr Simpson, who conducted the review, to look at the role of Consumer Focus and its responsibilities and duties and how those could be read across to the Consumer Council in the North?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Chair for his questions and comments. We say to the staff and the board of the Consumer Council that we very much appreciate that this has been an uncertain period for them.

We look forward to moving ahead with the appointment of a substantive chief executive. The post has been vacant since last August. Aodhan O'Donnell has been acting up and doing a very good job, but I am sure that we will now want to move to the point at which we have a substantive chief executive in place.

Resources for the Consumer Council rely on two parts of its functions. First, for its statutory functions, it has to have enough resources to comply with the needs there. As I stated, those are energy, water, sewerage, postal and transport services. So that will come as a matter of course. We will look at how best to get value for money in terms of the consumer advocacy role. In the past, we also funded other bodies to provide advice and assistance, and we will look at which is the best-placed body to deal with those issues moving forward.

I said that no evidence was put forward for more statutory powers. The reason is that it was one of those issues about which people said that we should have the same statutory powers as Great Britain but left it at that and did not look at what they actually wanted. That is why I do not believe that there is any evidence for widening the scope of statutory powers. Indeed, I argue that the Consumer Council really needs to focus now on the powers that it has.

One of the criticisms levelled when the review was taking place was that the Consumer Council tried to do too much instead of focusing on the issues that it really needed to be engaged in. I have already discussed that with the chair and deputy chair of the Consumer Council, and I am sure that we can work together to provide a very clear work plan so that consumers, who are the most important part of this story, know exactly whom to go to and where to go when they need advice and assistance. So, instead of widening the powers, I think that the Consumer Council needs to focus on the powers that it has at present and how it can best deal with those.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sure that Members will appreciate that Committee Chairs are given some latitude. There is now an opportunity for Members to ask the Minister a question on her statement.

Mr Dunne: I, too, thank the Minister for her statement. I trust that it will go some way to ending the uncertainty over

the future of the Consumer Council. Does the Minister recognise the need for improvement in how the Consumer Council interfaces and communicates with other bodies, such as Citizens Advice and other financial/debt advice groups?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his question. That was one of the key elements of Mr Simpson's review. He found that the whole landscape had changed since the Consumer Council was set up in 1985 in that a number of bodies now undertake an advice and consumer representation role, be that Advice NI, the citizens advice bureaux, the Trading Standards Service or many other organisations.

DSD recently set up the Northern Ireland Advice Services Consortium, principally to ensure that there is engagement right across the field with the Department. I believe that the Consumer Council should be part of the consortium so that we get a holistic view of what is happening in this whole area. I hope that there will be more partnership working. I understand that, in some cases, bodies compete against each other for funding applications and what have you, but it is important that we have a very clear focus on what is to be delivered for the consumer. I hope that there is more partnership working in the future through the Northern Ireland Advice Services Consortium.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a ráitis agus as an deis a thug sí dom agus do chathaoirleach an choiste chun an ráiteas seo aici a phlé. The Minister states that the key priorities and objectives are to be agreed with DETI and reflect regional consumer issues. However, a priority for DETI might not be a priority for consumers, which will be determined in the forward work programme and will have been publicly consulted on. How will the Minister's Department address the tension between the two and respect the independence of the Consumer Council and its role to tackle consumer issues?

12.45 pm

Mrs Foster: The Consumer Council has, of course, operational independence and that is something that will continue into the future. As I said, a number of options were put before me in relation to consumer representation. I believe that NDPB status is the best way forward because NDPBs retain their operational independence, but, at the same time, are accountable to Ministers for what they do. I think that that is important, because, at the end of the day, the Consumer Council is funded through public funds, and, if there is no ministerial accountability, where is the accountability for the use of public funds? Of course, the Consumer Council will want to bring forward its work programme. It will discuss what it wants to do in future with DETI and DRD, and that will be agreed. That is a good, collaborative way of moving forward. If issues arise during the year that need attention, the Consumer Council will address them, as it has, quite effectively, in the past. So, I do not think that there is any tension between its operational independence and the fact that it is accountable to DETI and to me as Minister.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for her statement and welcome the continuation of the General Consumer Council as a non-departmental public body with a somewhat reduced size but with improvements to ensure that consumers are better represented and better served.

The issue relating to the perceived independence of the Consumer Council will continue, especially considering the scrutiny that the body carries out on energy affairs, which are under the responsibility of the sponsoring Department. In her statement, the Minister refers to giving further consideration to the sponsorship arrangements for the council. What will the nature of those further considerations be?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for her question. The only reduction in respect of the Consumer Council will be in the size of the board. At present, it can have a board of up to 16. That is not where it sits at the moment; I think that it sits with 10, with the chair and the deputy chair. I do not believe that a board of 16 is required, especially when you look at other NDPBs, particularly those in my Department. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has a chair, a deputy chair and eight members, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has a chair and six members, but, in July, that will rise to eight members. We are talking about a reduction to around that size.

Some consultation responses indicated that, perhaps, another Department would be better placed to be the sponsor Department. We shall certainly be looking at those alternatives — the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, for example, or the Department of Finance and Personnel. Those are things that we will consider.

One of the reasons why we decided to keep the NDPB and not move to an abolition was that so many changes have occurred in Great Britain recently, and we want to see how they bed in. We particularly want to see how the consumer representation role moves ahead with the work of the citizens advice bureaux in Great Britain. Of course, any NDPB is subject to review, and the Consumer Council will be subject to review again in future.

Mr Lunn: I welcome the statement and the confirmation of the continuation of the Consumer Council, even in its slimmed-down role. The statement indicates, and the Minister has already indicated, that, frankly, we have more than enough advice services in Northern Ireland. Are we moving towards a situation in which the Consumer Council will maintain its role under its statutory responsibilities, but, perhaps, have it extended at some stage, and where Citizens Advice will do the casework?

Mrs Foster: Those were some of the issues that we had to grapple with during the consultation. For my part, I hope that the Consumer Council can complement the work that is carried out in other bodies like the citizens advice bureaux, Advice NI and Trading Standards. That is why I am keen for them to work in partnership with those bodies so that they are not doing the same things, because that would not be a good use of public money. I think that the Member will accept that.

There is not a slimmed-down role here; there is a more focused role. There is no reduction in staff numbers. The only reduction that I think should be made is in the number of board members. I think that most people will welcome the fact that we need to be more focused and, indeed, that we need to communicate better with those all-important consumers on where they access the appropriate level of consumer representation.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her statement today on this important issue. Of course, all arm's-length bodies are subject to periodic review. Does she have anything

in mind regarding the periods between reviews? How will she monitor the performance of the Consumer Council in between times?

Mrs Foster: He is right to say that all NDPBs, at least those under my Ministry, have to be reviewed. We had the review of Invest Northern Ireland. We are currently finishing off the review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. The Health and Safety Executive chief executive has asked me when he is going to be reviewed. It is important, when we are dealing with public funds, that we carry out these reviews periodically.

The last time the Consumer Council was reviewed was 1999. We have been a little tardy in looking at the Consumer Council. I think that fifteen years is too long a period of time; perhaps every five to seven years would be a good time, and then it would not be such a big deal. I recall that some in the House indicated that I had a predetermined view about what was going to happen to the Consumer Council. The conspiracy theorists were having a great time with what was going to happen, so much so that one of our papers had a campaign to save the Consumer Council. In fact, what we were doing was to make sure that the correct use of public money was taking place. That is what we endeavour to do. If we move forward in a focused way, we will ensure that that is the case.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for the statement today. Quite clearly, there is a discrete regional socio-economic profile, and the Minister reflected that in her response. The issue for any body that enjoys funding from the public purse is accountability and efficiency. The normal value-for-money requirement is well stated.

I note the Minister's comment about red tape. In considering the matter of more Departments becoming involved in sponsorship, there is the possibility that that will not contribute to efficient line management. In fact, it could be quite the opposite. I hope that the Minister will give careful consideration to that. The —

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

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: Yes. Thank you. The key question for me is: if we have the situation of ongoing review, is it possible that the Assembly could be advised of the different remits of the Consumer Council as is and Consumer Focus in Britain, to see what the issues that the Minister was not able to respond to on this occasion might be? If that information is not available, I am quite content for the Minister to reply in writing.

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his questions. I do not envisage there being two sponsor Departments. I envisage, perhaps after discussion — I am not suggesting that this is the case, and I am certainly not predetermining the discussion. Is DETI the right sponsor Department? Should we move it to DFP or OFMDFM? I am not suggesting more than one sponsor Department, because that I do not think that that would work. It would add more bureaucracy. I am more than happy to be the sponsor Department and to move forward on that basis.

The roles of Consumer Focus have been transferred to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in Great Britain. That was taken into account by Paul Simpson in his work. It probably largely influenced the review work that he carried out. We want to wait to see how that beds in in Great Britain to see whether there are any advantages in

that mechanism. I certainly believe that, here in Northern Ireland, we should move ahead with a partnership approach to make sure that the consumer has the correct level of representation. Some good work has been carried out by the Consumer Council in the past. We want to build on that good work and have more of a focus on outcomes in the future. That is where I hope we will be.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for her statement, which expresses concerns about the visibility and accountability of the Consumer Council outside the greater Belfast area. Minister, how do you intend to address that issue in order to ensure that there is equality across the Province and that every citizen has an opportunity to make use of the Consumer Council?

Mrs Foster: That point was raised during the consultation and, as a rural MLA, I take it very seriously. I think it is a perception more than a reality. As someone who uses the Consumer Council on a constituency basis, I know that it travels west when asked to do so. However, it raises a very interesting point about perceptions and communication, which I hope the board and the Consumer Council team will tackle. It is not a Belfast organisation, it is an organisation for the whole of Northern Ireland, and, if there are difficulties and problems that need to be attended to across Northern Ireland, then it should be available in those areas just as it is here in Belfast.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for her statement. There is a theme emerging around the issue of review. While the Minister acknowledged that the report into the Consumer Council has, in itself, injected a considerable degree of uncertainty around its future, can she assure the House that the review process that has been talked about does not provoke some uncertainty given the scope within which she has already reflected, and that there is a need for a very strong and robust Consumer Council, not for its own sake but for that of the consumer?

Mrs Foster: I am happy to agree with the Member's last point. The Consumer Council is there for a reason; the consumer. Therefore, that should be where the focus is and not on institutional bodies. That was always at the front of my mind when we were looking at this review and is why I came up with the determination that I have.

Going forward, I want to bring stability and certainty to the staff and board of the Consumer Council, which is why I am making this statement today. Its existence will continue, but now we need to move forward and work together to be more focused and work with the other institutions that I mentioned so that we can have a more joined-up and complementary approach to providing advice and assistance to the consumer.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for her statement, which I welcome. The report says that the review showed that the Consumer Council was responsive to consumers and was certainly effective as an organisation. I concur with that. The Minister mentioned the chief executive officer vacancy, and I know that the chair and vice-chair positions are coming up later in the year. What are her views on that?

Mrs Foster: I hope to move, along with colleagues on the board and particularly the chief executive, Rick Hill, to start the process to appoint the new chief executive as quickly as possible. I bear in mind that Rick's term comes to an end in December and I have spoken to him about

that issue. He has helpfully said that he will help with the transition, so, if there are difficulties, he will remain in post until the new chair is appointed.

I want to have the substantive chief executive appointed as quickly as possible so that we can then move to deal with the other issues around the board.

Executive Committee Business

Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

That the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

The uprating order is an annual order which sets out the rates of contributory and non-contributory benefits together with the various allowances and premiums that make up the income-related benefits.

Generally, the new amounts from April each year are based on the increase in the general level of prices over the 12 months ending the previous September measured using the consumer prices index (CPI), which is the measure of price inflation considered most appropriate for the purpose by the UK Government at Westminster.

1.00 pm

I am aware that there has been some debate in the past about whether CPI or the retail prices index (RPI) should be used as the measure, and some people argue that using CPI will cost less. Clearly, there is no perfect measure of inflation, but uprating by CPI ensures that, at the very least, benefit levels maintain their value against inflation. In addition, some commentators consider that it better reflects the inflation experience of pensioners and benefit recipients.

This year, however, because of the national economic situation, the Westminster Government decided to limit the uprating of certain working-age benefits to 1%. The Welfare Benefits Up-rating Act 2013 provides for an increase of 1% in the majority of working-age benefits and statutory payments in Great Britain for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 years. I stress that my Department has no power to increase benefits by a different or greater percentage to that provided for in orders made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Basic state pension is increased by 2.7% to £113.10, which is an increase of £2.95 a week, and the minimum guarantee in state pension credit by the same amount, taking a single person's weekly income to £148.35, and for couples the increase will be £4.45, taking their new total to £226.50 a week.

Those facing additional costs because of their disability and who have less opportunity to increase their income through paid employment have seen their benefits rise by the increase in CPI. Therefore, disability living allowance, attendance allowance, carer's allowance and the main rate of incapacity benefit have all risen by 2.7%, as did the employment and support allowance support group component and those disability-related premiums that are paid with pension credit and working-age benefits. Other benefits have been increased by 1%.

As a result of the uprating order, we will be spending an additional £108 million on social security in 2013-14, and that is money that will go into the local economy.

I fully appreciate that many of us wish that we could do more, but, as I have already stated, my Department is only

empowered to set the same rates of benefits as those payable in Great Britain.

I am sure that all Members will wish to ensure that people in Northern Ireland, including some of the most vulnerable in our society, can continue to receive these new increased rates of benefit and will, therefore, join me in supporting the order.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for tabling the motion.

The Committee for Social Development first considered the Department's proposal to make this annual uprating order at its meeting on 13 February 2014. When this was originally proposed, the Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to make the regulations, but with the very clear caveat that it had a number of concerns, particularly about the scale or level of the increase.

Those concerns related to the fact, which the Minister has addressed, that uprating the benefits either in line with CPI or at the 1% rate effectively represented a real-terms cut. As many Members will be aware, when NICVA carried out its report on welfare reform and the costs associated with it, it factored in the 1% increase over a number of years, which brought another figure, an additional £300 million, out of the local economy. Members made that clear at the Committee meeting.

When the statutory rule was subsequently brought before the Committee on 20 March, the Committee was content to recommend that it be confirmed by the Assembly, although the same views were expressed that the uprating, as it was called, would in fact represent a real-terms cut in benefits.

The implementation of the uprating proposals is expected to increase the Department's annually managed expenditure by approximately £108 million. The uprating order also includes provision to increase the weekly rate of ordinary and additional statutory paternity pay and statutory adoption pay, and those are responsibilities that lie with the Department for Employment and Learning. DSD has informed the Committee that it has consulted the Department for Employment and Learning and that DEL is content with these proposals.

I place on the record the concerns expressed by the majority, if not all, of the Committee members when the matters were discussed in Committee. With those concerns noted, the Committee recommends that the rule be confirmed by the Assembly. It is also important to point out that, if the regulations are not agreed to and the motion is not passed, the Department will have no legal authority to make the increase, even though it is by a small amount.

Mr Copeland: On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, I will make a few brief comments on the uprating order. It is an annual exercise, with little changing from year to year, so, to a degree, the issues that faced us last year still apply.

We appreciate that it is the Welfare Benefits Up-rating Act 2013 that provides for the 1% increase in the majority of working-age benefits and that that is still to apply for another two years. However, as I have said in the past, the Minister will no doubt be aware that the majority of children living in poverty in Northern Ireland now live in low-paid working households. The order will not support them. In our view, it will do the opposite. I hope that the Minister is keeping a watching brief on the impacts of the cap. I

wonder whether he can inform us of what discussions he has held with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on its intentions post-2015-16.

On some of the other benefits affected, I welcome the 2.7% increase in the basic state pension, disability living allowance, attendance allowance and the main rate of incapacity benefit. However, I stress that we must ensure that an inequality does not begin to build between those people in receipt of differing means of support. I am fully supportive of the pension, for example, being increased in line with the rate of CPI —

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Copeland: — but we need to remember that tax credits, maternity allowance and maternity pay are still very important benefits to the people who are in receipt of them. Therefore, the sooner that they can revert, the better for us.

On a slightly separate note, I wish to make a comment on the timing of the order. It is my understanding that the Minister sought Executive approval for his paper in February, and, as we have heard, the increase came into operation in April. However, it is only now being brought to the Assembly for approval. I realise that the order is subject to the confirmatory procedure, which means that it is first made and then must only come to the Assembly within six months. That makes me wonder what the point of today's debate really is and whether we are merely ticking boxes.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Chair has summed up the Committee's views on the legislation. I agree with Mr Copeland that the uprating happens in April every year, yet it is a number of months after that the Minister is bringing it to the Assembly. The Committee certainly had reservations about the 1% freeze in benefits for the next three years, which, again, is part of the Tory policy of cutting benefits. As the Chair said, it has been recorded that Committee members had a lot of reservations about the legislation, but the difficulty is that, if it does not get through, benefits may well be affected.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Fra McCann.

Mr F McCann: It has already been said. I have nothing further to add.

Mr Wilson: I support the order that the Minister is bringing in. On some of the points that have been made, yes, the Committee did look at the issue. We all understand that the degree of increase is set centrally by government. We all understand the difficulties that many people on low incomes and benefits are having to face, but there are two considerations that we have to make.

The first, which has been reiterated by all the Sinn Féin Members who have spoken, is that this comes from Westminster, and, if we do not implement it, there will be consequences. The odd thing is that, although it is taken on this issue, that stance has not been taken on other issues of welfare reform that will have consequences for the public purse. I am sure that the Finance Minister will raise that later on.

The second issue, which I just want to mention, because he would not take the intervention, is one that Mr Copeland raised. We accept the point that he made about the difficulties with small increases, especially as the cost of living has increased by more than the uprate in benefits,

and we recognise the difficulty that that causes for people on benefits. Nevertheless, the same problem is being faced by people in employment, including those who are in low-paid employment. I doubt very much whether there is anyone in the Assembly who would make the argument that we should increase benefits at a greater rate than wages are increasing, making it even less attractive for people to go into work. We are not talking about the wages of people who are very well paid; we are also talking about wages of people who are on low pay.

There are two reasons to support it, which I and other Members outlined. First of all, it is something that comes from Westminster that, if we ignore, will create greater difficulties for people. That is an important lesson, if only Sinn Féin applied it right across the spectrum of the debate on welfare and welfare reform. The point that I think is important for all of us is that we make sure that any actions that are taken in this Assembly do not make work less attractive for people who are in employment and who may face a situation where they are caught in a trap if benefits outstrip the increase in wages. For those two reasons, I support the order.

Mr McCausland: I am glad that there is a consensus of support across the Assembly for the uprating order, while acknowledging that various Members raised concerns and talked about a desire to be able to do more. However, as I said in my introductory remarks, the fact of the matter is that legislation does not enable my Department to diverge from Great Britain at all on the matter.

I thank the Chairman and his colleagues on the Social Development Committee for the way in which they have dealt with the matter. The fact of the matter is that all that I can do is commend the order to the Assembly. I am certain that Members will at least welcome the increase in the rates of benefits provided for by the uprating order. I should also say in the light of the earlier discussion that I think that Members should reflect on some of the important points that Mr Wilson made about the background to the order. I am certain that we will all welcome the proposed increase, and I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to four hours for the debate. The Minister will have up to 60 minutes to allocate, as he wishes, between proposing and making a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have 10 minutes. I remind Members that the vote on this motion requires cross-community support.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves that a sum, not exceeding £8,411,921,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund, for or towards defraying the charges for Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 and that resources, not exceeding £9,168,609,000, be authorised for use by Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 as summarised for each Department or other public body in columns 3(b) and 3(a) of table 1-3 in the volume of the Northern Ireland Estimates 2014-15 that was laid before the Assembly on 28 May 2014.

As has been set out, this debate covers the Supply resolution. The resolution seeks the Assembly's approval of the 2014-15 spending plans of Departments and other public bodies as set out in the Main Estimates.

The Main Estimates were laid in the Assembly on Wednesday 28 May 2014.

1.15 pm

The resolution relates to the supply of cash and resources for the remainder of 2014-15, as set out in the Main Estimates. A Vote on Account was passed by the Assembly in March, which provided initial allocations for 2014-15 to ensure the continuation of services until the Main Estimates could be presented to the Assembly for approval. The resolution and the Budget Bill that I will introduce later today request the balance to complete the total 2014-15 cash and resource requirements for Departments and other public bodies. The balance amounts to over £8.4 billion of cash and over £9.1 billion of resources.

The requirements have their origins in the final year of the Executive's 2011-15 Budget, which was approved by the previous Assembly on 9 March 2011. It also reflects the demand-led annually managed expenditure (AME). On behalf of the Executive, I request and recommend the levels of Supply that are set out in the resolution under section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

As is the norm, accelerated passage is required for the legislation, and, indeed, there is a provision for its use in this specific instance in the Assembly's Standing Orders. I understand that the Committee for Finance and Personnel has agreed to grant accelerated passage. I place on record my appreciation of the Committee's vital role in agreeing that important step in the financial process.

I am sure that Members are aware that the debate on the resolution is time-limited. I encourage Members to use their limited time to focus on the issues that specifically relate to the 2014-15 Supply resolution.

Like previous years, the 2014-15 financial year will present significant challenges for the Assembly in the provision of public services. When the 2010 UK spending review outcome for 2014-15 was set, it provided real terms resource departmental expenditure limit (DEL) and capital DEL respectively that were 8% and 40% lower than the 2010-11 baseline.

Since the 2011-15 Budget was agreed in March 2011, a number of issues have changed the 2014-15 financial landscape. Probably the most important in determining the scale of the Northern Ireland block has been the allocations as a result of subsequent UK autumn statements and Budgets. Those additional allocations also reflected a change in emphasis from resource to capital spending by the UK Government. That means that we are now better off by some £185 million of resource and £247 million of capital compared with the original 2011-15 Budget position.

The increase in resource DEL mainly reflects the reclassification of some elements of our Budget and does not represent any significant increase in spending power. However, the majority of the extra capital represents additional spending power, although some £63 million is in the form of financial transactions capital, which must be used as a loan or equity share to the private sector.

Since 2011, a number of financial exercises have taken place that also impacted on the position. They include a re-profiling of our capital budget, adjustments that resulted from the delay in the A5 road scheme and the Executive's economy and jobs initiative. The outcome of those exercises is reflected in the Estimates and ensure that the necessary resources are in place as early as possible to allow good planning and delivery of essential public services.

The Estimates are seen by many as complex and difficult to understand, and I agree with that assessment. However, it is imperative that we as an Assembly recognise that the Budget Bill underpinned by the Estimates is the key legislation for delivering funding to vital public services such as schools and hospitals. The public services underpinned by the legislation in turn support the wider Northern Ireland economy, and it is vital that we debate the legislation and pass it expeditiously.

We as an Assembly have an obligation to support our economy and encourage growth in our private sector. We must utilise the resources in the Bill in the most effective way possible to ensure that we can provide a sound footing for our businesses, our society and our people.

There are signs that the hard work of the Executive is beginning to take effect. Over the last few years, we have seen stabilisation and, more recently, the beginnings

of growth across the economy. According to the May economic update that was published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Northern Ireland labour market continues to improve. The number of people claiming benefits has also fallen for the fifteenth month in a row by 8,800 over the period.

The speed of improvement, however, has been slow compared with the UK average. The number of claimants in Northern Ireland fell 16% over the past 15 months compared with a UK average fall of 38%. The unemployment rate between January and March 2014 was 7.2%. That is down 0.9 percentage points over the year and is above the UK rate of 6.8% but well below the European Union average of 10.6% and the Republic of Ireland's rate of 11.9% in February. The local economic inactivity rate is now 26.8%, which is a fall of 0.6% over the past year, but this remains significantly above the UK rate of 21.9%.

Results from the latest Ulster Bank Purchasing Managers' Index survey suggest that local private sector business activity expanded for an eleventh consecutive month in May. April's figure was the sharpest monthly pace of expansion since the survey started in August 2002. The pace recorded was higher than the UK average and behind only London of the 12 UK regions. The local construction industry is also beginning to show signs of improvement, with a rise in workloads reported. There is clearly good progress being made, but there is much still to do.

Over the coming months, there will be a number of critical public expenditure issues to be dealt with, locally and with Her Majesty's Treasury, that will ultimately affect the public purse and the amount of funding that we can utilise in our public services. As we know, the public expenditure environment will continue to be constrained, and we will no doubt make decisions this year that will affect budgets going forward. That is why it is imperative that we work to get budgets right during 2014-15, which would allow us to make the key decisions that are necessary to keep our public finances on a sound footing. I believe that the Estimates before us today are the start of that process.

I look forward to the debate and to debating the expenditure plans contained in the Budget Bill and the Main Estimates. I request the support of Members for the resolution to approve further supply for the 2014-15 financial year to enable vital public services to continue beyond the current provision in the Vote on Account.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On 28 May, DFP officials briefed the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Main Estimates and the associated Budget (No. 2) Bill, which gives legislative approval to the Estimates and is to be introduced in the Assembly following this debate. DFP officials also provided a paper to the Committee that, amongst other things, reconciled the figures in the Main Estimates for 2014-15, with the original allocations for 2014-15 in the four-year Budget 2011-15.

The Committee's scrutiny of the Main Estimates focused on establishing the background to and reasons for the changes in the allocations for each Department. The amounts involved were significant, including a total of £157.2 million in resource allocations and almost £237.9 million in capital allocations; and a total of £48.8 million in resource reductions and £267.6 million in capital

reductions. There was a total of £30.3 million in resource transfers and £45.6 million in capital transfers with Whitehall Departments plus a range of resource and capital technical adjustments.

In addition to explaining the make-up of these changes during oral evidence, DFP officials provided the summary figures for each Department in writing to the Committee in advance. The largest of the resource allocations applied to the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education. The former received £55.8 million, which includes £21 million for the top-up of student fees and £20 million for NEEETs and youth unemployment allocation. For DE, there was an increase in its budget of £75 million, which was agreed by the Executive in 2011.

In considering DFP's position, the Committee noted a capital reduction of £10.1 million and questioned officials on the background to this. In responding, the departmental officials advised that the capital budget for the four-year period was originally quite heavily end-loaded with projects in the 2014-15 year. With additional capital funding available in 2013-14, the Department was asked to identify whether it could bring forward the planned projects for completion, which it was able to do, thereby resulting in the reallocation to the preceding financial year.

Given that there does not appear to be any provision in the DFP Estimate for equal pay, the Committee also queried how any settlement of the PSNI/NIO and Civil Service retiree issues would be funded in 2014-15, if agreed. In responding, officials advised:

"The PSNI/NIO element will be a matter for the Department of Justice."

They said that, in terms of the latter, because of the way that the accounting in the Estimates works, provision was made in the 2013-14 financial year.

Reference was also made to provision not appearing in the Estimates because Assembly permission to spend it was sought when it was in AME. As that explanation seems quite technical in budgetary terms, perhaps, when concluding today's debate, the Minister can provide us with further clarification on how any settlement of both the PSNI/NIO and Civil Service retiree grievances will be accounted for, including any practical impact on the Executive's DEL resources.

As for the other Departments, the most notable of the amounts in capital allocations was the £92.2 million for DRD, which included £30 million for the A8 Belfast to Larne project. The Department of Health received a significant number of allocations, which totalled £32.9 million, including £15.5 million for the children's hospital, £5 million for the addressing serious risks programme, and £3.5 million for the endoscopy decontamination unit at Belfast City Hospital.

DFP officials also explained the significant reductions, reclassifications and transfers across Departments' budgets for the year. On the latter, for example, they explained that the £129.5 million transfer for DSD relates to movement of housing benefit and social fund from the annually managed expenditure to DEL budgets, which does not represent additional amounts.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank DFP officials for taking members through the reconciliation of the

Main Estimates with the original Budget for 2014-15. The Department previously recognised the benefit of having the complete prior-year out-turn information available in advance of the Assembly considering the Supply resolution. In terms of further improvement to the process, if each Department were in a position to brief its Committee early on prior-year outturn, it would enable scrutiny of the incoming budget to be informed by consideration of the prior-year financial performance of each Department.

Following the DFP briefing on 28 May, the Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 42(2), to grant accelerated passage to the Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014, on the basis that it was satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it on the expenditure proposals in the Bill, and I have advised the Speaker accordingly.

Speaking from a personal and party point of view, for us in Sinn Féin, the Budget was framed to focus on delivering economic growth and, especially in my constituency, increasing tourist numbers, and also improving our international reputation. Unfortunately, the party opposite has undermined a lot of the good work done since devolution to position the North as a place to do business. We do not want to be portrayed, as we have been in recent weeks, as some sort of backwater economically and otherwise.

Of course, the First Minister's comments about ethnic minorities have an economic impact. They have had an international impact, they have been broadcast all across the world, and you would need to be very naive to think that that would not have an impact on investment. Coupled with that are the comments that we are, unfortunately, used to hearing now with regard to the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) community, and we also find out now from a survey carried out amongst the Democratic Unionist Party that the majority of its members would oppose relatives marrying a Catholic.

All those things coupled together do not paint a good picture of this place and do not paint a good picture of the North; it is making investors think twice about coming to Belfast, coming to Derry and about coming up the road from Dublin. I remember listening to one radio interview in recent weeks and hearing that a potential investor who was coming from Dublin to the North told the person who was bringing him up the road to stop the car once he heard some of the comments that were being made about the Muslim community.

We need to learn from all of that, because, time and time again, some of the ignorant politics that are out there and which we hear within these four walls and outwith in the community are impacting not only on our community in the North but impacting on our economic potential and our potential for economic growth and investment.

1.30 pm

The main aims of the Programme for Government were to grow the economy and tackle disadvantage. Many members of the party opposite see themselves as Tories; about 50% of them, according to their own internal surveys. Many of the party's MPs like to share tea and crumpets with the British Prime Minister.

Mr Wilson: You are jealous. Sure you are trying to get an invitation.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McKay: I will take an intervention, if you want.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McKay: Of course, I am sure that Mr Cameron had some interesting things to say about the welfare cuts agenda that his Government want to implement. I am sure that Mr Cameron was telling the DUP MPs, "Keep doing what you are doing, because this is what we want to see: our ideological agenda pushed in London and in Belfast". It is clear that the DUP is wedded to that agenda.

In the British Government's pushing of the welfare cuts agenda, I am interested to hear how the Department of Finance has assessed the costs, and not only in some of the scare-mongering it has been doing in recent weeks. We know that, once this agenda is implemented, a lot of people will be pushed below the poverty line and the breadline. That has other impacts as well, including on health. What impacts will this have in increasing pressure on our health service? How are we going to meet that cost? In terms of employment, with less money circulating in the economy —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr McKay: That is going to have an impact on costs to business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. These are questions that have been left unanswered, and the Minister needs to discuss them today.

Mr Frew (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): I do not know what planet the previous Member to speak was on. However, when you consider that Sinn Féin Members are talking about the Budget, they maybe know more about aerospace, anyway, than about the Budget or the economy.

I am speaking as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development. I will cover today the work the Committee has done on scrutiny of the DARD budget for 2014-15, capital and resource. I will mention some of the budgetary and financial issues and constraints that have been debated in the Committee.

The Agriculture Committee takes briefings on budgetary and financial matters on a regular basis as part of its ongoing remit to scrutinise the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. We had our last formal briefing on the Main Estimates, the June monitoring round, 2013-14 out-turn and the savings delivery plans on Tuesday 3 June. That was in preparation for this debate and others that will come to the Assembly over the next few weeks.

During the briefing on the Estimates, the Committee paid particular attention to an amendment or late addition to the budget for £100,000 to allow for initial financial assistance in connection with the Reservoirs Bill. A further £100,000 will be required the following year. This is to enable reservoir managers to meet their initial obligations under the Bill. It is expected that reservoir managers will use this assistance to commission an inspection of their reservoir, if they have not already done so. This will allow DARD to identify those reservoirs that are in need of work, to establish the associated costs of those works and to determine the need and type of a future grant scheme.

Whilst, in the larger scheme of things, this may be small change, it is a major issue for the Committee, in that it

addresses some of the key concerns that we have with the Reservoirs Bill at present and the heavy-handed approach in the Bill, which is not, in the Committee's opinion, based on firm evidence.

The Committee is aware that the Department is not normally one of the big spenders when it comes to capital projects. Nevertheless, it is aware that, this year, there are some major capital projects, namely the headquarters relocation, the Going for Growth strategy, flood alleviation measures and modernisation of the specialist estate. When we scrutinised the business plan for 2014-15, we noted that the capital resource was estimated at around £52 million. The capital projects that I have just mentioned are major issues for the Committee from a policy and an expenditure viewpoint, and, as a Committee, we will be following both aspects with great care and attention over the following year.

Another major issue for the Committee that is expected to be resource-heavy in the coming and following years is a new IT system called the Northern Ireland food animal information system (NIFAIS). This is to replace the current animal and public health information system (APHIS). The Committee has been concerned about this because APHIS and its replacement are essential to the agrifood industry, enabling traceability, and thus trade, within Northern Ireland and internationally. The agrifood industry is vital to the economy of Northern Ireland, so we will be scrutinising this issue with great care and attention from a policy and an expenditure viewpoint. As there are issues of commercial sensitivity around this project, the Committee has arranged a closed session oral briefing on it for late June.

Another major concern of the Committee is CAP and the pillar1 and pillar 2 aspects. Getting the CAP budget sorted and finalising how it will be spent is probably the most important issue for the Committee at the minute.

I will turn to the budget for pillar 2, or the new rural development programme (RDP) 2014–2020, first. I went back to see what I said about the programme when we debated the Vote on Account in February. Unfortunately, nothing has changed. I could repeat what I said about the Committee's concerns about the budget uncertainty for the RDP and CAP overall and it would still be valid nearly four months later. That is a major issue for the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to address and she must bring her proposals to the Executive as soon as possible.

There is a major budget issue that needs to be resolved. The importance of our rural development programme for the rural and farming industries cannot be underestimated. It enables valuable and essential projects, ranging from agrienvironment schemes and farm modernisation to tackling rural isolation and social and economic poverty. The lack of certainty is unsettling but the Committee is to be updated on the rural development programme at its last meeting before summer recess. Let us all hope that we get some details on the programme and the budget at that meeting.

Probably more important is pillar 1 of CAP or the new basic payment scheme to replace the single farm payment. Worth over €300 million a year to Northern Ireland, this EU grant is undergoing changes in the way it is being paid and distributed. I am sure that most Members are aware of the complexities and decision-making difficulties around this issue. Many decisions have been made and have

been met with general approval by the industry, but there are two big outstanding issues: the single region versus a two-subregional model for Northern Ireland and the speed of moving to a flat-rate payment system. Both are controversial and both have their supporters and those who oppose them. At this stage, most, but not all, parties have indicated which side of the fence they are on.

The most important thing the industry needs is clarity and a decision to enable farmers to plan and make key business decisions on how to manage and develop their businesses. It is imperative that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development brings her proposals to the Executive as soon as possible. In fact, it is probably too late for those farmers who need to plan ahead. I do not and cannot understand the delay. This could have been sorted out months ago, and she has been dragging her feet.

Linked but not dependent on CAP funding is the Agri-Food Strategy Board document 'Going for Growth'. This was published in May 2013, with a stated request for £400 million from central government. As the Chamber will be aware, agrifood and this strategy are a key target in the Programme for Government, falling jointly to DARD and DETI.

The agrifood industry is important to Northern Ireland. It has substantial potential to create jobs and wealth that can be spread across Northern Ireland and, with the right financial incentives, that growth could happen soon. The industry tells us that the opportunities are ready to be acted on. Many of the proposals in 'Going for Growth' sit well with the proposals of the rural development programme. There is near-perfect alignment regarding the farm business investment scheme, which is estimated to be worth £250 million.

At our recent briefing on June monitoring, we heard that DARD has made a bid for £1.4 million for a pilot scheme for a farm business improvement scheme. The pilot scheme is to ensure that the £250 million capital investment will do what it is meant to do and that farmers have the tools and know-how to make best use of it. We await the outcomes of that pilot scheme and the worth of it. We also heard that the Department is giving serious consideration to how the farm improvement scheme is to be delivered, whether by using in-house resources or outsourcing, and how the funding will be found.

Another major financial issue concerning the Committee is the budget for the test and vaccinate or remove (TVR) exercise to combat bovine TB. DARD has been preparing, for some time, to undertake pilots on the TVR scheme for badgers. In fact, there was considerable media coverage of the long-awaited launch of the TVR exercise last week. We are aware that the scheme could be costly and have been asking, for some time, for indicative costs and timetables. We now know that it will cost approximately £7.5 million over the next five years, at roughly £1 million to £1.5 million a year. The cost for that is to be met out of the existing budget dedicated to animal health, which in turn is part of the Veterinary Service budget. So there is no new money here. As a Committee, we have asked for further information on that. If it is just reusing existing moneys, what are the consequences? There are projects that are not going to be funded. Have staff been relocated to do it and, if so, from what?

The Committee was previously briefed on the capital funding that DARD will need to deliver flood alleviation measures over the next four financial years, to 2017-18. We heard recently that, in 2014-15, that will require £2.8 million approximately. This is timely, in that we had considerable media coverage last week of the launch by DARD and the Rivers Agency of flood maps. Those maps will inform the work of producing flood-risk management plans for areas of significant risk.

I will just mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, last night, I was out until 11.00 pm and did not sleep until 3.00 am because I was assisting families and households that were flooded in my constituency of North Antrim, in particular in Ballymena south. Families were on tenterhooks as flood waters entered their homes. It is an absolute disgrace that, after the massive flood in 2008, there is still the same issue with the drainage scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Frew: So the work being done on flood levels and planning for that is very, very important.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, as an deis cainte ar an rún tábhachtach seo atá faoi bhráid an Tionóil inniu. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in the debate today. It feels like only yesterday that I last spoke in the Assembly on a Budget Bill debate, but it was, of course, four months ago. Since February, we have, I suppose, rehearsed many of the arguments. You might say that nothing has changed or you might say that everything has changed.

Last Wednesday, we heard in the Queen's speech about a whole raft of legislation proposed by the coalition Government for the year ahead; I think that there were 11 pieces, in all. Of those, a number will, I am sure, have direct relevance to the people of Northern Ireland. Indeed, it will be interesting to hear from the Minister how he assesses the effects that some of that legislation may have. For example, what is his assessment of the coalition's plans to allow workers to contribute to Dutch-style collective pensions? How will the proposed Pensions Tax Bill and National Insurance Contributions Bill impact upon the economic spending power of the Northern Ireland public? How will the planned Childcare Payments Bill impact on Bright Start? The suggestion of a childcare subsidy worth up to £2,000 a year sounds promising, but I wonder whether we will, in fact, see the benefit here through the receipt of the appropriate Barnett consequentials. The coalition Government have realised that capital investment will underpin economic growth. They have proposed an Infrastructure Bill. Does the Minister think that we have prioritised capital infrastructure development here to a sufficient extent to underpin our economic growth?

I should note, however, that, in that raft of legislation, the SDLP fundamentally disagrees with the coalition Government's plan to give energy companies the right to run shale gas pipelines under private land. We will oppose that legislation in Westminster. I hope that the Minister and his party see sense and change their mind on progressing fracking plans for Northern Ireland.

1.45 pm

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. Maybe he will explain why the SDLP is opposed to exploiting a natural resource that we know is available in Northern Ireland and that could create thousands of new jobs, give us a secure source of energy in our own country and potentially bring down the cost of energy to householders.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to come back to the debate.

Mr D Bradley: I thank the Member for his intervention, but he is well aware of the potential dangers of fracking. In that context, we have to consider not only the price but the cost. The cost may well vastly outweigh any profits that we may gain in the short term.

I was saying that the SDLP has been highlighting the need to address the issue of employers exploiting zero-hour contracts and the importance of developing a living-wage society. A little progress has been made on that by the SDLP on Belfast City Council, but even the Tories have chosen to propose a Bill with tougher penalties for firms that flout minimum-wage rules and abuse zero-hour contracts. That is something that we might consider here as well.

I have said in the past that we should review the four-year budgetary period. A yearly Budget might add more interest to the budgetary process here, and that would enable us to respond in a more flexible way to the difficulties that we face, especially during these particularly harsh economic times. In conjunction with an annual Budget, we must emulate the Scottish Government, who highlighted the additional set of levers that they could obtain to provide more control and help shape a bespoke economic future, by establishing a Calman-type commission, such as that which was established in Scotland. Such devolved powers would enable us to move from merely tinkering around the edges of the Budget to shaping a Budget that suits the needs of our people.

Mr Cree: It is now four years since I spoke of the need to replace the cumbersome, convoluted ritual that we call the Budget process. It lacks clarity and transparency and does not allow for direct read-across and accountability. The then Minister — I am glad to see that he is here alive and well again today — agreed and was keen to improve the system. The Committee for Finance and Personnel did much work on it, we debated the issue in the House, and there was agreement on the way forward.

The matter was referred to the Executive, and there it has remained because the Minister of Education did not agree. He did not want the degree of accountability in his Department that would arise. I wonder why. Surely this ridiculous situation must come to an end. It is right and proper that all taxpayers' money should be clearly shown at all stages of the budgetary process. When will we have an improved financial process that is fit for purpose?

This is the final year of the Budget that was designed to cover the period from 2011 to 2015. There have been some interesting changes in that time, and, even working back, it is almost impossible to reconcile the figures at every stage. Of course, we are now faced with a new set of figures that, strangely enough, are similar to the 2011-15 resource and capital numbers. We know that many work areas and projects were not carried out. Indeed, some budget areas have disappeared altogether.

What have we to consider for the final year?

The sum to be applied out of the Consolidated Fund for the year ending 31 March 2015 is £8,411,921,000. That is certainly a significant sum of money. I would like clarity from the Minister of several areas in the Estimates in due course. To start with, a sum of £6.8 million in the OFMDFM Estimates for equal pay has been removed in the current Estimates. The Minister has been considering some sort of package for staff who had not been granted that award. I would be grateful if he would advise me of the current situation.

I also notice that several resource bids were anticipated to be made in the June monitoring round. They were classified as inescapable or high-priority. Why were they not included in the Department's Estimates as a matter of certainty? One bid referred to the Hillsborough sites, which are at a cost of some £1.3 million. I understand that it is necessary for maintenance and site security. How was that covered in the past? How does that significant cost relate to the capital value of the gifted sites?

The scale of the financial pressures in the Health Department appears to be severe. The respective Minister's estimate is that £305 million — 6% of the Department's total budget — is under stress. Is that another instance when in-year monitoring will be expected to take up the slack?

The Minister will not be surprised at my raising the issue of money being held in the centre. It would appear that there was over £800 million there last week. Will the Minister advise on the various sums at the centre and how and when disbursements will actually take place?

Finally, when the capital budget was set for 2011-15, it anticipated much more being spent in the 2014-15 year. A re-profiling exercise was conducted recently; indeed, the Minister referred to it. Capital appears to have been moved into the 2013-14 year. Therefore, I ask the Minister this question again: what other capital moves are planned or are likely in the current year?

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I welcome the opportunity to outline the Environment Committee's views on the Supply resolution for the Main Estimates 2014-15.

In a recent briefing to the Committee, departmental officials outlined the main aspects of the Budget position for 2014-15. They also referred to the additional amount of £12.75 million that has been ring-fenced by the Executive to enable the Department to meet the costs of local government reform. The Committee believes that it is essential that such a major change in the way in which this country is governed should be fully and properly resourced so that not only are the staff who join the administration of the new super-councils provided with appropriate training but there is a high level of capacity building to enable the new councils to fulfil their duties to the highest standards. The Committee has been supportive of the Department's plans to put such support in place. Adequate funding is an essential element in the delivery of the plans. The Committee welcomes that ring-fenced funding.

Officials also advised the Committee that further additional funding would be sought for the coastal communities fund. Members welcome any measures that aim to support the economic development of coastal communities by promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs so

that people are better able to respond to the changing economic needs and opportunities of their area.

The main area of concern for the Committee in considering departmental resources is the adequate funding of environmental protection and enforcement measures. Within the past year, we have seen the impact of illegal waste dumping at Mobuoy, where the cost of reinstating the surrounding landscape is still being assessed. Although we welcome the Department's review of its structures and procedures to ensure that such an incident never occurs again, the lack of resources available for environmental crime enforcement was a factor in allowing that situation to continue for such a protracted period.

Indeed, when we consider the extremely high cost of attempting to rectify incidents of pollution of all kinds, from the illegal dumping of tyres to the contamination of our rivers and waterways, we see that money spent on the prevention and detection of environmental crime is money well spent. For that reason, the Committee also supports the Department's June monitoring bid for increased funding to retain the 10 temporary investigators working with the NIEA to respond to organised environmental crime. In addition, the bid will address protection measures for the River Faughan and the disposal of hazardous waste that has been tipped on public land, both of which are issues on which the Committee has previously expressed its concerns.

I will move on to the Committee's consideration of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. We are glad that the Estimates include increased funding for road safety services for 2014-15. The measures introduced by the Bill will require an intensive and widespread public education campaign, possibly during this Budget period, and the Department will need to devote adequate and appropriate funding to ensure its success.

The Committee supports the Department's bid for additional funding under the June monitoring round and welcomes the resources delivered by the Main Estimates for 2014-15.

I now wish to say a few words on behalf of the Alliance Party. I want to mention briefly the racial equality strategy, which is now named 'A Sense of Belonging'. Given the recent increase in racism and the recent outcry, I think that we all need to redouble our efforts to get that long-awaited strategy produced. There is also a big need for the strategy to be resourced. A seven-year wait for the revised document is obviously unacceptable, and it indicates that the racial equality strategy has not been a high priority for OFMDFM. I also have to mention the lack of resourcing for the racial equality unit in OFMDFM. I understand that, at one stage, there was only one member of staff in the unit, although it now has five.

On the implementation of the strategy, I believe that all Departments will be asked to produce two to three meaningful actions to make a difference on the ground. How does the Minister intend to resource the strategy? Will funding be mainstreamed, or will it be sought through bids in the monitoring rounds? There is a big need for the strategy to be adequately resourced so that we can see proper actions and outcomes on the ground.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments. Question Time is due to commence at 2.00 pm.

The debate stood suspended.

2.00 pm

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

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we begin, I inform Members that questions 6 and 15 have been withdrawn.

Delivering Social Change

1. **Mr Moutray** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Delivering Social Change signature projects. (AQO 6272/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister McCann to answer this question.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): As Members will be aware, the Executive set up the Delivering Social Change framework to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It represents a new level of joined-up working across government to drive through initiatives that can achieve real and long-lasting social benefits for those who need them most. The benefits of this approach are illustrated by the multi-departmental, multi-agency and multi-sectoral implementation of six key cross-cutting signature programmes announced in October 2012 under a £26 million funding package. In addition, a further £1.6 million investment was announced in October 2013 to develop a future play and leisure signature programme. These programmes focus on early interventions and tackle the very root of issues before they have time to develop into problems.

We are already starting to see positive outcomes through the practical delivery. Over 900 family members have already received support through an intervention to support young people not in education, employment or training. Twenty new nurture units are in place and are playing a key role in improving the lives and educational attainment of our most vulnerable children. Over 225 teachers have been recruited to help children who are struggling with their English and maths, and a suite of parenting support programmes have been developed and are providing additional high-quality parenting support. In addition, the family support hubs and the social enterprise hubs are due to be fully operational by the summer. We look forward to seeing further positive outcomes as the programmes continue to progress, and, through the implementation of the Delivering Social Change framework, we remain committed to tackling the integrated, complex and sometimes spiralling issues that can lead to social deprivation.

Mr Moutray: I thank the junior Minister for her response. Can she outline the number of families who have benefited to date from the nurture unit in Upper Bann?

Ms J McCann: I do not have the exact numbers for the Upper Bann constituency for the Member, but I can say

that over 140 young people have already been assisted by the nurture groups. Junior Minister Bell and I visited some of the schools operating the nurture groups, and those facilities and services help not only the children but their wider families. They also help the teachers, and I think that they have been very productive. I will certainly get the constituency numbers that you asked for.

Mr Attwood: I thank the junior Minister for her answers so far. First, on the spread of Delivering Social Change projects, are there any funding gaps in relation to one or more of the proposals? Secondly, can you explain why the June monitoring report was submitted to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister two hours before it met last Wednesday, making it necessary for the Chair and the Deputy Chair to discharge themselves from their responsibilities and for the meeting to be chaired by another member of the Committee? Why were we given a paper of such import two hours before a Committee meeting began?

Ms J McCann: I will answer the Member's second question first. I know that there has been an ongoing problem with a number of Committees through the years, even when I sat on Committees, in getting that information. I will certainly look into it for the OFMDFM Committee.

To date, I have had no indication of any real problems in drawing down funding. The funding comes from a central Delivering Social Change fund and operates through the Bright Start childcare strategy. There is also the social investment fund and the central fund. To date, I have had no indication of any problems.

Muslim Community

2. **Mr McKay** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they are tackling prejudice and prejudicial views towards the Muslim community. (AQO 6273/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is committed to racial, ethnic and religious equality. We support the good relations work of the Belfast Islamic Centre through our minority ethnic development fund, and we will soon launch a revised racial equality strategy entitled, 'A Sense of Belonging'. As part of the consultation process, we will run public events to allow all people to contribute to the document. I encourage everyone to get involved in the process. The strategy must be fresh, informed and focused on the needs of the individuals and families that it represents. We can do that only if there is full participation not just from the minority ethnic sector but from everyone who wants to see all forms of prejudice and religious intolerance challenged and defeated.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. There is no doubt that recent comments about the Muslim community have been hurtful primarily to many in our community; however, they also undermine your work in trying to attract foreign direct investment to our shores. When will the racial equality strategy be published? It will be vital in helping to ensure that such episodes become a thing of our past.

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, I agree with the Member that the events of the last couple of weeks have been shameful, and the comments of Pastor McConnell were very unfortunate. He has apologised for those comments, but their dramatic effect on the Muslim community in

Belfast was evidenced by the conversations that we have had with the Muslim community at the Islamic Centre in south Belfast. Clearly, people were placed in an atmosphere of fear to such a point where one young woman who is a teacher in some of the schools said that she was afraid to go to her work. That is absolutely unacceptable. The steps that have been taken in the last short while to correct the situation were much needed. This will impact, if not handled correctly by us, on our prospects of attracting foreign direct investment. The story travelled all round the world, and I think that it was very damaging.

The racial equality strategy should be published and put out for consultation. I have cleared the draft, and I am optimistic that it will be signed off in a few days. A racial equality strategy will set the framework for tackling racial inequalities and promoting good race relations. Officials have been working with minority ethnic representatives through the racial equality panel to draft a strategy that will meet the needs and aspirations of minority ethnic people and wider society. We want to make sure that the document is fit for purpose, and we will continue to work in partnership with representatives of minority ethnic people with the consultation and the finalisation of the strategy to ensure that we achieve that aim.

Mr D McIlveen: I am sure that the deputy First Minister will agree that, whilst we should stand against racism in all its forms, in taking such a stand, it is equally important not to demonise or stereotype an entire community.

Mr M McGuinness: I absolutely agree that all of us in positions of political leadership have a duty and a responsibility to stand four-square beside one another but against racism and sectarianism in our society. I think that the big difficulty about the last short while is that it gives a distorted picture of the overwhelming majority of our people from every section of the community who want no hand, act or part in racism or sectarianism.

That represents a real challenge for all of us, and I think that it is a challenge that we have to rise to. I want to pay tribute to all those people who, over the last couple of weeks, have come on to the streets to protest against the comments that were made. In doing so, they send a clear message here on the island of Ireland, in Belfast and to the wider international community that we are a society moving forward and that we are not prepared to capitulate to those in our society who wish to portray us as being in any way sectarian, racist or, indeed, bigoted.

Mr McKinney: I thank the deputy First Minister. I concur with him about the shameful nature of the remarks, and I acknowledge the fact that some words of apology were used more recently. Can he acknowledge just how deep the damage has been and, therefore, how comprehensive the remedy must be, up to and including an apology to not just the Muslim community but the rest of society here?

Mr M McGuinness: I certainly hope that all sorts of lessons will have been learnt from the events of the last couple of weeks. I know that this is not just about people in the Muslim community being offended. We have met these people on a number of occasions over recent years. These are very civilised, very cordial, very intelligent, highly educated people who make a massive contribution to our society. These are professional people, many of whom have the lives of our people in their hands on a daily basis,

and they are people in whom I have absolute faith and trust. So I think that it was not just the Muslim community that was offended by this; I think that wider society as a whole was offended by this situation.

The focus now has to be on how we move forward and how we learn the lessons from the last couple of weeks. Remember that all of this is happening against the backdrop of what is clearly being reported by the PSNI as an increased number of attacks on ethnic minorities, particularly in the Belfast area, much of which has been instigated by elements within the UVF. That has been very, very clear for some considerable time, and I have been on the public record in the House stating that. That places a huge onus on all of us to stand together against the attacks, but to be very focused on what we need to do in the future. I think that the publication of the racial equality strategy, which is long overdue, needs to urgently address the issues that lie at the heart of this matter.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: There is a later question on the anti-racism strategy.

Mr Swann: Taking the deputy First Minister's comments into consideration, what financial or material support will his Department offer to the Muslim community to ensure that it has a cultural centre that meets its needs?

Mr M McGuinness: That is an issue that came very much to the fore during the course of the First Minister's visit and my visit to the Islamic centre. We have absolutely accepted that the Muslim community is entitled to a mosque, if a proper site can be found which is suitable for them. The First Minister is on the public record as saying that he believes that it would be appropriate, and I agree with him that, if necessary, public funds could be used to provide assistance with regard to the construction of a mosque in Belfast.

So, yes, I think that there is a huge responsibility on all of us to ensure that we deal with the needs and concerns of the Muslim community. Hopefully, the racial equality strategy will be contributed to in a very meaningful way when it goes out for consultation. Once that is put into effect, it, coupled with very strenuous efforts to provide a mosque, should send a powerful message to our people and to the international community that we are a very tolerant society that recognises that diversity enriches our society.

Ms Lo: What specific provisions relating to Islamophobia are going to be included in the new strategy?

Mr M McGuinness: Hopefully, within the next number of days, the Member will see the detail of what is being put out for consultation. Obviously, because of the events of the last couple of weeks, we are focused on the needs of the Muslim community and those people at the Islamic centre in south Belfast, but it is a wider issue. It is about our general attitude to people who come from far-distant shores to live among us. I am one of those people who absolutely believes that diversity is a good thing and a strength, and that our society is enriched by the presence of people from different cultures. We live in a world that is increasingly cosmopolitan, and there is a huge responsibility on all of us to ensure that the rights of people, and the associated equality, are implemented in a way that ensures that every section of our society, including the Muslim community, feel part of our society and wanted.

2.15 pm

The experiences of people from this island over many centuries, when they went off to far-flung regions of the world, whether it be North America, Australia or wherever, were that they were badly received at a time of great ignorance. The fact is that that is now happening in our day, and there is still a very tiny minority of people in our society who have racist or sectarian attitudes. They need to get the very clear message that there is no place in our society for any of that sort of activity. The Member has been the subject of criticisms and attacks. I absolutely deplore her treatment and the treatment of all those who have come to live among us and make a massive contribution to our society.

Disability Strategy

3. **Mr Lynch** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what impact the disability strategy will have on the post-19-years-old special educational needs sector. (AQO 6274/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister McCann to answer this question.

Ms J McCann: The Executive's disability strategy aims to set out a high-level policy framework to give coherence and guidance to Departments' activities across general and disability-specific areas of policy. It provides a framework for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities. The strategy emphasises the fact that young people with disabilities should be supported in addressing transition needs so that they have the same opportunities for growth and fulfilment as non-disabled young people. The strategy refers to article 24 of the United Nations convention relating to education, which includes access to an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.

Employment and employability are issues that require Departments to work together to support people with disabilities. The Executive's disability strategy aims to set out actions to promote education, vocational training and employment opportunities, as well as safeguarding the employment opportunities of those already in work. It aims to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to attain skills and qualifications through access to appropriate training and lifelong learning opportunities.

In taking forward the delivery of the strategy, all Departments have committed to considering what needs to be done and how they will measure progress. One key aspect of the Department for Employment and Learning's contribution to the disability strategy will be to chair a cross-departmental focus group on transitions for young people with severe learning difficulties and disabilities.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she believe that enough is being done at community level to help people with disabilities?

Ms J McCann: I think that the Member and others will agree that we have heard concerns of people with disabilities and their families about this issue. A transitions paper has been brought forward to that ministerial group. We will look at that very issue.

When young people leave school, or whatever they are at, aged 19 they can sometimes be very vulnerable without the support they enjoyed in the school setting. A team works with the parents and the young person to find work placements. It does not have to be just work placements; it can be volunteering, mentoring or whatever. There is a need to ensure that when we have that transition for the young person at 19 we have those community-based projects. There are some with very complex needs, and they might need to have a day care setting as well. It is very important that they are there.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the junior Minister for her answers so far. Will she give the House some further information on the 12 cross-cutting themes and the 18 strategic priorities associated with the disability strategy?

Ms J McCann: As you know, the disability strategy has been out for consultation since last year. I cannot remember the month, but it was 2013. Theme 7, for instance, deals with the transition from childhood to adulthood, and theme 10 covers employment and employability. There are a number of themes that are directly connected with the transitional period, but there are also themes that look at, for instance, disability awareness and advocacy for people with disabilities in organisations. Monitoring and reporting are part of the strategy, as are employment and standard of living; tackling crime against people with disabilities; and access. That access is not just about access to transport or buildings, it is also about access to sports and leisure. There are clear themes that entail a cross-departmental approach and Departments working together to ensure that they are delivered in that way.

Mr Dallat: Does the Minister agree with me, a former teacher, that the provision for those children when they reach the age of 19 is appalling by any standard and does not register the type of equality that was enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement? Does she further agree that it is time for this Assembly to stop sitting on its hands and to do something?

Ms J McCann: I said earlier that I, as a representative, have had constituents coming to my office to raise the issue of the lack of support and community-based activity facing people when they reach the age of 19. The ministerial group is now in place and that paper is coming before it. It will not solve everything, but the issue is being examined. It is a big issue, and it has been raised at that level.

NICVA Economic Data Report

4. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for his assessment of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action commentary on economic data published in March in relation to measuring the impact of the economic pact. (AQO 6275/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The economic pact contains measures that will promote and accelerate economic growth as we build a shared and prosperous future. We are making good progress with the package in areas such as job promotion; assisted area status; identifying further shared future projects; progressing our red tape review; promoting research and development; and broadband. There is further developmental work on corporation tax, the consideration of further fiscal devolution and the setting up of a joint ministerial task force that will address

banking. Measuring how well we are doing with economic pact actions is straightforward, and we are due to meet the British Prime Minister later this month to discuss that.

The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) commentary on economic data makes no reference to any difficulties concerning the measurement of the impact of the economic pact. The NICVA report puts forward some recommendations giving its views on ways to improve how we measure our total output, investment in exports, public expenditure and regional data. The recommendations that are of most relevance to the economic pact are those that relate to enhancing the accuracy of public expenditure data and strengthening measures of economic growth.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. Does the Minister believe that there is potential for improvement in local economic data?

Mr M McGuinness: There are some challenges associated with securing the level of information to facilitate a deeper understanding of all the dynamics of the local economy. We would benefit from the publication of input/output tables, which are currently in development. There are significant gaps in local public finance data, which exist because the Treasury in London does not publish disaggregated receipts. The accuracy of the estimates of locally generated revenue could be improved. Ultimately, it would be in our best interests to have a full set of accurate public sector accounts, and the British Government should support us in achieving this. Addressing the gaps would enhance local economic strategies as we would have greater information on local economic performance.

Mr G Robinson: As we are now approaching the anniversary of the economic pact, could the deputy First Minister indicate what progress has been made on it in the last year and whether any formal announcement is likely?

Mr M McGuinness: I think that considerable progress has been made on the commitments in the economic pact. Progress made against the actions is establishing the foundations for future economic growth, and, while we welcome that progress, it is important that we continue to work with the Government to ensure that all commitments are delivered in a timely manner.

Securing powers to lower corporation tax remains a key priority for the Executive to promote the growth of the private sector. We will continue to advance the case for the devolution of corporation tax within the time frame set out in the pact. Considerable progress has also been made against the key pact commitments on the review of business red tape. Considerable progress has been made on all four work strands of the review. I am encouraged by the positive engagement with business representative bodies, regulators and Departments. It is essential that businesses provide evidence to support emerging recommendations.

The pilot enterprise zone in Coleraine, announced in the Budget statement of 19 March, will offer enhanced capital allowances only as an incentive, potential to promote economic development and further investment in the area. Access to Finance welcomed the extension of start-up loan schemes here. Some 99 loans have been drawn down to date, with a total value of £459,000. I welcome

confirmation that we will continue to benefit from 100% assisted area status, at least in the medium term.

Racial Equality Strategy

5. **Mr McCarthy** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the development of a racial equality strategy. (AQO 6276/11-15)

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

Ms J McCann: The deputy First Minister has already outlined in an earlier answer that we hope that it will be in only a matter of days. A number of events will be held in areas where there is a high proportion of minority ethnic people, and events will be facilitated in different languages, where relevant. We hope that that will be very soon.

Mr McCarthy: Given the hugely detrimental publicity around the world for Northern Ireland as a result of the disgraceful diatribe and venom coming from a Belfast pulpit recently, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister must be hugely embarrassed and, indeed, ashamed that, in seven years, a strategy to tackle racial inequality has not been produced. Will the junior Minister tell the Assembly what specific issues have held up the strategy for seven years, and, if and when the strategy comes, will there be sufficient resources available to see it implemented without further delay?

Ms J McCann: Yes, I agree with the Member that it is unacceptable that it has taken so long. There have been issues on which we have needed political agreement, but those have hopefully been resolved, and we want to see the strategy published as soon as possible.

We believe that the strategy will be adequately resourced, and we will also set out in the strategy a number of points that we are specifically looking at to take it forward. The points include the elimination of racial inequality; combating racism and hate crime; the equality of service provision; participation; social cohesion; and capacity building for groups. Alongside the strategy, there will be a separate fund of £1.1 million from the minority ethnic development fund, which will also go some way.

However, I totally agree with you. The length of time that this has taken is totally unacceptable.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Minister, we understand the importance of the publication of the racial equality strategy, but what is OFMDFM doing to address the increase in racial attacks?

Ms J McCann: As I said last week when I spoke in the Assembly's debate on racist attacks, the strategy will in some part help, but much more needs to be done. One of the best things that we can do, as the deputy First Minister outlined in answer to a previous question, is stand together and show our support for those people who feel vulnerable and under threat. That goes right across society, for political, Church and community leaders.

2.30 pm

We are also going to be taking a number of initiatives in the short term. For instance, we will look at having a leaflet campaign to try to send a visual message to our ethnic minority people. We will look to try to develop a multi-

agency approach like there is, for instance, in south Belfast through the Round Table. We are going to try to put that in place in east, north and west Belfast and we are going to take the Unite Against Hate initiative forward again. So, there are a number of proposals and interventions that we are making, as well as putting out the strategy. Some are short term and immediate, some are medium term, and others will be more long term. However, I think that, at the minute, the important thing is to show support and solidarity to people out there.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for questions for oral answer. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies

1. **Mrs Hale** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to assure the House that they will support the abolition of the discriminatory practice of the restriction on non-Catholic teachers being able to teach in maintained schools without a Catholic certificate in religious studies and take steps in OFMDFM to have the restriction removed. (AQT 1221/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: This matter lies within the remit of both the Department of Education and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It has been the subject of considerable debate over many years. I think that there is a huge responsibility on all the stakeholders to see whether a satisfactory outcome that all sides can live with can be achieved. I certainly encourage everybody to be involved in a very constructive debate on how to resolve the matter.

Mrs Hale: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. In his drive to deliver equality, and given his public statements both outside and inside this House regarding respect for other communities, will he outline how a non-Catholic accesses a certificate of religious education?

Mr M McGuinness: That is the challenge. What we are dealing with is the historical nature of education in the North of Ireland going back many decades since the partition of Ireland in the early 1920s. The Catholic education sector took up the mantle for the education of Catholic children, and as a result, practices were put in place that now, in the context of a society moving forward and evolving, necessitate everybody approaching the issue in a way that does not allow anybody to be open to the accusation of discrimination of any kind.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Alastair Ross is not in his place, so we will move on. I call Mrs Sandra Overend.

Internet Safety Strategy

3. **Mrs Overend** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an update on the cross-departmental Internet safety strategy, for which they are responsible, especially as we come to the close of another school year, when our children, depending on the weather, might spend a higher than average amount of time on the Internet. (AQT 1223/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, junior Minister McCann will take this question.

Ms J McCann: The Member will be aware that we have had a number of meetings on this matter, and it is being taken forward. We have met the Safeguarding Board and the National Children's Bureau in recent weeks on the progress that has been made on taking the strategy forward. The forum that was being set up has already met.

When junior Minister Bell and I were in Brussels last week, we joined the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE), which is an international organisation over there, for a conference that was video streamed to a number of countries. We have made some progress on connecting internationally on the whole area of the Internet and the digital safety of our children and young people. I certainly look forward to meeting the Member again to update her on the work that has been taken forward on that.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for that information. She mentioned that the e-safety forum has had its first meeting. Could the Minister nail down a time frame for the completion of the work of that e-safety forum and for such a strategy to be brought to the Assembly? Could she tell us what resources will be provided to it?

Ms J McCann: Again, I can only say that I take a keen interest in driving this forward because I have three teenagers. As a parent, I know that parents are looking to see what they can do and how they can help. We are trying to push the issue forward as quickly as possible. Work has been carried out, and we made connections when we were in Brussels, so we hope that the e-safety forum is now in a position to drive the strategy. The Member will know that the main responsibility is with the Department of Health, but, as junior Ministers, we are certainly keen to ensure that it is brought forward as quickly as possible.

Secret Deals: Victims' Commissioner's Comments

4. **Mr Givan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given that they will know that the Victims' Commissioner has said that revelations about secret deals are eroding the trust and confidence of people who were bereaved and injured during the Troubles, whether the deputy First Minister, in considering that comment and in his role as the deputy First Minister, with the Victims' Commission under his remit, will ensure that he and his colleagues take part in the inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and give evidence in a public, open and transparent fashion, rather than continuing to go on-the-run on the issue. (AQT 1224/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The Member needs to be conscious that, when I stand here as deputy First Minister, I represent a joint Department. I do not stand here as someone who has a duty and responsibility to speak for Sinn Féin. I speak for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. However, the question is valid in so far as it deserves an answer from my perspective. I make the point that I am not speaking on behalf of the First Minister on this issue.

Gerry Adams, Gerry Kelly and I met Lady Justice Hallett a few days ago. She has been given the responsibility to take forward an inquiry into the matter. The first thing to be said — I know that there is a dispute between us on the matter — is that it is absolutely nothing to with a secret agreement. All that was in the public domain, going as far

back as Weston Park, and every single Member knows that. The Committee then took the decision to establish its own investigation, and I will flag up the difficulties that that presents. In the recent past, some unionist politicians have said to me that that body will probably not report until early in the new year, and it has been flagged up that the Ulster Unionist Party in particular is not prepared to engage in a way forward on dealing with the past until such times as that Committee comes in with its report. So it is not satisfied with any outcome from Lady Justice Hallett. That has huge implications for whether we as a body will deal with —

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

Mr M McGuinness: — how we learn from the past and how we deal with other issues associated with it.

Mr Givan: Given the role that the deputy First Minister has over the Victims' Commission, and given that victims are looking to that office for truth, honesty and, at times, justice, does the deputy First Minister want to apologise for his crass comment of, "How sorry do you want me to be?" for the specific acts that his Provisional IRA was involved in when he was a commander of the IRA? Will he apologise for that comment and step up and tell the truth about what he and his hate-filled Provisional IRA were involved in during the 30 years of conflict?

Mr M McGuinness: The Member needs to be conscious that, in the course of a conflict that lasted for a quarter of a century, many people were involved in violence, including many people supported by the Member and by all the unionist parties in the Assembly. I would like to think that the work that I have been involved in over the last 20 years, which I do not think even compares with the contribution that the Member and, indeed, many Members on the opposite Benches have made towards peace — *[Interruption.]* That work — *[Interruption.]* As the old Native American chief said, fine words, as some people expect here, mean little unless they amount to something. I think that the work that I have been involved in over 20 years has amounted to something. I have done that in the face of much opposition, including from some Members from the opposite Benches.

Flooding: North Antrim

5. **Mr Frew** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what they can do to ensure that their office aids and abets a coordinated approach to save householders in his constituency of North Antrim, particularly in Ballymena last night, where many families and households were subjected to flash flooding, with some flooded five times in the last six years. (AQT 1225/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: I am in total sympathy with those affected by the issue that the Member raises. There is a huge responsibility on us all to seek remedies to these situations in a very coordinated way. If you look at the events of the last couple of years, you see that it is quite obvious that all the Departments are working in a very coordinated way. Obviously, the Department in the lead on this situation is the Department for Regional Development, but we all have a responsibility to work together to ensure that the terrible circumstances that people faced in the Ballymena area are addressed as quickly as possible.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for his answer. Although we commend people on the ground for their efforts, it took Roads Service an hour and a half to bring sandbags and the Fire Service two hours to bring an appliance to pump water. What more can the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister do to make sure that any coordinated approach is hastily put in place so that the damage done is not as bad and that houses are saved before they are flooded?

Mr M McGuinness: The Member can be reassured that we in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister take these situations very seriously indeed. They cause terrible trauma to those who have their household, in particular, and their business flooded. The way that we have established working processes in a very coordinated way among Departments has put us in a position of being able to deal effectively with quite a number of the unexpected situations that occur.

Over the last couple of days, the weather went from bright sunshine one minute to incredible deluges the next. I suppose that it is very difficult for the infrastructure to deal with that sort of situation. Also, in reality, no two situations are the same, so lessons are being learned all the time. It is incumbent on the Department for Regional Development and the Department of the Environment, supported by OFMDFM and other Departments, including the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, to ensure that we are well prepared to deal with fairly extraordinary weather outbreaks such as those we have seen in recent times.

Victims: Apologies

6. **Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in turning to a question that the deputy First Minister does not want to answer, given that, although, last week, he was very keen that his partner, the First Minister, should do a lot of apologising, he, as a victim-maker, went out of his way to insult and demean the innocent victims of the IRA by arrogantly asking "How sorry do you want me to be?", would he today like to take a second opportunity to apologise for his condescending outburst. (AQT 1226/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: It is obvious that the Member has selectively extracted one aspect of an interview that I gave to Stephen Nolan. He would be much better representing the totality of what I said on that matter. In my remarks, I clearly outlined my view that an awful lot of people, including republicans, had a lot to be sorry for in the events of the last 25 years. I include the people whom he supported in the state forces, who were up to their neck in violence for much of a quarter of a century.

2.45 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up.

Finance and Personnel

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Questions 4 and 11 have been withdrawn.

Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI

1. **Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the equal pay claim from Northern Ireland Office and PSNI administrative staff. (AQO 6287/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

It was clearly established in court that the equal pay settlement applied only to periods of service in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and did not apply to bodies such as the NIO and PSNI. So there is no valid equal pay claim. However, I am aware how strongly affected staff feel about this issue, and I have worked to find a way in which the moral argument that has been raised could be recognised in some way. As a consequence of that work, I recently circulated a paper to my Executive colleagues outlining a recommendation that will result, I hope, in a satisfactory resolution of the issue for this group of staff. The recommendation and any expenditure will require the agreement of the Executive.

Mr Hussey: Unfortunately, I did not quite hear the full response from the Minister. Is he aware that the rumour is that the proposal from the Minister has been put forward to the Executive and that he has said that it will take weeks to get through the Executive? Do we have a rough indication of when he expects this matter to be resolved?

Mr Hamilton: The Member, I am sure, would not expect me to operate on the basis of rumours. All I can say to the Member, the House and, more importantly, to those affected members of staff is that I have done the work that I need to do on putting forward a suggested solution, as it is at this stage, to Executive colleagues. The paper has been with the Executive for a number of weeks now. I understand the frustrations that some members of staff will be experiencing because of what they perceive as yet further delay in resolving this issue. I have done my bit. As I said, I have drafted a solution, and it has circulated around Executive colleagues. I await the agreement of Executive colleagues for that to come forward for debate and discussion at the Executive, and, hopefully, agreement to the solution that I have put forward.

On estimating how long that will take, I hope that it will be resolved and, indeed, it should be resolved as a matter of urgency, given the widespread support that there supposedly has been for a resolution over the last number of months. Because of that, I expect that it should be dealt with fairly quickly, but, as the Member will appreciate, not everything moves through the Executive as quickly as we would like. In that respect, even if I wanted to or were able to, I cannot put a clear guess or a clear estimate on when it might come forward for agreement, although I hope that it does so very soon.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Can the Minister clarify to the House that all groups, including home civil servants at AA and AO grade, have been consulted and have agreed to any proposed settlement?

Mr Hamilton: I am not going to get into the detail of what is being put forward in the paper. What is in the paper and the detail that is included is still a matter of confidence between Executive colleagues and me. There has been no consultation, to use his word, about the specific paper that has gone forward other than, I have to say, I have listened very carefully to representations by, for example, Members of this House on behalf of affected staff. I have received much correspondence from affected staff since taking up post in late July of last year. So, in that sense, I have been listening constantly to representations about the need to deal with this issue conclusively. Although there may not be, as I mentioned previously in the House, a legal

argument for dealing with this, there is a need to recognise the very strong moral argument that has been put forward. I hope that what is there in respect of a suggested solution not only meets with Executive colleagues' favour but will be welcomed by those staff affected and will draw a line under this issue.

Mr Newton: Minister, you have indicated that you have submitted a paper for the consideration of your Executive colleagues. Can you indicate to the House the extent of the support that there has been, or has not been, from your Executive colleagues thus far?

Mr Hamilton: I have received responses to my paper from roughly half of the Executive. I have received responses from Ministers representing our own party, the Alliance Party, the Ulster Unionist Party and the SDLP. Many of the responses have highlighted issues around the detail of the paper, which I welcome, because it is important that Executive colleagues feed back any concerns that perhaps have been represented to them by affected staff and seek clarification of how any scheme might work. That is to be welcomed and is a positive response. The responses have ranged from enquiries of that nature up to outright enthusiasm for the suggested solution that I have put forward.

To date, I have received no responses from Ministers representing Departments where Sinn Féin Ministers are in charge, so I am unsure of their position. However, I seek some solace from the fact that members of that party — particularly those on the Finance and Personnel Committee, where the issue has been voiced most strongly over the last year, 18 months and beyond — have been supportive of a solution. I hope that their support rubs off on their ministerial colleagues, and that they come forward with support for the solution that I have put to the Executive.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, and, as a member of the Finance and Personnel Committee, I certainly will not speak on your behalf. I am sure that the Minister is aware that a large number of retired civil servants are very disgruntled that the settlement is a belated response for people who were discriminated against throughout their careers and who are still waiting for justice. Will the Minister clarify whether the paper that he has submitted deals solely with those in the PSNI and the NIO or whether it includes the small number of workers in NI Water who are in a very similar situation?

Mr Hamilton: The paper that is before the Executive deals exclusively with PSNI and former NIO staff. It does not deal with the NI Water situation, as that is a matter for the Minister for Regional Development. I am very keen to see this resolved as quickly as possible. Early on in my tenure in office, I made the commitment to affected staff that I would reopen the issue and take a look at it again. I think I owe them that at the very least. I have been able to find a way to resolve the issue satisfactorily, and I hope that the Member, having been brave enough to rise and ask the question, can now impress upon his party colleagues in the Executive the importance of recognising the very points that the Member has made in respect of the moral argument that something has to be done for the staff who have been affected, and that they, too, can come forward with their support and that that support is not only

forthcoming but forthcoming in a rapid fashion so that the issue can be dealt with conclusively.

Mr Allister: The Minister knows how perplexing this matter, and the inordinate delay, has been for the affected staff. Do I discern from what the Minister said that, whereas he has proffered a paper to the Executive, it has so far been blocked from being tabled for discussion by Sinn Féin, the party that likes to talk the most about equality in the House — and this is an equality issue? Is the Minister gently saying to us that expectations, for example, that this might have been dealt with in the June monitoring round are now to be dashed because of that obstruction?

Mr Hamilton: The Member is always less gentle than I would be in the use of terminology, which is something that I pride myself on.

It is not right to conclude that this could not be dealt with in the June monitoring round; it could still be dealt with. Submissions of bids by Departments for inclusion in the June monitoring round only concluded at the tail end of last week, and they have yet to be deliberated on by the Executive. I hope to do that at our next meeting, which is in about 10 days' time. I suppose that there is the possibility — I will put it no more strongly than that — that this could be dealt with at that point. Of course, as the Member has rightly identified and as he will understand and appreciate, because there is an expenditure element, the proposal that I have put forward would require a considerable amount of expenditure, which would have to happen within a tight monetary and budgetary context as well. It will require the agreement of all sides and all parts of the Executive to do that. The fact that every party in the House has come forward with support for a resolution to the problem bodes well for agreement at Executive level now that a viable solution has been put before them. So I remain optimistic that this can be agreed, and I share the hope of the Member and, I am sure, the rest of the House that this could be resolved in the short timetable that the Member has spoken about.

Invest-to-save Measures

2. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of whether the public sector reform agenda could be stimulated through invest-to-save measures. (AQO 6288/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Whilst public services must operate as efficiently as possible, public sector reform is not all about cost containment. Up-front investment may be necessary to stimulate innovation in service delivery, improve outcomes for citizens and generate savings. The public sector reform division in my Department is exploring potential financial incentives that may be useful in progressing reform initiatives, and those could indeed include invest-to-save measures. For example, I believe that a greater focus on preventative spending is key to encouraging innovation in our public services. Invest-to-save measures could provide the financial stimulus required to encourage preventative spending.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. Further to that, which invest-to-save measures are being considered?

Mr Hamilton: The public sector reform division in the Department is exploring possible sources of funding to support a range of reform initiatives, including the potential to establish a specific change fund. It is envisaged that a change fund would be based on invest-to-save principles that have been well established in Northern Ireland over the last number of years. The fund would be available to finance up-front investment in cross-cutting initiatives that are expected to generate savings in the longer term.

It is also envisaged that a change fund would be available to finance some of the innovative methodology, such as the innovation laboratories that we have commenced, to develop solutions to complex policy issues. I anticipate that the fund will be in place for 2015-16; the next financial year. However, given that discussions are at a very early stage in respect of next year's Budget, it is not yet clear what quantum of expenditure would be required.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that nowhere in Northern Ireland are public sector workers more demoralised at this point than in Coleraine? Can the Minister assure us that this is not just another device, homespun, to rob areas of Northern Ireland of public service jobs when the private sector is nowhere ready to absorb them?

Mr Hamilton: I presume that, in framing that question, the Member is not suggesting that reform of the public sector is some of code for reductions in headcount. I hope that I have picked him up correctly in that respect. He is wrong if he is suggesting that that is the underlying ethos behind reform of the public sector. I have been pushing this issue, really since the start of my term in office, recognising, as I do, the need.

This will become crystal clear and more than apparent to Members of the House — if it is not already apparent — over the next weeks and months, as we start to conclude not only the Budget for 2014-15, as we are taking through the Budget (No. 2) Bill today and tomorrow, but as we start to develop the Budget for 2015-16. It will become crystal clear to Members and people outside the House that the money that we have to spend on public services is decreasing, in real terms, as we move forward. That will put severe pressure on the services that the people of Northern Ireland rely on.

From the outset, I never suggested that reforming the public sector is code for reducing the headcount; that is not something that I see as part of the agenda. Instead, it is about getting better outcomes with the resources we have or less. So, it is about improving how we do business, changing how we do business and learning from others' innovative methodologies and how they deliver public services. It is about not being afraid to say that we in Northern Ireland are not perfect at everything and acknowledging that there are others who do things perfectly well if not better, and learning from them and applying those methods to Northern Ireland.

This is about using the staff that we have in the public service in Northern Ireland. There are some very gifted, talented and able staff located across Northern Ireland. As a matter of urgency, because of the underlying problems in public spending moving forward, I want to see us get better outcomes from them for their work.

Infrastructure Projects

3. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he plans to reduce the time taken to develop infrastructure projects. (AQO 6289/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Public infrastructure projects are critical in helping to underpin the economic growth of Northern Ireland. It is important that they are delivered expeditiously. The potential for improvement in the commissioning and delivery of public infrastructure projects was recently examined by a number of reports, including one from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).

3.00 pm

As chair of the procurement board, I established a subgroup to bring forward recommendations to improve government's performance and to draw up an action plan for implementation. That work is now complete and will be considered by the procurement board this week.

Having considered feedback from the subgroup, I intend to endorse the following key recommendations, among others. The first is that a centralised construction procurement and delivery service is established in the Central Procurement Directorate in my Department to be responsible for the provision of technical advice, procurement, project management and contract management relating to all government building projects. The second is that the Executive agree to a portfolio of strategically significant projects based on recommendations from my Department and the Strategic Investment Board. This will follow a zero-based review of the priorities for infrastructure investments. The third is that projects are reviewed quarterly to enable Ministers to report on the progress of those that are of strategic importance. Other recommendations are that Departments fully populate the ISNI delivery tracking system to enable the information it contains to form a regional infrastructure plan, improving the visibility of forthcoming projects to the local construction industry; and that the head of the Civil Service and permanent secretaries implement a change programme to support a delivery-focused culture in government.

Mr Moutray: The Minister mentioned his hope for a more centralised procurement and delivery service in CPD. Has he been able to make any progress on that?

Mr Hamilton: I have. For example, the Health Minister and I recently agreed that the functions of the Health Estates investment group would be transferred from the Department of Health to the Central Procurement Directorate in the Department of Finance and Personnel. A material result of that is that around 50 staff will transfer to CPD in October 2014. As for how having a more centralised approach to procurement and delivery will work in practice, the benefits of having centralisation and the shared experience that will come from CPD joining Health Estates will quickly become apparent. Those individuals will be responsible for specific technical advice, the actual procurement, and project and contract management. Responsibility for the prioritisation and ordering of health infrastructure projects will remain with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. It will also be responsible for the financing of those projects.

As far as I am concerned, the approach that the Health Minister and I have agreed to in respect of Health Estates

is the way ahead in meeting the objective of having a more centralised procurement and delivery service in CPD, where the parent Department still decides the priorities for infrastructure. In Health's case, it decides where a hospital service or primary care centre will be provided. It is then the responsibility of CPD in my Department to ensure that that is delivered on time, to specification and within budget. That responsibility is taken from the Health Department, and it does what it does best, which is to deliver the service that flows from that. It is my Department's responsibility to make sure that the infrastructure is put in place in a timely manner. That is the way ahead. I hope that it is a template that other Ministers will follow and that they, too, will see the benefits of that approach.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra cuimsitheach chomh maith. I thank the Minister for his wide-ranging, comprehensive reply there, particularly on procurement issues. How many major capital schemes or further investment infrastructure schemes currently rest at his Department for sign-off?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have the precise number of projects that are sitting before my Department awaiting sign-off. The Member is talking about business cases that other Departments have put forward to DFP for sign-off. We will certainly do our best to provide that information to the Member as quickly as possible.

With the issue of business cases, I am mindful of the criticism of the Department of Finance and Personnel, criticism that I do not always think is warranted. It is sometimes convenient to criticise DFP for slowing down projects because it is sitting on business cases. I have found through experience that the business cases had often not even arrived with DFP, yet we were already being blamed for slowing them up. I do not mind being blamed if we have slowed a case up, but, if we have not even got the paper, it is hard for us to slow it up.

We did analysis in the Department and found that we were turning business cases around in short order. I cannot remember the precise number of days, but it is not weeks and weeks and weeks, as some might think it is. As part of the work of the procurement subgroup, we have also looked at raising the delegated levels so that Departments will have to take some responsibility themselves. One of the other things that happen from time to time is that Departments pass on business cases to DFP, almost expecting us to mark their homework for them. They need to take on some of the responsibility themselves. They look to us to sit in judgement on the merits of a project or scheme, but it is important that Departments start to do that more themselves. Therefore, one thing that we will look at is whether we can increase the current delegated limit, which is, I think, £1 million, to perhaps £2 million for all business cases.

I am mindful of the criticism that is there. We have not turned a blind eye to it and instead have sought to address it. I do not think that all the blame is ours; in fact, I do not think that even the majority of the blame is ours. Hopefully, the work of the procurement subgroup and the recommendations that come forward will get endorsement from the whole procurement board and will be taken forward so that we see an even swifter turnaround of business cases, whether for infrastructure projects or not.

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

Mr Cree: It is certainly good news that the Minister brings today. Minister, what progress has been made on fast-tracking other projects that could be substituted at short notice should a particular project not go ahead?

Mr Hamilton: That is incredibly important. You can put the procurement delivery vehicles in place as best you can — the merger of the Health Estates into CPD is a major step forward in doing that — but the Member is right: you need a pipeline, to use the vernacular of the construction industry, of projects that are ready to go in the best of times and the worst of times. In the worst of times, when we identify major projects that do not go ahead — the A5, for example — there is an urgency for the Executive to find projects. We will have something akin to that situation, I imagine, in June monitoring, as, early on in the financial year, as is always the case, Departments will identify capital projects that cannot go forward. They relinquish that cash pretty early, and it is then up to the Executive to find other projects that are worthwhile spending that money on. As the Member will appreciate and the House will understand, it is not always easy to bring forward major projects. You simply do not have the time to do that. One of the key recommendations that I am endorsing is that the Executive as a whole agree a portfolio of strategically significant infrastructure projects for Northern Ireland so that, when we get to Budgets and in-year monitoring and when situations such as the A5 arise — unfortunately, such situations arise from time to time, as that is just the reality of the type of projects that they are — we can pluck strategically important projects off the list and move them forward much more quickly than previously would have been the case.

Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation

5. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how allocations redistributed through monitoring rounds are assessed. (AQO 6291/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive's decisions on allocations during the monitoring rounds are based on a number of factors, not least the amount of resources available. When Departments submit monitoring bids, they provide a range of information, including how the proposal will impact on departmental objectives and the Programme for Government. Departments are also asked to rank their individual bids. All those factors are taken into account in the Executive's monitoring round decision-making.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his answer. What protections are in place to ensure that allocations are made on the basis of evidence-based need?

Mr Hamilton: Considerable work goes into analysing exactly the need of each bid that comes forward from Departments. In response to an earlier question, I said that Departments were given a period in which to come forward with their own priorities. They are, in some respects, responsible for ranking those priorities themselves against the actual need for the project. However, as the Member will appreciate, there is always more bid for than there are available resources. Therefore, other factors have to come into play sometimes, depending on the quantum of resources available to meet a bid, even a bid for which there may be pretty acute need. I imagine that June

monitoring will be no different, although I do not anticipate there being much cash available. You will see bids partially but not completely met, because the Executive will want to try to meet something of quite a few things rather than all of one bid. Of course, there is an important factor, too, in each Department's ability to deliver on what it is requesting in-year. There may well be a need, but the quantum of resources that they are looking for may not be able to be spent within the year. Usually, that is not a problem in June, but it becomes increasingly a problem in October and certainly in January, as the financial year runs down and the ability to spend large amounts of money diminishes.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. Will he outline what pressures the Budget faces in the current June monitoring round?

Mr Hamilton: As I said in response to Mr Brady and previous questioners, the Budget, as the Member will appreciate, is under increasing pressure. The June monitoring round process, whereby Departments make bids to the Department of Finance and Personnel and list and rank their bids, has just concluded. That is being analysed, and we hope to be in a position to agree it or certainly to put something to the Executive by their next meeting in a week or so. I cannot give specifics on the bids, much as the Member and the House might like me to. As I said, the process has just concluded, and we are looking at those bids. We will come forward to the Executive with our recommendations on how those bids can or cannot be met.

The one thing that I can say without getting into the specifics is that I know that June monitoring, as is the case, indeed, with the whole Budget moving forward, will be immensely challenging. It is not helped by the fact that there is still no agreement to proceed with welfare reform. This year alone, in June, we will have to deal with the £13 million that has already been lost through penalties for non-compliance last year, and we will have to deal with the £87 million penalty for non-movement on welfare reform this year. Already, before we go in and try to meet bids — I know that many are urgent and that Departments are in great need of that cash — we are in a situation where around £100 million is being taken from our Budget because of non-compliance with welfare reform. I think that many Departments will be disappointed in the June monitoring round, but many of those will be Departments that are headed up by a Minister from a party that is ensuring that there is no progress on welfare reform. Therefore, any failure to meet the bids from those Departments will, in effect, be self-inflicted wounds.

Mr McKinney: Could I just drill down into the process a little bit more to see what has primacy in the distribution in the June monitoring round or any other monitoring round? Is it a government target, or is it the Department's? Given the process that he just outlined, is he not in danger of spreading the butter so thinly that it satisfies neither the Department's ambition nor the Executive's target?

Mr Hamilton: Unfortunately, that is the reality; that is what government is all about. It is about making choices. We are being forced to make choices in increasingly difficult fiscal circumstances that are not helped by the fact that, as I mentioned in response to Mr Anderson, we are shooting ourselves in the foot, so to speak, by not proceeding with welfare reform. We are being forced to pay penalties that we should not be paying. What is being spread will have

to be spread even thinner as we move forward, and we already face the reductions coming through from Tory cuts from Westminster as well.

When it comes to which priorities are met, there is a range of issues that we will have to look at, not least the overall picture of what resources are available. You could have, as we have had in the past, tens of millions of pounds' worth of bids but considerably less than that with which to meet them. So, we are having to look at things such as Programme for Government targets and priorities and things that are inescapable legal requirements. There are frequently bids — the Member will see this in the June monitoring round paper as well — that have been committed to in the past or where we legally have to comply with certain things and they have to be met over and above something that is, perhaps, even a Programme for Government target. That is just the nature of the beast, and we have less money than we need to pay for everything that we want to pay for, so choices have to be made. That is what governing is all about.

Mr Swann: The Minister has already outlined that bids are often for more than the supply of money that is available. What steps does he take to ensure that, where any bids have been previously supplied, the moneys are spent?

3.15 pm

Mr Hamilton: That is monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the financial year and is ultimately dealt with in the provisional out-turn, which I will come forward with for the last financial year in late June or early July of this year. There is ongoing discussion and correspondence backwards and forwards between my Department and others to ensure that money is being spent and that pressures that have arisen within the year are being addressed through the allocations that have been made to them.

Departments do not always spend exactly what they anticipated they would spend. That is why, at the end of the year, there will sometimes be underspends in Departments. Thankfully, we have the Budget exchange scheme in place, which allows us to roll forward expenditure into the subsequent year, but I do not want Departments to get into that habit and think that they can just not spend the money on what they were given it to spend on. To be fair, I do not think that most Departments make erroneous bids. They will make bids for genuine pressures, when there is genuine need, and will spend the money accordingly.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for oral questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Budget 2015-16

1. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when he expects the Budget for 2015-16 to be prepared. (AQT 1231/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: When the 2015-16 national expenditure situation was clear, I wrote to Executive colleagues outlining the process as we move forward. During November and December 2013, my officials also undertook a pre-consultation exercise with a range of key external stakeholders. That included major business

organisations, trade unions and voluntary and community sector representatives as well as the Committee for Finance and Personnel, of which Mr Cree is a member. I aim to have a final Budget in place by Christmas 2014. That would necessitate a draft Budget being agreed by the Executive for consultation early in the autumn.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for that response. Does he anticipate any changes to the Programme for Government as a result of that Budget exercise?

Mr Hamilton: Changes to the Programme for Government that flow from the Budget are ostensibly the responsibility primarily of the First Minister and deputy First Minister as they are the owners of the Programme for Government. They will have to come forward with their recommendations about what we do with it.

We are in the situation of having agreed a Programme for Government and, indeed, a Budget, thinking that they would take us up to the end of this Assembly's mandate, which has been extended by a year. That poses a range of questions for the Executive as a whole on the Budget and whether we need to do radical surgery on it. Many Executive colleagues might think that that is a good idea, given the pressures that their Departments are under. Others might think that an extension of spending patterns from the previous year might be the most sensible thing. That and whatever spending review flows after it might be the easiest thing to agree given that it is only a year until the next Assembly elections.

Similarly with the Programme for Government, many targets would probably follow through and be extended into another year, whereas others, given emerging needs, demands and issues, would have to be added into that alongside the updating of other targets.

June Monitoring Round: HSSPS Bid

2. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he expects a bid from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in the June monitoring round. (AQT 1232/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I always expect bids from the Health Minister coming up to monitoring rounds. I am aware — the Member is maybe better aware and better placed than I am on this — of media coverage on the pressures that the Health Minister believes his budget to be under. I absolutely expect that, as in previous monitoring rounds, he will come forward with a range of bids to deal with those very real pressures that he faces.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he expect to be able to meet the bids that are submitted by the Health Department?

Mr Hamilton: I would like to be able to meet the bids that the Health Minister is coming forward with. I know that his Department is almost insatiable in its demand for resources. It is under constant pressure. The fact that the Minister has endeavoured to drive out waste from his budget and has done so to the tune of several hundred millions of pounds over the last number of years shows that he is trying to do the right thing to reduce costs in his Department. Nevertheless, the pressure in that Department is constant and continual.

I think that my ability as Finance Minister to recommend to the Executive that all or even a substantial chunk of the bids that are coming forward be met in June monitoring is hampered by the fact that other Departments are coming forward with pressures.

The envelope of available finances is less than we would like. As I mentioned, we are, of course, facing the reality of penalties for welfare reform. I think that it is a shame and, indeed, a disgrace that, in a scenario in which Health, Justice, Education and other Departments, which deliver front line services that vulnerable people in Northern Ireland badly need, are facing such pressure that we cannot address, even in part, some of those pressures because we are having to squander money by sending it back to Westminster because we cannot move forward with welfare reform.

Desertcreat: Bill of Reductions

3. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to update the Assembly on the bill of reductions process and addendum to the business case for the Community Safety College at Desertcreat. (AQT 1233/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I do not have the full detail of the reduction in costs. It is not primarily a responsibility for my Department. The Department of Justice heads up the procurement and is taking it forward. My Department is involved in many respects, not least the financing and the continuing flexibility that we have received from Westminster to finance this with some end-year flexibility. However, the procurement, the cost and reducing that cost to try to ensure that the project remains a reality are not, first and foremost, the responsibility of my Department.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat. The project offers major, significant opportunities for employment, not least for the construction sector. Is the Minister concerned that it is taking too long to be finalised?

Mr Hamilton: As I say, I am not responsible for it, nor will I stand in judgement or be critical of other Ministers or Departments because projects have not moved forward. The Member will be well aware — Mr Cree raised this issue with me in respect of the likes of the A5 — that big capital projects, particularly those of the quantum of Desertcreat and the A5, will habitually, unfortunately, meet problems with delivery because of their nature and complexity. I regret that that happens. It happened in those two cases at times very close together and, therefore, created the impression that it happens all too frequently.

I think that it is worth pointing out that, annually, we spend well over £1 billion on infrastructure, and most of that goes ahead without any headache or problem whatsoever. In recognising the very real economic benefits that the college brings forward, never mind the community safety benefits, it is important that any outstanding issues are resolved very quickly so that we can proceed with the project or, as Mr Cree said, if there is an issue with funding or an issue that means that the scheme cannot move forward in the timescale first envisaged and is delayed, we can have other equally valuable projects that we can spend the money on as quickly as possible.

Health Service: Payroll Problems

4. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he agrees that the payroll problems experienced in the health service raise serious questions that should be addressed by the Executive, as such IT and technical problems could affect any upgrading programme in any Department. (AQT 1234/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Once again, it seems to be the day for me to be asked about everybody else's responsibility but not my own. I am happy to come here any time to answer questions about my responsibility.

That is not to denigrate the very real payroll issues affecting staff in the health service. I understand that there are issues with HMRC, the emergency tax code that people were put on and the inaccuracies contained in that. I understand that there are also issues with the timeliness of the submission by staff of information on, for example, overtime.

My Department is not responsible for payroll services in the Department of Health. We are, however, responsible, through HR Connect, for payroll services for the Civil Service and a few other agencies. My Department is responsible for just shy of 30,000 members of our public service. At present, the monthly payroll accuracy in HR Connect is 99.9%. So, it is almost as good as it can get in ensuring payroll accuracy for the some 30,000 public servants whose pay is my responsibility.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer, even though the issue goes, as he said, beyond his remit. Are all Departments deploying the same software?

Mr Hamilton: No, they are not, and this is a very good example of where it is not the case and where the Department of Health is using a different system for its 70,000 to 80,000 employees. Given that it is successful, paying at 99.9% accuracy rate and that there is, I understand, spare capacity in the system or could at least be built on to the existing system, I encourage all Departments whose bodies, agencies or arm's-length bodies are not using HR Connect to look very seriously at it as a shared services option to roll their payroll into. Given current performance, that would not only ensure accuracy in the delivery of pay to individual members of staff but will help to reduce costs, because the more individuals who are getting paid using HR Connect, the bigger the reduction will be in the unit cost for each person.

I have tried to encourage all Departments to look at that, and I have been in discussion with the Minister of the Environment about the possibility of using it in time for our new councils, as they look to realise savings as a result of RPA. So there is huge scope for HR Connect to be expanded as, indeed, there is for quite a few of our shared services that are quite successful in Stormont.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

5. **Mr Attwood** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he is prepared to follow the example of his ministerial colleague the Minister of the Environment and relocate jobs to Coleraine to mitigate the impact of the disastrous Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) decision, given that, last week, his ministerial colleague the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment gave a very disappointing response to the same question, saying that

she would look at that in the context of local government reorganisation, which would be far too late for the DVA workers. (AQT 1235/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Member will be well aware that the Minister of the Environment and I have been working very closely on that issue. He and I took on responsibility to bring a paper to the Executive, and, indeed, we brought it to the Executive in the last number of weeks. I welcome what the Member's party colleague and my Executive colleague Mr Durkan has done in relocating jobs from DOE to Coleraine. As the Minister primarily responsible for those staff, it is, first and foremost, his responsibility to do that.

I know that other Departments have been actively looking at opportunities that may exist in their Department to redeploy staff to Coleraine and to the other affected areas in Northern Ireland. That was the whole emphasis of the paper that was circulated around Executive colleagues. The Member will appreciate from his time in government that it is not always easy to do that in the sort of time that we have for that issue, because time is marching on with the end of the existing work coming up in the summer. I have confidence and faith that Executive colleagues are doing their best in looking at relocating his staff, but it is not always as easy as the Member might wish it was, and he will know from his time in government, having not moved a substantial amount of jobs out of Belfast to anywhere else, that it is not that simple and straightforward.

Mr Attwood: I think that the record shows that, when I was Minister, I did relocate jobs out of Belfast in moving jobs to Derry for social security purposes, for the carrier bag levy and for other reasons. The issue is that, last week, your ministerial colleague the Enterprise Minister chided other Ministers who are responsible for large volumes of staff in their Departments. Your Department has over 3,000 staff. Given the paper that you have been working on with Mr Durkan, why are you not able to say today that you will relocate 50, 100 or 150 of the 3,000 jobs that fall under your responsibility?

Mr Hamilton: Very simply, a substantial number of the staff under my responsibility in the Department of Finance and Personnel are not at the grades that are affected in Coleraine. The Member will know full well that the majority of the grades affected are at AA and AO level. A substantial number — in fact, the larger percentage — of my staff are not at that grade. You cannot move someone in a job at a different grade to Coleraine to take up the slack if there are AAs and AOs there. So it is not as simple and as straightforward as the Member thinks it is.

3.30 pm

I commend the Minister of the Environment for what he has done to date. As I said, it is primarily his responsibility, as the Minister responsible, to address it first and foremost. I will continue to encourage other Ministers who have larger complements of staff to similarly do so, but we all have to appreciate and understand that it is not an easy matter to do in the short timescale that is available to us in respect of the DVA jobs in Coleraine.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That concludes Question Time. The House will take its ease while we change the top Table.

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

Executive Committee Business

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly approves that a sum, not exceeding £8,411,921,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund, for or towards defraying the charges for Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 and that resources, not exceeding £9,168,609,000, be authorised for use by Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 as summarised for each Department or other public body in columns 3(b) and 3(a) of table 1-3 in the volume of the Northern Ireland Estimates 2014-15 that was laid before the Assembly on 28 May 2014. — [Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel).]

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to today's debate on the Main Estimates. In the context of continued economic instability and the requirement on the Assembly to address local needs and prioritise, this is a critical debate. It covers our final spending plan for 2014-15. I thank departmental officials for briefing the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Main Estimates. The officials took the Committee through the changes that occurred during each of the monitoring rounds. I want to focus on a couple of the issues.

First, as the party spokesperson on disability, I see a necessity for budgeting to change to ensure that those with a disability are prioritised within local spend. The welfare cuts agenda will hit sickness and disability claimants the hardest. Indeed, the 66,000 individuals adversely affected by the incapacity benefit reforms can expect to lose an average of almost £3,500 a year. The 67,000 people losing out as a result of the changeover from disability living allowance to personal independence payments by an average of more than £2,100 will have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable in our society.

I believe that we need an independent assessment of the impact of the proposed cuts to welfare reform on sick and disabled people and their carers and families, drawing on the expertise of the Work and Pensions Select Committee in Westminster. We also need to ensure that the proposed budget reductions being brought forward by the British Government do not negatively impact on services to disabled children. It is important that children with

disabilities are given the best opportunity to reach their full potential and are fully integrated into society. There must be no barriers to participation for disabled children.

As poverty is one of the key indicators in preventing children with disabilities from leading an improved lifestyle, some of the proposed cuts in budgets will only add to the number of children who fall under the child poverty level. Health and Education combined need to ring-fence and prioritise funding in that area.

We also have a higher percentage of households with children than those who live in Britain. As well as having more families, we have a higher proportion of larger families with four or more children.

Our rates of persistent child poverty are more than twice those in Scotland, England and Wales. The income of families with children has already been badly affected by the welfare reforms introduced since 2010, with a consequent lowering of living standards for those in the bottom half of society. Those families face a further drop in living standards over the coming three years, and we need to protect families in any way we can.

I also welcome the Health Minister's recent announcement of a new pioneering device to help those with diabetes. Although it is being piloted in the South Eastern Trust, I urge the Health Minister and, indeed, the Minister of Finance and Personnel to prioritise it to allow the 80,000 people here who suffer from diabetes to benefit from it and to ensure that, once it is piloted, it is not a case of a postcode lottery as to who can avail themselves of it. Everyone entitled should receive it. I hope that the Minister is prioritising and is able to ring-fence much-needed funds for it, as diabetes is the fastest-growing health threat here today. Statistics for the Strabane and Omagh districts in my constituency show that the number of people with type 2 diabetes has increased by 1,000 over the past five years.

Again, I want to major on the A5 and the £108 million that was handed back and reallocated to capital projects in DHSSPS and DRD. The A5 is vital for the economic infrastructure west of the Bann, as recent economic investment, inward and indigenous, has been lost in favour of other areas because of our road infrastructure or, indeed, lack of it. The A5 is a strategic must for the region and a massive influencer on the decision of an investor to our region west of the Bann, but I am reassured that the A5 remains an Executive priority. Hopefully, the money coming forward will be reallocated to it.

We also need to deal with the challenge of youth unemployment. There needs to be a robust partnership between government and employers. Some 22% of young people aged 18 to 24 are unemployed, and 30% of the total unemployed are aged 18 to 24. Twenty-five thousand people exit the North every year. That represents a huge pool of talent and youthful ambition that is being lost to our economy. Forced emigration and unemployment has been a scourge on our society for generations. Emigration has been utilised as a political safety valve since the economic crash. We still raise too many of our children for export. It is one of the great failures of our society, and there is a massive human cost to it. The curse of emigration is causing untold misery to families the length and breadth of this state. I have met many parents who have been in tears as they recounted the fact that the children they have reared and educated have been forced to leave for

Canada, Australia and elsewhere. Increasing numbers of families are fragmented, with their children scattered around the world, and, as a consequence, we have a Skype generation. We must offer our young people a real choice — not just the dole or the plane out. We must offer our young people a credible youth guarantee scheme, and we need a cross-departmental working group to address emigration.

The number one priority of the Executive — rebalancing the economy — has yet to be fully achieved and is a work in progress. There has been considerable improvement, but, despite all the efforts made and good work done, challenges continue.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé thar a bheith buíoch díot as seans a thabhairt dom labhairt ar chúrsaí airgeadais anseo inniu. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the Main Estimates. Initially, I will speak as Chair of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee on DETI's capital allocations, which are £3.4 million in relation to tourism development and £10 million in relation to Invest NI's agrifood loan scheme.

At last week's meeting on the June monitoring round, DETI reported that the £3.4 million for tourism development resulted from a bid from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board against the events fund. Of that, £2.3 million is for contractual commitments, where letters of offer have issued to event organisers. Those cover international events, the sponsorship of national events and pre-commitments for the Tall Ships 2015. Given that such events are usually planned and organised well in advance, it is entirely unclear — to me, certainly — why those requirements were not identified during the original Budget process.

In evidence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel, it was further stated that there was a Budget realignment of £12.2 million, where the Executive took money from DETI in acknowledgement that there was not as much economic stimulus at that point, and a further £7 million on the capital side for the same reason.

This year's monitoring round identified that Invest NI is now seeking the reinstatement of £7.7 million to its resource budget, along with a further £2.8 million resource allocation. DETI is also making a bid for £6.6 million for its capital budget through internal reallocations.

In summary, the DETI/Invest NI resource budget was reduced by £12.2 million due to the economic downturn. Invest NI is now seeking to have £7.7 million from its allocation reinstated, along with a further £2.8 million, making a total resource bid of £10.5 million due to the economic recovery. The DETI/Invest NI capital budget was reduced by £7 million due to the economic downturn, and Invest NI is now making a bid for £6.6 million for its capital budget due to the economic recovery. Given the short period between the original budget Estimates and the current Estimates, the figures support the view that there is considerable uncertainty around budgetary requirements for Invest NI in what remains a volatile economic climate.

I stood here roughly a year ago to inform the Assembly that, in June monitoring 2013, Invest NI had made a bid for £9 million due to increased economic activity. That further supports previous calls for end-year flexibility in Invest NI's budget. I brought that to the attention of the Assembly last year, and I reiterate it today. As the

economy is the Executive's number one priority, we must recognise the importance of Invest NI to the development of the economy. We should provide it with the flexibility it needs to conduct its affairs in a confident and professional manner with a prudent level of financial flexibility, rather than having it continually coming back to the Executive with its begging bowl every time a substantial investor makes a commitment.

I will now speak with my party hat on. We have heard references to uncertainty, tourism and tourism development. It is appropriate that a number of domestic local factors over which we have some control are inherently part of the problem of the fluidity between semi-certainty and uncertainty. For example, issues such as flag protests are certainly not going to attract tourists to the North by any means, manner or fashion. Those things add uncertainty to the image we give abroad. I have done some research into this. The image sent abroad in recent weeks from the most senior member of the Executive, Peter Robinson, as he endorsed extremist comments from Pastor McConnell, made this place sound very unwelcoming and not tourist-friendly. That is the absolute opposite of what we know the rest of our neighbours and friends to be: a welcoming, good, charitable and hospitable people. That was a very wrong message to send across the world.

Just so that people are not in any doubt about what that may cost us economically, I will put something on record. We send a message to people across the world, whose only difference from us is that they are of a different religious persuasion. We are supposed to cherish, respect and nurture that difference. That should be the message coming from the Assembly. I hope that that message goes firmly on record as the true voice of the people of the North.

3.45 pm

For the record, the total number of Muslims in Asia in 2010 was around 1.1 billion, which was 25% of the population. Asia is home to the world's largest Muslim population. Sixty-two per cent of the world's Muslims live there, with Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh having the four largest Muslim populations.

Islam is the largest religion in Africa. I will come to my point here. Members may not want to listen to the facts or realities of this, but, in Asia in 2012-13, the export market was worth £386.2 million, which was worth 14.7% of rest-of-the-world sales. The total for the Middle East was £221.3 million, which represented 8.4%. The total in Africa was £169.8 million, which was 6.4%, while, in Turkey, the total was £24.1 million, or 0.9%. Those figures relate to and impact directly on the businesses offering a future to our young people and stability for our local community. The clear message from here should be that we are welcoming to difference, that we accommodate difference, that we respect difference and that we want to do business with people from differing backgrounds rather than insult their culture and where they come from.

In future, when people are doing business across the world, they should be very careful about what they say when they want to attract economic activity, when they want to have investment in our country and when they want exports from the North to be readily accepted by people of differing backgrounds. They should be respectful.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGlone: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Storey: The Member talks of respect in this new era that we are living in, in which everybody has to be respectful of everybody else. Does that include the Black brethren in Dunloy at the weekend who were allowed to walk only about 20 yds outside their own Orange hall because of intransigence and the inability of republicans and nationalists in that village to show tolerance and respect for diversity and those who have a different culture?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the Member responds, I am sure that the vast majority of Members in the Chamber will agree that we have now gone well off the Supply motion. If I had not been here a minute ago, I would not have a clue what we are debating.

Mr McGlone: I think the Member, in his unique way, probably makes the point. Respect is given when respect is cherished, and when those whose activities, be they verbal or physical, show respect for people and respect difference, they will get that back.

You are quite right, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not quite sure how a band parade in Dunloy contributes to the economic activity of an area, other than maybe to slow the place down for a day so that people cannot get in to do their shopping, but — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Now you see the problem that I have: several Members are shouting from a sedentary position. That is not the conduct of an Assembly that is worried about the economy and hoping to do business.

Mr McGlone: The Member probably does not know this, but some of us come from areas where respect is cherished and given. That applies equally to some of our villages: whether they be Orange or Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) parades, those people are respected and accommodated. That is the type of society and the type of message that we want to put across the world when we are going for economic activity and when we want to sell this place as a positive, rather than as a negative, by word or deed.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I will maybe return to the remarks of my colleague from Mid Ulster later, if I have time.

As Chair of the Education Committee, I want to comment on the Supply resolution Main Estimates of 2014-15. As the House knows, the Department of Education is one of the larger-spending Departments. In 2013-14, it spent over £2 billion, according to the Estimates document. The Committee understands that the total spend amounted to around 99% of the Department's 2013-14 budget. Education generally has a good record in overall budget forecasting for capital and resource. If you look at the way in which that is set out in the document, you will see that it certainly indicates that there was a considerable large spend. However, serious concerns remain about the Department's non-engagement in the context of the savings delivery process and repeated comments that the existing and previous Finance Ministers made about abiding by and applying the rules equitably and fairly across all Departments in that way.

I cannot leave the subject of forecasting without mentioning the Department's capital programme. Around £109 million was spent on capital projects in 2013-14, most of it on schools. The Main Estimates set out a substantial

increase to £182 million in 2014-15. That increase is very welcome and is good news for school estates, particularly for those schools that will benefit as a result of new capital build. However, less welcome is the level of delay that is associated with the individual capital projects that were previously announced in the House. Of the 42 major capital works that were announced in June 2012 and January 2013, only five, including Arvalee special school in Omagh, are in construction. Another three are due to begin in June. Additionally, 51 smaller-scale school enhancement projects, costing over £100 million in total, were also announced as being advanced in planning during October 2013. The Committee for Education understands that the capital budget for those in 2014-15 will be only some £5 million, not the £20 million as originally indicated.

Given the delays and the low level of investment, it appears that those schools that have been waiting for new buildings or enhancements will have to wait a lot longer before the work is completed or even before the spades are in the ground. I understand that the Department's capital budget in 2014-15 is safe; that is to say, it will probably all be spent and thus will not be reallocated to the centre. However, the Department of Education appears to be managing that by using its capital money for a large programme of much-needed minor works.

Programming a large number of major capital works is not easy; there will always be delays and slippage. However, given the large number of planned works, the significant delays and the expectations that have been raised, the Department of Education, and, indeed, other Departments, may wish to think again about the selection of capital projects and the way in which they are announced. The real issue is the procurement process for school buildings, and the current single tender process militates against the effective and efficient delivery of school buildings. It can take anything up to five years-plus between the announcement of a capital programme and its delivery.

Turning to the resource budget, the Department of Education has just gone through an elaborate and surprisingly expensive process, costing over £100,000, of revising the common funding formula scheme. The Committee scrutinised that process carefully and welcomed some of the changes that the Minister made. However, despite the Education Minister's much-acclaimed comments that this was a good example of how you conduct a public debate, I cannot fail to say that it should be used as an example of how you make a monumental disaster when giving assurance to schools about the future of their particular funding stream. That said, a majority of Committee members were far from satisfied with what has become the end product. Many members continue to be dissatisfied with the absence of clarity on a distribution mechanism for some of the additional funding to schools in 2014-15. That clarity is vital, given the current uncertainty about the 2015-16 Budget process. I trust that the Department will be able to give clarity to schools, given the concerns that have been expressed to many Members over the last number of weeks and months.

The Department also recently advised that, as a consequence of issues relating to welfare reform, it plans to set aside some £29 million in 2014-15. Officials assured us that this is not a contingency fund. I remind Members that the Minister of Finance had to write to the Department and the Minister expressing concern about

the use of a contingency fund. There is another term for it: a slush fund. Officials were very quick to point out that that is not what it is. However, it has all the hallmarks of money being put under the bed so that, when a crisis comes, the Department will find that it is able to take the £29 million that it has top-sliced from education and library boards, which affects every Member and every school that is represented in the House. Clearly, there is inventive financial accounting going on to which the Finance Minister requires to pay particular attention. There is a concern despite the officials' assurance that this is not a contingency fund and that the Department will, in fact, be redirecting its contingency moneys to what it calls a welfare reform "set-aside" fund.

Officials also indicated that the balance of the set-aside money will come from resource that had previously been earmarked for teacher severance payments and the establishment of the controlled schools sectoral support body. So here we go again. The one sector that ends up getting its coffers raided is not the integrated sector, not the maintained sector, not the Irish-medium sector and not the voluntary grammar schools but the controlled sector. It is good enough to raid its coffers because it does not complain or moan. It does not have a sectoral body. It does not have a voice speaking up for it, and, therefore, it is an easy target. Shame on the Department for treating a sector in that way.

The Committee notes with concern the Department's proposals for the set-aside fund. The majority of Members are concerned that the Department's proposals may have an unwelcome impact on front line services. Therefore, not surprisingly, Members will view with renewed interest the outcome of the June monitoring round and the general outworking of the Budget process in 2014-15.

I now turn to a number of issues as a Member of the House. One issue of great concern is how the Department, in setting out its policy projects and plans, is able to set aside money for carrying out those plans and policies without there having been a proper, effective consultation with schools and stakeholders. I will give you one example of an absolutely unmitigated disaster in the Department of Education that cost the Department and the Northern Ireland Exchequer over £5 million: computer-based assessment. We now have a raft of reports that have been made available to the Committee in which the Education and Training Inspectorate, the gateway review and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment all tell us clearly that computer-based assessment was fundamentally flawed in its preparation, procurement and in the way that it was processed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Storey: As a result of all that, Members, £6 million has gone down the Swanee. The House, the Finance Minister and everybody concerned with education needs to be aware of that and to make sure that it does not happen again.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. We are all too aware of the many challenges facing our health service. The Committee held a briefing with departmental officials on 28 May to explore some of the

challenges facing the Department of Health in the 2014-15 Budget. This is not the first year that the Department has faced financial problems. Last year, it received an additional £55 million in the monitoring rounds, but there was still a cash overspend of some £13 million at the end of 2013-14.

4.00 pm

The Department told the Committee that it faces a funding shortfall of £160 million this year and has therefore decided to submit bids totalling that amount under the June monitoring round. There are 12 key areas in which the Department faces a challenging financial situation this year and for which bids have therefore been made. I want to mention just a few of them. There are bids of £30 million for elective care; £22 million for unscheduled care; £21 million for Transforming Your Care (TYC) transitional funding; £10 million for public health; £10 million for clinical negligence; and £9 million for mental health and learning disability. The first thing that struck the Committee was that the financial pressures are spread right across the Department's remit. There is no area without financial pressures. That highlights the stresses that the Department is experiencing and is a cause of concern for all of us.

The Department advised the Committee that, under DFP rules, it has to prioritise the bids as A, B or C, with category A referring to inescapable expenditure, category B to expenditure having a direct impact on the Department's ability to meet wider pressures and category C to expenditure not contractually committed to that could be scaled back if needed. The Committee scrutinised the bids at its meeting on 28 May. We wanted to understand exactly what the money would be spent on, why the pressure had arisen in the first place, why it had not been foreseen and the rationale for classifying the bid as A, B or C.

I turn first to the bid for £21 million for transitional funding for Transforming Your Care. It was originally estimated by the Department that £70 million would be required to implement TYC in the period 2012-15. However, the Committee was told by officials that this £70 million is now required over a five-year period rather than the initial three-year period, and, to date, only £28 million of the required £70 million has been allocated to TYC transitional funding. That means that we have a gap of £42 million. Under June monitoring, the Department is bidding for £21 million. However, it has classified that as a category C bid — the category designated for expenditure considered expendable and easily scaled back. The Committee was very surprised by that, given that we have been told countless times that TYC is the only way forward, that we cannot continue delivering healthcare as we are doing and that change is absolutely necessary. Yet the Department has rated the need for funding to implement TYC as category C.

The Committee was concerned about the approach taken, so we wrote to the Minister to ask for an explanation of the logic of classifying the bid. We received a response at our meeting on 4 June, when we were told that the category system is required by DFP and that all the bids are important for the Department. As a result, the Committee has, rightly, written back to the Department to ask it to prioritise the 12 bids that it submitted. We need to know how the Department, if its request for £160 million is not

met — I must say that it is an unprecedented amount to bid for in a June monitoring round — will spend the money that it does receive and what its key priorities are.

The Department is also bidding for £30 million for elective care to bring down the waiting list times for a range of specialities, including orthopaedics, general surgery and plastic surgery. While the Committee wishes to see the Department getting a handle on waiting lists and waiting times, we query whether using the private sector to tackle the backlog is the best approach, particularly in the long term. The Committee has been carrying out a review of waiting times since January 2014 and will present its findings to the Assembly in due course.

The next bid that I want to refer to is the £22 million for unscheduled care, which has been classified as category A. We are all too aware of the current problems across emergency departments: waiting times, patient safety, staff morale and so on.

When the Committee heard from the Department on 28 May, we were told that the bid was needed to pay for more staff, to have seven-day lab services, to improve patient flow and to plan for winter pressures. Members of the Committee and, indeed, all MLAs will have constituents who have had poor experiences in our emergency departments. We all agree that that situation must improve and that, if more resources are required to get to the bottom of the problem, they must be pursued.

I now wish to turn to the bid of £10 million for clinical negligence.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. We have the Supply Estimates in front of us. If, as she suggested, the case is so compelling, maybe she would give us an indication of how the £15 billion-plus might be reallocated to facilitate what she has asked for in her speech.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Member for his intervention. It is very apparent that there is an unprecedented pressure across the Department. I do not think that anybody would take issue with the Member's comments on that. However, if you like, the great hope for the delivery of health was to be the implementation of Transforming Your Care. That bid should be prioritised. It should be a category A bid and should not be a category C bid.

I want to turn specifically to the bid of £10 million for clinical negligence. The Committee understands that the Department must, of course, provide for cases where medical negligence is found and compensation is due. However, we are concerned at the scale of the problem and the pressures it is placing on the Department's budget. The Committee is firmly of the belief that, while you can never completely eradicate problems with care, the Department should make strenuous efforts to reduce the possibilities of them occurring. That means that processes and procedures must be regularly tested and those found to be ineffective must be replaced — surely that is why the serious adverse incident system has been put in place. To do otherwise would be to waste public money that could be spent far better on improving patient care.

To sum up, the Committee is seriously concerned about the financial pressures that our health service faces in this financial year. However, we need more clarity from the Department on what it believes its priorities are, should further funding be made available through the June

monitoring round. We are also concerned that, within the current financial context, the shift left envisaged under TYC simply will not happen and real and positive changes to our health services will not be made or delivered.

Mr Givan: Before I go on to make justice-related comments, I am pleased that, in respect of the comments of the previous Member who spoke, Sinn Féin is now saying that it supports TYC, that it needs to be pressed forward and that funding for it needs to be provided. For the past number of months, Members from Sinn Féin have been beating the drum and saying that it needs to stop and there needs to be a review. We now have it on the record — TYC: get it funded and keep the process moving. It is useful for that to have been put formally on the record. The Member did not comment on welfare reform and what the implications could be from not pressing forward with it. We have heard a lot of concerns about the £150 million needed for the Department of Health, and the party opposite has a lot to play in reducing the burden on that Department by acting more responsibly in respect of the finances of this place.

I now turn to my role as the Chairman of the Committee for Justice. I am pleased to be able to make some comments on the resources available to the Department of Justice. The Committee regularly scrutinises the Department's budget and savings delivery plans and receives detailed information on each of the monitoring rounds. At its meeting on 4 June, it considered the detailed information provided on the budgetary position for the 2013–14 out-turn and the June monitoring round. Given the position outlined and the scale of the emerging pressures facing the Department in particular, the Committee has scheduled further briefings with officials to discuss the issues in more detail.

On the 2013–14 out-turn, the Department's unring-fenced resource DEL underspend represents 0.86%, which is commendable as far as managing the budget is concerned. The capital underspend, excluding the Desertcreat training college, represents 10.5% of the budget, and we will want to look more at that issue. In relation to Desertcreat, the Committee is extremely disappointed that further progress has not been made and that construction work on the college has not started by now. It is clear that the Programme for Government commitment to deliver the college will not be met within the envisaged timescale. While the underspend relating to the college will be carried forward under the Treasury security funding agreement, it is imperative that the procurement process is resolved and that construction begins as soon as possible. The Committee will want to look closely at this capital project.

I turn to some of the key pressures the Department is already facing in the 2014-15 year before the likely impact on the budget as a result of welfare reform, which I will touch on shortly. A range of potential pressures in relation to litigation, including the working time directive costs faced by the Police Service and costs relating to the O'Brien litigation and judicial pensions, have been identified as likely to have to be covered this financial year. There is also a pressure of £4.7 million arising from miscarriages of justice and criminal appeals that will have to be funded.

In respect of the Prison Service exit scheme, I welcome the Department's commitment to provide funding of £1.7

million to enable the remaining 12 officers who applied to leave as soon as possible this financial year. While it creates a pressure in the short term, it is right to complete the exit scheme, which has been ongoing for some time, and it will remove a payroll pressure in the longer term. Members will be familiar with the scheme. Over 500 officers — I declare an interest, as a family member was one of them — have now left the Prison Service under the scheme. Primarily, it is an invest-to-save scheme because it will save money in the long term, and that is what the business case was predicated on. However, it also gave recognition to the service and sacrifice that many of the prison officers gave to this country during the worst times of our Troubles. It is right that recognition was given to them. I know that a number of them feel aggrieved at how lengthy the process has been to get to this point, but nevertheless, as we come to the conclusion of the scheme and these remaining 12 officers leave, it is right that we put on record our thanks and appreciation to those who served in this particularly challenging role.

On legal aid, yet again, the main pressure faced by the Department centres on the cost of legal aid, with the forecasted pressure already indicated as being £35.5 million for this financial year. If reforms had not taken place, the pressure would be even higher. While some of the pressure has been created by an initiative by the judiciary during the last financial year to clear a backlog of Crown Court cases — action that is to be welcomed, given the avoidable delays often faced in criminal cases — the worrying increase in the cost of civil legal aid continues. The Department intends to allocate £23.5 million towards the legal aid pressure and will bid to the Department of Finance for the other £12 million as part of the June monitoring round.

The continuing financial pressure caused by the cost of legal aid is not sustainable, either now or in the future, and other parts of the Department and other criminal justice organisations cannot continually have their budgets reduced to fund it, particularly given the other pressures that they face, including the possible impact of welfare reform. The Committee will carefully consider the further reforms of legal aid being brought forward by the Minister to ensure that, while value for money is achieved, access to justice is not undermined, particularly in respect of civil legal aid for family law cases. This is an issue that the Committee has looked at on numerous occasions, and, speaking personally, I believe that the Department needs to do more to press this issue.

We hear the constant complaints from the legal professions about what this will mean to them. However, when £20 million was taken out of criminal legal aid, at that time, the barristers warned that this would be a catastrophe. They threatened to go on strike, and dire predictions were made about the implications. I am not aware of any adverse impact from taking £20 million from barristers who could well afford to do with less. We only need to look at the list when it gets published every year — some barristers in this place will know better than others how best to get money out of the system — to see that change needs to happen more quickly and more deeply than it has done to this point. Obviously, we will balance it, particularly around family law. That is a particular interest for the Committee, but more needs to be done, and the Minister needs to move this forward much more quickly.

4.15 pm

On welfare reform, the Committee has been advised by the Department that the Finance Minister has indicated that, without clear progress on moving the Welfare Reform Bill through the Assembly before June this year, 1.5% reductions across all Departments will be sought as part of the June monitoring round. That equates to a reduction of £11 million for the Police Service and £5.3 million for other areas of the Justice Department. I know that the Justice Minister believes that the 1.5% cuts should not apply to the Department of Justice, given its ring-fenced status. However, plans are being made to deliver the savings, if necessary. If the reductions are made, they will no doubt impact on the ability of all areas to deliver the required levels of service and will place further pressure on the Police Service budget.

When I spoke during the debate on the 2014-15 Vote on Account in February, I highlighted the major budget and resilience challenges that the PSNI faces, particularly in relation to sustaining the number of warranted officers that it believes is necessary, which will, as it currently stands, create a significant budget gap, while delivering its required savings. Clearly, any further reductions will most likely impact on the delivery of front line services, given that 80% of overall police costs are salary-related. The Committee will want to keep a close eye on the situation and the likely implications of failing to deal with welfare reform.

With regard to savings delivery plans, although the Department is on track to deliver total savings of £109 million by 2014-15, the impact of achieving that requires close scrutiny, particularly in relation to the delivery of front line services, and a number of organisations have already highlighted the likely impact that achieving the savings will have on them. It is clear that the Department faces substantial budgetary pressures during this financial year that will have to be carefully managed to ensure that key priorities and targets continue to be delivered to the required standard. I support the motion.

Mr McCallister: The Supply resolution and tomorrow's Budget (No. 2) Bill are taking place against a backdrop of considerable fiscal uncertainty for the Finance Minister, the Executive and the Assembly. That uncertainty is born of an inability to make collective decisions and an inability to provide a clear strategy for Northern Ireland's economy and society.

Welfare reform is one of the numerous elements sitting on the Northern Ireland Executive's table. The Finance Minister has informed his colleagues on a number of occasions that his inability to get agreement means that the Treasury is bringing in a process of restructuring the block grant for additional payments from Northern Ireland for retaining the old welfare system. The Finance Minister has proposed the model of top-slicing 1.5% off all departmental budgets, and we heard last week that that would mean almost £70 million for the Department of Health. Suddenly, we hear the Chairperson of the Health Committee pleading for more money and putting forward a case for it. There are not many of us who would not want to make the case for more money for our health service, our hospitals and our A&Es that are struggling and for the social care part of health that is in desperate need. However, we cannot do all these things and expect the money to come from nowhere — from thin air — or for the

Finance Minister to somehow pluck it off a tree. It has to come from somewhere. That is why we need to have an Executive who actually function with some semblance of collective responsibility.

It is bizarre that the entire Executive are in agreement to devolve the powers to vary corporation tax and reduce it, possibly over a number of years, to the same level as that in the Republic, which is 12.5%. That decision could cost the Executive upwards of £400 million a year. I ask the Finance Minister and the Executive parties this: if their strategy is to top-slice a sum from each Department on an annual basis, how will that be achieved and what effect will it have?

I note that HMRC is reported to have almost completed its technical work on devolving corporation tax to the Northern Ireland Executive. I note that one of the key conclusions from the Scottish Conservatives 'Commission on the Future Governance of Scotland' was:

"Corporation Tax is the least suitable of all taxes for devolution".

It concluded:

"it is not economical to collect on a small scale; it relates to activity that can easily be transferred across borders; it is highly volatile; and it does not generate a reliable yield".

The Finance Minister will have heard me speaking about this before. There are problems with our economic data and its reliability. Should we devolve corporation tax, there are problems with its volatility, and that message seems to be reinforced by Lord Strathclyde's commission.

I also note that the former Finance Minister Mr Wilson, who is in the Chamber, said last week that unless we progressed on welfare reform, we would not be able to devolve corporation tax. When you add into this the inadequate nature of the data that I have talked about, our budgetary process, which, I know, Mr Cree has talked about for a long number of years, and the inability of this Executive to make a decision or to come to some form of collective responsibility, it does not fill me with great confidence that the Executive may be heading in the right direction.

It is also important to reflect on the damaging headlines that we had last week, given the First Minister's comments about the Muslim community, and the effect that that could have on our international reputation. All these things have a potential impact on foreign direct investment. I acknowledge that the First Minister, after a number of days, apologised.

A look at the UK economy shows that it is performing better than many had expected. I note that the Ulster Bank index recently showed the best results for Northern Ireland since 2007. However, I think that, at UK and Northern Ireland level, we have to be careful not to get too complacent. We are a long way from sustainable and balanced growth, and our main priority must be to develop that balanced and sustainable growth. The fact that the UK trade deficit has widened since March suggests that, if we are not trading our way into economic growth, we might be either unlocking investment or, indeed, borrowing more to grow. The IMF's warnings over productivity and the developing housing bubble cannot be ignored, and all

of those can cause major problems in our economy too. Those were some of the things that led to the very difficult period that we had. Recent reports by the Office for National Statistics showed that people in Northern Ireland had the lowest disposable income in the UK, meaning that the potential rise in interest rates will hit our households or indeed our economy much harder than anywhere else. That is why I am extremely confused at the current stance of our Executive.

As I have said many times, the very nature of devolution in the UK is changing. The potential for a constitutional convention, after the Scottish vote, is growing. The conclusion of Lord Strathclyde that:

"the Scottish Parliament should be responsible for setting the rates and bands of personal income tax in Scotland"

is extremely significant. It means that there is more on the table with regard to devolution than ever before. Yet, we, somehow, do not seem to even be engaged in that debate in a particularly meaningful way.

In light of the nature of our economy, which is primarily made up of SMEs, I am also at a loss as to why the Executive are so scared of examining our options in full. For example, if Sinn Féin cares so much about the impacts of welfare reform, why is it not arguing for a special case for Northern Ireland that could see us have control over personal tax allowances? That would have the potential to really make work pay. Why does the DUP not look in more detail at making the whole of Northern Ireland a real enterprise zone by looking at further R&D credits and capital allowances? I have been calling for a full commission on devolution and fiscal powers for Northern Ireland, and I have yet to hear a real argument over and above "Don't rock the corporation tax boat" as to why we should not create that commission to look at these issues. Set that in the context of the wider UK debate and settlement, from the Welsh example to the Scots, and we are not at the table in that debate.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr McCallister: Yes.

Mr Wilson: I have listened to the Member intently. I know that his party is no longer a unionist party, so he is probably not too worried about greater independence for Northern Ireland. However, on the issue of capital allowances and all of Northern Ireland being an enterprise zone, is he not aware that, as a result of UK Budget decisions, capital allowances of up to £250,000 are now available? Most firms have recognised that they do not need capital allowances greater than that, so why would we go chasing after something that we already have?

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to Mr Wilson for the intervention. The point is that we are not even having that debate here. We are not even progressing by saying that we should set up a commission to look at that — even something similar to what the Scottish Conservatives did with Lord Strathclyde. We are being left behind in the debate that the Scots and the Welsh have been having. We have focused solely on the corporation tax debate. Mr Wilson shakes his head, but he acknowledged even when he was Finance Minister that there were problems with corporation tax. He acknowledged even last week as a former Finance Minister that to do corporation tax we

must do welfare reform, yet his most senior partners in government will not agree to do welfare reform. There is no sense of collective responsibility around the Executive table. Look at the plethora of issues that —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McCallister: — we have unresolved and costing money, from reform in education to welfare reform, which is the biggest. I am sure that the Minister in his response will be busily telling us the cost of welfare reform.

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

Mr McCallister: I see that I have run out of time. Thank you.

Mr Deputy Speaker: You certainly have.

Mr Wilson: This is an uncomfortable debate, of course, for Sinn Féin and the parties on the other side of the Chamber collectively. If we look at the contribution of the Sinn Féin Chairman of the Committee for Finance and Personnel, once he got off the Committee script, he spent no time at all talking about what is in the Estimates and was all about attacking the DUP.

The false display of hand-wringing that we had that the poor, oppressed people would find themselves even worse off as a result of comments by the First Minister, when for years, even when in government, his lot were sponsoring arms importation into Northern Ireland and not supporting the rule of law and the police. They did not think that that would have an impact on the economy, so we do not need to take lectures from him on the issue —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member will resume his seat. I am somewhat disappointed that the Member was not listening to me earlier when I encouraged Members to talk about the Budget.

Mr Wilson: We are not actually talking about the Budget; we are talking about the Estimates. However, the important thing is this: the point was made earlier, and I am simply making the point that this is an uncomfortable debate.

I will tell you why it is uncomfortable for Sinn Féin. The first reason is that this is an annual reminder of the financial benefit of the Union. Apart from the £15.5 billion in the Estimates, the totalled managed expenditure is over £23 billion. If you count the revenue that comes to Northern Ireland, there is a deficit of over £9 billion a year. The expenditure in the Estimates is a reminder that services of the quality that we have in Northern Ireland are deliverable only as a result of our union with the rest of the United Kingdom. That is uncomfortable for Sinn Féin.

I noticed that the Chairman of the Finance and Personnel Committee talked about the cosy relationship between the DUP and the Tories and said that we wanted to have tea and crumpets with them. Sinn Féin has been banging on the door for four years to get in, so if anybody is searching for tea and crumpets with David Cameron, it is the party opposite. Of course, the Estimates are a reminder of their opposition to Tory cuts and their purist attitude of "We will not accept these Tory cuts".

4.30 pm

I can remember when I was in the position that the Minister is in now. Sinn Féin Ministers were outside with the trade unions protesting against Tory cuts. But do you know

what this book is? This book is the outcome of agreement between Sinn Féin, the so-called Tory DUP and all the other parties in the Executive, because this is the final year of a four-year Budget — a four-year Budget that had to facilitate Tory cuts of £4 billion. So we will have nothing to do with this false hand wringing. Sinn Féin knows that, when the chips are down, either it brings this place down, which does not suit its image in the Irish Republic, or else it has to work with the material that is available. That is why I take issue with Mr McCallister asking why we cannot have some collective responsibility. We established a four-year Budget in the most difficult of circumstances. This is the outcome and the delivery of the final year of that four-year Budget. I think that that is something that, sometimes, the Assembly is not given credit for having done.

The next point that I want to make is this: whilst we have figures in the Estimates for each Department, of course, like any budget, there will be changes. There are pressures on the departmental budgets, and some of the money will not be spent on the purposes that we will vote for today. That money will come back again and will have to be reallocated. Pressures will emerge that will have to be dealt with in year. That is made more difficult in the incoming year by some of the decisions, or indecisions, that we have had. I do not want to go on about welfare reform, but a lot of Members mentioned the impact that no decision on welfare reform is likely to have on the flexibility and opportunities that the Finance Minister will have in monitoring rounds. The first call will, of course, have to be on the demands that Westminster makes upon us because we have not initiated the process of welfare reform. That means that there is less money to deal with the kinds of pressures that are being dealt with.

Yes, there are pressures, and nearly everyone who has spoken talked about those pressures. However, the fact of the matter remains that this is the money that we have available and this is how we have decided to divide it up. Even those who say that it is divided up wrongly voted for the Budget four years ago. They have had opportunities to make changes. When we had the Vote on Account, I did not hear any amendments. No amendments are proposed to the Estimates. Plenty of people are talking about what we should be spending money on, but where would you change the figures around in the provisions that we have before us?

I want to make a final point. We do not have time to go into all the figures, but one constant theme is running through the document. That is that we are still not getting to grips with the cost of government. If we really want to find ways of delivering on all the front line things that people talked about today — education; justice; health; enterprise, trade and investment; and all the others that have been mentioned — we have to ask ourselves whether there is anything in the figures that we have that we can look at. Take, for example, the cost of social security in DSD. It is up 20% from 2012, and it will go up even further if we have to purchase a separate computer system because we do not implement welfare reform. Time and time again in the Assembly we have called for advocates for different sections of society. Look under OFMDFM and see the cost of the Children's Commissioner, the Equality Commission, the Commissioner for Older People and the Victims' Commissioner. That all adds up to over £15 million. Since 2012, the costs for some of those have gone up by 50%.

We had a discussion in the Committee for Social Development the other day — we have the figures here in the book — about the transfer of urban regeneration to councils. It would seem, however, that, whilst it is being devolved to councils, and councils will take on that role, a sizeable element will be retained in DSD, with all the attendant costs that that brings.

I believe that those are the kinds of issues, across Departments, that we ought to be tackling. Either we have a costly Administration or we slim down the administration function, look for different ways to deliver it and put the money into front line services. There is no point in regularly having debates like this, with Members simply saying that they want more money spent on particular things without saying where they believe that that money should come from.

I believe that, even with the tightness of the Budget, as the Finance Minister has described on a number of occasions in recent weeks, there is still room to find ways to deliver additional money that he can allocate for the things that are required. In the Assembly, we have to engage in that ongoing work.

I wanted to make those few short remarks on the Estimates at this time. I will finish on one last point that Mr Bradley raised. The SDLP believes that this should be an annual exercise. I assure him that, if this were an annual exercise, long-term planning by Departments and non-departmental bodies would become almost impossible, with the wrangling, consultation and everything else associated with allocating a Budget. A four-year Budget, with the current flexibility, at least gives some certainty. That is why I believe that it was a significant contribution by the Assembly and, despite what Mr McCallister and the press say, it shows that, when we put our minds to it, we can do a job and reach compromises —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

Mr Wilson: — even though Sinn Féin does not want to accept that it made compromises on what was basically a Tory-based Budget.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Supply resolution motion on the Main Estimates for 2014-15. Whilst I am aware that the Department of the Environment does not have the biggest budget in this devolved Assembly, it is, nevertheless, an important budget that has the potential to bring real improvements and benefits to our communities, towns and cities, our heritage and our landscapes. I want to highlight briefly some of the main issues affected by the Budget.

In the last few weeks, we have seen some of the most sweeping reforms of local government in Northern Ireland with the elections to the new super-councils. The new streamlined structures mean that we now have councillors elected to serve on only 11 new councils. The councils will bring real prospects of local communities having a greater say in how their areas are governed. It is essential that these new bodies are given every chance to succeed.

I welcome the work being undertaken by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Finance and Personnel to create a transitional relief scheme to protect those ratepayers who would otherwise face excessive increases in their rates bills as a result of RPA and the boundary changes, which will be complete by 2015. I look

forward to hearing more detail from the Finance Minister on the transitional relief scheme.

During the relatively short time that I have been a member of the Environment Committee, one of the most troubling episodes I encountered was the discovery of the scale by which Northern Ireland is affected by environmental crime and pollution. No single episode encompassed this travesty more than the Mobuoy site in County Londonderry. I am absolutely committed to ensuring that there is sufficient funding in place for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to enable it to tackle environmental crime and pollution, particularly with Mobuoy, where we have seen an obscene amount of environmental pollution for monetary gain. This crime should, of course, not have to be paid for by the taxpaying public but by the perpetrators. I sincerely hope that, in time, the justice system will see those responsible paying for the damage done to our beautiful countryside.

The Committee also expressed concern about the prioritisation of resources to ensure that dereliction is addressed, which needs to be prioritised as we seek to attract tourism and investment in Northern Ireland. The amount spent on tidying up eyesores in our town and villages to ensure that the opportunity for publicity generated by the Giro d'Italia coverage was maximised just goes to show how much work really needs to be done to our surroundings. Improvements for the Giro were mostly cosmetic. As temporary measures, they cannot hide the long-term neglect that has left blights on nearly every street you care to mention.

Recently, my home town of Antrim benefited from some fantastic work to improve its public realm. Now that the work is complete, it is a real improvement for all to see. However, one thing that I feel very strongly about is that the improved public realm draws more attention to the number of derelict buildings and facades along the length of the main streets.

I am happy to support the prioritisation of resources to address dereliction. However, it must be done in a joined-up way to ensure that all Departments charged with the responsibility for development and renewal work together to make real change, not just change of a cosmetic or short-term nature.

I would like to bring my remarks to a close by saying that, in some senses, much of what Members contributed to the debate was on the issue that our aspiration to support policies and programmes that will make real change is in danger of being lost to us because of the cuts proposed as a result of our failure to agree a way forward on welfare reform. Anyone who has bothered to listen to any of my speeches in the Chamber will know that I am not someone who is interested in gratuitous political point scoring just for the sake of it. That is why I raise my concerns about welfare reform. It has the potential to decimate any future Budget settlement, such is the scale of the financial penalties. I do so out of genuine regret that, yet again, the Assembly is leaving itself open to the charge of failing to deliver for the greater good of our people. I hope that we will be able to find the will to resolve this and demonstrate that the ability to take difficult decisions is not beyond us.

Mr Lyttle: I will make comments on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in my capacity as Deputy Chairperson. I

may also make some brief comments as an Alliance Party MLA.

Officials briefed the Committee on the 2014-15 opening budget and June monitoring proposals at our meeting on Wednesday 4 June. Regrettably, papers for the briefing were provided to the Committee less than two hours prior to the meeting. Members expressed concern that, as a result, there was insufficient time to give adequate consideration to the information provided. It was for that reason that the Chairperson and I excused ourselves from the briefing. The failure of OFMDFM to provide papers to the Committee in a timely manner has been a serious problem for a considerable period. We have undertaken much work to try to improve access to information from the Department. It is my understanding that a similar situation also occurred last year with the 2013-14 budget briefing. The Committee is eager to hear from Ministers what processes can be put in place to prevent Departments taking that approach and to allow for proper Committee scrutiny on departmental budget allocations and bids.

At the meeting, the Department advised that its opening resource budget for 2014-15 was £70.4 million — a reduction of £3.5 million compared with last year's figures. Officials highlighted that that was a particularly challenging allocation for this year because of additional pressures on the Department. They advised that it has over-allocated its resource budget by £2.2 million.

The Department's capital funding allocation is £13.6 million. However, members were advised that almost £5.5 million is to be surrendered in the June monitoring round because of the failure to reach agreement on how to proceed with the Maze/Long Kesh site. From a personal point of view, that shows just how important it is that the Assembly reaches agreement on a comprehensive and ethical process for dealing with the past, given the scale of the surrender that will occur.

One additional pressure relates to the inquiry into historical institutional child abuse. The Committee was advised during its consideration of the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill that the funds of between £15 million and £19 million required over the lifetime of the inquiry would be made available despite there being no baseline. Indeed, it is imperative that the bid of £4.282 million in the June monitoring round be met.

4.45 pm

There is also an issue with the regeneration of former military sites, in particular, the Shackleton site. There is no baseline for ongoing security and maintenance costs, which are significant for such a large site. The Committee was advised that that could cost as much as £500,000 to £600,000 a year. Again, there is a capital bid in the June monitoring round for £1.3 million to cover the costs of Shackleton and other sites gifted from MoD through the Hillsborough agreement.

The Committee welcomes the continued funding available to victims and survivors. Throughout this session, the Committee has carefully scrutinised the work of the Department and the Victims and Survivors Service to ensure that the needs of victims and survivors in our community are addressed. The Committee welcomed the independent assessment of the service and, indeed, looks forward to seeing all the recommendations implemented.

With that in mind, the Committee is supportive of the bids for funding for the Victims and Survivors Service, which will hopefully ensure adequate resourcing for the service to meet the needs of victims and survivors.

From a personal point of view, it is clear that the Department is still striving for an accurate costing for the Victims and Survivors Service. Indeed, the administration of the financial assistance scheme for 2013-14 experienced significant difficulties, and concerns remain about how exactly that administration will be delivered in this financial year. It is my understanding that victims and survivors' groups have serious concerns about a potential gap in their funding further to June this year. Hopefully, all those situations can be addressed. The Committee will therefore continue to keep a watchful eye on the progress of the Victims and Survivors Service over the coming financial year.

I wish to highlight members' concerns about the scrutiny of the Executive's ring-fenced Delivering Social Change fund, which includes the social investment fund, the childcare fund and the Delivering Social Change signature programmes fund. The Committee encourages greater transparency on how those Executive funds are being allocated and spent. That would make it easier to track spending across the Executive's Delivering Social Change funding streams, which also now seem to include the Northern Ireland Hospice and the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF) European capacity-building fund, as they were mentioned in the June monitoring round bid for an additional £6 million.

The Committee is awaiting a breakdown of how the £20 million in total that the Department hopes to spend in those areas will be allocated across each of the programmes. Indeed, from a personal point of view, I support the pilot that the Department is conducting on children's budgeting. I think that that could be a very effective way for the House and the public to assess exactly how much and how effectively money is being invested in children's services across Northern Ireland.

I would like to make a few other brief comments in my capacity as an Alliance Party member of the House. The budgeting and administration of OFMDFM's central good relations fund have caused me, and, indeed, organisations across Northern Ireland, significant concern. It is my understanding that there was an extreme delay in calls for a good relations fund in the last financial year and that ongoing delays are being experienced by groups across Northern Ireland working in that vital area of policy. Funding for community relations and for Building a United Community in Northern Ireland in general has seen significant challenges. OFMDFM appears to be relying heavily on funding from the European Union and, indeed, American philanthropy.

With goals set by the Together: Building a United Community strategy, which include interface removal within 10 years and perhaps more modest commitments on shared education, shared housing and cultural expression, and the racial equality strategy, it remains to be seen what types of long-term commitments and adequate funding are being allocated to those important areas for people in Northern Ireland. Indeed, we need to see much more serious funding committed if we are to believe that the Department is taking seriously those key issues for our society.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: I am happy to give way.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the Member's contribution on community relations. With all the adverse publicity about the racial attacks on ethnic minorities, there is a risk that we might take our eye off the ball in relation to sectarianism. This day last week, there was a horrendous front-page story in one of local newspapers about a young man who had sustained 19 stitches in his face because of a sectarian attack. Will the Member join me in urging OFMDFM to get on with the job and provide leadership in tackling sectarianism in our community?

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for her intervention and agree wholeheartedly. I believe that sectarianism and racism are, unfortunately, extremely close friends. Indeed, as I said, the commitment of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to robustly funding and adequately addressing those key issues remains to be seen. Investing in and delivering improved community relations and good race relations will build political stability in Northern Ireland, and it is absolutely central to delivering the improved social and economic well-being that we all want for citizens across Northern Ireland.

In closing, as chairperson of the all-party group on cycling, I extend my support for the work being done by the Department for Regional Development and the bids that are being made by the Minister for Regional Development to vastly improve our cycling network across Northern Ireland. It has huge scope for social, economic and health benefits in Northern Ireland, and I hope that it is an area of policy that the Executive seek to give long-term sustainable funding to.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I rise to support the motion and follow on from my colleagues who spoke earlier, particularly Daithí McKay, who covered quite a bit of ground.

I want to speak first of all, if I can, for a moment or two, on behalf of the Social Development Committee. I will just speak very briefly. The last discussion that the Committee had on this matter was on 29 May, when we had a briefing on the June monitoring round from officials and asked them to refer to the Main Estimates discussion today. The officials gave some examples and some explanations around the Budget and so on. The Committee accepts, therefore, that there will be little change in the overall budget position of DSD. That is fair enough; we understand that.

There have been ongoing discussions at the Committee in the past, particularly in the past year, about the monitoring rounds, and virtually all the members have expressed strong concerns at the way in which the Department has not been able to manage the funding that has been available to it, particularly on issues such as housing, for example. Whilst no members of the Committee would have taken exception to putting additional moneys into co-ownership, for example, at the same time, the members are acutely aware that that money was going to co-ownership, which is fine; fair play and good luck to all those people who will benefit from that. However, at the same time, we are still not addressing the social housing need, which is one of our particular priorities, notwithstanding the fact that, on 24 March, the House agreed that 4,000 social houses should be built that were additional to the Programme for Government commitments

in this CSR. We are disappointed that no additional bids have been made by the Department to address what many believe to be a clear shortfall in the social housing provision for all those people who are in need. The Department and the Housing Executive's own figures tell us clearly that there are 20,000 people in housing stress on a waiting list, never mind the up to 40,000 in total on the waiting list who are waiting for a roof over their head.

I just make the point that the Committee has expressed concerns about the way in which issues such as housing and social housing have not been resolved to the satisfaction of all those people, particularly those who need a home. We have heard a lot from the housing association movement, for example, and, indeed, the Department has raised a range of issues that are barriers to the provision of social housing. Those barriers include land procurement, and the Department has moved to some extent to try to have advance purchase of land. That is good and very welcome, but there are other issues around planning, procurement, DFP funding streams and so on that we believe are barriers that still exist, and if we do not, as others said earlier, do government on a joined-up basis, we will not meet the needs that the people that we serve are entitled to have addressed.

I believe, and Sammy Wilson touched on it earlier, that the current British Government virtually pulled the rug from below the Executive in 2011 when they pulled £4 billion, which is no mean amount, from the money available. Sometimes, media commentators tend to forget that. To take £4 billion from the money available to the Executive was a devastating blow to the prospects of consolidating devolution and the power-sharing arrangements that we have, even though there are those who do not particularly want to be involved in them. Nevertheless, that £4 billion taken from the money available left one heck of a hole.

I believe that the Executive have done a fairly decent job, notwithstanding the money taken out, to try to meet the needs of the people we represent. There have been failings — there is no question about that — and there have been shortfalls. We can always do things a lot better, and we need to do things better, but I do not think that we can lose sight of the fact that we had money taken out of the Budget that nobody expected to be taken out.

This is why we make no apologies for continuing to bang down the door of 10 Downing Street. However, we are not interested in running to Downing Street to get peerages, which is what Sammy and his colleagues appear to be more interested in doing; we are interested in knocking down their door to make sure that the British Government live up to their responsibilities to the people here, not only in the money they took from the Executive but in their other wider responsibilities in the Good Friday Agreement.

I want to try to accentuate the more positive aspects of the discussion today, because we are not dealing with all the individual policies. For example, even welfare reform, which has been mentioned before, is a separate debate, albeit linked to the overall money that is at our collective disposal. There are clearly fundamental differences in views on welfare reform. I do not see anybody in Sinn Féin being uncomfortable about blocking the Welfare Reform Bill, I can assure you of that. We are consistent on the matter.

We want to be, and we are, a responsible party in government. We want to try to make sure that we do these

things responsibly. If all parties here were to band together in a common cause, we fail to see how we would not get a better deal from the British Government than that which is being imposed on us. Therefore, we will continue to pursue the course of action that we are involved in on the welfare cuts agenda, and we make no apology for that. We just hope that other parties will eventually come on board with the same agenda rather than, day to day, trying to ram the welfare cuts agenda down people's throats and tell us that it is actually not so bad and that we should be thankful for it because there are constituencies in England that are worse off. Well, I do not represent any constituency in England, but I represent a constituency here, and I am more interested in the people that I have to represent and am answerable to. I am very proud to have that privilege, and I am not going to let them down with respect to the commitments that we have made in the past.

We came into this mandate saying that we would be opposed to a welfare cuts agenda, and we remain true to that position. Will we work with the other parties to try to resolve the matter? Yes, we will try to do that. If we can get a better deal, we will be up for that. If we do not get a better deal, we are not up for it, and we will continue to block it.

I want to make it very clear, and Sammy Wilson, as a former Finance Minister, is well aware, that Sinn Féin blocked agreement on a Programme for Government at the beginning of the last mandate because the money was taken from the Executive. We were not prepared to simply impose those cuts directly on to the people we represent, which is why we had protracted discussions and debates, privately and publicly, around how we could generate bigger amounts of income. That was why we had the whole debates around getting money from the Harbour Commission and whether, for example, we could find additional revenue, which we have not yet managed to do, around social housing. We insisted that we were not simply going to accept the cut from London but were going to see whether we could generate additional funding and how, in a fair way, we could distribute the money that we have available to us.

As John McCallister referred to earlier, we have been consistently arguing that we want to see a transfer of the fiscal powers that would allow us to tailor the system, whether it is a welfare system or a taxation system, to meet the needs of the people we represent. I am not interested in what happens in London, Sunderland or somewhere else. I am interested in what happens in my constituency and in the constituencies of all the other 107 MLAs who are elected to this House. I live by the mandate through which we, as parties, came in here, and we have a Programme for Government that is about building the economy. It stands to sense that, if we have a fair society, we have a stable society. If we have a stable society, we can provide a welcoming environment.

The Executive have done good things to support local businesses. They need to do more, but they have certainly done some very good and valuable work. We should not underestimate, undermine or denigrate some of the very good work that has been done by the Executive collectively, but, again, I stress that we need to make a fair society.

5.00 pm

It is regrettable that, in the environment that we have at the moment, there has been failure to have political agreement, whether that is on Haass, parades, flags or

dealing with sectarianism and racism. The longer we put those big decisions off and the longer we put off a resolution of those serious issues, the longer we will continue to have a fairly toxic and negative environment into which we expect and hope to bring external investors and, indeed, hope to encourage local communities and businesses to invest more. We are about trying to have a fair Budget — we will deal with some of the figures tomorrow — and dealing with a fair society.

I will go back to the issues around DSD, for example. It is about tackling disadvantage. We all agree with that. It is about building sustainable communities. As I made clear last week in the debate on racism, when the House, thankfully, was united in its condemnation of racism and was committed to tackling racism, no Member needs to have a racial equality strategy to deal with racism. Of course, we need and want to have it for wider society, but we also need to resource such a strategy. We need to make sure that we put the money where our mouths are, because we need a strategy, and, more importantly, we need resources attached to that. There are very simple things. If the Muslim community cannot have a decent quality of a mosque, it is an indictment of all of the community. In my view, that same test applies to all the various communities that, collectively, we are supposed to represent. In our view, we have a strategy, and we have the necessary resources applied to those strategies. If we need legislation, we need legislation and enforcement, because, we have to recognise that, sometimes —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Maskey: — we will not be able to change people's opinion, but we can certainly change their behaviour. I support the motion and welcome the good things that have been done, but we need to make sure that we will continue to monitor to make sure that we deliver a fair society, be that in housing, tackling disadvantage —

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

Mr Maskey: — or creating employment.

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. I will base my contributions on health, primarily, as health spokesperson for the SDLP, but I will turn back to some of the comments from earlier. Regardless of whether it is going to David Cameron for peerages, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, letters, it amounts to side deals by the individual or the parties. We need a collective approach from all parties in the Assembly in agreeing the way forward on negotiation. We need to sit down collectively with the Prime Minister to discuss those issues, not as individuals or individual parties.

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

Last week, the SDLP brought a motion to the House calling for increased measurement of the Transforming Your Care plan and, more importantly, its implementation. You will not need to be reminded that that is the foundation plan for health service change. The motion received all-party support. In short, the House was not satisfied by the response from the Department that the original 99 targets in TYC were being properly measured or, in some instances, whether they were being implemented at all. We

are still not satisfied by the further answers that we have received.

Last week, a sizeable bid for moneys was made by the Health Department. It is important to underscore the fact that every pound becomes vital, because we are talking about something in the order of £5 billion of health spend here. That is 50p in every pound. In that sense, we must be sure that every pound is spent directly and measured against productivity, but we are not seeing that, and the public are not seeing that. Two and a half years into the process, respected unions, such as the RCN, have come to the Health Committee and told us that they do not know what Transforming Your Care is. Remember that it is supposed to be the foundation block for health service change. They cannot see a model for implementation, and, in the context of today's debate, we cannot see where the money is going to and whether it is going to the correct place. We cannot see if it is being properly measured. I will remind you of what some of the other unions said. NIPSA said that, "despite its visionary rhetoric" — so it recognises positives — Transforming Your Care is:

"creating the space within which universal provision is undermined".

UNISON said:

"TYC fails to control critical risks, and is cost rather than clinically driven. Therefore the TYC model as presented requires fundamental reconsideration."

Under Transforming Your Care, significant funding is being placed into housing and older people. That has been a focus of the Health Committee for some time. We discovered through evidence sessions with the Department that there is no definition of "assisted living" — not no agreed definition but no definition. There is no concrete plan, and the TYC direction is being implemented inconsistently and often unilaterally by health trusts. We hardly need much reminding, because of the uproar around it, but, following target 10 in TYC, the Northern Trust closed its residential care homes. The Minister had to reverse that decision after significant public outcry. That is one of his 99 proposals that absolutely went south.

How can we be sure, given the many crises in health service strategy, some of which I have outlined, that the money in the Department is being used effectively, when crisis spending is the order of the day and we do not know how much the impact of a failing TYC is provoking the crisis in the first place? The simple answer is that we cannot. Elected representatives are left accepting a health service bid for money while not fully knowing where it will go, whom it will go to and whether it is being used efficiently. We know nothing other than the argument, which is, effectively a demand-led assessment. The Department has consistently bid for more TYC transitional money, and consistently it has received less. As well as the overall plan not working, the Department is not even given enough money for it to work. What is the plan underpinning the bid? Do we simply back a Budget with a failed plan behind it? Is that what we are being asked to do? I feel deeply uncomfortable being asked to back the monitoring round and the overall Budget.

The Department received £9.4 million in the June monitoring round last year against a total bid of £28 million. It received little in January. It has put in a bid in this

monitoring round for substantial millions. It is clear from what the Minister has said this morning about the thinness of the Budget that it is not going to get that either. During the debate in January, I asked the Finance Minister, who I do not think is listening, to continue to cast a clinical eye over Transforming Your Care and the amount of money being used for its implementation. The SDLP has not seen any evidence that he has done that to date. Instead, we are being fed warnings by ministerial counterparts from that party — the Finance Minister and the Health Minister — about the future financial situation here and the effect that cuts will have on the provision of services. The Health Minister has consistently used the issues of welfare reform and the health budgetary deficit to spell out a reduction in services, the possibility of redundancies and consequential risk to patient safety. The Finance Minister, on hearing that, did not take a comprehensive look at health service strategy or the Transforming Your Care agenda, where the money is being spent; instead, he backed his party colleague and issued threats of his own. So close together are those two Ministers that, on 16 May this year, they released simultaneous press releases containing threats of reduced services if more money was not attained. Where did that come from? Did it come from the finance office? Did it come from the health service office?

Mr Allister: The DUP office.

Mr McKinney: Did it come from the DUP office? That is an interesting question. Who is running whom? Who is running that agenda?

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): You should be a journalist.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McKinney: Who is running that agenda? Where is the accountability? The Finance Minister should not be cheerleading for his party counterpart when he outlines the extent of money problems in the health service; rather, he should scrutinise why that is the case in the first place. Is he a cheerleader or a challenger? Depending on that, what support are we being asked to give to the Budget and the monitoring round?

We know what the former Finance Minister would have done when it came to this issue. Mr Wilson was extremely critical of the then Health Minister, Michael McGimpsey. How different the situation is now, when the Health Minister puts his hands out for many millions of pounds. If we follow the press releases, we know that there will not be any interrogation whatsoever.

Last week, the Health Minister, in his reply to the debate, quoted what he believed were the successes of the Transforming Your Care implementation. Let us look at those again. The Minister picked five successes, but I will look at just two. He said that, under target 55, the Department now had a clear provision of information for those affected by mental health issues, and he spoke of using new technological resources for that. What he did not say was that this was a website that is a year late and is still not up and running as we speak. That was one of his top-tier achievements — the development of a website in a programme that is costing £70 million over five years — or is it three years? That programme has not even received that money through bids and will not receive it through further requests. He said that the Department had successfully established 17 integrated care partnerships.

What he did not say is that the integrated care partnership model is currently under review, which is holding up a rake of other targets in the system.

My clear point is that there is a huge allocation to the Health Department. In this instance, it is nearly £5 billion. It is, therefore, extremely concerning that we cannot see how this money is being used, and there are serious questions about the strategy that it is being used for. We will not accept the Health Minister's approach, which seems to be "You agreed the plan in the first place, so don't worry your sweet little heads about it. I will do the work, you pay the bills, and we will consult you later when it has been done or not done". This needs to be scrutinised, and, as I said, I am deeply concerned about being asked to support it when there is a clear lack of measurability. The House accepts that there is a lack of measurability, and the Finance Minister should share our concerns.

Mr Swann: I welcome the opportunity to outline the Committee for Employment and Learning's views on the Supply resolution for the Northern Ireland Estimates 2014-15.

The continued pressures on all Departments are well known to the House, so I will not rehearse those issues. However, from the Committee's standpoint, I argue that the Department for Employment and Learning currently has an important long-term goal in developing Northern Ireland as an attractive destination for inward investment. Just last week, the Committee heard from the Department that, although the economic situation is slowly improving, the pressures on employability services such as Steps to Work and other schemes remain high. This means that the calls on the Department's budget, which must react to these pressures, also remain high.

The Department has informed the Committee that it has been living within its budgetary constraints. This is regularly maintained and inspected by the Committee. In reviewing the Main Estimates, the Committee considered the details behind the additional resource allocations. Of the £55.8 million, £21 million is for the top-up student fees, and £19.6 million is for NEETs, the youth employment scheme and Pathways to Work. There is also a range of further allocations for employment initiatives, including £2.7 million for First Start; £2.1 million for Step Ahead 50+; £2.6 million for additional undergraduate science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) places; £2.4 million for 150 additional PhD places; and £2.5 million additional funding to support European social fund (ESF) projects.

The Department's capital allocation includes £4.7 million for the University of Ulster at Coleraine's rationalisation phase 3; £3.3 million for Queen's University; £2.8 million for Stranmillis University College for asbestos removal and infrastructure; and £1 million for the Southern Regional College in Banbridge. The Department also advises that the Main Estimates show the fallout of the reclassification of the further education colleges and university colleges to non-departmental public bodies. The Department has highlighted that there has been a £27.8 million non-cash addition due to the depreciation of assets of the further education colleges and the university colleges, which, as non-departmental public bodies, will not show in the Department's budget.

Another consequence of the reclassification to NDPBs is that an NDPB that wants to spend its accumulated cash

reserves needs to have the equivalent budget cover from the Department to enable it to do so. The Department has advised that it submitted a £28 million bid for capital to Treasury, which has been successful. The Committee also asked about the detail of the reduction in the Department's capital budget, and the Department advised it that, after a successful bid for £28 million capital, it realised that it would not need all the money in the current Budget period. The Department has therefore worked with DFP to give back £18 million, with the proviso that DFP would make the money available when needed.

I will speak now as an Ulster Unionist Party member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Departmental officials spoke about the £1 million that was not raised by the wind farm development project. On questioning them, I was disappointed to find out that they did not have an awful lot of knowledge of the project, even though they thought that it was going to raise £1 million for the Department. More alarming is the fact that they wanted to offset that money by the sale of additional timber from forestry. I am no expert on the price of unfelled trees, but I would say that it takes an awful lot of trees to make up a revenue shortfall of £1 million. It is ironic that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development would make up a renewable energy project shortfall by felling trees.

5.15 pm

Mr Rogers: I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate.

The SDLP has consistently argued against the way in which current financial arrangements have been managed. We did so during the debate on the spring Supplementary Estimates, and the 2014-15 Main Estimates give us another opportunity to assess the areas of greatest need in our education system.

Funding must make proper provision for our young people to help them to reach their highest possible standards of educational achievement. That has the potential to give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning and employment. As I listened to all the Members who spoke, it struck me that we have to look in the mirror at times to move forward. Schools are managing diminishing budgets, but they are expected to review their school development plan and plan ahead.

Important things have to be considered in a review. With the school estate, planning is extremely important, but it must be based on accurate projections of the future school population. In a recent debate, I spoke about the weaknesses in the area-planning process. That process, or should I say the parallel processes conducted by the boards and the CCMS, did not take on board the idea of shared education and did not think to involve further education at all. Surely that is not based on a sound analysis. An analysis that is based on the pretence that you need more than 105 children in a primary school and more than 500 in a post-primary school to be an effective school illustrates just one thing: the Department is driven by accountants not educationalists.

It is disappointing that, in 2012, only about one third of capital projects have cut the first sod. Of the projects announced in January 2013, only two of the 22 projects are expected to be on site by 2015. That is disappointing not only for school communities but for the construction

industry. The announcement of 50 school enhancement projects was good news, but I am led to believe that there is only £20 million in the pot, and the expected expense is £100 million. Will it then take five years to deliver those?

The level of school maintenance and the whole procurement process are incredible. I will give you one simple example from my area. A local primary school had a meeting of the board of governors, and, luckily, one board member was a plumber. As they left that night, they noticed a bit of a leak, so the plumber got a ladder and isolated the leak. The principal rang the board the next morning to be harangued by the board. Why did he not get a plumber to come from Magherafelt? In one case, he said that there was a plumber there with a van from Castlebar. That will have to be looked at. Would the board rather replace the ceiling and close the school for a few days? Are we about value for money at all?

On the subject of value for money, we failed to deliver ESA, and £17 million has gone there. What we now have is a lame CASS, which is able only to firefight. I have always talked about another important resource in our schools, which is our teachers. Given that the CASS resource is lame, the level of good professional development is just non-existent. Our young teachers are being snapped up by schools in England. Why? There are no jobs here. How can we raise standards in schools when we have up to 35 children in a primary school class? Smaller classes would make a big difference. In addition, the recent debate on pensions has made life more difficult for young teachers because more mature teachers will have to stay in employment until the age of 68.

Another thing that we have talked about very frequently is embedding self-evaluation in our schools. How can we embed self-evaluation in our schools if we do not have good staff development?

Investment in a long-term early years strategy is essential if we are to create building blocks for our children's educational future. Current funding arrangements favour education at secondary or third level rather than at the early stages of learning. We believe that a child's development hinges on high-quality early childhood experience. The SDLP wants a redirecting of funds towards early years. Increased investment at an early stage is essential to addressing poor rates of literacy and numeracy. While there have been some modest improvements in the levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy, Northern Ireland's global educational position in literacy and numeracy has been falling since 2006. In 2010-11, some 9,000 pupils left full-time education having failed to meet required standards in literacy and numeracy. We just have to do better.

Not only is an effective early years plan right for the development of our young people but it will help to improve the local economy in the long term. A well-educated population can bring innovation, creativity and ingenuity to the local economy. We believe that a more robust focus on attainment in STEM subjects is important in order to provide our young people, and as a consequence our businesses, with the necessary skills to excel in this area of global competition.

If our economic outlook is to improve, we need to address the skills imbalances that characterise our island economy. Critically, these imbalances lead to lacklustre

productivity and stifle levels of foreign direct investment and business start-ups. Skills gaps act as an impediment to productivity and can, therefore, generate lags in growth. Skills shortages mean that there is an imbalance between demand and supply in labour markets. Labour demand may not be fully met if the labour supply does not possess the types of skills that we need to meet those needs. There seems to be recognition that, across our island, there needs to be much greater engagement with higher education and enterprise to ensure that there is no mismatch between Ireland's skills requirement and the output of its higher education systems.

The proposed changes to the common funding formula will not address social need or improve the delivery of the Department of Education's key policy objectives. Rather, the proposals will result in greater disadvantages, particularly among our small rural schools. The SDLP is only too aware of the finite nature of the resources available for education services. However, increasingly, budgetary restrictions in schools will result only in more expensive problems in school maintenance and future provision. Sound financial planning is as intrinsic to improving our educational system as it is to running a school. The Minister must allocate funding to strengthen the educational prospects of all our young people.

Mr Allister: One struggles to find any example of humour in documents as dry as this. However, I discovered something quite humorous when I got to page 268, which describes the functions of OFMDFM. One of those functions, and the basis on which it asks the Finance Minister for money, is to provide the:

“effective operation of the institutions of government”.

Given how this Administration operates, they really must be having a laugh that the Department with oversight for the effective operation of government, OFMDFM — it being the Department that carries off the gold medal for dysfunctionality every year on every issue — should be the body charged with the very thing on which it fails so lamentably. In criminal law, there is such an offence as obtaining property or money by deception. I have to say that, if OFMDFM is obtaining money to the tune of tens of millions of pounds from the very generous Finance Minister, it seems to me that, *prima facie*, it is in the business of obtaining money by deception.

If ever I had any doubt on that matter, I was confirmed in that view when I listened to the speech of my colleague from North Antrim Mr Storey who told us that, in one of the Departments, there is inventive accounting — in the Department of Education — that there is a slush fund being operated and that there are all sorts of failures and misdemeanours. If the annual Estimates are part of a bona fide process of financial management and oversight and we have an allegation as serious as that from a Chairman of the Education Committee — that the Department of Education is operating what he calls a “slush fund” and that there is inventive accounting — not only does the Minister of Education owe the House an explanation but the Finance Minister owes the House an explanation if that is how the Department of Education, which he funds, is being allowed to function.

Of course, we know that the Department of Education eschews transparency. It resists at every opportunity the attempt to shine any spotlight or searchlight of control on

how it organises and expends its funding. Of course, it is no secret that the Education Minister was to the fore in resisting and thwarting the attempt by the Department of Finance to introduce more properly coordinated accounting processes in respect of how Departments get their money. They simply take on to themselves the billions of pounds handed to the Department of Education and, with no transparency, shift the money where it suits them, from sector to sector with no accountability.

Indeed, it is notable that, during the various monitoring rounds, the Department of Education rarely, if ever, gives back any money. Indeed, the same could be said of most Sinn Féin Departments. Oh yes, they always have their hand out looking for more, but, when it comes to the collective responsibility of helping to hand back money to share with other Departments through the centre, they have nothing to give. It is a Department that cloaks in maximum secrecy what it does with the money that it gets. It is surely a failure of the system that it continues to get away with that.

There are other challenges in relation to expenditure. In the House last week we heard a boast from the Culture Minister that, at the North/South Ministerial Council sectoral meeting on waterways and the language body, she had blocked the approval of the 2013 business plan and the 2013 budget. Here we are, almost at the halfway point of 2014, and the Culture Minister is boasting that she has blocked the budget for money already spent by those two cross-border bodies. Where is the financial accountability in the fact that that Minister can make that boast? What does it tell us about the financial anarchy that seems to prevail as a consequence in those North/South bodies if they merrily continue, year on year, and then, some time, one day, maybe, they will retrospectively put a budget in place for money that they have already spent, squandered or whatever the case may be? That is a glaring flaw in relation to how matters proceed.

5.30 pm

In opening the debate, the Minister told us that there will be significant challenges, and I think that we all know that, with the impasse on welfare reform, there will be significant challenges. Can the Minister shed any light on whether we see in these Estimates any reflection of those challenges, or will we see any reflection of them when he publishes the Budget (No. 2) Bill? How are the budgetary arrangements for this year going to reflect those challenges? Does he have an arrangement to get the Budget (No. 2) Bill through the Executive, either to reflect the existence of those challenges or, by some sleight of hand, to pretend that they are not there? How is the Budget mirror going to reflect the fact, the existence and the reality of those challenges? Perhaps the Minister can give us some indication of that.

Finally, from time to time, one notes little lines in these budgetary documents that, to laymen like me, are occasionally of some interest and leave one wondering what they really mean. In the Main Estimates document, what are called "Notional Charges" are listed against every Department. In some of the budgetary documents, there are also listed reflections that, perhaps, might be capitalisation or some down-writing of capitalisation etc, but when you total the notional charges in the Estimates book, they amount to something in excess of £110 million,

with some £26 million of notional charges in DSD alone. Can the Minister shed some light on what those notional charges are? Are they simply a down-writing of capital assets or are they something more? What do notional charges reflect, and what are they about? Perhaps you can inform this ill-informed MLA about that.

Mr Dickson: In many ways, the debate is rather false. The reality is that a crisis is looming as public services face cuts of millions of pounds due to the failure to implement our Welfare Reform Bill. Therefore, that is where I would like to focus my remarks.

I share many of the concerns about the changes to welfare that have been implemented by the United Kingdom Government, and we opposed those changes at every stage of the Bill's passage at Westminster. However, the concern of Members across the House does not negate the fact that the UK Government are not prepared to give us special status or privilege in those matters beyond the concessions that have been negotiated, and they are unlikely to do so in the future.

One of the questions that those who are blocking the progress of welfare reform need to answer is why they think that MPs will allow Members of this House to shirk their responsibilities and not take difficult decisions on the same changes that they have to implement in their own constituencies and for constituents in the rest of the United Kingdom. Blocking the Welfare Reform Bill demonstrates not just political immaturity but a reckless attitude to our public finances, as we will demonstrate as we approach the June monitoring round, unless dramatic and immediate action is taken by Members. We have already seen £5 million a month taken from us since January, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is telling us that this will rise to £10 million in the next financial year, just around the corner. The Finance Minister outlined that we are now looking at cuts across the board of 1.5% in the next monitoring round, which will have a profound effect on the delivery of services. Those who oppose the progress of the Welfare Reform Bill, far from helping the most vulnerable in our society, are cutting their ability to escape from poverty because the financial penalties imposed affect, and will affect, our front line services, our health services, our education system and our skills and training, which are all key vehicles for overcoming and avoiding hardship. These are not abstract implications. We are talking about real cuts to teaching resources and to our services that help to get people back to work after periods of sickness or long-term unemployment.

Members can make a big show of standing up to the Government and opposing welfare reform, but passing the cuts on to other Departments will not help people either. It hinders. We desperately need to move beyond the current impasse. If we were able to get the Bill to the Floor of the House, at the very least, we could debate it properly. We could then discuss in detail the financial implications and how we and our Departments can respond within our powers. Until this issue and the issue of financial penalties is resolved, this debate is and remains somewhat farcical. We can debate budget allocations, but until this Assembly faces up to its responsibilities, we do not know what further sanctions could arise and what the implications will be for those in other Departments.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Clearly, the business on the Order Paper will not be disposed of by 6.00 pm. In

accordance with Standing Order 10(3), I will allow business to continue until 7.00 pm or until the business is completed. I call the Minister for Finance and Personnel, Mr Hamilton, and you have 52 minutes to respond.

Mr Hamilton: The debate today has covered many aspects relating to public expenditure, some that did not relate to public expenditure and some that were not closely related to the matter in hand at all. Nevertheless, I will endeavour to address as many of the points raised during the debate as I possibly can in the 52 minutes allotted to me.

First, I again thank the Committee for Finance and Personnel for its agreement to take this important legislation through by accelerated passage. This agreement secures a timely transition of the legislation through the Assembly, thereby avoiding any legal uncertainty over the funding of public services for 2014-15.

I listened to the debate today with interest, and I now turn to the issues that were raised by Members. I will address as many as I can. I begin with the Chair of the Committee, Mr McKay. He raised several issues, including some that related to concerns or issues that the Committee had raised. First, let me address his comments on prior year out-turn information. He raised the issue, as he has done in the past. My Department provides the Committee with forecast out-turn information. It does so regularly, and that covers all Departments. The information provided to the Committee in April and May provides the most robust assessment of year-end out-turn available at this stage, and I trust that that information is helpful to the Committee. Furthermore, I echo the Member's call for all Departments to engage early with their Committees on year-end information.

Mr McKay and McGlone raised the issues of tourism and economic growth. Whilst I think that they were positive in their assessment, they both raised those issues for somewhat negative reasons, although I highlight the fact that there are lots of positives in respect of tourism and the economy. I am very pleased to report that the Programme for Government targets for visitor numbers and tourism revenue have been achieved for 2013. The latest figures show that visitors increased by 2% to 4.1 million in 2013, with associated expenditure increasing by 5% to £723 million. This demonstrates that the momentum built up with the ni2012 celebrations continued in 2013 and, hopefully, into 2014 and beyond as well.

I turn to the wider economy. While the global downturn had a significant negative impact on local economic conditions, there are now signs that the local economy is beginning to recover. This includes significant improvement in the local labour market, with the claimant count falling for each month since January 2013 and job numbers having grown for eight consecutive quarters, adding over 15,000 jobs to the economy. We are also seeing stronger growth in the private sector. I am sure that we all welcome the fact that the driver of economic growth in Northern Ireland is now quite significantly the private sector. Economic activity has expanded in three of the four quarters in 2013, with manufacturing exports also up by 6.5% in 2013 compared with 2012 levels. Our economic prospects are more positive than in recent years, with independent forecasters predicting economic growth to range between 1.9% and 2.8% in 2014.

Mr McKay and Mr McGlone attempted to talk about tourism and the economy in somewhat negative terms to try to make pretty puerile political points. Mr McKay, notwithstanding all of the great positive news that there has been in the economy, saw fit to describe Northern Ireland as an economic backwater. Those sentiments were echoed in part by Mr McGlone when he talked about flag protests being negative for our economy and our tourism sector. He was partial in what he picked out, and there was no mention, of course, of the likes of the republican coat-trailing exercise in Castlederg last summer. One wonders how many tourists the glorification of terror or the retraumatisation of victims attracts to Northern Ireland. As Mr Wilson pointed out, we listened to Mr McKay talk about the negative effect of particular comments or certain activities over the past number of years while conveniently forgetting the devastating impact that IRA violence had on our economy for 25 or 30 years, which was very selective. You have to ask what the IRA murders, the IRA bombs, the IRA kidnapping and murder of members of the business community and the blowing up of businesses across Northern Ireland do for Northern Ireland's reputation or to our attractiveness as a place to visit or to invest in. Indeed, the reason why we face an uphill struggle in transforming and rebalancing our economy is in no small part down to the fact that we faced three decades and more of republican violence in Northern Ireland. Once again, we saw Sinn Féin attempting to rewrite the history of Northern Ireland. I want to put on record the fact that we on this side of the House will never let it do that.

Mr Paul Frew raised matters on behalf of the Agriculture Committee. He mentioned the Reservoirs Bill and referred to the provision in the Main Estimates for expenditure to assist owners to comply with proposed reservoir legislation. I welcome the Committee's scrutiny of all departmental spending plans and encourage the Agriculture Committee to continue to engage with DARD to ensure that its views are fully reflected in the development of that important legislation.

Mr Frew also mentioned the flooding in Ballymena and said that he was out to all hours of the evening and into the early hours of the morning, I think he said, wading through flood water, which looked pretty terrible, particularly in the Galgorm Road area of Ballymena. My officials have approved the emergency financial assistance scheme for those affected by flooding over the weekend. Household holders will be eligible for a £1,000 payment as an offer of practical assistance to those who have suffered severe inconvenience to ensure that homes are made habitable as quickly as possible. The scheme is funded through the Department of the Environment, and any householders who have been affected should contact their council as soon as possible.

Mr Frew also mentioned the rural development programme, and I fully agree with the points that he made on the 2014-2020 rural development programme. It is imperative that the Agriculture Minister confirms her plans for that important scheme in a timely manner to ensure that the Executive can consider the funding requirements as part of the 2015-16 Budget exercise.

5.45 pm

I turn to Mr Bradley's comments. Mr Bradley is still in the House and has remained here for most of the debate. It

shows on his face that he has been here for most of the debate. Conveniently for those of us who missed the Queen's speech in real time, he gave us a gallop through some of the highlights, particularly in respect of Bills. I assure him that Northern Ireland Departments, including my own, will examine the detail of the Queen's speech and consider the implications for budgets here at the earliest possible opportunity. I reassure him and the House that, should additional funds be made available in Whitehall for the implementation of those Bills, Northern Ireland will receive proportionate allocations under the Barnett formula, where there is read-across to equivalent functions here.

Mr Bradley was not the only Member — I think that Mr McCallister did as well — who raised the issue of tax-varying powers and having additional fiscal levers. The June 2013 'Building a Prosperous and United Community' document, sometimes referred to as the economic pact, includes a commitment by the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to:

“examine the potential for devolving specific additional fiscal powers.”

That is over and above the Programme for Government commitment to seek responsibility for setting the rate of corporation tax following the completion of an initial scoping exercise, which is currently being taken forward by my officials. A key deciding factor will be whether the benefits to the people of Northern Ireland of devolving the tax and moving from the national system of rates and allowances will benefit the people of Northern Ireland will be sufficient to outweigh clearly any cost. The recommendations from the analysis should be put to the Northern Ireland Executive and Government Ministers by autumn this year. There has been no lack of willingness to pursue attaining and taking on additional tax-raising powers, as air passenger duty for long-haul flights has shown, where there is a distinct, definable economic or social benefit for Northern Ireland, but, as Mr Wilson, for example, has pointed out, we have always to bear in mind affordability issues as we have the discussion about the pursuit of corporation tax. When you have the scenario that Mr Wilson outlined, in which we have a £9 billion-plus subvention and spend £9 billion-plus a year more than we raise in taxes, we have to be exceptionally careful about what additional fiscal levers we take on and employ, and we must consider what the impact might be on our finite Budget.

Mr Bradley also talked about infrastructure investment and the delivery of same. I think that he was here for Question Time earlier, at which I outlined some of the recommendations from the procurement board subgroup that I will be endorsing and seeking to take forward, such as more centralised procurement and delivery of infrastructure projects, prioritisation and the building of a pipeline of infrastructure projects. I see a scenario clearly in which, on the one hand, our current expenditure budget is going down and is under increasing pressure, but, on the other hand, our capital budget is increasing. It is important that we as an Executive ramp up our infrastructure spend, knowing and understanding, as we all do, the significant economic and social benefits that improved infrastructure brings to our towns and cities and the region as a whole.

We entered this year with over £1 billion in capital expenditure for the first time in three years. When you add

in asset sales and our reinvestment and reform initiative (RRI) borrowing, for example, that takes our likely capital expenditure this year to £1.6 billion, which is getting back up to where it was before the current Budget cut 40% from our capital budget. Therefore, it is important that we ramp up that expenditure and get it on the ground as quickly as possible. Hence, my focus is on prioritisation and on ensuring that it is done and done effectively. That is why I want to see a much more centralised approach to procurement and delivery.

Mr Bradley also spoke about his desire to see a yearly Budget process. In some ways, we have a yearly process, and this is part of it, frustrating as it is for all of us. He is now a veteran of this type of Budget process. I would like to see a more streamlined Budget process, and I am on record as supporting that. Hopefully, we will be able to take that forward in the short to medium term. I echo the comments made by my colleague the former Finance Minister that, if the Member and the House think that we have difficulties now agreeing four-year Budgets, heaven forbid the difficulties that we would have were we having to go through this process annually.

Mr Wilson made the point about giving certainty to Departments, particularly over capital expenditure, which is a point that the Member raised and I have just addressed. It would be exceptionally hard to do that for Departments if we were going through the uncertainty that is inherent in an annual Budget process, in which you have political ramifications each and every year. You would almost never stop. This would be the backcloth. From one year to another, almost all that my Department would do would be seeking to agree budgets and trying to balance things. There are other benefits and merits in having multi-annual Budgets. I presume that whatever Government come in at Westminster after the general election in 2015 will go for a three- or four-year Budget, taking them to the end of the Parliament in 2020. One of the other benefits is that we can balance out expenditure across those three or four years. Some Departments might think that they are doing badly in year 1 but are doing better in years 2 and 3, and they can plan appropriately. I think that I understand why the Member wants a yearly process. There would be a sense of greater transparency and greater involvement of the House, but, in the political environment and system that we have, coming back each year to try to agree a Budget process would be fraught with difficulty.

I want to see improvements to our financial process, however. Mr Cree raised that issue, which he frequently does on such occasions. On 9 March 2012, following consultation with key stakeholders, including the Assembly, my predecessor circulated a paper to the Executive reporting the outcome of the review of the financial process. To date, the report has not been tabled for discussion by the Executive. The Minister of Education and, indeed, the Minister for Regional Development raised concerns about sections of the report. Discussions with the Minister for Regional Development reached a successful conclusion in January of last year. Although not entirely content, from the perspective of accountability, with the Minister of Education's proposals on his expenditure lines, his proposals were accepted. An amended report, taking on board the Minister of Education and the Minister for Regional Development's proposals, was circulated to ministerial colleagues on 10 April 2013. It is worth pointing out that the concerns that were raised

by both Ministers were addressed, even to the extent that the Department of Finance and Personnel was not 100% happy with accommodating them all. However, to get an improved process, compromise was achieved.

The Minister of Education still had concerns, however. He and my predecessor met and corresponded prior to the summer recess of 2013. The concern relates to ministerial versus Executive control over budgets, which is an issue that Mr Allister discussed, and reduced requirements in particular. I believe that the Education Minister's concerns would be alleviated if the Executive granted DE some flexibility. However, I would like to have further discussions with the Minister of Education, as I see this as an opportunity for the Executive and the Assembly to deliver a significant, positive reform of what are direct rule-inherited publications and financial processes. There is something fundamentally wrong with an Assembly that is seven years up and running still operating direct rule processes. There is an irony, of course, that one of the Ministers who are protecting and defending those direct rule processes is a Sinn Féin Education Minister.

Mr Cree also mentioned Hillsborough. He referred to them as "Hillsborough sites", and I started to panic and worry about what sites in Hillsborough we had. Was it the castle or the fort? Of course, he was referring to sites that had been transferred and gifted as a result of the Hillsborough Castle Agreement. They were gifted by the MoD under that agreement a number of years ago. Due to the timing of the sites being sold, there was no provision in OFMDFM's baseline as part of Budget 2010 to cover the maintenance costs associated with them. I think that Mr Lyttle also raised that issue. OFMDFM bid for and received in 2013-14 an allocation to cover maintenance costs for the sites. It would be up to OFMDFM to bid again this year if it cannot cover this pressure from within its existing baseline.

Mr Cree again, as he always does, raised his concerns about items that sit at the centre. I understand that he has received a briefing from my officials on centrally held items. Of those, the majority are financing items. Rates income, for example, sits as a centre item. However, some significant amounts will be allocated in the in-year monitoring rounds. They include £11.2 million of EU match funding; £26 million relating to the social investment fund and Delivering Social Change; up to £44 million of additional borrowing relating to Together: Building a United Community; £3 million relating to the childcare strategy; and some £35 million of financial transactions capital.

Mr Cree mentioned, as did many Members, the Department of Health budget pressures, and I will come to some of the specifics of that. I am fully aware of the pressures that the Department of Health faces in this financial year. Whilst I do not doubt that it faces difficult choices in the months ahead, it is not unique, as many other Departments face financial pressures. The Department of Health knows — it is something that I have communicated face to face with the Minister — that it needs to live within its budget as best it can and not rely on additional financing that may become available from monitoring rounds.

Mr Cree also raised an issue about £6.8 million. I think that he asked if it related to equal pay. If the Member consults the page in the Main Estimates, he will see that, whilst it is in the adjoining line, it actually relates to strategic sites, which was the issue that we were just talking about. It does

not relate to equal pay. The figure that is attached to equal pay is only £4,000, which I understand is a correction of previous equal pay issues and not the issue about the PSNI and NIO.

Anna Lo mentioned several issues relating to the environment, but she also mentioned the racial equality strategy — 'A Sense of Belonging' — and the funding implications associated with that. Once agreed, it will be for individual Departments to implement the strands of the strategy that fall under their remit. I expect that Departments would prioritise their funding sufficiently to ensure that any agreed strategy would be funded from existing resources. However, should pressures arise, Ministers will be able to utilise monitoring and Budget processes to bid for additional funding.

Michaela Boyle spoke about the A5. She will be aware, as a representative of that area, that a number of steps are to be taken by DRD on the A5, including work to address the area of concern that Mr Justice Stephens identified in his court ruling and the public consultation exercise. I understand that the outcome of the public consultation exercise may lead to the need for a further public inquiry in the spring or summer of next year. Subject to the successful conclusion of those exercises, the Executive will decide, taking account of other Executive priorities and the funding commitments of the Irish Government, when funding can be made available to commence construction of the A5 scheme.

I move on to Mr Paul Givan, who raised many issues in his capacity as Chair of the Justice Committee. He particularly focused on pressure on the legal aid budget. Legal aid is a demand-led service with a range of factors that impact on forecast expenditure levels. Since the establishment of the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission in 2003, it has needed additional funding each year to meet its legal aid liabilities. During 2013-14, the Legal Services Commission faced significant budgetary pressures for legal aid expenditure. An additional £31 million was made available by the Department of Justice, enabling the Legal Services Commission to continue to make legal aid payments until year end. I understand that there will continue to be pressures on the legal aid fund during 2014-15, which the Justice Minister is seeking to manage as far as possible. I understand that the legal aid reform programme has put changes in place, which, when fully implemented, will deliver £20 million of annual savings in criminal legal aid. The Department of Justice is consulting on further changes, which, when implemented, will deliver further savings. The Department of Justice recognises the importance of accurate forecasting, and, as part of the legal aid reform programme, a project is under way that is aimed at improving the accuracy of the Legal Services Commission's forecast.

Mr Givan also asked about the Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat and referred to the delays experienced in developing the project. The FGP consortium, comprising Spanish company FCC Construction and local company Gilbert Ash, was appointed as the preferred bidder in December 2013. Despite extensive engagement, the preferred bidder, unfortunately, was unable to demonstrate that it could offer an affordable and compliant bid. In light of that, the programme board discontinued the preferred bidder process. Although that is disappointing, it is not the end

of the process. I understand that the programme board remains totally committed and supports the development of integrated training for three services. The programme board commissioned a review of the project, the main elements of which have now been completed and are being considered. Future progress of the project will be determined following a full analysis of the review findings.

Maeve McLaughlin, as Chair of the Health Committee, spoke at length about the £160 million shortfall in health in this financial year. She made a great plea for more funds. It seems that every area of health funding is to be categorised as a top priority, with nothing to be considered a secondary or tertiary priority; everything should get top billing. It is hard to disagree with many of her arguments. Whether it was about elective surgery or Transforming Your Care, those are significant and important issues for the health budget. However, Maeve McLaughlin's comments would be much more believable, and not considered by some as crocodile tears, if Sinn Féin was not proposing to blow nearly £100 million because of non-movement on welfare reform, with that failure to move obviously putting significant pressure on that budget. She offered no response at all to Mr Wilson's perfectly reasonable question about how or where money should be found. Everything was a priority and everything should be funded in full, but there was no offer about where the money should come from. That is the sort of economic illiteracy that we have now come to expect from the party opposite.

Speaking of economic illiteracy, John McCallister — no, no, I am being unfair; I will come to that later.

He started off very well. He spoke of fiscal pressures and pointed out, as he was the next Member to speak after Ms McLaughlin, the ridiculousness of the Sinn Féin position of arguing for more cash but at the same time throwing money away because of non-compliance with welfare reform. I do not think that anybody would disagree with his call for a better system of government to help to address some of these big issues — I do not disagree. He is a well-known advocate for opposition and does so as leader of the opposition in his own party. He has more experience of speaking about opposition, having now fallen out with at least two parties in the Assembly.

6.00 pm

Mr McCallister: At least our executive knew to resign. *[Laughter.]* Maybe this one will do the same.

Mr Allister: They have no shame.

Mr Hamilton: I will not get into talking about that.

Mr McCallister wanted to dwell on corporation tax. He raised the issue in January and February as well in the discussions on the spring Supplementary Estimates. I assure him that, as was the case last year, there is no impact of corporation tax in this financial year. He is right to point out that there is a significant cost involved, and my predecessor and I have spoken about that. There are very clear and obvious benefits in devolving corporation tax and lowering the rate in Northern Ireland to one that can compete much better with the Irish Republic: the estimate of around 60,000 additional jobs by 2030 is one of the lower estimates and comes courtesy of the Enterprise Minister's economic advisory group. When a positive decision, I hope, is taken by the Prime Minister in the

autumn, we will have time to consider how we deal with the issue of where the money will come from.

I am not concerned about the robustness of our economic data. In fact, Members need to be careful, and I advise the Member in particular to be careful. Questions about the robustness of our economic data are raised more frequently by republicans in the House in an attempt to undermine our place in the Union. I think that the Member is still a unionist — *[Interruption.]* Yes, he is, he is nodding in affirmation. He needs to be careful when trying to make one argument that he wants to make. I know that he is a bit of a sceptic about corporation tax but he needs to be careful not to start using the language of republicans, which is designed to undermine our place in the United Kingdom.

He mentioned Lord Strathclyde's report on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. That has to be viewed in the context of a very political document that was feeding into the debate on a referendum that is now 100 days away. It reflects, I think, the lack of desire among English Conservatives to devolve corporation tax to Scotland. There is sympathy with the position that we find ourselves in. There is less concern on their part about industry upping and moving to Northern Ireland to avail itself of a lower corporation tax rate. There is more very real concern about the same thing happening across the Scottish border. Their opposition in the report, although there is support for the devolution of other taxes to Scotland, has to be debated in the round when the referendum in September, I hope, goes the right way, and the people of Scotland vote to remain in the Union. Inevitably, there will be a debate about what additional powers, including tax powers, are devolved to Scotland. One that was never on the table was the devolution of corporation tax, and I do not think that we should lift the arguments against it in Scotland and transplant them in Northern Ireland, expecting them to fit entirely.

Mr McCallister argued for the non-devolution of corporation tax but then argued for further tax devolution or, at least, the consideration of further tax devolution. He also talked about the Welsh and said that — I am, perhaps, paraphrasing him — we are not where the Welsh are. If we look at where the Welsh are with many of their fiscal powers, we see that they do not have the borrowing powers that we do and they covet the ones that we have. They are seeking to get borrowing powers akin to the ones that we have.

The Welsh asked for and are getting, subject, I imagine, to a referendum in Wales, the power to vary income tax. However, if you look at the detail of what they got, you see that it is not a deal that I would ever recommend that this House take. They have agreed to something called the lockstep, which means that, if they want to cut or raise tax in a particular band — for example, if they want to lower tax for those at the lower end of the earning scale — they have to make a commensurate reduction at the higher end as well. Therefore, if you reduce at the bottom end, you have to reduce at the top end. If you increase at the top end, you have to increase at the bottom end. Their flexibility to actually do anything economically with income tax is severely restricted. The particular deal that they have gone for hampers their ability to perhaps, on one hand, help people by making others pay for it in a progressive way. When you ask Treasury for some of those things,

you have to be careful because it will give them to you if it thinks that it will benefit from doing so. I am sure that Mr Wilson can back that up. Treasury has a deal with the Welsh Government that they see as more beneficial than one that I would sign up to, I have to say.

However, as I mentioned in response to Mr Bradley, we are looking at the possibility of devolving further taxation powers. There is no blanket ban in my head on the devolution of those powers. If there is a clearly defined social or economic benefit, and it is affordable, we can and should look at devolving them to Northern Ireland. We are obligated to do that.

I want to pick up on Mr Wilson's comments. I have made several references to him already. He is right to point out that the Estimates are a reminder of the fiscal benefit to Northern Ireland of our membership of the United Kingdom. As I have said before in the House, it affords us Scandinavian levels of expenditure without Scandinavian levels of taxation. As tough as things are, we have to work within the constraints of the Budget that we have, which is, as the Member pointed out, £9 billion more than we raise ourselves. We are considerably constrained by that fundamental fact.

He dwelled quite a lot on different ways of delivering services. I am sure that it was a frustration of his when he was in my seat — as it is increasingly becoming a frustration of mine — that many Ministers will talk the talk on delivering services in a different way but will continually come forward with bids for more funding for the same old ways of delivering services. I always pose the fundamental question back to them: if you think of all the various social ills that we have, such as educational underachievement, alcoholism, drug dependency and recidivism, and that many of those indicators have been getting worse over time, particularly during the years when we had, comparatively speaking, an abundance of public resources, what would make us think that, in tighter fiscal times, more money would solve those problems? We have to look at delivering better outcomes with less money, which is, I know, a challenge. We are very good at starting new things. However, we are appallingly bad at stopping old things even when they do not deliver the outcomes and results that we want. Poor outcomes will persist if we fail to change.

If there is one small silver lining from the cloud of tighter fiscal times, it is that, even if Departments do not really want to look at different ways of delivering services, such as partnering with the third sector or the private sector or looking at doing it differently in-house, and are not attuned to wanting to do that instinctively, the fiscal circumstances that we face towards the end of the decade will force them to think in those ways. That is why I have pushed the reform agenda from the outset; not for political reasons, but because we are facing at least another five years of tight times. The Chancellor has made that very clear. The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor have made it clear that, no matter who is in power after the next election, tough times remain ahead.

Although the platform in Northern Ireland is not burning in the way in which it was in the Irish Republic or the mainland, it is starting to warm up, and, if Departments do not get to grips with it very quickly, we will have considerable problems in years ahead.

Alex Maskey dwelled a lot on housing. I have to say that I am very proud of what we have been able to do in respect of co-ownership over the past number of years. We have doubled the funding to co-ownership; it has received about £30 million a year. Last year alone, that allowed the Co-ownership Housing Association to house and find homes for over 1,000 people, families or couples in Northern Ireland. That is something that we should welcome and celebrate. It is not fair to say that co-ownership does not address social housing need. Many of those who can purchase their own homes through co-ownership either would have been on the social housing waiting list or might have been susceptible to going onto the list.

In respect of the 4,000 additional social homes in the 2014-15 financial year, the social housing development programme has been allocated £91.5 million to fund 2,000 new social and supported housing unit starts this year. Mr Maskey wants to see that increased to deliver 6,000 social homes in this financial year. While that might be a fine aspiration, it is clearly unrealistic. Even if the sector had the capacity to deliver 6,000 homes in a single year, which it knows it does not, we would need to find another £183 million with which to do so.

Pam Cameron mentioned local government reform funding, which is very topical given the recent elections to the new councils. In 2013, the Executive agreed to provide a reform funding package of £17.8 million over the 2013-15 period, with a further commitment of up to £30 million for rates convergence beyond 2015. That is a substantial contribution on the Executive's part.

I have made it clear that it is councils that will benefit from the savings that reforms deliver, and it is right that councils should contribute to the upfront costs. That can be achieved by using reserves, delivering efficiencies and borrowing. My Department has secured the UK Government's agreement to allow councils to capitalise up to £33 million of what would otherwise have been resource cost to facilitate funding those costs through borrowing, which will prevent a spike in district rates.

The Executive have also allocated £30 million to manage rates convergence as a consequence of councils merging and other boundary changes. On 28 May, my Department launched a consultation on the proposed transitional rate relief scheme, which will protect ratepayers who would otherwise face sudden and excessive increases as a direct consequence of councils merging or other boundary changes.

I now turn to Mr Fearghal McKinney. I am glad to see that he is back in the Chamber so that he can listen to what I am saying. He came to the game of politics fairly recently, having previously been in the press. He mentioned joint press statements. I regret that my colleague the Health Minister, who was briefly on the Back Bench, has now departed because he might have been able to understand what the Member was talking about. He mentioned joint press releases being released by my Department on 16 May. I have looked at my Department's website, the Health Department's website and, indeed, at the suggestion of Mr Allister, the DUP website, but on none of those three websites is there a statement released jointly, severally or in any way by me or the Minister of Health.

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes.

Mr McKinney: If the Member checks the BBC news website, he will be able to see, on 16 May, separated by 15 minutes, two separate but consistent messages from the Health Minister and the Finance Minister referring to the overall welfare reform issue vis-à-vis the Health Minister and Finance Minister's Departments.

Mr Hamilton: I stand to be corrected. I will check Hansard, but I am pretty sure that the Member made an accusation, in all sorts of theatrical ways, that there was some sort of conspiracy with the releasing of press statements. Was that done by my press office? Was it done by the Minister of Health's press office? Mr Allister helpfully intervened and asked whether it was done by the DUP press office.

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: Mr McKinney seemed to be enthused by that contribution from Mr Allister. I am making a very clear point to the Member — I am happy to let him stand and retract what he said — that there are no statements from 16 May on the DHSSPS website, the DFP website or the DUP website. I am happy to check Hansard but I am pretty sure and pretty confident that the Member said that they were released as press statements by the press offices of the Departments jointly or separately or by the DUP. That is not the case.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for giving way. He may want to dive into the minutiae of the issue. However, the overall point is that the Finance Minister is in charge of the Budget. We have been able to demonstrate — we have support on this from across all parties in the House — that the fundamental platform for change in the health service, TYC, is not being measured and funded properly, and, as a result, the Health Minister is coming to the House and to the Finance Minister asking for more money. What we are saying is that, rather than echoing or parroting the Health Minister's concerns, the Minister should challenge him.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I think that the Member should be careful, because the Minister conceded and allowed you to address the point that he made. You seem to be reiterating an earlier point that you made in your contribution, but you are not addressing the point thrown up by the Minister.

Mr McKinney: I beg to differ, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I did so at the very outset.

6.15 pm

Mr Hamilton: It is convenient for the Member to rise and say, that the Minister should not get into the minutiae of this detail when it is very clear that the minutiae does not suit the case that the Member proffered earlier. The case remains that there was no issuing of press statements by my Department, the Minister of Health's Department or the Democratic Unionist Party's press office as implied by the Member. I know that he is new to this game and I do not know how he checked his facts when he was working in the world of journalism, but standing up and making such bold statements is not how you do business in this House.

If I stand accused of working closely with my colleague the Health Minister, I am guilty as charged. I make no apology for working as closely as I can with my colleague Mr Edwin Poots. Given the level of cooperation and working together that goes on between the Health Minister and me, and indeed between other Ministers, not all of whom

are members of my party, and me, it begs the question: would Members rather that Edwin and I did not discuss those issues, that they came as a surprise and that I was blindsided and did not have a clue what was going on? I think that it is right and proper that he discusses these issues with me and that I, in return, try to assist where possible.

I welcome what we have achieved together. The Minister has taken hundreds of millions of pounds of waste and inefficiency out of the health service system. We allocated an additional £100 million to health in the last financial year and, of course, found money for a new regional children's hospital at the Royal Victoria Hospital site. Those are things that I am proud of and that should be celebrated. I am sorry that I may not be able to offer the same degree of support to my colleague the Minister of Health, and I am more sorry that, because of the failure of the SDLP and others to move forward on welfare reform, we may not be able to offer the same degree of support to vulnerable people in Northern Ireland who need the support of our health and social care system.

I will turn to Mr Jim Allister's comments. He started by trying to find some humour in the document and proved that he has a unique brand of humour that is not shared by many people in this land. He raised concerns that were raised initially by my colleague Mervyn Storey and referred to — I think that he was echoing Mr Storey — a slush fund in the Department of Education. I think that that had been officially referred to as a "set-aside" by officials from the Department of Education — I thought that only fields were set aside — of nearly £30 million to deal with welfare reform. It was an interesting comment from Mr Storey because it suggests that there is no likelihood of agreement on welfare reform if the Minister of Education is setting aside £30 million to pay his contribution towards possible penalties, and I will certainly consider that in the context of what he might bid for in future monitoring rounds, including the current one in June.

I am concerned about the general lack of participation in budgetary processes by the Minister of Education, and I know that it concerned my predecessor as well, whether it is on departmental savings delivery plans or the monitoring round. I concede the point that the Department of Education rarely gives up money and rarely bids at provisional out-turn. Usually, all the Department's money is spent. So, there is not a problem in that respect. The issue is more about transparency around where the money is being spent. It does concern me, and I have spoken about my concerns before, but one thing that I have learnt in the past 11 months or so in this job is that Ministers will need me long before I will need them. When they come looking for help, as they all do, these are points that I remember closely.

Mr Allister mentioned £126 million of notional charges that, I think, were down for DSD and maybe some other Departments. I point out to him that that reflects the cost of central services provided to Departments, principally by my Department, usually in respect of accommodation charges. So, they are charges that are incurred by DFP and are then pushed out to the likes of DSD and other Departments.

The issue of welfare reform came up repeatedly during the debate, and I do not want to dwell on it too much more other than to point out that the negative impact on

Northern Ireland, if we do not move forward with welfare reform in the coming weeks, will be significant.

The negative impact of not introducing welfare reform far outweighs any adverse impacts of introducing it. It is not every part of it that I am supportive of and not every part of it that my party is supportive of. That is why my colleague the Minister for Social Development has negotiated a package of measures with the UK Government that will address the most significant adverse impacts like payments and the bedroom tax.

There is no doubt that the Treasury will reduce our Budget if we fail to make progress. For 2014-15, that is estimated to be £87 million on top of the £13 million that we have already lost to the baseline of this year's Budget because of penalties incurred for non-compliance last year. Furthermore, we stand to lose over 1,400 jobs at service centres in Belfast and Londonderry, as DWP, I am certain, will relocate that work if we fail to make progress on welfare reform. There are also serious concerns over our continued ability to process welfare payments when existing DWP systems become unavailable to us from 2016 onwards. Separate local IT systems have been estimated to cost £1.6 billion and will not and cannot be delivered on time. That will directly affect hundreds of thousands of people across Northern Ireland.

I picked up a couple of points. One that Mr Allister has just left on is that he asked whether the £13 million penalty or any part of the penalties of welfare reform were included in the Estimates: they are not. The £13 million penalty will, I hope, be dealt with in June monitoring, and the £87 million penalty for this year is not due to come out of our system until next year in the spring Supplementary Estimates, but it is something that, I believe, needs to be addressed in June as well.

I think that I have touched on most of the points that have been raised. I apologise to any Members if I did not address their points. To be fair, I think that I have addressed the points of most Members who are here. Perhaps, I failed to address Mr Swann's point. I will come back on the £1 million for wind farms. We will get a detailed response to the Member in respect of that. *[Interruption.]* Mr Wilson will give you a — I am loath to even raise it. Why did I even raise it with Mr Wilson in the Chamber? That was a silly mistake.

With that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw my remarks to a close. Thank you for your patience and your indulgence. Assembly approval of the Supply motion today and the associated departmental expenditure plans laid out in the 2014-15 Main Estimates is a crucial stage of the existing public expenditure cycle. Failure to pass the 2014-15 Supply resolution at this juncture would put at risk the smooth continuation of public services into the remainder of this financial year. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that the vote on the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That this Assembly approves that a sum, not exceeding £8,411,921,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund, for or towards defraying the charges for Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 and that resources, not exceeding £9,168,609,000, be authorised for use by Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31 March 2015 as summarised for each Department or other public body in columns 3(b) and 3(a) of table 1.3 in the volume of the Northern Ireland Estimates 2014-15 that was laid before the Assembly on 28 May 2014.

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: First Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

I beg to introduce the Budget (No. 2) Bill (Northern Ireland), which is a Bill to authorise the issue out of the Consolidated Fund of certain sums for the service of the year ending 31 March 2015; to appropriate those sums for specified purposes; to authorise the Department of Finance and Personnel to borrow on the credit of the appropriated sums; to authorise the use for the public service of certain resources, including accruing resources, for the year ending 31 March 2015; and to repeal certain spent provisions.

Bill passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I inform Members that confirmation has been received from the Committee for Finance and Personnel, in accordance with Standing Order 42(2), that the Committee is satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it on the public expenditure proposals contained in the Bill and that the Bill can, therefore, proceed under the accelerated passage procedure. The Second Stage of the Bill will be brought before the House tomorrow.

Adjourned at 6.24 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 10 June 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):
I beg to move

*That the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland)
Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
2014 be approved.*

I am seeking the Assembly's approval to confirm the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The regulations make it unlawful to compile, use, sell or supply blacklists that contain details of people who are, or who have been, trade union members or who are taking part, or who have taken part, in trade union activities, where the blacklist may be used by employers to discriminate in recruitment or in the treatment of existing workers. Under the regulations, current and former trade union members may complain to an industrial tribunal if they are refused employment, subjected to a detriment or unfairly dismissed for a reason relating to a blacklist. Also under the regulations, employment agencies are unable to refuse to provide a service because a worker appears on a blacklist.

The regulations are subject to the confirmatory procedure as laid down in the parent legislation, which is in article 5 of the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Article 5 provides the necessary powers to introduce regulations to outlaw the blacklisting of trade unionists.

The regulations were made on 19 March 2014 and came into operation on 6 April 2014. To continue to have effect, they must be approved by a resolution of the Assembly on or before 5 October 2014.

The Department originally consulted on the issue back in 2003, but, as there was no hard evidence of blacklisting taking place at the time, regulations were not implemented. However, in March 2009, the Information Commissioner announced that he had uncovered a vetting service operated by the Consulting Association, an organisation for companies in the UK construction sector. The Information Commissioner proceeded to prosecute the chief operating officer of the Consulting Association for breaching a provision of the Data Protection Act 1998.

It was noted that the Consulting Association had collected information on the trade union membership and activities

of many individuals and that that information had in effect been used to blacklist them. Following that announcement, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in Great Britain brought in regulations to prohibit the blacklisting of trade unionists. The regulations have been in force in Great Britain since March 2010.

Given that some of the construction companies identified in the Information Commissioner's investigation were linked to operations in Northern Ireland, my Department, as the Department responsible for employment law in Northern Ireland, decided to investigate and consult on the need for similar regulations. This consultation ran for 12 weeks from 28 July 2010 until 20 October 2010.

Following agreement from the Executive and the Committee for Employment and Learning, I now intend to enact these regulations formally to prohibit blacklisting in Northern Ireland. This will ensure that all trade union members working in Northern Ireland will have similar safeguards and protections to those working in the rest of the UK.

The Department does not wish to deter employers from vetting prospective employees, provided such vetting is proportionate and complies with employment law and data protection principles. The regulations have been specifically designed to target only listing activity that involves trade union membership and activities and to enable affected individuals to seek redress from this type of discrimination.

The very specific focus of the regulations should ensure that virtually all vetting activity that has nothing to do with trade union matters is left unaffected. I emphasise that good employers really have nothing to fear from the regulations.

I am grateful to the Committee for Employment and Learning and the Executive for their detailed scrutiny of the policy proposals and the regulations. I hope that I have provided the House with sufficient explanation of the purpose of the regulations and will, of course, respond to Members' points in my closing remarks.

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I welcome the opportunity to outline the Employment and Learning Committee's views on this statutory rule. This is important legislation. As well as the detail of the statutory rule, it sends out an important message to employers and employment agencies that, while the Assembly supports them in their efforts to develop the economy, it will not allow them to discriminate against individuals whom they decide have been vocal in their opposition to some of their employer practices.

On 29 February 2012, the Committee received a briefing from departmental officials on the results of the Department's consultation on regulations to prohibit blacklisting. During the briefing, the officials advised that, in 2009, an investigation by the Information Commissioner discovered that an organisation held a database containing the details of more than 3,000 construction workers that included personal information on relationships, trade union activity and employment history. That database had been used by more than 40 construction companies. The owner was prosecuted for breach of the Data Protection Act and fined £5,000.

During that briefing, the Committee noted that there was consensus on introducing regulations on the issue. The Committee was content with the Department's proposal to bring forward the legislation as long as it would not be overly burdensome on the vast majority of companies that have never been engaged in such activity but would ensure that something was on the statute book to deal with any company found to be participating in such practices.

The statutory rule prohibits the compilation, distribution and use of blacklists to facilitate discrimination against trade union members and activists. Making it illegal for an organisation to refuse employment or dismiss an employee for a reason related to a blacklist is necessary to protect employees' rights.

The Committee considered the proposal to make the statutory rule at its meeting on 11 December 2013 and agreed that it was content with the need for the rule. It agreed, however, to write to the Department of Finance and Personnel seeking clarification on what action will be taken against companies that are found to have operated blacklists.

At its meeting on 15 January, the Committee considered the responses from the Department of Finance and Personnel advising that, should the legislation become law in Northern Ireland, it will mean that companies could have a formal court or tribunal decision or ruling against them for such practices. That would make it possible for contracting authorities to exercise their discretion clearly, under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, as to whether individual contractors should be excluded from any procurement process. The Department of Finance and Personnel also pointed out that the contracting authority would still be required to carry out an assessment in every case.

The Department laid the statutory rule on 25 March, and it was considered by the Committee on 9 April. There was no change to the policy content since the proposal was considered by the Committee, and the Examiner of Statutory Rules raised no issues. The Committee for Employment and Learning supports the statutory rule and commends it to the House.

Mr Buchanan: I welcome the fact that the Minister has brought this issue to the House today. It will ensure that workers who have been involved in trade unions or been activists in previous employment will not be discriminated against in future employment because of their involvement in these types of organisations. Employers, by placing activists' names on blacklists, may inadvertently discriminate against those employees when they go for future employment, simply because of their prior involvement. The implementation of this statutory rule will prohibit the compiling, distribution and use of lists to discriminate against workers involved in trade unions and activists, and it will reinforce workers' employment rights.

The rule will make it against the law to refuse employment on the grounds of the details of an employee appearing on a blacklist. It is important that workers have free access to involvement in trade unions without fear of future recriminations that would discriminate against them should they apply for work or try to get a job in other organisations. Any document compiled to treat some employees in any way less favourably than others is of grave concern to us. Discrimination on any ground is wrong, and I am happy that this legislation is being brought forward to outlaw such practices.

The blacklisting of employees because of trade union involvement is not widespread in Northern Ireland. However, despite it being a relatively minor problem here, putting in place legislation is a matter of principle to safeguard against it becoming a problem in the future. The legislation will guard against such practices creeping into different industries here. As a principle, we want to ensure that legal measures are put in place to guard against such discriminatory practices in Northern Ireland. Therefore, I welcome the implementation of the legislation and commend it to the House.

Mr P Ramsey: I very strongly welcome Minister Farry's bringing this very important legislation to the House. The SDLP welcomes this Executive business today. As the only Assembly party to vote against the increase in pension age for public servants and the reduction of redundancy pay for civil servants, many of whom are low paid, we have demonstrated our commitment to protecting the interests of hard-pressed households and trade union members.

The fact that the Information Commissioner in England named companies operating in Northern Ireland in a report on blacklisting is deeply and distinctly worrying. In the past fortnight, Northern Ireland has again witnessed at first hand the damage done when discrimination is permitted. The choice to join a trade union is a right under law. No employer is allowed to try to make you change your decision on trade union membership or to threaten to penalise you if you do not. Therefore, it is important to ensure that employers are prohibited from compiling lists of individuals who are members of unions or who have taken part in the activities of the trade union movement. We do not want those employees to be discriminated against when employers are recruiting or allocating work.

This is of specific importance in the current economic climate, when work is scarce and employees have less employment security. It is particularly important to bring in such legislation to protect workers: for example, those on zero-hours contracts. I know that Minister Farry is painstakingly going through consultation on this, and our Committee has met officials. Industries should be more flexible. There should be more fluid employment practices, particularly in the construction industry, to ensure that employees are well protected.

The SDLP is committed to protecting and extending the rights of, and opportunities for, workers across Northern Ireland. We will continue to advocate that other parties follow the SDLP's lead and insert meaningful social clauses into Department contracts so that the successful contractors make a reasonable contribution to providing work experience for young people and opportunities for the unemployed. We will continue to highlight the need to remedy and stop zero-hours contracts. In that vein, we are

very happy to support this very meaningful and important legislation.

10.45 am

Dr Farry: I welcome the comments made by the three Members who contributed. In reference to comments made by Robin Swann as the Chair of the Committee, I welcome its scrutiny of the regulations and the support that it has provided. I also note the importance of the regulations being enforceable through tribunals and our courts system.

Tom Buchanan's comments neatly dovetailed with those of the Chair of the Committee. That gives me the opportunity to stress, once again, that the practice of blacklisting is rare in Northern Ireland. It is also important to stress that the vast majority of employers are responsible and do not engage in this destructive behaviour. However, whenever they do, the consequences are serious and, as Mr Ramsey outlined, amount to discrimination and denial of opportunities. When people are found to be operating blacklists or engaging in other behaviour that will now be made illegal, it is appropriate, therefore, that we send a strong message.

Mr Ramsey ventured slightly beyond the immediate topic of blacklisting and chose to place the regulations in the wider context of other debates that are alive in society. Members will have their own views on that wider context and the measures that we may or may not wish to take. However, in response to Mr Ramsey's comments, I agree on the importance of people having the freedom to engage in trade union activity. Trade unions can be a very constructive voice, both in the workplace and in wider society. They have been proactive in leadership in standing up against sectarianism and racism in society over past weeks.

The Finance Minister will no doubt be happy to respond on the use of social clauses in Government procurement, but they are routinely used and deployed by Departments and they make a real difference. My officials will brief the Committee for Employment and Learning on zero-hour contracts tomorrow and will discuss the advanced stage of the preparation of a consultation document. Subject to the outcome of those discussions, it is my hope that we will launch a public consultation on zero-hours contracts in Northern Ireland some time next week. We will seek people's views over the next number of weeks with a view to taking decisions on what regulations we may wish to put in place in Northern Ireland. That will be a decision for the Executive and, in turn, the Assembly to shape, but it is a debate that is required, and I am sure that there will be considerable interest from MLAs and members of the public in the outcome.

I thank those Members who contributed today as well as the Members of the Executive who agreed to the regulations and the Committee for its scrutiny and support of the regulations. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):
I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Budget (No.2) Bill [NIA 36/11-15] be agreed.

The Second Stage debate today follows the approval of the Supply resolution yesterday by the Assembly for the expenditure plans of Departments and other public bodies as detailed in the 2014-15 Main Estimates.

As Members will undoubtedly be aware, accelerated passage of the Bill is necessary in order to ensure Royal Assent prior to the end of July. If the Bill did not proceed by accelerated passage and receive Assembly approval before the summer recess, Departments and other public bodies might have legislative difficulty accessing cash, which would threaten the effective delivery of public services prior to our return to the Chamber in September. However, the Committee for Finance and Personnel has confirmed that, in line with Standing Order 42, it is satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it on the public expenditure proposals contained in the Bill.

I thank the Committee for its work in agreeing to accelerated passage. It is often unheralded work, but the Committee has been involved in the setting of the 2014-15 Budget right from its inception in the 2011-15 Budget back in March 2011, through each exercise approved by the Executive, up until the finalisation and publication of the Estimates volume a few weeks ago. The work of the Committee in that respect is vital and, whilst much of it takes place in the background, so to speak, its importance cannot be underestimated.

The Estimates and associated Budget Bill are complex documents, and the review of the financial process that my predecessor and I have often called for would help to clarify the Estimates process. In fact, it is a review that the Committee has long sought. Any future review would be an opportunity for the Executive and Assembly to deliver a significant, positive reform of the financial process inherited under direct rule.

The Assembly's Standing Order 32 directs that the Second Stage debate should be confined to the general principles of the Bill, and I shall endeavour to keep to that direction. The main purpose of the Bill is to make further provision of cash and resources for use on services, in addition to the Vote on Account provided in the Budget Act in March, up to the requirements of Departments and other public bodies set out in the Main Estimates for 2014-15. Copies of the Budget Bill and the explanatory and financial memorandum have been made available to Members today, and the 2014-15 Main Estimates were laid in the Assembly on 28th May.

The Bill will authorise the issue of a further £8,411,921,000 from the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund and the further use of resources totalling £9,168,609,000 by the Departments and certain other bodies listed in schedules 1 and 2 to the Bill. The cash and resources are to be spent and used on the services listed in column 1 of each schedule. Of course, those amounts are in addition to the Vote on Account passed by the Assembly in March, bringing the total amount of cash provided for 2014-15 to over £15.4 billion pounds.

In addition, the Bill sets for the current financial year a limit for each Department on the use of accruing resources. Accruing resources are current and capital receipts totalling £2,299,191,000. Therefore, the resources authorised in the Vote on Account in March and the resources and accruing resources now provided in this Bill bring the total resources for use by Departments in 2014-15 to over £19 billion. Of course, those amounts of resources include not only the departmental expenditure limits (DEL) on which our Budget process mainly focuses but the departmental, demand-led annually managed expenditure (AME).

Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the temporary borrowing by my Department of £4,205,960,000. That is approximately half the sum authorised by clause 1(1) for issue out of the Consolidated Fund. I must stress to the House that clause 2 does not provide for the issue of any additional cash out of the Consolidated Fund or convey any additional spending power, but it does enable my Department to run an effective and efficient cash management regime and ensure minimum drawdown of the Northern Ireland block grant on a daily basis — something that is very important when contemplating the daily borrowing by our Departments.

Finally, clause 5 removes from the statute book two Budget Acts from 2011 that are no longer operative.

The numbers contained within the Budget Bill are significant, and I am sure that Members will agree that it is not an easy task to translate those figures into the delivery of public services on the ground, but the reality is that this legislation is required for every public service, whether it is a schoolteacher or a police officer, the building of a new road or the training required for gaining a new job. All public services need this legislation to operate in this financial year. So, whilst it may appear dry and seemingly detached from day-to-day life, it is in fact a crucial piece of legislation underpinning our public services.

I will conclude on that note, and I will be happy to deal with any points of principle or detail of the Budget Bill that Members may wish to raise.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As outlined, the Bill makes provision for the balance of cash and resources that are required to reflect the departmental spending plans in the 2014-15 Main Estimates. They are based on year 4 of the former Executive's Budget, which was approved in the previous mandate of the Assembly. As on previous occasions, DFP has highlighted the potential consequences for the authorisation of departmental spending should the Bill not progress through the Assembly before the summer recess.

The Committee took evidence from departmental officials, and I wish to reiterate the Committee's appreciation for their helpfulness in explaining the detail of the series of allocations, reductions, technical adjustments and transfers that have been made since the allocations were initially set out in the Budget 2011-15. The Committee also examined DFP's June monitoring round return. I shall refer to that briefly as it is relevant in highlighting how the allocations in the Budget Bill can and will change through the monitoring process as we progress further into the financial year.

As a Department, DFP has the relatively small capital allocation of £21.7 million for 2014-15. However, in the June monitoring round, it has included bids for the asset management strategy that would provide £40 million in capital, in addition to £3.5 million in resource, with the aim of realising savings by rationalising public sector accommodation. While the Committee sought further detail on the anticipated savings and risks attached to the projects involved, the size of the capital bid is significant. If agreed by the Executive, it would result in an increase of over 184% in the Department's capital allocation in the Bill. I highlight that as an example of the extent to which departmental budgets and finances present a constantly moving picture. That is all the more reason why Assembly Committees should continue to undertake robust in-year scrutiny and oversight, and are facilitated by their Departments in doing so.

On a separate issue at departmental level, the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development wrote to the Finance Committee to establish what relevant provision has been made in the Bill for the Reservoirs Bill, which it is at Committee Stage. The Finance Committee sought an urgent response from the Department on the specific detail of any provisions, including any conditions that might be attached, in advance of today's debate. While the Committee has not yet received a response to that request, I understand that the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has also pursued the issue directly with its Department.

As I indicated during yesterday's Supply resolution debate, the Committee agreed to grant accelerated passage to the Budget Bill under Standing Order 42(2) on the basis of having been consulted appropriately on the expenditure provisions in the Bill.

In terms of the contribution of Assembly Committees to the Budget and financial process, I also highlighted during yesterday's debate the importance of facilitating effective scrutiny of departmental financial forecasting and out-turn data by all Statutory Committees. Detailed and regular monitoring of the financial performance of Departments will enable Committees to identify issues in real time and obtain assurances that the necessary corrective or preventative action will be taken. On that point, DFP provided prior-year forecast out-turn figures for all Departments to the Finance Committee on Tuesday 3 June. However, if that information were made available slightly earlier the Committee would be in a position to share the figures with the other Statutory Committees in time to further inform their contributions to the plenary debates on the Main Estimates and the Budget (No. 2) Bill. Perhaps that is something that can be addressed for next year.

At a strategic level, more effective Assembly input to and scrutiny of the Executive's Budget and expenditure will help to further demonstrate that devolution is making a difference in delivering accountable, responsive and efficient governance in the North. That would represent positive steps forward, but on the immediate business before us, and on behalf of the Committee, I support the general principles of the Bill.

I will make a few comments from a party perspective. Like a number of other Members, I have come from an event on air connectivity, which was hosted by George Best Belfast City Airport. Air connectivity is an issue that the Finance Committee has looked at.

The Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee has also looked at it, and, obviously, we need to continue to oversee the work that those respective Departments are doing in regard to air connectivity.

11.00 am

Air passenger duty is a major issue and has been flagged up by a number of commentators, including Pricewaterhouse-Coopers. It said that, in its opinion, air passenger duty (APD) could be more important than corporation tax as an economic game changer. There is a lot of frustration, not only among the airports but from many involved in the tourist industry and many in business circles in general, that APD is not moving as an issue at Westminster.

Of course, my party believes that the power should be devolved so that we can set a rate that is fair to allow competition on an all-island basis. Currently, our constituents have a choice about where they fly to and from, but that will always be dictated by a number of factors, primarily price. At the moment, because of the excessive charges in the North, most consumers and most of our constituents decide to fly from Dublin airport. I want to see a fair and level playing field across the island with the same rate of air passenger duty as its equivalent in the South, where it has been abolished. The only way to do that, in our opinion, is to have the measure devolved and then to abolish it. Obviously, that will come at a price, but everything comes at a price. Once the power is devolved, the Executive can decide not to change the rate of air passenger duty, but they can decide to lower it at least to make things easier for businesses and to try to ensure that we open up some new routes to places such as Germany and France and connect airports in Belfast and Derry to those hub airports in Europe. That would ensure that we are more open to the world and that we are more open to all those tourists who are willing to come here but who, too often, arrive in the South rather than the North and so are less likely, obviously, to come North, and therefore the tourist operators and the businesses throughout all our constituencies are less likely to gain revenue or economic benefits.

Credit is due to the tourist organisations and the Departments that were involved in the organisation of the Giro d'Italia in north Antrim, Belfast, south Armagh and elsewhere and, indeed, down to Dublin. The fact of the matter is that that was a great marketing opportunity, and the island has been marketed for one of the largest sporting events in the world. The problem is that the connectivity is not there to facilitate whatever demand will come out of that. My fear, which is shared by others in the industry, is that those tourists will arrive in Dublin and will do the usual circuit of Kerry, Galway and Dublin but might not come to Belfast, the Causeway Coast, Derry and Donegal.

If we were to have a mature debate about air passenger duty and a report from the Finance Minister and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on air connectivity, we could make a decision on this sooner. I get the sense that the economic Ministers in the Executive want to kick this issue down the road. We need to deal with this now because, as I said yesterday, growing the economy is one of the main pillars in our Programme for Government, and tourism needs to be front and foremost in that, as should agrifood and other sectors.

Unless you are going to grasp the opportunity to have the power for things like APD devolved, you will not realise the full potential for tourism. Obviously, there is a debate in Scotland about devolution there and, ultimately, independence. Hopefully, regardless of what the decision is in Scotland, we can have a mature debate here about the devolution of further financial powers. I heard what Members on the opposite side of the House said about waiting until Westminster gets round to abolishing air passenger duty. You could be waiting for decades until Westminster makes a decision. The only way that we are going to improve our economic outcomes is by taking economic decisions ourselves. After Scotland concludes its debate and has its vote on independence, all the parties around the Executive table need to have a mature debate about what powers we need to have devolved in the short to medium term. Air passenger duty is relatively small in comparison with something like corporation tax. We have heard some positive soundings from the Executive and the Minister about the devolution of corporation tax in the time ahead, and that needs to be prioritised as well. However, given the fact that APD —

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr McKay: Yes.

Mr McCallister: Does the Member not see an inconsistency in calling for the devolution of corporation tax and his party's position on welfare reform?

Mr McKay: I know that this particular issue is a hobby horse for the Member, and we heard him talk at length about it yesterday. At the end of the day, Sinn Féin's position on this is well known. We would like to have all powers devolved to this side of the Irish Sea so that we can make decisions for ourselves. Any change to the rate of corporation tax obviously comes at a cost, and welfare reform comes at a cost as well. However, we need to look at the costs in the round. Yesterday, I mentioned the impact that welfare reform proposals will have on the Tory agenda and the fact that the impact on the most vulnerable in our communities has not been thought through fully. There is always the reference to the estimates coming from Treasury, and everybody has to bow down to what the Treasury says. This would have a huge impact on public health; the more people you push under the breadline, the more people you will have accessing the health service because of their mental health, in particular, and their physical health. That has not been assessed. I have not heard any estimates of the added pressure that that would have on the health service. I have not heard any estimates from the Department or the British Treasury about the economic impact that the withdrawal of millions of pounds would have in our town and city centres. It has not been thought out and that debate has not been had. Indeed, that debate has been avoided by many of the players who are willing to push forward welfare reform as soon as they possibly can.

Our position is quite clear; we want to see a fair outcome and a fair deal for everybody that we represent. We recognise that our level of deprivation is quite starkly different from that in communities in Scotland, England and Wales, and, therefore, we need to have different policies in place to deal with that and to ensure that we have better social outcomes for the people whom we represent. All the parties need to get round the table to deal with that and present a robust case to the British

Government and Westminster to ensure that we do get a fair deal on welfare reform.

As I said, the Giro was a great success for tourism. In the coming weeks, we will see the Tour de France in Yorkshire, and that will obviously bring huge economic benefit to the communities in that part of England and in France. We need to aim for that as well. I speak to many who are involved in cycling clubs throughout my constituency of North Antrim, and they want to see that as well. Why should we not be more ambitious? Why should we just set the bar at the Giro? The Tour de France is being hosted just across the water, and I believe that we could do it better over here. Therefore, the case should be presented for it in the years ahead, as it should be for other major events, including the Rugby World Cup. Work is under way to try to attract that event to our shores as well.

Tourism majored in the Programme for Government, and we are not punching at or above our weight. Throughout the rest of the island, tourism is more mainstream. Communities recognise its economic impact on job creation, and so on, because it is more developed. We in the North need to match that level of development. The way in which to do that is by through improving access and by effective marketing of major events, such as the Giro d'Italia. The Executive and their economic Ministers need to get serious about that, because the cost of APD is relatively minor in comparison with corporation tax. It is something that Ministers need to get to grips with to improve our economic outcomes and our image.

We referred to this yesterday: the image of the North, and of the island as a whole, is clearly linked to attracting tourists to these shores. I reiterate the point that we cannot afford to have a loose word here or there from our politicians that lead to major headlines across the world that paint this place — particularly this city — in a negative light. I say that conscious of —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am going to diplomatically encourage the Member to focus on the Budget Bill.

Mr McKay: I thank the Deputy Speaker for his intervention. Of course, I am speaking about budgets that are in place for the respective Departments for tourism and those for community relations through OFMDFM. That is my tenuous link.

To conclude, a LeasCheann Comhairle, as I said yesterday, we in the North have to major on tourism more than we do already. As politicians, we need to be more conscious of the image that we portray to the world. That is because a lot of the good work that has been carried out by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and by other Ministers to attract inward investment — foreign direct investment — week in and week out, can be undermined by the stroke of a pen or a loose word from a politician. Members need to be very mindful of that in the time ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Paul Girvan, who will be mindful of what I have just said.

Mr Girvan: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I am in favour of the Budget Bill and its progress. Hopefully, we can get there today. However, in doing so, I want to comment on what happens in Committee. I also put on record my thanks to the Committee staff and to the departmental officials who come along to brief us

and keep us up to speed with what is going on. A word of thanks has to go to them, because it is not always that easy to understand exactly what we have in front of us. They have made the process very easy.

One thing that needs to be improved urgently is early intervention during monitoring rounds to ensure that money that cannot be spent is brought forward early enough so that it can be reallocated. That needs to be done so that we do not have to send back money because it was brought back far too late to allow it to be spent. In this mandate, to date, no moneys have been returned. That is good. On many occasions in the past, tens of millions of pounds had to be handed back to the Exchequer because of a lack of funding commitments.

Some benefits have been brought forward. As a region, from a business perspective, we probably benefit from some of the lowest rates in the United Kingdom.

The average business rate in Northern Ireland is £10,554. I cannot give you an exact figure for Wales and Scotland, but the payment in England is about £15,000 — 50% more than in Northern Ireland — plus an average water bill of between £334 and £388 a year. So, there have been major benefits for the Northern Ireland economy, and businesses have been able to avail themselves of that.

11.15 am

One commitment in the early stages of this mandate was to grow our economy. In doing so, we have probably boxed well above our weight on inward investment and attracting new business. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is not here, but I congratulate her and her Department for their work in encouraging and bringing forward new business through Invest NI, which has turned its game around in recent years from being a business promotion organisation to delivering numbers. In recent months, its predictions have gone far beyond expectations.

There will be a decision on the devolution of corporation tax, which will impact on us in future years. A decision will be made this autumn, and hopefully we can use that as another tool in the box to grow our economy and ultimately ensure that we benefit from it.

Invest-to-save schemes have been helpful in Departments, although each Department seems to have a slightly different interpretation of a saving. It is not a cut. It is sometimes about ensuring that better use is made of resources, thereby increasing efficiency in those Departments. Some Departments have been very good at that and others have not. I encourage each Committee to scrutinise invest-to-save schemes to see where they can be of benefit to make more money available for delivery on the ground.

Much has been made of how we can influence the way forward. There are a number of variables. The previous Member who spoke mentioned welfare reform and the difficulties of not having everything pinned down. We got concessions with provisions that have been implemented in GB, but we must focus on moving forward and resolving the matter before it has a very major impact on the delivery of services to the wider public. The Executive will also have to focus on that to ensure that we progress the matter to a good conclusion.

There has been much positive media spin on the tourism aspect of the Giro, and we can take advantage of that.

That will probably not happen this year, but, for years to come, there will be benefits from the people who watched the shots filmed from helicopters of the wonderful scenery. People will want to come to see the wonderful sights of Northern Ireland. We probably have some of the greatest scenery that the world has to offer, and we should be selling that as a positive as opposed to not selling our Province. Some people ask, "Why would you want to go there?", and I have heard people say, "There is nothing to see here", but, when you start to focus on where they live, you see that there is a lot more to see there than in many other places in the world that claim to be tourist attractions.

Everything is right on our doorstep, and we should be taking full advantage of that. Northern Ireland is a very small country, and you could go from one end of it to the other in two hours — depending on what you are driving, but that is beside the point. It is vital that we get the benefit from selling Northern Ireland as somewhere that you can get around relatively quickly to see what you need to.

I have a real interest in air passenger duty because Belfast International Airport is in my constituency. It is vital to have air links to encourage tourists from other areas and so that we have business links that we can develop. That has to be looked at. I believe that the British Government implemented APD as a green tax to deal with carbon offsetting. I do not see that they have not done very much with it. Under a European directive, doing away with the duty, if we decide to do that, could be classed as state aid. That is among the arguments that could be brought forward. However, the Republic of Ireland seems to do what it wants and ask for forgiveness later. We are unique in that we compete directly with an airport that is two hours down the road and can offer flights with zero APD. I see the uniqueness of us having to look at addressing some of those areas.

We have been successful in dealing with the band of APD for long-haul flights, which ensured that we retained our only link to North America. It is vital that we encourage more long-haul flights. Conversations are ongoing to deal with the matter, and Northern Ireland could benefit greatly from it.

I have spoken with many business owners over the last year who said that we have got many things right. Fifty per cent of all businesses in Northern Ireland are availing themselves of a 20% reduction in their business rate. Many of them are asking, "Can we be sure that this will continue?" It is good that we have been able to facilitate that until now, and there is work ongoing to ensure that we can extend the business rate relief programme. It is vital that we do that, especially in this time of economic austerity and given the difficulties that many businesses are having.

It is also encouraging that we are using some of our major capital investment to deliver projects that are creating employment and ensuring that we can bolster and support our construction industry. Major schemes are under way, and I appreciate that many things have been happening in certain areas to ensure that we move forward in a better way. That includes reviewing how we deal with planning and ensuring that the planning process is more streamlined. Some of the benefits of that work are coming through, and we are finding that applications get through the system more quickly.

Under RPA, there will be more of an opportunity for those who are involved at a local level to have some influence in the development of area plans, which will mean that there is some opportunity to ensure economic development in those areas. The Deputy Speaker is smiling. I appreciate that we have enterprise zones, and Coleraine happens to be one of the areas that has benefited from having an enterprise zone. We now need to focus on setting those up in areas where there are difficulties in attracting business to ensure that that happens across the board.

I put on record my thanks to the Minister and his predecessor for the good work that they have done in ensuring that we have our voice heard in Westminster, have a lobby in Whitehall and get our message across. We do not necessarily get all the money that we would like, but I would like to ensure that we get everything that we can. I appreciate that our Ministers and the Executive do that to the best of their ability. I know that we receive a lot more back than we pay in. Some people think that we should be getting a lot more, but I believe that, when the Barnett formula is calculated, we do not come out too badly.

I appreciate that people have mentioned how welfare reform might have an impact. A lot of people say that it will cost this or that, but we will actually receive more moneys; our welfare budget will increase, as opposed to reduce. Some people are not willing even to look at that matter. I appreciate that we need to ensure that we get the best deal for those who require the benefits, who are probably the most vulnerable and needy in our society. That is what we are doing.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, as an deis cainte sa díospóireacht seo ar an Bhuiséad. Thanks very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Budget.

As I mentioned in yesterday's debate, for the SDLP, using other means of levering further expenditure to invest in the local economy and in sectors that could improve the life of people here is the whole purpose of devolution. However, in Northern Ireland, we are again looking at one section of the Budget in isolation and neglecting the opportunity to be more holistic and strategic.

A yearly Budget, as opposed to the current four-year Budget that we discuss in part today, would provide the opportunity for our economy to be more flexible. It would give us better opportunities to provide solutions for childcare funding, assist small businesses and reprioritise capital spending to boost our economy; all things that the SDLP has been highlighting the necessity of for some time. An annual Budget process, which the SDLP has continually proposed, is nothing new; it is the case, largely, in most countries.

As I said, an annual Budget process would enable us to adjust policy priorities, where required, to best support our population. It is all the more necessary, given the holes in the Budget. The Minister did respond to the points that I made on this issue yesterday, but I was not convinced by his answers. He said that an annual Budget would involve his officials working on a Budget for most of the year. One would assume that it was the job and the responsibility of the officials of a finance Department to work on budgetary matters constantly. I believe that an annual Budget would provide much more accountability and ensure that projects

are moved forward much more rapidly than they are, in many cases, at the moment.

When this Budget was published, the SDLP outlined some key reasons why it was necessary for Northern Ireland and the Executive to be more ambitious in their thinking.

All these reasons are more pressing now than they were in 2011.

11.30 am

When the Executive published this Budget, they did so without an accompanying Programme for Government. As I said at the time, the cart was placed before the horse. Such budgetary management without strategic planning is far from ideal, and perhaps we are now seeing the legacy of that bad planning, particularly in our health service. My colleague Mr McKinney has spoken in detail about the lack of transparency and assessment of the strategic priorities in the health service, and it strikes me that the rot set in when this four-year Budget was signed off without a Programme for Government.

Today, 20% of our young people are still out of work, yet the Budget did little to prioritise job creation. Yes, it is true that some jobs have been announced recently, which I very much welcome, but it is not enough to stem the tide of migration. Quite often, the jobs announced are Belfast-centric.

Again, last week, there was controversy in the Assembly regarding the Education Minister's plans for area planning and the decision not to proceed with the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). This is another demonstration of the problems caused and the money wasted when a strategic government programme, supported by adequate budget lines, is not agreed. The 2011-15 Budget did not truly recognise that public expenditure is the major economic lever here in the North.

Just as the coalition Government are now proposing with their Infrastructure Bill, in 2011 the SDLP proposed a number of options to prioritise capital expenditure to better stimulate the economy. This included increasing capital expenditure for social housing construction. In this context, we should bear in mind the 9,878 households that are accepted as homeless by the Housing Executive.

The final reason why the SDLP voted against the 2011 Budget was its absolute failure to identify any new revenue streams. We published two distinct documents with, potentially, billions in proposed spending alternatives, but those proposals were shouted down. Given the economic climate, and for all the reasons I have just outlined, it is imperative that the Minister and the House look at those proposals again to be imaginative for the future. It is imperative that we properly assess alternative proposals from the SDLP and from other sources.

We can do things differently to benefit the people of the North, and the SDLP will champion the necessity to do so. I fail to understand why the Minister has been so resistant to such an approach. Why not assess, as I and others have suggested, the establishment of a Scottish-style commission, the options to extend devolution and the opportunities to take control of additional fiscal levers? As I said previously, if this were to be done we could get a clear picture on an evidence base of which fiscal levers

are available to us and which will add to our economic development.

It is not sufficient to say that we have all the good powers already available and that the rest would be of no benefit. Such an argument does not fly. Only last week, we were debating the air passenger duty levy. As currently set, the levy penalises Northern Ireland business travellers, who are unfairly taxed on every journey to England. We heard earlier from the Chair of the Finance Committee the effect that the duty has on the tourism industry. A reduction of air passenger duty on all flights, international and internal, would help reduce the competitive disadvantage faced by Northern Ireland industry, especially the tourism industry.

Why not provide an evidence-based argument to the London Government? Why not assess all the available options that would allow us to use our small size to be nimble in the global market? We must be bold, brave, ambitious and take reasonable risks in the development of the Budget, including budgeting annually, to benefit industry, business development and, consequently, wider society.

Go raibh míle maith agat as an deis cainte. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to participate.

Mr Cree: It seems no time since we were talking about budgets yesterday.

The Executive's top priority during the Budget period 2011-15 was to develop the economy. As we are now finalising the figures for the last year of the Budget, it is useful to look at what has been achieved. In 2011-12, the public sector accounted for 36% of all jobs, compared to 28% in Great Britain. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland accounts for 63% of output compared to 39% in Great Britain. As a result of the large public sector, gross value added (GVA) per capita in Northern Ireland has been significantly below that in the rest of the United Kingdom, at around 80%.

What progress has been made over the period? What special measures are included in this Budget to advance the Programme for Government target?

At the start of the Budget period, we were told that up to 30% of existing Northern Ireland Civil Service accommodation was in poor or very poor condition, with substantial investment required or replacement sought within five years. Again, I wonder what the current situation is. The reduced maintenance budget may well have exacerbated the condition of the estate. Perhaps, the Minister can advise us.

Yesterday, I referred to the Hillsborough agreement sites — the Minister will note that I put in the word "agreement" there to make it easier this time — and the cost of £1.3 million that has been included in the Estimates for security and maintenance.

Looking back at the first year, 2011-12, again, we see that Ministers recognised the importance of the regeneration sites which had been gifted by Her Majesty's Government. But what has been done during the intervening three years? Mr Wilson correctly stated yesterday that the outcome of the four-year Budget is before us now and indeed that is the case, but how successful has it been? On the capital side, £547 million was expected in receipts during the four years of the Budget. A further £100 million

was anticipated to come from asset sales through the capital assets management unit. Were those moneys realised or is there a balance to be achieved this year?

I will now turn to the reconciliation of the Estimates with the Budget. The Committee for Finance and Personnel was supplied with a table, annex A, which was most helpful. Again, I congratulate the staff for their forthrightness in coming and attempting to answer our questions. It certainly makes life a bit easier. In that table, we could see that the Department of Education was allocated an extra £75 million to increase its budget. What was that sum for and has it indeed been spent? DCAL was given £16.8 million for regional stadia. Is that sum likely to be spent in the remaining Budget period?

Yesterday, I referred to resources that are held in the centre. The Minister advised that the sums would be disbursed shortly. However, on the capital side, there is reinvestment and reform (RRI) borrowing of around £300 million. Included in that figure is £50 million that relates to Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC). I ask the Minister why that is necessary when there was £80 million in the social investment fund last year. There is reference to £44 million of unallocated borrowing from T:BUC which is at risk by the Treasury. Again, can the Minister clarify that situation?

Finally, I note that there is an unallocated sum of £34.8 million that relates to financial transactions capital. This is a fairly new form of investment, and I believe it has a great future. Is that £34.8 million the final figure for the year? Are there projects which that capital can service and have they been identified at this stage?

Colleagues will raise other questions about various Departments later in the debate. I look forward to hearing from the Minister again in due course.

Mrs Cochrane: Following the Assembly's approval yesterday of the Supply resolution for the expenditure plans of Departments and other public bodies as detailed in the 2014-15 Main Estimates, I welcome the opportunity to now contribute to this stage of the Budget Bill. On the surface, the Budget Bill is quite dry. However, it is crucial legislation for every public service provided for under the authority of the Assembly, and we must ensure that our plans fit within the context of the current economic climate.

The past financial year has seen some economic growth, which has not been seen for some time. That is a testament to our private sector, which continues to innovate and perform in domestic and international markets. However, we should also recognise the role that our public sector has played in providing the conditions that have aided the recovery. The jobs and economy initiative directed resources to areas to help educate young people, upskill workers and resource businesses, whilst, at the same time, ensuring that we continue to care for the vulnerable and the elderly. Unfortunately, however, much of that good work could stop due to the current impasse on welfare reform.

During yesterday's debate on the Main Estimates, concern was expressed about the public expenditure consequences of non-delivery of welfare reform. I, too, share that concern. The forecast penalty for 2014-15 is £87 million, which simply cannot be met through the reduced requirements that usually materialise in the three monitoring rounds. Cuts to all Departments will therefore

be required. In some ways, that makes a farce of us debating today a Budget that we know will be reduced in the weeks and months ahead.

We are already seeing Departments retreating into their silos, trying to simply manage their individual budgets and protect themselves from the inevitable cuts that will result from the fines that will be imposed. This is not good for Northern Ireland. Our budgetary process needs to be handled maturely and innovatively, and collaboration between Departments is imperative.

We spent months in the Social Development Committee scrutinising the Welfare Reform Bill for Northern Ireland. A number of variations for Northern Ireland have been secured. Of course I agree that we must do as much as we can to protect those in our society who rely on the benefit system, but I believe that the time has come to implement the Bill and to stop cutting our nose off to spite our face. All that we are doing by delaying the legislation is reducing the money that we have to spend on our public services — the very services that are aimed at helping the most vulnerable to escape from poverty.

It is not just the direct financial penalties that we need to concern ourselves with. There are other adverse impacts upon service delivery and the wider economy that cannot be ignored. For example, the Department for Social Development currently employs 1,400 people to provide child maintenance and social security services to people in England on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). DWP has been very clear that, should Northern Ireland not maintain parity and, consequently, no longer have staff experienced in using the IT systems, it will have no option but to relocate those jobs elsewhere. The loss of those jobs would be a huge blow to the local economy.

We owe it to the people of Northern Ireland to maximise the outcomes from our Budget. Therefore, we need leadership from all parties on this issue so that we can focus on service delivery, protect our most vulnerable and bring people out of poverty. We need to continue to reform our public services to ensure that we have the right components in place to continue on the path to economic recovery. I know that party colleagues will raise some other issues in the Budget today, but I think that this is one of the main things that we really need to focus on.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to today's debate as the Chair of the Regional Development Committee.

I start by thanking my colleague the Finance Minister for bringing this motion to the House today. I noted yesterday that the level of the Main Estimates for the Department has reduced by a mere 0.43% from last year, so it is positive that, despite continued pressures, the amount of investment available to the Department has, to all intent and purposes, remained static.

11.45 am

Colleagues on the Committee for Finance and Personnel received a briefing on the Main Estimates from DFP officials on 28 May 2014, during which they summarised the Regional Development allocations. There is a revised asset management unit capital receipts allocation of £17 million; £30 million for the A8 Belfast to Larne project; £2

million for land and compensation costs; £13.6 million for the Magherafelt bypass; £11 million for road structural maintenance; £8.1 million for the Glarryford A26 project; £5 million for the local transport safety measures and road safety improvements; £2.5 million for bus procurement and the completion of the 2013-14 orders.

On the resource side, I note that there is £7.6 million for the moratorium on increasing car parking charges, which was a result of the economy and jobs initiative and is welcomed by the Committee. However, I will lay down a bit of a marker for the Minister. The Committee was briefed on 4 June about the proposed legislation for the transfer of off-street car parks and was quite rightly shocked to hear that there were no proposals to introduce safeguards to provide for the future sales of those assets. Officials were not in a position to indicate the value of the assets and have been asked to forward that information to the Committee. I have since been advised that, based on 2010 figures, the total asset being transferred is £233 million or £256 million at today's prices following inflation. The Committee will not allow those assets to be transferred unless there are substantial safeguards in the legislation to ensure that the public purse does not lose out in the event of any future sale of part or all of those assets, and I hope that the Minister for Regional Development will take note of that position.

The total additional allocation to the Department in the financial year is £96 million, and that is a welcome bonus to a very tight budget. Obviously, we are not in a position to see outcome figures, but I am confident that the Minister for Regional Development and his officials will achieve their spend targets, as has been the experience in recent years.

Investment in the strategic roads infrastructure has a significant impact on our economy and in contributing to confidence in the construction and ancillary industries. For every £1 million invested in our roads, some 28 jobs are sustained. The economic knock-on that those works have in our construction industry and to the suppliers in the industry is immense. Every £1 invested in construction generates £2.84 in total economic activity, and, of course, completion of those roads will allow for faster and more efficient freight operations and for more and better tourism infrastructure and will help to link our most remote communities.

The Committee continues to be concerned, however, about the huge backlog that is accruing in the road structural maintenance programme and is sitting at £830 million. The current departmental budget for the programme is £56 million whilst the independently assessed structural maintenance funding plan (SMFP) level is £133 million, leaving a shortfall of £77 million.

While my colleague the Minister for Finance and Personnel and his Executive colleagues have been very generous in recent years, it would be wholly inappropriate to expect the SMFP level to be continually maintained through future monitoring rounds. Additionally, that method of topping up the pot at monitoring rounds is not necessarily the most efficient, given that the report 'Maintaining strategic infrastructure: roads', issued by the National Audit Office at the end of last week, stated that because the Department for Transport had to bid in year for additional moneys, that resulted in most maintenance being carried out:

"in the autumn and winter, which is less efficient because materials can be more difficult to handle in cold and wet conditions and daylight hours are shorter. As a result of the additional funding for emergency repairs, which is made available at the end of the financial year, almost all highways authorities need extra capacity from the market at the same time, which makes it less likely that they will get value for money".

That was supported by departmental officials presenting to the Committee on the June monitoring round. They stated in their briefing papers:

"The early allocation of additional funding would provide best value for money by allowing more resurfacing work to be done in the summer months during longer hours of daylight leading to traffic management and safety benefits."

It is our opinion that the Minister for Regional Development and his officials need to argue for greater funding certainty for capital projects and maintenance budgets, thereby increasing the potential to achieve better value for money.

It is not all about the roads infrastructure. Importantly, it is also about the sewer and waste water infrastructure. We are all aware of the seriousness of the governance issues and arrangements in Northern Ireland Water, and I thank the Minister of Finance for his continuing discussions with Treasury to try to bring about greater governance and financial flexibility for Northern Ireland Water. However, the Committee has concerns about Northern Ireland Water's long-term budgets, particularly as a number of waste water treatment plants are either at or approaching capacity, increasing the risk to the Northern Ireland economy of infraction proceedings from Europe, which would see significant penalties applied.

We have only to look at the Department of Agriculture and the penalties that it had to pay because of the farm maps issue. Of huge significance to our economy is the overspill into Belfast lough. That not only brings the potential for more infractions but could result in businesses that want to locate in Belfast being refused because its systems cannot take any more capacity. Only yesterday, we heard about future developments planned for Belfast harbour and the positive benefits that that new investment will have on our economy. We cannot and must not jeopardise such investment.

Those are matters that the Minister for Regional Development and his Department need to address urgently in order to protect and grow our economy in order to bring about meaningful and strategic investment in our construction and service industries and to put a plug firmly into the very real potential flow of infraction penalties away from investment in our economy and into the black hole of Brussels. I can assure the Minister and his officials that he will have the support of the Committee if he does so.

I expect that other Committee members will contribute to the debate and may cover areas that I have not touched on. I again thank my colleague the Finance Minister for bringing the motion to the Chamber, and I assure him and the House that the Committee for Regional Development will continue to hold the Department to account for its use of moneys granted to it.

Before I draw to a close, Mr Deputy Speaker, as a Member of the House, I will raise an issue that was spoken about

yesterday, when the Deputy Chair of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister spoke on behalf of that Committee. I want to put it on the record for clarity. At last Wednesday's meeting, the Chair told the Committee that the June monitoring papers had arrived only a couple of hours before the meeting. It was quite apparent that he and the Deputy Chair, Mr Lyttle, who spoke yesterday, had done a side deal and decided that neither of them would chair the meeting. Initially, nine members of the Committee were present, including the Chair and Deputy Chair when they were there. I have to say, for the record, that, although other members had not seen the papers —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hope that the Member will be able to tie this in with the Budget Bill.

Mr Spratt: This is to do with the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, because it shows how the Budget could have been held back or stymied in some way as a result of it. I want to put it on record that I was elected as Acting Chair after the Chair and Deputy Chair had left, and the officials who were waiting to speak on the June monitoring round were questioned very effectively by the seven members from the three parties who were left, including the Chair's colleague Mr Cree, who remained and asked very effective questions. So business was done, stunt politics failed to work, and we were able to continue, today and yesterday, with the Budget debates.

I hope that that ties in, Mr Deputy Speaker, but it is important to put on record what happened last Wednesday at the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Mr Weir: I will try to follow that.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Please do not.

Mr Weir: As a — hopefully — reasonably responsible MLA, I will try my best not to stymie the Budget, the Budget process or the debate.

Arguably, one of the pitfalls of being a member of the Finance and Personnel Committee is that, although we have a certain level of additional insight and involvement with the budgetary process, each year we rise on the Budget and try our best to find something novel to say about it. I assure Members that I will not burden them with anything novel but will keep to the same well-trodden script of previous years.

The budgetary process has been criticised, and it has been said that it should be every year. All of us, from the youngest Member to the oldest, can remember days when Budgets, particularly those written across the water, were delivered amid high levels of fear or expectation.

I have just spotted the honourable Member for West Belfast coming into the Chamber, so I hope that that does not mean that we are soon to have an hour or two of his dissection of the Budget. We shall see.

With traditional Budgets, there was fear and expectation. It was almost a roller-coaster feeling: would it be a giveaway budget or one that was more geared towards austerity? From an economic perspective, the end result, whether in Northern Ireland or across the UK as a whole, was that there was a roller-coaster quality to it. It meant that it was very difficult for organisations and Departments to effectively plan in a more strategic manner over time.

Over the last 10 to 15 years, an important development, although it is criticised for dullness or inflexibility, is that we have been able to set longer-term Budgets. That is an advantage, and I welcome the Bill as part of the process. An encouraging element in the economy is that we have seen a certain level of economic revival and confidence that we can move forward.

However, there is no doubt, as I will say later, that there is a great shadow hanging over the Budget. It has been touched on by others, and it is the shadow of the failure of some parties to deal effectively with welfare reform and the major implications that that will have.

12.00 noon

There is also a wider challenge. It is one that the Minister is embracing very effectively but to which our government system is perhaps a little slow to react. There is a challenge to ensure that there is stability, but there is also a need for innovation and fresh thinking on public expenditure. Take, for example, the delivery of services. Ultimately, people care about is ensuring that they get the best possible service at the best possible value. That is not simply a matter of saving money. There are issues with opportunity costs. If you fail to save money in one bid, it means that fewer resources are available in another section. The innovative work on public sector reform — the Minister pioneered that as part of the budgetary process and as part of the priority of delivering high-quality and efficient public services in the Programme for Government, which is fed into the Budget — and the creation of the public sector reform division are a step forward. As part of looking at reform, we should consistently look at how we can better deliver.

I remember, going back to a previous Finance Minister who is now the First Minister, one of the criticisms. I am paraphrasing, but, at times, one of the problems was that Departments tended to look at the 3% of new money available or the changes required and, effectively, take for granted 97% of their budget and not examine it. A positive aspect of Departments' savings delivery plans is a much more critical examination of their own budget. I join others in expressing regret that one Department, namely the Department of Education, has not embraced that. Constantly looking at innovation is very valuable in trying to deliver through the Budget. To that extent, the move largely precipitated by actions across the water on a new attitude to financial transaction capital is to be welcomed, but it is an area in which we, collectively as an Assembly, need to do better.

We should realise that whatever the position of the economy as a whole and whichever party wins next year's general election at Westminster, regardless of whether it is dependent on help from outside, we will still be in a situation of tightened financial circumstances for Northern Ireland. I think that, if anything, as there is further work to clear the Budget deficit, we will find that that will get tighter. Despite that, it is good to see the projected figures for capital spend. The Chair of the Committee for Regional Development mentioned the benefits of capital spend. He mentioned the multiplier effect and the impact on our economy, particularly the construction sector. Even with all the constraints, we still project a capital spend for next year of around £1.1 billion. That will be of benefit, and we can supplement it with financial transactions capital. It is,

perhaps, a little disappointing that, although good projects have come forward, there is still a large pot of money that could be spent through that route. It is a question of the right projects coming forward. I appreciate that that deals much more with partnership with the private sector, but it is a key challenge that needs to be put in place.

I turn now to one other aspect, which is an area that I have been involved in for some time. I certainly welcome the provisions made in the Budget for the implementation of RPA. It is important that, as we move towards a more efficient system of 11 councils, which will better deliver for all our citizens, we do not have the unfortunate, unforeseen circumstances of some citizens being left with a steep rise in their rates bill. Consequently, in addition to the support given, there was provision for rates smoothing and an allocation to ratepayers to ensure that they would not lose out. The £30 million set aside by the Executive is very useful. Of course, we always look at the negative side of the coin. However, there is a realisation that, for quite a large number of people across Northern Ireland, rates convergence will mean that they go from a higher rates level to a lower rate; that is to be welcomed. In the priority of the Executive, particularly the Finance Minister, to aid the economy, ensuring that people have money in their pockets to spend is very helpful.

There is also a realisation, which, again, is encompassed in the Budget, the issue of support for businesses. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but approximately 50% of businesses now have some relief support. That is important as we face a much more global market in which businesses face pressure not simply from downturns in spending but from the greater availability of capital and movement of trade and the consistently increasing opportunities for both exports and imports. It is not said often enough that efforts to provide that support for businesses, particularly new businesses — small business rates relief, industrial de-rating, empty shop rates concessions and empty property rate relief — have helped to spread the burden of rates a lot better, with the end result that, on both the domestic and non-domestic side, ratepayers in Northern Ireland pay an awful lot less than their equivalents across the water. In difficult economic circumstances, that can only help our businesses and enterprise, and it can only help people to retain money to spend on those services.

There is no doubt that, despite all the good work that is being done, a major challenge lies ahead. It is one that, I have to say, two of the parties in the Chamber have effectively ducked so far: welfare reform. I agreed very much with Mrs Cochrane when she spoke about the direct cost to services and the long-term implications for jobs and the parity issue. The potential impact on the Budget is estimated at about £100 million. We cannot simply pretend that we can take that sort of hit without it impacting on front line services for vulnerable people. Those at lower levels in the Civil Service may ultimately not get the pay rise that they were hoping for. There may have to be cuts to vital services. I suspect that there will not be a great deal of sympathy for saying, "We wanted to ensure that we did not have a cap on welfare spending so that someone who is on the equivalent of £35,000 gross is capped at that point". There are some decisions that have to be made. I await someone making the case and saying, "We will spend all that money on welfare and make the cuts in Departments", but there is not that level of honesty or transparency

among those who oppose this. There seems to be a belief that the welfare reforms can simply be ignored and that there will be no consequences whatsoever. There are clear consequences. I would have more admiration if someone were to say, "Actually, to preserve this level of welfare spending, I am prepared to make the following sacrifices and cuts in other Departments". At least that would be an honest position. I am not sure that it would be a particularly wise or financially prudent position, but at least it would be honest.

In yesterday's Supply resolution debate, it was mentioned that the current subvention was calculated at something in the region of £9.6 billion. I know that there are arguments that it could be a little bit higher or a little bit lower. However, there is a wider issue beyond simply the implications over the next few years of failure to grasp welfare reform. If we were foolish enough to go down the route of breaking parity on welfare, we would break parity on taxation and, ultimately, the block grant and would face a situation in which any Chancellor would simply say to the Assembly, "Well, if you want x, y and z, raise more money yourself". That would mean either higher taxation or much lower expenditure. The reality is that, as a region of the United Kingdom, we benefit from parity, as other regions do. Going down a line that threatens that parity and that opportunity to protect the lowest paid in our society by having that parity is a very short-sighted approach. If, in doing so, some of the parties opposite find some fig leaf to hide behind and if that provides comfort to them in signing up to what needs to happen, I am happy with whatever fig leaf they get in that regard.

The reality is that there are tough decisions to be made. As an Executive, we need to move forward on the basis of practical realities, such as the very fine Budget in front of us today. No Budget supplies every penny to every project that all of us around the Chamber would like to see, but, overall, this is a balanced and good Budget. Let us not throw away the good work of that Budget by going into a land of make-believe and pretending that some of the implications of the wider financial bid cannot be faced up to.

I hope that I have not engaged in what the last Member talked about — stunt-ery and taking actions of that nature. We need to send out a responsible message that faces up to reality but also says that we have a good Budget today that the House should back.

Mr P Ramsey: I look forward to participating in the debate on the Budget. The SDLP did not support the 2011-15 Budget for important reasons that my colleague Dominic Bradley has already outlined to the House. That, however, is no direct criticism of the present Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, who is probably one of our more effective Ministers in discharging his duties. His task was made greater because the Department for Employment and Learning — I am a member of the Employment and Learning Committee — was asked to make a resource saving of nearly £400 million across the four Budget years. In that regard, there is no direct criticism of you, Minister, but it is clear that we did not vote for that Budget at that time.

I want to reiterate some of the points that I made earlier about the legislation that Stephen Farry has brought forward on the blacklisting of workers. Our party is very content to support the Department for Employment and Learning's legislation. I hope that we will outlaw, once and for all, the blacklisting that occurs right across Northern

Ireland. I reiterate that the SDLP was the only party in the Assembly that voted against the increase in pension age for public servants and the reduction of redundancy payments for civil servants. In doing so, the SDLP clearly demonstrated our commitment to protecting the interests of hard-pressed households and trade union members. It would be welcome if the rest of the Assembly were to do the same.

I reiterate that, in recent times, following on from some of Peter Weir's comments, we have seen an increase in zero-hour contracts in the volatile job market, which has meant that low-paid workers and those on short-term contracts find it harder than ever to pay the family bills. That is clear and obvious. In this budgetary process, we should consider ways to legislate on and provide funds to tackle that most important issue. It is imperative that the issue of zero-hour contracts is adequately addressed to protect workers.

Our students — a most important subject — are now in a worse place than they were in 2011, when the Budget was set without providing clarity on student finance, student fees or the education maintenance allowance. Additionally, we are yet to see a rise in the student cap, which would, undoubtedly, create jobs and limit the brain drain and the emigration from Northern Ireland, to which my colleague Dominic Bradley made clear reference. That is happening more often in this area today.

12.15 pm

I will now address some issues relating to my constituency, particularly one that would prove a great boost to Derry and to the north-west region of Ireland. There are plans for a substantial university campus in Derry: the Minister will clearly be aware of the One Plan. The key driver of the One Plan is the delivery of the expansion of the campus at Magee. However, we have not seen any funding for the One Plan. We have seen no long-term goals for achieving it. Nearly every citizen in the city participated in the consultation on the One Plan. The most important infrastructural development that could occur in Derry is the expansion of the Magee campus. Economically, socially and culturally, it would make a huge difference.

I was disappointed to find out recently that a call was made for funding, under Together: Building a United Community, an initiative through the Treasury as part of the economic package for Northern Ireland, that resulted in substantial moneys being allocated to the relocation of University of Ulster from Jordanstown to the centre of Belfast. However, a small project involving a new teaching block at the Magee campus that was to cost £10 million was denied. Who ultimately determined the outcome of that application? Who determined that almost £40 million would go to Belfast when a small project involving a teaching unit, which would have helped Magee evolve and create more classrooms, was denied?

The Magee campus has made a huge expression of interest in lands at the Foyle and Londonderry College. Its plans include the creation of a new institute for sustainable technologies, the expansion of business and professional services, the creation of an institute for health and well-being and the expansion of computing electronic and software courses. That is where the jobs are. Clearly, the new future lies in the creative industries, the IT sector and finance, yet we are denied this in the north-west. Jobs in

that sector are those that modern business and industry will require.

Was it the Minister's Department that appraised the business case? Was it the Department for Employment and Learning, the Exchequer or the Northern Ireland Office, which were part of the Together: Building a United Community project? The Minister and the Executive must face up to the fact that, during the intervening period between this debate and the implementation of the massive cuts in the Department for Employment and Learning's resource budget, real people will be unable to take advantage of the services that we, in this House, are trying to allocate every day.

Questions have to be asked about youth unemployment. Why did the Department for Employment and Learning surrender £1 million, when every Member in this House knows the history of increasing youth unemployment and the 44,000 NEETs across Northern Ireland. Why are we surrendering money?

I reiterate to the Minister that my constituency has yet to see any real commitment from the Executive to Magee. Would he be minded to support the One Plan regeneration plan? There have been massive funding injections for the move of the University of Ulster from Jordanstown to Belfast and it is no wonder that the people of Derry in my constituency feel that Stormont is doing nothing for them. I understand the apathy that they have towards Stormont, when time after time, decisions are made that clearly put the city and the young people in my area at a disadvantage. We need to prepare and have a real regional Budget, one that recognises the intrinsic need for deprivation and historical indifference to be given the attention that really addresses the non-existence afforded to my people by the Executive when it comes to providing a fair, regional, balanced Administration that will provide opportunities for all.

That is what we are here for. We all enter politics to try to improve the quality of life, but that is becoming much harder when we represent areas that are continuously deprived of infrastructure, jobs and education. The Budget needs to be looking regionally and subregionally in order to have an impact.

I have met the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister for Employment and Learning about an economic inactivity study that they carried out. The study will result in trying to create pilot programmes or projects across Northern Ireland. It came about as a part of a Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) report that it gave to the Employment and Learning Committee in November of last year.

Having the City of Culture brought great things to the north-west. It brought a sense of great worth. People were feeling confident about themselves and very proud of the city. However, even given the City of Culture year and the amount of money — good money — that was invested by a lot of Departments, the level of unemployment rose in Derry. We all thought that the legacy of the City of Culture would be greater employment opportunities. It has failed.

We have an economic inactivity report now. How much money is allocated to it? Again, there are no budget lines. I make it clear that the report has to look at hot spots across Northern Ireland. Those hot spots have been identified as being in parts of west Belfast, wider Belfast and urban

areas, but clearly the biggest hot spot is Derry and the north-west, where there are high levels of unemployment and youth unemployment but, most importantly, very high levels of economic inactivity.

We have to prioritise the Budget. Dominic Bradley and our party have consistently said that you cannot provide a four-year Budget plan without renewing it every year when circumstances change and when we are clearly not hitting targets that other places, such as England, are hitting when it comes to creating greater employment opportunities. Even in the media yesterday, the big story was that Northern Ireland is not hitting targets.

The Minister for Employment and Learning recently brought forward legislation in the form of the Work and Families Bill. Again, it is legislation essentially inspired by Westminster. The Bill must dovetail with other key policies and strategies, including those for early years, childcare, play, leisure, and cohesion, sharing and integration. Similar consideration must be given to how it impacts on the work of DETI, the rural development plans and, most importantly, poverty reduction strategies. There are too many people in Northern Ireland on the breadline. The terminology that we are all now using is the “working poor”. We have to address that need, so we need to have an injection of investment into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

We had a huge event recently in the Long Gallery promoting science, technology, engineering and maths. That is the future. We need to provide those subjects, and not just in secondary and grammar schools. We have to promote and advocate STEM, but we need to invest in it in primary schools in order to generate interest.

The Committee for Employment and Learning carried out an extensive inquiry into careers. The Careers Service across Northern Ireland has failed, because we are not appropriately addressing future needs, such as what our young people need; what jobs they require; and what third-level education they should undertake. Parents' greatest choice in life is for their son or daughter to become a teacher, but what is the point in promoting that now when we find that so many hundreds, if not thousands, of them are not in work? Future jobs are going to be in the creative industries, and that is why, Minister, there has to be investment in the Careers Service across the board, and collaboratively, so that good money is spent and good investment is made to save money. We must promote and progress them consistently, as they are essential for the development of a strong knowledge-based and skilled workforce. Without such investment, our young people and students will be disadvantaged — they are continually disadvantaged — and our economic growth will be hindered precisely as we prepare to take advantage of the beginnings of what I spoke about: a global financial upturn that we have not yet seen.

The Minister has to respect and value other parties' contributions to the debate. We are meaningfully playing our part in the Executive and in stable Government, but, at times, it becomes so difficult and frustrating when people ignore us and do not listen to points about those regional disadvantages. It is about time that people lived up to the mark. The Executive are there to provide a future for everyone across Northern Ireland.

Mr Kinahan (The Chairperson of the Audit Committee): I am grateful to speak in the debate. Initially, I will speak as the Chair of the Audit Committee and then, if I may, touch on some education matters.

On behalf of the Audit Committee, I wish to confirm that the provision for the Northern Ireland Audit Office in the Budget (No. 2) Bill corresponds with the amount that was agreed by the Audit Committee and laid before the Assembly earlier this year. Those amounts were also included in the Audit Office's corporate plan for 2014-15 to 2016-17. The plan identifies three key areas in which the Audit Office believes that it can add considerable value to the Northern Ireland public sector. Those are encouraging further improvement in financial management; promoting the proper conduct of public business; and promoting improvement in the efficiency and quality of services that are provided to the taxpayer. The Audit Committee endorses those key areas.

While there have undoubtedly been improvements in the quality of public sector financial management, good governance and propriety, and the delivery of services in recent years, there remains significant scope for improvement. We want the Audit Office to use its influence across the public sector to assist in identifying opportunities for reducing costs and improving productivity, efficiency and service delivery.

The Audit Office's valuable service comes at a cost, and the Committee welcomes the fact that it has been steadily diminishing that cost to the public purse. During a period of prolonged financial pressures, in which securing the maximum benefit for every taxpayer pound has never been more important, the Northern Ireland Audit Office has reduced its net resource requirement year on year, all the while maintaining and even adding to the quality and breadth of service it provides to the Assembly. Specifically, the Audit Office's 2014-15 Estimate provides for a decrease in its net resource requirement of 1.5% in cash terms from its Estimate for 2013-14 — £8.2 million compared with £8.327 million. What is more, that represents a cash terms reduction of 12.7% from its 2010-11 net resource requirement of £9.397 million.

I want everyone to keep it in mind that the Audit Office saves the taxpayer an average of £26 million a year through its work, and that is only the work that can be measured in financial terms. We anticipate further reductions in the Northern Ireland Audit Office's net resource requirement of 1.7% in 2015-16 and a further 2.2% in 2016-17. If realised, those reductions would represent a cash terms reduction of 16.1% from the 2010-11 baseline.

The Audit Committee endorses the provision in the Main Estimates for the Audit Office, commends the Audit Office for the efficiencies it has achieved and looks forward to the continuing valuable support that it provides to the Assembly. I remind everyone that a saving of £26 million a year is not to be sniffed at.

I will move on to education. I keep in mind the words I used in speaking about the Audit Office and highlight the need for value for money. At times such as these, it is essential that we find the most efficient way of spending every penny. Sometimes, I wonder, Minister, whether we are making the effort to do so.

The job of every Committee is to scrutinise all the actions of its Department and Minister, but there are two blocks to this happening. One is that the Department or the Minister does not provide the figures in time and there is a lack of training of Committee members. The other, as the Minister knows, is the lack of transparency because of the jargon that it is all written in. I ask whether the Minister is considering looking at how accounts are presented so that we get them in a way that we and the public can understand, and everything is totally transparent.

12.30 pm

I know that the Minister of Education wants flexibility, and there is no harm in that, as long as we know all of the figures and they are fed to us. We have been told in Committee that the Department of Education is the worst at making efficiency savings, yet that seems hard to believe when you compare it with what we get from OFMDFM. Will the Minister consider setting in place guidelines, incentives and maybe even penalties so that total transparency is possible in all Departments, but especially in Education? I am told that this may be going on, and I wonder whether the Minister will update us on whether we are getting to a more transparent system.

I return more specifically to education. Yesterday, the Chair of the Committee for Education said, quite rightly, that the Minister does extremely well on capital spend, but I would like things to be done better in many other areas. While we are on the subject of capital spend, I know that the Minister loathes the term “shovel ready”, but I push the point again that every school’s plans must be financially sound, properly designed and ready for purpose. When I was in council, you used to see, every quarter, a list of all of the roads and pavements and where they were in the line of priority. If the same thing could happen with schools, they could at least see the future and when their school will be rebuilt, or even that it is on the list. Something like that would give hope to the teachers and pupils.

We have a disastrous system of area planning at the moment. I wonder whether the Minister has taken on board in his budget that, if the Treacy judgement runs the way that it is going, there could be an extra cost from legal challenges to what has already happened in area planning, in which we have seen very little movement towards sharing. As I pointed out the other day, only 16 applications to share came from 1,200 schools. We all need to do a whole lot better, and I hope that the Minister will use the money from his budget to encourage it to happen more and more and in a much better way.

Yesterday, the Chair said that we need to make sure that the controlled sector has its own body and that it will need funding. However, we also need funding for the voluntary grammar sector and, indeed, the integrated sector to give them the same powers and the same bodies. I do not think that anyone is looking at budgeting for that. We need to start moving towards the single shared education system that we want to see.

Another concern is special needs. As we know, legislation is looming, and we have seen in the Estimates from the Minister that an extra £10 million is being spent —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Can the Member indicate whether he will conclude in the next couple of minutes,

because we need to finish for the Business Committee meeting?

Mr Kinahan: I have a good bit more to say, so I will not conclude, Deputy Speaker, in the next three or four minutes. If you would like me to conclude now, I will start again later, or are we finished?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think that we will leave it until after Question Time. The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.34 pm.

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

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Health Service: Financial Pressures

1. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current financial pressures facing the health service. (AQO 6302/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): My Department faces a considerable financial challenge in 2014-15, with some £160 million of additional resources estimated to be required in order to balance the books. Of that £160 million, £115 million of the deficit is rolling forward from 2013-14, much of which was dealt with through the non-recurrent measures in 2013-14, including additional allocations for the in-year monitoring rounds and managed slippage/deferral expenditure.

The remaining deficit relates to new service developments that are essential to sustain current policies and to provide new cost-effective therapies. Together with cost pressures, such as pay and demographic changes, those amount to £305 million in 2014-15 and are offset by £90 million of Executive funding and £170 million of further savings.

Financial deficits are allocated in all five integrated trusts due to front line service pressures in a range of areas, such as unscheduled care, elective care, nursing levels, specialist services, mental health, learning disability and childcare. Unfortunately, despite the additional Executive funding and our demanding savings plans, we still have a funding gap of £160 million, which means that we have submitted a significant number of bids in the June monitoring round. I strongly recommended that the Executive lend their support to this critical investment in health and social care services.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his response. At a recent meeting of the Health Committee, officials from your Department informed the Committee that, if the £160 million of extra funding that you have in for is not provided, waiting times will be compromised, safety and quality of services will be compromised and, indeed, the Programme for Government will be compromised. Surely, Minister, that is a dreadful state of affairs. Do you still maintain that the health service is not in crisis? If you do not get the funding, how will you provide a good, decent service for all our constituents?

Mr Poots: I would have thought that the Member would be appropriately saying that the health service needs to get that funding, as opposed to looking at the prospect of not getting it.

Mr McCarthy: You did not get it last time.

Mr Poots: We did get money in each of the monitoring rounds, and I greatly appreciate the support of the Finance Minister in that. However, this is not a matter for the Health

Minister and the Finance Minister; this is a matter for the entire Executive. It is important that the Assembly and the Executive recognise that the financial pressures that are faced by health and social care in the coming year will do serious damage to the health service if we cannot go some way to meeting them.

Mr McKinney: Will the Minister outline how the demonstrable underfunding of Transforming Your Care has affected its implementation in terms of initiatives started, not started, held up, completed and time taken?

Mr Poots: It is critical that Transforming Your Care happen, because it will ensure that we save money and have a health service that is fit for purpose as we look to the future. To make that happen, however, requires an investment in the first instance. We have invested money in it, but not enough. Therefore, we require further funding for Transforming Your Care, and we require further assistance to ensure that that goes forward.

A gap of £160 million in a budget of over £4.5 billion is significant, and we really need to look at filling it. When, on top of that, I am requested to find a further £50 million to fund welfare reform, that puts us in real difficulty. For example, at this moment in time, the unions are asking me to proceed with the pay rise. I want to proceed with that pay rise, which is very modest, but how can I with a £210 million gap? The remarkable thing is that we have people who are earning considerably less than £20,000 a year to whom I cannot give a 1% uplift. That is because people on the other side of the House want to ensure that no cap is put on welfare, which is the equivalent of £35,000 gross. So, because they are starving us of the funding through welfare reform, they want people who are not working to be receiving over £35,000 and they do not want to give a pay rise to the auxiliaries, the porters, the domestics — those low-paid staff in our health service.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given this £160 million gap in health funding, was Michael McGimpsey right when he said that there was inadequate funding of health?

Mr Poots: I suspect that had he been right, we would have been paying off 4,000 staff three years ago. We would have been moving into chapter 11 three years ago. The health service would have been in crisis day after day, and we would not have been able to do things like the satellite radiotherapy centre at Altnagelvin. We would not have been able to provide the 24/7 cath labs that we are about to. We would not have been able to provide drugs for nine months to people with arthritis. We have reduced that to three months. We have done a whole series of things. We would not have been able to take on the additional nurses, doctors and allied health professionals. So he was not right.

We are in a different situation now. Demographics have moved on. There are new drugs and challenges, and we need to address that. I need the support of the Assembly to address it.

Health Service: Innovation

2. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to promote innovation across the health service. (AQO 6303/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am committed to healthcare innovation, and a number of actions are already well developed. These include the drive to implement Transforming Your Care that has innovation at its core; the clinical research networks across all trusts that to date have enabled some 25,000 people to participate in clinical trials of potentially beneficial new disease-prevention strategies, diagnostics, treatments or care practices, and our continuing support of Health and Social Care (HSC) R&D.

Our memorandum of understanding on connected health and prosperity with Minister Foster's Department and Invest NI has led to the Northern Ireland Connected Health ecosystem, engaging organisations from health, academia and industry to consider the development and procurement of innovative solutions for the health sector.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Minister for his detailed answer. Does he agree with me that research and development are an important aspect of our health service? To what degree is he focusing on this?

Mr Poots: Again, we are now part of UK-wide research and development. That involves an investment of some £2 million, but it has already released far greater multiples of funding to Northern Ireland for research to take place here. We have also established an ecosystem that involves health and social care, our universities and business. We identify the issues and problems; the universities identify potential solutions, in conjunction with our clinicians and specialist staff, and business can then go out and make that a viable sales proposition. In that respect, we are moving those ahead in Northern Ireland.

Clinical trials are an important income stream for our trusts, enabling further investment in research and development and innovation activities. Our achievements to date, through HSC R&D support, include Province-wide clinical research networks that enable patients with any of 13 different diseases to participate in clinical trials of potentially beneficial novel prevention strategies, diagnostics, treatments and care practices. Clinical trials are an important magnet for the attraction of investment by government, including the EU, charities and businesses. To date, some 25,000 local people have participated, and this is a major source of evidence for beneficial innovation.

A Northern Ireland public health research network is also in place, driving innovations that involve the HSC and the wider local communities to provide evidence for improved population health.

Mr Gardiner: What discussions have taken place in the Executive in relation to applying for EU Horizon 2020 research and innovation funds?

Mr Poots: We have spent a lot of time developing our European links, specifically with the idea of targeting Horizon 2020 funding and bringing it to Northern Ireland. Therefore, Northern Ireland winning three-star reference region status — and only 13 countries achieved that status — is significant. We now chair the group of premier league countries on that work in Europe.

As a consequence, we have developed relationships with European Commissioners and key people on the potential for Northern Ireland leading the way in many healthcare innovations. I believe that this will deliver significant benefit to our population, bring investment to Northern Ireland and

help to ensure that we retain people who have real quality and skills in health and social care.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. What advances have been made in e-health initiatives in the last couple of years?

Mr Poots: E-health is an area that we in Northern Ireland are leading on. For example, the only place in the United Kingdom to have a robot working effectively at a hospital is at Daisy Hill, in conjunction with Craigavon Hospital, where the intensive care doctor is able to do a ward round in the high-dependency unit in Daisy Hill remotely. That ensures that we can care for and support greater numbers of people in the high-dependency unit in Daisy Hill.

We have set up a programme for 20,000 people who are able to self-monitor, feed that information back into the central data at Fold in Holywood, where there are specialist nurses. If they identify that someone's readings are outside the norm, they will telephone them, talk to them and give them advice. We have found that this is a great means of keeping people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other chronic illnesses in particular out of hospital.

There is a whole series of other things that we are doing. We have virtual clinics so that you do not have to go to the big hospital very often to see the specialist; you can do it from another hospital. Indeed, some people are doing it using Skype at home. We are doing a wide range of things in e-technology and I think that there will be massive opportunities for the health service moving forward in that direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 8 and 10 have been withdrawn.

Blueprint for Change

3. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the findings from the British Association of Social Workers 'A Blueprint for Change' report. (AQO 6304/11-15)

Mr Poots: I attended the launch of a report by the Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers (NIASW) on 12 May and welcomed the spotlight on good social work practice and the important role of social work in the provision of adult services. The report highlights challenges being faced by social workers, with a particular focus on bureaucracy, and makes 24 recommendations, calling for a reduction in unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy as well as better workload management and support for first-line managers. My officials are meeting the association in the near future to discuss these findings.

Social workers work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society, and it is a difficult and often stressful job. I want their skills and knowledge to be deployed where they are best utilised. The report provides information from a practice perspective on the barriers to social workers using their skills and knowledge to best effect. This information will usefully inform work that is being led by the directors of social work from the five trusts on reducing bureaucracy, which is an identified priority in the Department's social work strategy. The NIASW is playing a key role in supporting the implementation of this strategy.

Work is also under way, as part of the social work strategy, to look at the workload management and role of first-line managers in supporting social workers. Again, this report will usefully inform that work.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Leas-Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. Does the Minister agree that the level of bureaucracy and paperwork impedes the face-to-face duty of care for social workers?

2.15 pm

Mr Poots: I am very sympathetic to that idea. When we are taking cases and social workers are taking cases, we have to be very careful that those cases are robust. Therefore, it is not something for the Department of Health to address alone. The Department of Justice and the courts also have a key role to play. We have been having discussions with them, and we want to identify a means by which we can have that robust presentation but reduce social workers' paper workload. It is very important that we do that, because, when social workers are spending a disproportionate amount of their time on paperwork, they are not spending time with the vulnerable people whom they need to be supporting.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. He will recall that, some time ago, he announced that his Department was commissioning a value-for-money piece of work and an audit. Is he in a position to update the House on the outcomes of the report?

Mr Poots: There are, for example, 800 social workers employed in adult services. The benchmarking shows that social workers in Northern Ireland spend more time on client work than their UK counterparts, with approximately 81% of their time being spent on client-specific work. The majority of social workers have a caseload of fewer than 40 cases, which appears to be higher than that of their UK counterparts. However, owing to ambiguity around the definition of "caseload", it is difficult to draw robust conclusions. Of the social workers surveyed in Northern Ireland, 95% considered the level of supervision that they receive to be adequate, with 72% receiving supervision monthly or more frequently.

Mrs D Kelly: The report refers to staff morale in the social work profession. You may well be aware that some trusts are using agencies to recruit social workers. Those social workers are getting paid between £6 and £7 an hour, and the agency is getting substantially more than that.

Will the Minister undertake to review the employment of social workers across the trusts to ensure that young recruits and graduates who come out this year will get a full-time job instead of having to suffer the poorly paid agency regime?

Mr Poots: If the Member has evidence of that, she should put it in writing to me so that I can follow it up. We need to be very careful that what we present is accurate, and, if what she says is the case, it is something that we will seek to address.

Nursing: Investment

4. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he is investing in the nursing profession. (AQO 6305/11-15)

Mr Poots: I recognise the important role that nurses play across the health service, particularly in the context of pressures across the HSC.

In March 2013, over 14,000 whole-time-equivalent qualified nurses were employed in HSC, representing an increase on the previous year of more than 300 nurses.

I have approved the tool Delivering Care: Nurse Staffing Levels in NI, which is being used to determine nurse staffing in general, specialist, adult medical and surgical units. That tool will result in more nurses, reduce the usage of bank and agency nurses and enhance the role of ward sisters or charge nurses to enable them to time to fulfil their ward leadership responsibilities. Furthermore, my Department is reviewing the nursing and midwifery workforce and will provide a workforce plan to ensure that it is fit for purpose over the next five years.

To ensure progress on Transforming Your Care, I have increased the number of health visitors in training from 18 in 2011-12 to 61 for the incoming year. I have also increased the numbers of district nurses in training from nine in 2011-12 to 23 for the incoming year. I held a round-table meeting with representatives of the Royal College of Nursing in June 2013, and I am actively addressing all the concerns that they raised, particularly those on the nursing and midwifery education commissioning budget, which is being transferred to the Chief Nursing Officer.

Mr Girvan: In his answer, the Minister mentioned workforce planning. Will he outline the next steps for workforce planning in the framework for nursing and midwifery?

Mr Poots: The framework will be further developed in a phased approach in an effort to address all areas of clinical practice, such as emergency departments, district nursing, health visiting, and mental health and learning disability care settings. The range will not prescribe the staff numbers that should be on every ward at every point in time; rather, a normative range will be developed in discussion with staff, managers and commissioners. That is dependent on a range of factors that influences the planning process.

The planning processes will include the triangulation of findings from recognised workforce planning tools, alongside key performance indicators for safe, effective and person-centred care. Normative staff will have a phased implementation when resources become available. It is expected that HSC trusts will take account of the recommended staffing ranges in the framework in developing proposals to meet the objectives in Transforming Your Care, in supporting new proposals for additional resources and when developing efficiency and productivity plans. Commissioners will be able to use the framework, within which they can agree and set consistent ranges for nursing workforce requirements for providers of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

Ms S Ramsey: Go raibh maith agat, a Leas-Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. During last year's crisis — for want of a better word — in A&E, you committed to upskilling some nursing staff so that they would be able to take a more leading role and discharge patients if necessary. Will you outline how many of those nurses are in place and whether their pay scales have been re-banded up to that level?

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for the question. She was not at the Nurse of the Year awards this year because of ill health, but I made a significant announcement at the event. We are transferring training to the responsibility of the Chief Nursing Officer. That has been very well received and is very positive. Consequently, we are upskilling more staff than before as specialists — for example, as emergency nurse practitioners, in mental health services, in paediatrics, in district nursing and in health visiting. Across the range, we will train more and more nurses to practise at a very specialist level, which makes absolute sense. We will get better results and better value for money, and patients will get better care. It is win-win all round. The nursing staff are up for it. They want to do the job and are ready for the challenge. That is hugely positive. Over the past year, we have seen an increase in our nursing staff of some 316 full-time equivalents. We put our money where our mouth is: when people say that they want more nurses, we deliver more nurses.

Mrs Overend: The Minister's flagship policy, Transforming Your Care, points towards empowering GPs and more specialist nurses to treat patients at an earlier stage, away from a hospital setting. I welcome the recent increase in nursing development funding, but will the Minister explain why the funding was cut by about 10% during 2012-13?

Mr Poots: We got some additional funding throughout 2012-13, but we also overran our budget that year. That is very significant. We could not live within our means. We did not overrun the budget by a large amount, but, while others believed that it was better not to carry out welfare reform and spend the money there, we were running short of money to provide health and social care. When it comes to that, Members need to look at their conscience. If they think that welfare is a higher priority than health, they need to examine their conscience. I think that health is a higher priority. We need to ensure that we can provide the healthcare that the public expect. We need to support our staff who provide that care, give them reasonable remuneration for the job that they do and ensure that they work in reasonable conditions. None of those expectations is too high. However, if we starve the health budget of funding, those expectations will be unmet.

Mrs McKeivitt: Minister, you just mentioned supporting nursing staff and referred to remuneration in particular. Would you support a 1% pay rise for nurses here, as is being discussed in England and Wales?

Mr Poots: I am very supportive of it, but I explained earlier that there is a £210 million budget gap: an existing £160 million and an additional £50 million because we did not proceed with welfare reform. That is because your party and Sinn Féin believe that it is more important, for example, to keep resisting the cap of £26,000 that is coming in in England, Scotland and Wales, which is the equivalent of £35,000 for someone who is taxed on their pay, than it is to give a 1% pay rise to workers who earn less than half that. I do not think that that is a justifiable position, and we really need to look at that again. I want to give nurses and other staff a pay rise, and I hope that Sinn Féin and the SDLP will assist us in doing so and stop starving the health service workers of money by ensuring that it goes to welfare instead of health.

Health Service: Payroll Issues

5. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an assurance that payroll issues within the health service have been resolved. (AQO 6306/11-15)

Mr Poots: I assure the House that my Department, the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and the trusts are committed to ensuring that the payroll issues affecting Health and Social Care staff are addressed and resolved as a matter of urgency. This means individual staff, managers, payroll departments and the payroll system supplier working together and learning lessons when mistakes are made.

Members will be aware that there have been three key issues: the receipt of enhancements such as overtime, incorrect national insurance deductions and the incorrect application of emergency tax codes. In addressing the issues involving the enhancements to basic pay, I highlight the fact that the new payroll system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and the trusts therefore continue to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols and providing further training and support. In addition, we have recently approved further expert support for the HSC payroll functions over the coming months. All employees affected by incorrect national insurance contributions have received payments to address the issue, and a corrective fix has been applied to the system to prevent the issue recurring. Finally, on the application of emergency tax codes, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has reviewed the tax codes of all affected staff and, where appropriate, revised them in time for the May pay run. HMRC has confirmed that some staff will remain on an emergency tax code in line with normal business, and these are being considered case by case.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire le haghaidh a fhreagra go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer. After listening to it, I would like to ask him this: has he considered suspending the roll-out of the payment delivery scheme until he has a guarantee that there will be no repeat of the recent debacle, or is he happy now that all the issues have been resolved?

Mr Poots: The Minister is far from happy. There are 70,000 people on our payroll, and, in the last round, I understand, roughly 500 did not receive the appropriate pay, so I am far from happy about that. However, it would be an absolute disaster if we dismantled that process and went back to what happened before. We are almost there, and we can only apologise to people who have not received their pay. They are entitled to their pay and should get it. We can apologise to them, and we can ensure a second pay run in the month to enable things to move forward. As of 5 June, only a fraction of staff — we are down to fewer than 10 members of staff — still need a fix to the amount owing to them. We are almost there, albeit that we should never have had to go through all the difficulties in the first place.

2.30 pm

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

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

1. **Mr Attwood** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following similar questions to his ministerial colleagues, including those who are his party colleagues, considering the jeopardy that so many people are facing with their future employment, what proposals he is bringing forward, in line with the good example set by Minister Durkan, to relocate health jobs to Coleraine in order to mitigate the horror of the decision imposed by London. (AQT 1241/11-15)

Mr Poots: Of course, those jobs were not lost on the DUP's watch; when it was in the DOE, the jobs stayed in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, the Member asks a valid question. The answer is simple: I have asked my staff to write to each of the trusts and arm's-length bodies (ALBs), indicating that, if administrative jobs are available, Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) staff should be made aware of them. Where there are jobs available in the health and social care system, I encourage DVA staff to apply for them.

Mr Attwood: I want to say to the Minister in respect of his opening comments that, if he asked people in Coleraine, the unions and the workers which party and which Ministers went over the wall for them, they would not look favourably on him and his colleagues.

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

Mr Attwood: He should ask that question rather than smirk at the experience of people in Coleraine whose jobs are now in jeopardy.

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

Mr Attwood: People in Coleraine and the DVA will not be impressed —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Can we have a question, please? If not, we shall move on.

Mr Attwood: Given what people in the DVA in Coleraine are about to experience, do you think that writing letters at this stage is an adequate response from you as Minister?

Mr Poots: I was not the Minister who failed the people in the first instance. Those pressures were on when Sammy Wilson, Arlene Foster and I were in that Department. We did not fail. Given the fact that failure has now happened, I have responded. I am asking trusts and arm's-length bodies to see whether they can assist and provide jobs for the people in Coleraine and other areas. We care very much about those individuals. We care about people having jobs. Jobs have always been a top priority for the DUP throughout its tenure as the lead party in the Executive. From 2007, in the most difficult times, we have always sought to bring jobs to Northern Ireland. It is my party's policy to give people a hand up as opposed to a handout. I am seeking to ensure that we can provide employment for them. If we can provide jobs for those people at all, we will certainly do so. I am asking the trusts and the ALBs to look at that.

Legal Highs: Speckled Reds

2. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the process that his Department is following to make drugs such as Speckled Reds illegal and whether he believes that the response

is timely and speedy enough, given that he will be aware of the coroner's comments last week about the Speckled Reds link to 18 deaths. (AQT 1242/11-15)

Mr Poots: Unfortunately, the Department cannot make them illegal, as it is a reserved matter. When it came to light last year that a large number of people had died as a result of taking such drugs, we did some work on that. We have corresponded with the Home Office, which has the responsibility. Subsequently, the Home Office carried out a review, and I expect something to come forward on how it can respond better to that in the next few weeks or months. I asked the Home Office to look at places like the Republic of Ireland and New Zealand, where reactions are perhaps sharper. We can do more to ensure that those drugs are taken off the streets. The PSNI has been lifting the drugs, not because of some of their content but perhaps because of other things in them. That has enabled the police to confiscate them. However, a lot of the materials produced may be "legal", in spite of the fact that they are very dangerous substances.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra.

I thank the Minister for his answer and, indeed, what he outlined. I made the point to the Minister of Justice that Belfast City Council used by-laws around the regulation of products. I just wonder whether there is now an opportunity for the Minister of Justice, you as the Minister of Health and perhaps the chief executives of the new councils to come up with some swift way of dealing with this type of issue as it arises.

Mr Poots: Councillor Gavin Robinson pressed that issue, and it was a very successful move. I know that counterparts in Scotland and Wales are looking at what went on in Belfast to see whether they can apply that in their cities.

The Executive discussed the matter at last Thursday's meeting, and it was agreed that we would ask the Attorney General to take a look at whether we can provide more flexibility in closing down on these things. We need to be aware that a new drug could be produced every day of the week for the next number of years, so we need to be as fast in responding to what comes forward as the criminal fraternity is in producing the drugs.

Mental Health Capacity Bill: Under-16s

3. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what safeguards are in place for under-16s who are excluded from the draft Mental Health Capacity Bill. (AQT 1243/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is a series of safeguards under a series of Orders, including the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and other Orders and legislation. A considerable amount — a raft — of legislation covers that area as things stand.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. How will the Minister address the criticism of the Children's Law Centre and others that this legislation will disadvantage one of the most vulnerable and least resourced groups, namely the under-16s?

Mr Poots: Considerable advice has been taken on that from the Office of the Legislative Counsel (OLC), the Attorney General's office and the Departmental Solicitor's

Office. This will be the largest piece of legislation to come before the Assembly. We have not been convinced of the added value of doing this at this stage. The Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 will be retained specifically, and that will cover under-16s. Interestingly enough, the Republic of Ireland Government have decided that they will set the age at 18, so other states are doing the same as Northern Ireland.

Social Work: 24/7 Access

4. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline what efforts are being made to improve access to 24/7 social work expertise. (AQT 1244/11-15)

Mr Poots: We have been working quite closely with the social work community on this. In the past year, we have provided 24/7 access to social work teams in each trust across Northern Ireland. So, if you require or someone requires a social worker, 24/7 access is available. That has been developed over the past year, and it is a significant advance.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Minister for his answer. How can the greater availability of social workers help our emergency departments?

Mr Poots: Social work and healthcare go hand in hand. We are very fortunate in Northern Ireland to have health and social care under the one roof. We have our Northern Ireland regional emergency social work service, which provides a response outside the 9 to 5 times. By doing so, it often ensures that people with mental health issues can be dealt with outside a hospital setting in their own home. The service provides the care and support that such people need to get through a time of crisis in their life. Our social workers carry out very important work, which ensures that fewer pressures are applied to our emergency departments.

Pay Issues: Belfast Trust

5. **Ms McCorley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on any progress that has been made to resolve the pay issues faced by health workers in the Belfast Trust area. (AQT 1245/11-15)

Mr Poots: I think that I indicated that to the House when answering previous questions. We identified that the numbers are now very small, and we are thankful for that. I am not happy about anybody not receiving their pay on time, and I will continue to heap pressure on each trust to ensure that they make sure that all staff are paid on time. There is a responsibility on staff as well to get their time sheets in on time and to ensure that their managers put them in on time, but there is also a massive responsibility on those who have introduced the new system to ensure that it works effectively. That was not the case, but it is working much more effectively now. I want to see it working perfectly.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. A few days ago at a protest, Conor McCarthy of Unison said that, every week, even up to last week, members were holding their breath waiting to see whether they were going to be paid at all and that, even the ones who were paid, did not know whether they were going to be paid correctly. Does the Minister believe that the system is fit for purpose?

Mr Poots: I think that the system is fit for purpose. It should have been fit for purpose from the outset. In every pay run in life, somebody will not get the pay that they expected to get because something has not been cleared, such as time sheets to apply for overtime and so forth. That was not the issue here. There were multiple cases, of course, but we are now getting down to a situation where it is much more marginal and is affecting much smaller numbers of people. I want it reduced right down to single figures.

Transforming Your Care: Sinn Féin U-turn

6. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he welcomes the U-turn from the Chair of the Health Committee who, in yesterday's Main Estimates debate, stated that funding for Transforming Your Care should be designated a priority bid. (AQT 1246/11-15)

Mr Poots: I certainly do, because, a few weeks ago, people on the other side of the House were suggesting that we should not proceed with Transforming Your Care but did not produce any alternatives. I am glad that they now recognise that they are incapable of producing alternatives. Therefore, we need to progress with the well-thought-through proposals that have been put forward and ensure that we properly and appropriately finance them. I trust that the Executive will decide to ensure that health service reform can happen so that we can absorb the additional workload that will arise as a result of demographics and greater levels of chronic illnesses. The greater availability of quality drugs will ensure that people can live much longer, and we need to respond to that. Transforming Your Care is the best means of doing that, but it needs to be supported financially.

Mr I McCrea: Does the Minister not find it somewhat ironic that, in calling for the funding to be made available, Sinn Féin and others continue to block welfare reform? Will he outline the impact that not taking welfare reform would have on providing the much-needed funding for Transforming Your Care?

Mr Poots: What is being asked of us would buy us well over 1,000 nurses or allied health professionals. It would buy around 10,000 hip replacements. That is the scale of what is being taken out of the healthcare budget to support welfare reform. However, what galls me most is that, at this moment in time, we are struggling to find a means of giving people on low pay in health and social care a pay rise that they deserve and should get while others who are not working are receiving considerably more money. Members opposite — Sinn Féin and the SDLP — are making the case that that should be the case and that people who are not working should receive more money than people who are working. Those parties are denying me the opportunity to give those people who are working but are on low pay the rise in their salary that they should be entitled to.

2.45 pm

Justice

Crown Court Remuneration

1. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on his proposals for Crown Court remuneration. (AQO 6316/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I have just completed an extensive period of consultation with the Bar Council and the Law Society following the public consultation on Crown Court remuneration. I listened carefully and sympathetically to their representations and, where possible, made adjustments to my proposals, which have recently been made available to the Justice Committee. I have agreed to protect the fees in some categories of cases and types of fee.

The impact of the proposed new fees will be an overall reduction in levels of remuneration for solicitors by 27% and for counsel by 22%. When fully implemented, Crown Court remuneration will be more in line with that in England and Wales.

The high spend on legal aid continues to have a significant impact on my Department's budget. The reforms that I have put forward need to be implemented to minimise the impact on other areas of justice delivery.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he accept that the proposals will have an adverse effect on solicitors' firms in rural areas and a negative impact on his equal access to justice strategy?

Mr Ford: No. There is no evidence to suggest that the changes being made will have a particularly adverse effect. The position will remain that fees will continue to be paid at a slightly higher level than is the case in England and Wales, despite the fact that lawyers in Northern Ireland have referred to the lower cost of running legal services in Northern Ireland.

Mr Givan: The Minister will be acutely aware of the forecast overspend already for legal aid of some £35 million this year. At what point will he decide to bring forward concrete proposals, given the fact that it is unlikely that he will get agreement from the Law Society and the Bar Council for a unified proposal from the Department and the legal profession? Ultimately, there needs to be a point at which the Department brings forward proposals for the Committee to take a decision on.

Mr Ford: I entirely take the Committee Chair's point. Firm proposals are on their way to the Committee, and I trust that it will give them a favourable hearing, given what the Chair has just said about the very significant excess expenditure likely in this financial year compared with the budget. There is a real issue of costs being taken from other key aspects of the justice system in order to pay legal aid fees at a higher rate than is payable anywhere else in these islands.

Mr A Maginness: I have listened very carefully to what the Minister has said. He places his reply in the context of what has happened in England and Wales. Does he not recognise that, as a result of severe cuts in England and Wales, there is, in fact, a crisis in accessing justice? Does the Minister wish to replicate that here? Would he not prefer to enter once again his Department into negotiations with the Law Society and the Bar Council to reach an amicable agreement?

Mr Ford: I thought that lengthy negotiations with the two branches of the profession were exactly what had been happening over the past several months since the formal consultation closed. I have made the point that

the fees that will be payable in Northern Ireland under my proposals exceed those currently payable in England and Wales, from which the Justice Secretary has made proposals, which he has withdrawn temporarily, to make further cuts. Therefore, the reality is that, in circumstances in which solicitors and barristers say that they can run their legal practices cheaper in Northern Ireland, we will still be paying more than in England and Wales and significantly more than what is proposed for England and Wales.

Mr Cree: Having listened to the Minister, I wonder why he will not undertake a full review of costs in the overall judiciary and identify efficiency opportunities.

Mr Ford: Anybody who does not think that, for the four years since the devolution of justice powers, we have been seeking to ensure maximum efficiencies in every part of the justice system really has not been following comments that I have made in the Chamber in the four years since I became Minister. As the Committee Chair highlighted, the reality is that the budget for legal aid is exceeded by the anticipated expenditure for this year by approximately 50%, and the issue clearly requires significant attention.

Mr Deputy Speaker: David McIlveen is not in his place for question 2.

Magilligan Prison

3. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the progress made on the proposed newbuild programme for Magilligan prison. (AQO 6318/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prison Service officials are nearing completion of the outline business case for the redevelopment of Magilligan prison, which will be submitted for approval within the next two months. It is DFP's decision as to whether to grant approval for the capital funding for the project. That decision will determine the timeline for the development of the new prison at Magilligan.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he confirm whether the newbuild will create additional and permanent employment opportunities at HMP Magilligan, which could help to alleviate the unemployment situation in the surrounding area?

Mr Ford: I am afraid that, at this stage and without the approval of DFP, I cannot guarantee that the project will go ahead as I would wish, and nor can I guarantee that there will be additional employment, since one of the key issues for any newbuild will be to ensure that it is manageable in the most efficient manner possible. However, when we talk about employment, we should recognise that we have now completed the voluntary early retirement scheme, with a significant number of officers being able to leave with dignity from the services that they performed in the past, and the introduction of a significant number of new operational staff who will help to implement the planned reforms of the Prison Service.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí. I thank the Minister for his answers. Will he outline what meetings have taken place with local stakeholders about the location of Magilligan to ensure that there is no negative impact on the need to create good community links?

Mr Ford: Members will remember that one of the initial recommendations from the prison review team was to

look at rebuilding Magilligan elsewhere. Following good discussions, in particular with councils in the north-west, we are able to see how better community links can be established to ensure that we provide opportunities for prisoners for outside work, in particular, to ensure connections with local businesses. As a result of that, we have been able to proceed with plans to rebuild at Magilligan.

Mr Dallat: Will the Minister arrange for Members to spend a day in jail in Magilligan — that might be welcomed by the wider world — so that they can see and understand fully the transformation among inmates, particularly with educational opportunities.

Mr Ford: The Prison Service has arranged a number of visits in recent times for Members of the Assembly and, indeed, for members of the Oireachtas, who have also visited Maghaberry prison. I have no doubt that, if Mr Dallat wishes to make a personal visit, he will be welcomed through the gates and possibly back through the gates as well.

Fuel Laundering

4. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on any discussions he has had with the PSNI, the Department of the Environment and other agencies in relation to illegal fuel laundering. (AQO 6319/11-15)

Mr Ford: The law enforcement and policy lead for fuel laundering is with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and my Department is in regular contact with HMRC. The Organised Crime Task Force has a cross-border subgroup devoted to fuel fraud. It is chaired by HMRC and includes members of the PSNI, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. The group meets regularly.

In addition to the ongoing operational work of HMRC, there was an announcement earlier this year on the introduction of a new marker for rebated fuel, and market testing is ongoing. My Department has also introduced legislation on the unduly lenient sentencing in this area, and, as I informed Members recently, I have been in correspondence with the Economic Secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury about legislation affecting the naming of filling stations that have been found to sell illicit fuel.

Fuel laundering affects the environment, legitimate businesspeople and the money available for public services. All areas of the justice sector will continue to fight it in every way possible. It must, however, be recognised that it is a crime sector that exists as a result of demand, and it is in the hands of the public to remove that demand and bring laundering to a halt once and for all.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. He will, however, be well aware of the long line of illegal fuel laundering plants discovered in recent months. It seems to go on and on, unabated, and, as you rightly said, it causes huge damage to the environment and is a huge cost to the public purse. Does the Minister agree that the full cooperation of the National Crime Agency (NCA), locally, would be a major help in trying to tackle illegal fuel laundering and that there is a need for all parties in the Chamber to give the agency their full support?

Mr Ford: I certainly agree with Mr Anderson that we require the National Crime Agency to have full operational powers in the devolved sphere in Northern Ireland.

However, the NCA does have powers on the specific issue of excise evasion because it is a non-devolved matter. Of course, it operates those powers without any accountability to the institutions in Northern Ireland because of the refusal of those who are so concerned about accountability to allow the NCA to operate in the devolved sphere.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister referred to a new marker being tested. Can he indicate when it will eventually be applied to fuel?

Mr Ford: The best advice that I can give to Mr Bradley is that, when the announcement was made in February, it was estimated that it would be 12 to 18 months before it was fully operational. I have had no updates since.

Mrs Dobson: I am sure that the Minister will agree that the livelihoods of hard-working and law-abiding families are being put at risk by illegal fuel laundering. Why is the conviction rate so pathetic?

Mr Ford: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not sure that it is appropriate for me to answer, because that is, effectively, an operational question. I should, however, make clear to Mrs Dobson and others that, effectively, many laundering plants operate without any personnel present. If it were possible to pick people up, it would be solely at the point at which a delivery was being made and fuel taken out. Given the way that they operate, it is extremely hard to arrest those who are directly responsible. However, in the potential for the referral of unduly lenient sentences, we have the opportunity, when arrests are made, to set a clear sentence that will set down a marker to others.

Hate Crime

5. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Justice, given the marked increase in violent hate crime attacks, whether the Unite Against Hate campaign should be re-launched. (AQO 6320/11-15)

Mr Ford: Hate crime, whether it manifests itself in verbal abuse, intimidation or violent crime, is deplorable and has no place in a modern society. I am determined that my Department will continue to do everything possible, through the delivery of the community safety strategy, to tackle hate crime and the harm that it causes.

Unite Against Hate was previously launched in 2009 as a multi-agency campaign to raise awareness of the impact of hate crime, challenge negative attitudes and perceptions, create a climate of zero tolerance and promote diversity. With an estimated 110,000 migrants having come to live and work in Northern Ireland, and in the context of recent events, it is clear that there remains work to be done.

On 19 May, I wrote to the First Minister and deputy First Minister seeking an update on discussions that their Department led in 2012 on the scope for a renewed Unite Against Hate campaign. I am waiting for a response. In the meantime, my Department will continue to chair the multi-agency working group set up to deliver a range of practical actions, as set out in our community safety strategy, to tackle hate crime.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for his answer. I welcome the fact that he has raised the issue with OFMDFM, but I can only hope that a response comes faster than the seven

years that we have been waiting for the racial equality strategy. In the meantime, will the Minister give the House a sense of what his Department is doing to tackle hate crime?

Mr Ford: I thank my colleague for his question. I certainly share his hope that it will be significantly less than seven years before we see some action on hate crime, which is clearly becoming a major issue. I will list some of the issues that are the direct responsibility of the DOJ and which my Department is implementing. We partly fund the hate incident practical action scheme, which provides protection and security to victims. We are consulting victims' groups on developing third-party reporting systems for people reluctant to approach the police about hate incidents and crimes. We have reviewed the capacity of advocacy services and are considering investing in that scheme. We part fund an initiative to identify the key elements of the Belfast City Council tension monitoring model, with a view to using PCSPs to roll it out elsewhere. We are monitoring the review of legislation in England and Wales to see whether there are lessons we can learn. We have delivered initiatives to prevent reoffending through early stage intervention, working with PCSPs, the Probation Board and the Youth Justice Agency. We hope that they will address offending behaviour, including community and restorative approaches. We are planning workshops with key victims' groups to raise awareness of the work of the hate crime delivery group in delivering our community safety strategy so that we can develop it and ensure that we provide the best possible services to people in Northern Ireland.

3.00 pm

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that, regardless of the campaign in place to combat racism, those in positions of leadership must never, by their actions or words, create the conditions in which racism flourishes?

Mr Ford: I agree entirely with Mr Lynch. As I said in an interview when I was asked about comments made by Pastor McConnell and the First Minister, people need to be very careful, not about the precise intellectual justification for the words they use but the potential atmosphere created among those in this society who are only too ready to indulge in hate crime and do not hear the words; they just hear the sense.

Mrs Overend: Will the Minister include hate crime against sections of the indigenous community, such as damage to Orange and church halls, in any campaign?

Mr Ford: As I have already said, the Unite Against Hate campaign is led by OFMDFM. It certainly applied to all kinds of hate crime in the past. I trust that, if it is resurrected by that Department, which will certainly be with the full assistance of my Department, it will cover all forms of hate crime again.

Hydebank: Secure College

6. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the progress made towards the establishment of Hydebank Young Offenders Centre as a secure college, as recommended by the Prison Review. (AQO 6321/11-15)

Mr Ford: In October last year, I announced that Hydebank Wood College would be delivered through the creation of a task force, whose responsibilities included designing, developing and delivering the college ethos. It is, of course, crucial that we get the supporting structures and processes right to deliver the right outcome for those in custody. The Prison Service has therefore established a dedicated secure college oversight group, whose current membership includes senior officials, the governor and deputy governor, and which will soon be extended to include external providers and agencies, including learning and skills experts.

A review of supporting structures has taken place, with significant changes being implemented to the management structure and specific roles, coupled with the introduction of free-flow movement of prisoners, revised scheduling arrangements and a review of security classifications, all of which are aimed at supporting the creation of a college-based ethos. Work is now also under way to ensure that a comprehensive induction programme is completed for each committal, which will inform the development of a personal development plan based on individual strengths, risks and the need to support effective rehabilitation. An interim contract is in place with external providers, who are working alongside existing staff to improve the provision of learning and skills, with programmes tailored to meet individual needs, complemented by a daily regime that timetables activities in an innovative way.

In September 2014, the prison oversight group will receive an update on the vision action plan and timelines for the delivery of the Hydebank Wood College.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the progress made by the Minister of Justice in relation to the establishment of Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre as a secure college, given the importance of skills and employment to rehabilitation and the reduction of reoffending. Does the Minister have a timescale for the completion of the project and what key differences does he think it will make to our society?

Mr Ford: At one level, the project will not be complete ever because it will be an ongoing project. We are certainly looking to have the work being done on external skills provision well in place and fully implemented in the next academic year. We will be doing the ongoing changes to regime, timetables and so on, which I mentioned, over the same kind of timescale. The important issue is that we provide those in Hydebank Wood with the best possible opportunities to make progress while in prison and to link them in when they return to the community to keep them involved in whatever learning and skills opportunities they have developed in custody to ensure that they have a better chance of employment when they leave.

Mr Eastwood: I welcome the limited progress made around this. It is very important that rehabilitation is at the forefront of our minds when we are looking at these issues. Can the Minister assure us that all inmates will be given opportunities to access training and education suitable to their needs?

Mr Ford: That was awfully begrudging — “limited progress”. It is work that is well under way, and I think that, when Members see the work that is being done overall on the prison reform programme and the amount that has been done in two years, they will perhaps acknowledge that it is a very significant programme. It is taking time to

implement: I grant that. I assure Mr Eastwood that all those in custody in Hydebank Wood will be given the opportunity to avail themselves of appropriate learning and skills opportunities.

For example, we have seen work on developing the horticultural unit, and there is other work going on. I hope to sample the food that is being cooked by prisoners in a new development that will provide additional opportunities. All of those are small steps which, when joined together, will show that we are providing a much better opportunity for prisoners than has been the case until now.

Mr McGimpsey: What does the Minister estimate the cost of the provision at Hydebank to be? Has he had any discussions with the Department of Finance about when he will bid for funding for this facility?

Mr Ford: The cost of implementing the scheme is relatively little, because it is coming out of existing budgets by way of reallocation to ensure that services are provided in a more efficient way. There are, of course, other issues at the Hydebank Wood site, such as accommodation for women, which are under discussion with DFP as part of the capital programme, but there was no need to involve that Department on the specific issue of the secure college.

Parading Season

7. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the discussions he will have with the newly appointed Chief Constable in relation to working with local communities to ensure a peaceful and inclusive parading season. (AQO 6322/11-15)

Mr Ford: First, I publicly congratulate George Hamilton on his appointment as Chief Constable, as I have already done in person. I look forward to working with him in my role as Justice Minister. I have had regular meetings with Matt Baggott on a range of issues, including parading. Naturally, I hope that these will continue when Mr Hamilton formally takes up his post at the end of the month.

As for the parading season, I encourage all to play their part in finding a solution to bring about a peaceful conclusion to the issue. The reality is that neither the police nor I can solve the issues around parading. Resolution can only come through local dialogue in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. I am thankful that the weekend parades passed off without incident and hope that this will set the tone for the coming weeks.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he outline what discussions the Chief Constable intends to have with local community groups and what his engagement has been with those communities in the lead-up to the parading season?

Mr Ford: I am afraid that I cannot say what the Chief Constable plans to do, since that is an operational matter for him, but I assume that some of the discussions that have recently been led by ACC Will Kerr about a variety of issues in Belfast that impinge to some extent on parading will continue. I am aware that there has been some local engagement in the north and east of the city in particular. Really, the issues as to exactly how the police will operate are issues for the Chief Constable, whether current or future.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that the money being

used to police the illegal protest camp at Twaddell is money wasted, and furthermore it is money that is lost to other policing priorities?

Mr Ford: I agree, and I made exactly that point at the last Question Time, when I highlighted the fact that the cost of policing the Twaddell Avenue protest has now exceeded £9 million. The reality is that that money, which could have been used to address policing priorities in other areas, is now lost. It could have been used on a variety of ongoing community policing projects that I suspect every MLA could identify in their constituency. However, it has, sadly, been expended for no good purpose whatsoever. It really is time that those who are involved in that particular camp recognised the reality of the law, recognised where the Parades Commission's lawful determinations have led them, accepted that point and gave up their protest.

Mrs D Kelly: The question uses the phrase "inclusive parading season." Does that definition of inclusivity mean that the parades should be open to all, regardless of race, religion, community background or sexual orientation? Would the Member agree that that would be a step forward?

Will the Minister also outline to the Assembly what steps he has taken, if any, to press the British Secretary of State to introduce legislation, which has already been addressed as having been weak by the Secretary of State herself?

Mr Ford: On the first point that Mrs Kelly made, I have to suggest that she ask the questioner, not me, what she meant about an inclusive parading season. I am not necessarily sure that many of those who organise parades would wish to have others who parade on different days, in different places and perhaps wearing different items all involved.

The Member raises a serious issue on legislation, but, as far as I am concerned, the best solution to dealing with parading problems in legislation is when we get agreement among the five parties of the Executive and ensure that we can carry legislation forward in this Assembly and not rely on the Secretary of State doing it at Westminster. I trust that what we will see over the next few weeks will ensure that we do not have to make that request of the Secretary of State.

On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme

8. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Justice to outline any discussions he has held with the PSNI in relation to the administrative scheme for on-the-runs. (AQO 6323/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not had any discussions with the PSNI about the administrative scheme for on-the-runs, nor would it be appropriate for me to do so.

Mr Kinahan: Was the Minister aware that there were three on-the-run letters cleared in March this year?

Mr Ford: My understanding of that particular position is that Sinn Féin has said that that was the case and the Northern Ireland Office has denied that it was the case. It is not my responsibility in any event.

Mr McGlone: Just to clarify, will the Minister indicate what discussions he has had with the Attorney General on the on-the-runs legislation?

Mr Ford: I am sure that Mr McGlone will be well aware of the convention that Ministers do not discuss legal advice

that they have sought or received, including advice from the Attorney General.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Does he agree that all parties and individuals in the House should be open about their experiences in relation to the on-the-runs debacle? Will he therefore agree that it is an absolute scandal that Sinn Féin refused to appear in front of the House of Commons Select Committee this week in this place?

Mr Ford: Again, whatever view David Ford might have about people who ought to be honest and open and take the opportunities that are presented to give evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, I am not sure that it is for the Minister of Justice to say what others should do in front of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, save to say that I did my best to answer their questions this morning.

Prison Service: Sickness Absence

9. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the levels of sickness absence in the Prison Service. (AQO 6324/11-15)

Mr Ford: During 2013-14, absence in the Prison Service totalled 13.8 days per member of staff against the DOJ target of 9.7 days. That is a provisional figure, and the official figure will be finalised by NISRA later this year. At present, the projected figure for 2014-15 is 10.6 days per member of staff against a DOJ target of 9.2 days. I am not complacent about the progress to date, and every effort continues to be made to reduce the level of absence further. Management is committed to continuing that work with staff and their trade unions.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he see staff morale in our prisons as something that impacts on staffing absence levels? Is he satisfied that everything is being done to ensure good working conditions in our prisons?

Mr Ford: Although I recognise that prisons can be very difficult places in which to work, it is not always easy to say that everything possible is being done. However, I take significant heart from the fact that the projected level of absence for uniformed staff in prisons for this year is around 11 days, whereas in the preceding four years it was between 15.1 and 17 days. I think that is an indication of good work being done and perhaps of higher morale among staff than was suggested by the question.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answers. Does he feel that, perhaps now that the voluntary redundancy scheme is over and complete, the reduction in absenteeism is directly related to the new intake of recruits?

Mr Ford: Mr McCartney may be drawing inferences a bit further than the evidence suggests. There was a significant reduction this year, but a number of new staff were in last year and a number of old staff had already left last year. It is difficult to suggest that it is directly related, but I have no doubt that elements of those who were, shall we say, of more advanced years might have been more likely to take sick leave, owing to the natural health pattern as people age. That is something of which I am increasingly aware.

3.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends questions for oral answer. We now move on to topical questions.

Criminal Justice System: Public Confidence

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any concerns about the state of public confidence in our criminal justice system, particularly in the Omagh area, following the BBC 'Spotlight' programme on the behaviour, attitude and conduct of the PSNI in Omagh towards young people. (AQT 1252/11-15)

Mr Ford: I appreciate the question that Mr McElduff has raised. I was in the US last week, so I did not see the 'Spotlight' programme to which he refers. I am aware that the district commander, Chief Superintendent Dunwoody, has said that he is working to address some of the issues raised and that the ombudsman has been made aware of some of the issues and is investigating a number of cases. Beyond that, I can make no particular comment on the points raised by Mr McElduff.

Mr McElduff: Will the Minister of Justice show a personal interest in making sure, in the time ahead, that there is public confidence in the criminal justice system, particularly in the Omagh area arising from the reported incidents, and that the damage is repaired?

Mr Ford: I certainly take a personal interest in ensuring the highest possible community confidence in policing and other aspects of the justice system, not just in Omagh but in 25 other districts. In doing so, however, I need to be careful that I do not seek to take over the role of the ombudsman or the direct management responsibilities of the district commander. I expect that I will meet Chief Superintendent Dunwoody for other reasons in the near future, and I have no doubt that this will feature on the margins of that meeting.

Legal Highs: Speckled Reds

3. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is aware of the rise in the use of the drug serotonin, also known as Speckled Reds, and some other tablets, with Speckled Reds linked to some 18 deaths in the North of Ireland, and, even though he will also be aware that there is some sort of process to find out how to bring forward legislation to make these drugs illegal, whether he agrees that it is time for the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the councils to come together to try to find some way to close down the supply of what should be an illegal drug. (AQT 1253/11-15)

Mr Ford: I note that a very similar question was asked at the end of health questions a few minutes ago. As Members are generally aware, the reality is that drugs policy is a reserved matter and is therefore not for us. I am sure that most Members will be aware of the practical work that was done by environmental health officers (EHOs) in Belfast using consumer product safety legislation to tackle some of the premises that were selling such drugs. I understand that the advice has been spread, at least to Omagh, and has been shared between environmental health officers. The Department of Justice offered its assistance if required, but I believe that the EHOs have

been communicating anyway. I know that those lessons have been picked up in other parts of the UK.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as na freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer. He may have made this precise point, although I did not pick up what he said at the end. Will he elaborate on what collaboration is happening? Using by-laws to close down so-called head shops was a very good move while we await the other process. Will the Minister elaborate on the collaboration that he is talking about?

Mr Ford: I believe that the specific legislation that was used was product safety legislation. I am not aware of the exact detail of that, as it was taken forward by environmental health officers working for the city council. Its use certainly appears to have been successful in closing down at least some so-called head shops in Belfast, and I understand that others, at least those in Omagh, have considered using similar legislation. Clearly, there are situations in which the current law can be used, but, as the Minister of Health said, the Executive have asked the Attorney General to look at the issue to see what further powers may be available to strengthen the law in the devolved sphere.

Racist Attacks: DOJ Action

4. **Mr Maskey** asked the Minister of Justice what steps his Department is taking to tackle the rising level of racist attacks. (AQT 1254/11-15)

Mr Ford: In answering an earlier question, I highlighted some of the issues relating to hate crime and the work that was being done. There are significant issues about ensuring the best possible cooperation with the police and that bodies such as the PCSPs use their opportunities. A lot of work is being done to consider the implications of the Unite Against Hate campaign and issues for which the Department of Justice has responsibility, which I outlined to Mr Lunn. The key issue is to ensure that we spread the message that that sort of hate crime is utterly unacceptable and ensure that there is a policy of no tolerance for it.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for that response. Will he reissue a call to all those in political and civil leadership not to say or do anything that would encourage racism in our society?

Mr Ford: I will certainly repeat the point that I made to Mr Lynch a few minutes ago: it is not necessarily the precise intellectual words that individuals use but the culture that is created and the danger that those who are willing to resort to hate crime in this society will half hear a message rather than listen to the words that I fear may help to drive the sort of crime that we have seen in recent weeks. I welcome the fact that we have now seen statements from Pastor McConnell and the First Minister that have made their position clear, but I believe that everybody in public life needs to be very careful about the language that they use.

Community Safety College: Desertcreat

5. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Justice, at the risk of sounding like a broken record on the issue, to provide an update on the building of the Community Safety College at Desertcreat outside Cookstown. (AQT 1255/11-15)

Mr Ford: Once Mrs Overend said “broken record”, she did not need to say any more. At this stage, I cannot give any specific further information on the Community Safety College. Work is ongoing on the programme board, and I am not in a position to give any more specific detail other than to say that the work is ongoing and I am looking forward to seeing the next response. I believe that the Justice Committee will have a hearing on this on 2 July.

Mrs Overend: I must say that I am disappointed by that response. It seems that mistakes have been made along the way, right from the design process. In fact, if we take it back to basics, I understand that the land at Desertcreat has been badly planned since the Department of Agriculture milked goats on it and that, more recently, the weeds have not been managed and the rental of the land have not been managed.

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

Mrs Overend: Will the Minister tell me what he is doing to restore confidence to the people of mid-Ulster and ensure that the college will be completed at Desertcreat?

Mr Ford: I fear that neither the control of weeds nor the management of goats, beyond a couple of them, is within my remit, and nor is the overall issue of providing confidence solely for my role in the Department of Justice. Issues have to be addressed by the programme board, which, as Members will be aware, has connections to two Departments because the Fire and Rescue Service comes under the remit of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. In that context, it is impossible for me to give specific assurances on what the outcome will be. I assure the House that the programme board is examining arrangements in detail, looking at overall costings, seeing where costs can be taken out and whether it is possible to deliver the project on a slightly reduced scale to provide value for money. That detailed work is being done, and I cannot report on the outcome until it is completed.

On-the-runs: Ministerial Briefings

6. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Justice whether, when he took up office, he asked for or was offered briefings on the outworkings of Weston Park, the outworkings of Peter Hain’s on-the-runs legislation that did not make it through the House of Commons or, indeed, on the on-the-runs letters. (AQT 1256/11-15)

Mr Ford: I did not ask for a brief on any of that. Given that I did not know that letters were being issued, it would have been a bit difficult to ask for a brief on them. As far as Peter Hain’s statement to the House of Commons is concerned, I am afraid that I had the naive presumption that, when a Secretary of State stands up in the Chamber of the House of Commons and says that nothing is happening, that meant that nothing was happening.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Where does the buck stop with this matter?

Mr Ford: I fear that we will all have to wait for the outcome of the review by Lady Justice Hallett, the inquiries by the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee and the Assembly’s Justice Committee, the work being done by the Police Ombudsman and the internal PSNI review of the status of the letters. We will find out where the buck stops

on a number of factors, but, at this stage, it does not stop with the Department of Justice and never did.

Legacy Inquest Cases

7. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice what evidence he can provide to show that he has made a demonstrable commitment to ensuring that legacy inquests are held, meaning that we are not called again before the EU courts to face criticism, given that he will be well aware of recent comments from the senior coroner, who criticised the Minister and his Department for their failure to provide expert investigators and for the fact that funding has been given on a drip-feed basis to the outstanding Stalker inquests into the murders of six men in Armagh, the murders of three police officers by the IRA and the murder of 17-year-old Michael Tighe, who was shot by state forces. (AQT 1257/11-15)

Mr Ford: Mrs Kelly raises a complex and difficult issue. There are currently something like 46 outstanding legacy inquest cases relating to 75 sensitive and contentious deaths. That is clearly a very significant backlog that has huge resource implications for a budget that, as I said earlier when we talked about legal aid, is under severe pressure. The individuals to whom she has referred, who are needed to carry out some of the investigations, are not DOJ employees, and I understand that there is difficulty in getting the relevant expertise to carry out that work. I have had recent meetings with officials and have commissioned an internal review of how we can more effectively use the resources that we have to ensure that we are more article 2-compliant than is currently the case. However, until we can find some way of resolving the difficult issues of the past rather than relying simply on coroners' inquests and the other work by the ombudsman and the HET, we will continue, as a society, to be in difficulty. That is why there is such a need to ensure that the five-party talks succeed.

Mrs D Kelly: I am not saying that we should not deal with the past in a comprehensive and ethical way. Nonetheless, this is a matter of concern and has been before the European courts a number of times. The men were killed in 1982, yet, some 32 years later, inquests have not been held and their families have not been able to move on. Minister, since you took office, have you, in any of the previous monitoring rounds, sought additional resources to facilitate the request of the senior coroner for an expert investigator? That matter has been before you or your Department for the past three years.

Mr Ford: Part of the issue is the sheer technicality of the way in which monitoring rounds operate, with the DOJ having a ring-fenced budget separate from the normal DFP-led process. To the best of my knowledge, no specific request has been made for funding for such an investigator to be considered in the DOJ internal monitoring proposals. If that is not correct, I will write to the Member and correct it. If that is the context, it is not specifically the Department's responsibility. The responsibility lies elsewhere — in our arm's-length bodies — to see that the investigations are done. I will ascertain and communicate to her the exact position.

Rural Crime

8. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Justice whether he agrees that it could be said that neither DOJ nor

the PSNI has a strategy to deal with rural crime, given that the recently published policing plan for 2014-17 makes absolutely no reference to agricultural crime. (AQT 1258/11-15)

Mr Ford: The reality is that much of the work of the PSNI does not feature specifically in the policing plan, to some extent because it is regarded as business as usual. Had Mr McIlveen been here, I would have had a response specifically about some of the rural crime and agricultural crime initiatives in the Ballymena area. That will be published in Hansard shortly. However, I assure Mr Hazzard that a lot of work is ongoing, including work by the rural crime unit, which is part-funded by NFU Mutual and the Department. The unit works with the police on identifying trends in agricultural crime to ensure that we get the best possible response. Over the past two or three years, I have also had the opportunity to visit not just the Balmoral show but other agricultural shows, where the police have engaged, sometimes in conjunction with PCSPs and sometimes on their own, in order to look at these wider issues. We hope to announce further initiatives in the next couple of weeks.

3.30 pm

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Irish Language: Assembly Criticism

1. **Ms McCorley** asked the Assembly Commission how it plans to address the recent criticisms of the Assembly, in relation to the Irish language, contained in the report by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. (AQO 6326/11-15)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for her question. The Assembly Commission has not given any consideration to the report by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Nor was the Assembly contacted to provide information on its procedures, which were subsequently mentioned in the report. The Commission considered legal advice in May 2013, which indicated that, until such time as the regional and minority languages charter is translated into domestic law and given direct effect in Northern Ireland, it creates no rights or obligations on the Commission.

Draft language guidance has been under consideration by the Assembly Commission. The views of all parties were sought following a meeting of the Assembly Commission on 27 February 2013. Those views will be considered at a future meeting of the Commission. However, I think that it is fair to say that this is an area on which the Commission has so far been unable to reach political agreement.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for his answer. There may not be a complete obligation on the Commission to fulfil the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Nevertheless, there are requirements on public authorities, and I contend that there is a moral obligation on us all to comply with the obligations because,

in fact, the Irish language does not receive equality of treatment. How would the Member respond to that?

Mr Weir: Above all else, the Commission will ultimately be guided by its obligations. That is the legal requirement. To that extent, we must realise as well that, when we are talking about minority languages, there is a range of minority indigenous languages in Northern Ireland, minority ethnic languages and British and Irish sign language. It is a question of ensuring that the Commission meets its obligations. As such, what is the principal guiding bit? I think that that would be our obligations under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. From that point of view, any position that we have to take has ultimately to be guided by our legal obligations. Indeed, the Commission has received legal advice on what its obligations are, and it is important that we fulfil them. It is not for me to say, one way or another, what counts as a moral obligation.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as ucht a fhreagra go dtí seo. I thank Mr Weir for his answers thus far. However it is now almost two years, I think, since the Commission consulted. This party responded on the formation of a language policy by the Commission. Is the Member telling us that this is yet another issue that will be left on the shelf, unattended, because of failure to reach agreement?

Mr Weir: The indications are that, at some stage, the Commission will come back to this issue. I correct his timescale, because views were sought, I think, arising from a meeting in February of last year. So, it is a little bit over one year rather than two years.

There is obvious difficulty around this issue, and the Commission, where possible, strives to reach consensus or, failing that, at least a majority position. There is no doubt that there are sensitivities around this issue. Consequently, reaching cross-party agreement has been difficult, but it is an issue that will be returned to in future.

Mr I McCrea: Will the Commission member advise the House whether there is any statutory requirement to consider the information in the report by the Committee of Experts? Will he also advise whether there is any mention of some people's inability even to speak English?

Mr Weir: I am not going to comment on the linguistic skills of anybody in connection with this. As I said, the Commission operates on the basis of its legal obligations.

Indeed, legal advice has been sought in terms of our obligations. The Commission will always operate within what it is legally required to do and its legal obligations and will fulfil those. At present, we believe that we are within our current obligations.

Parliament Buildings: School Visits

2. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the schools that have visited Parliament Buildings since April 2014. (AQO 6327/11-15)

12. **Mr Byrne** asked the Assembly Commission for an overview of the schools and organisations that have visited Parliament Buildings in 2014. (AQO 6337/11-15)

Ms Ruane: A LeasCheann Comhairle, le do chhead, ba mhaith liom ceisteanna 2 agus 12 a fhreagairt le chéile. Gabhaim buíochas leis an dá Chomhalta as ucht a

gceisteanna. Maidir le ceist an Uasail Uí Fhlannagáin, ón 1 Aibreán 2014 go dtí 9 Meitheamh 2014 ghlac 88 grúpa ó 61 scoil — thart faoi 3,500 dalta — páirt sa chlár oideachais i bhFoirgnimh na Parlaiminte. Orthu seo, bhí 25 bunscóil agus 36 meánscoil.

Mar fhreagra ar an Uasal Ó Beirn, is é cuspóir Choimisiún an Tionóil Foirgnimh na Parlaiminte a dhéanamh oscailte agus inrochtana do chách. Thug 983 scoil agus eagraíocht cuairt ar Fhoirgnimh na Parlaiminte sna chéad sé mhí den bhliain 2014.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I propose to answer questions 2 and 12 together. I thank both Members for their questions.

In relation to Mr Flanagan's question, from 1 April to 9 June 2014, 88 groups from 61 schools — approximately 3,500 pupils — participated in the education programme in Parliament Buildings. Of these schools, 25 were primary and 36 secondary.

In response to Mr Byrne, it is the aim of the Assembly Commission to make Parliament Buildings open and accessible to all. Thankfully, we have schools coming from all sectors, including Irish-medium. I would just like to distance myself from some of the previous comments in relation to the Irish language. The Irish language should be treated with the utmost equality. Unfortunately, to date the Assembly Commission is not doing that, but that is an issue I will continue to take up in the Assembly Commission.

Since the start of 2014, 243 groups visited the Assembly through the Assembly education programme. Of those, 67% were school groups, 9% universities and the rest youth groups, those from further education colleges, exchanges and adult groups. Through Assembly Community Connect, 96 organisations from the voluntary and community sector have taken part in free training in Parliament Buildings to improve their understanding of how they can engage with the Assembly. A total of 223 businesses have visited the Assembly through their involvement in Assembly and Business Trust events, which improve business and the private sector's understanding of how the Assembly works and policy and legislation are developed.

Fifty organisations have visited Parliament Buildings from across the world through the parliamentary outreach service to learn more about the role of the Assembly. The events office hosts a range of schools and organisations within Parliament Buildings. Since January 2014, the events office has welcomed 36 school groups which have taken part in a tour of Parliament Buildings.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member that there are two minutes to reply to a question.

Ms Ruane: OK. In conclusion, 335 organisations have attended a function.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for her answer. Can I ask the Member to provide a list of areas that schools have come from? I am predicting that there is going to be a deficit from my constituency. Will the Commission consider expanding the number of visits the outreach and education teams conduct in schools in rural communities?

Ms Ruane: I will certainly forward to the Member a list of all the schools that have attended the Assembly, but the Member will be glad to know that schools from all 18 constituencies have visited Parliament Buildings since 1 April 2014, along with five schools from outside the North. I can certainly provide the Member with the list, and we will consider any requests on how we take forward the schools or outreach programmes.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Joe Byrne is not in his place.

Centenary Commemorations

3. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on any events planned to commemorate centenaries over the next seven years. (AQO 6328/11-15)

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. In April 2012, the Assembly Commission agreed a policy which established the "Perspectives On..." series to deal with the handling of significant anniversaries in Parliament Buildings during the decade of centenaries. The policy provides for the package of anniversaries that are to be commemorated to be agreed early in each mandate and for the first Commission meeting of each year to agree the events and anniversaries to be marked that year. For example, in the current mandate, there have been commemorations of the Titanic, the Ulster covenant, women's suffrage and the rise of the labour movement.

In September, a lecture and reception will be held on behalf of the Commission to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. In January 2016, the Commission will agree events to commemorate the Easter rising of 1916 and the battle of the Somme of the same year. Those will be timed to take account of the dissolution of the Assembly for the elections in that year.

The anniversaries to be officially marked in the 2016-2021 mandate will have to be agreed by the Commission early in that mandate. Therefore, questions about events in that period are not for the current Commission. However, all events agreed have to conform with the 10 principles set out in the policy, which include that they are of a sensitive and inclusive nature, are based on historical fact, and provide an opportunity for differing views to be expressed.

Mr Kinahan: I thank Mr Weir for his answer. For the events that we are responsible for in this term, have budgets been prepared, and have we looked at utilising funds that are available from Westminster and Europe?

Mr Weir: Obviously, the events are organised with budgetary constraints in mind, and events in Parliament Buildings are not seeking to compete with other larger headline events. There is an educational and academic quality to them.

It is anticipated that the remaining four events in the rest of the mandate will cost in the region of £5,000. So, it is a relatively small budget. If there are other sources of funding, I am sure that the Commission will be happy to look at them, but the financial burden is relatively small given the nature of the events.

Mr McMullan: I am sure that the Member agrees that it is important to include inclusiveness and diversity in these events.

Mr Weir: Sorry, I did not catch that.

Mr McMullan: It is important to include inclusiveness and diversity in these events.

Mr Weir: I certainly agree. Part of the aim is to try to ensure that different perspectives are produced. As I indicated, there were 10 principles established, which are the key criteria for the events, including that differing views and perspectives are to be given, that events are to be inclusive and that they are to be sensitive in their nature.

In this part of the world, there is a level of ignorance at times about historical events on which there is a range of understandings. Part of the aim is to try to increase understanding of, and education in, those events. So, the aim is to embed historical significance and understanding, things not always fully utilised when celebrating a range of events.

Mr Dallat: I thank Mr Weir for his answers, and I appreciate that we are discussing centenaries. Does he agree that one of the most important events in Ireland was the Irish famine of 1845, and can he assure us that people will not have to wait until 2045 to commemorate an event that was inclusive and affected all the people of Ireland, North and South, and in which two million people died?

Mr Weir: Obviously, it was a very significant event. When the Commission was looking at things, it was looking specifically at the decade of centenaries. Outside that decade of centenaries, there is a wide range of vital and significant events that have had profound effects on our history. At some stage, there may need to be a look at how these can be best reflected.

There was concern about particular sensitivities around the overall centenary of events that were coming up. That is what the focus was on, and it was why the policy was developed; but that is not to exclude consideration of other events in our history at a different stage.

3.45 pm

Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion

4. **Mr Maskey** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on how it is making Parliament Buildings more inclusive for all communities. (AQO 6329/11-15)

Mr Cree: I thank the Member for his question. The Assembly Commission has taken a wide range of steps to ensure that Parliament Buildings is inclusive for all communities. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act requires all public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act, including the Assembly Commission, to comply with two statutory duties. The first duty is the equality of opportunity duty, which requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories. The Assembly Commission's 2012-16 equality scheme is a statement of the arrangements for fulfilling the statutory duties and is also the plan for their implementation. It meets both the legal requirements of schedule 9 to the 1998 Act.

The second duty is the good relations duty, which requires that public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

The Member may wish to note that a letter from the Equality Commission in October 2013 stated:

"It has been encouraging to note that the Northern Ireland Assembly has sustained consistent progress in the implementation of their Equality Scheme and there is evidence of effectiveness in meeting the S75 duties. There has been sustained engagement and consultation with those directly affected by the policies and this has been a key achievement of the Northern Ireland Assembly's scheme. A clear culture exists in the organisation that fosters co-operation with other parts of the public sector and those affected by statutory duty."

In addition, the Assembly Commission has taken a number of steps to promote inclusion in Parliament Buildings through the following projects, initiatives and plans: Action on Hearing Loss accreditation; the autism initiative; the disability action plan; gender equality research; Assembly Community Connect; tours and educational visits; the Speaker's art group; and the good relations action plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind all Commission members that their reply should be made within two minutes.

I call Alex Attwood. Sorry, I call Alex Maskey.

Mr Maskey: I have been offended before, Mr Deputy Speaker. Your apology is accepted.

I thank the Member for his response. Notwithstanding some of the progress that he referred to, notwithstanding the equality obligations that the Assembly Commission operates under and, equally, notwithstanding the rather modest ambitions of the Equality Commission, as laid out in its response to you —

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

Mr Maskey: The question is this: will the Member advise the House what particular steps the Commission is taking to ensure that those of us in the broader community who are Irish speakers will have their rights enshrined in all aspects of the Assembly precincts?

Mr Cree: My answer will be shorter on this one, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Commission is committed to the promotion of good relations and has a place in the good relations action plan. However, the Commission recognises that, on language, symbols and emblems, further work is required.

Mr Eastwood: Will the Commission member tell us about some of the further work that he envisages might be required around language, symbols and emblems? There was not much detail in his answer.

Mr Cree: I thank the Member for his question. The reason that there was not much detail is that it is ongoing work. Some work has been done, but it was necessary to clear all the bread-and-butter issues, if I can call them that. The easiest things have been resolved, but a few difficulties are still in place. As I said, further work needs to be done in the area of language, symbols and emblems. I accept that.

Lord Morrow: I am sure that most of the House would agree that inclusivity and accessibility run hand in hand. Are we getting to the stage in this Building at which we are going to put up "No entry" signs at our gates? With the configuration of yellow lines all around this place, are we

putting up unwelcome signage and telling people, "Stay away, please, we would rather you did not come, but, if you should come, you might be welcome?"

I understand that the Commission has responsibility for everything inside the railings, but responsibility for outside the railings lies elsewhere. What consultation was there with the Commission and the Department before all these yellow lines were put down to prohibit people from coming into the grounds of Stormont?

Mr Cree: I thank Lord Morrow for his question. He is quite right; the land outside the railings is the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Personnel. There have been ongoing negotiations with it about the restrictions that are in place. We have had a measure of success on the provision of additional car parks. In fact, there is no reason why parking could not be provided on one side of the road from Carson's statue down to Massey Avenue. So far, unfortunately, despite our best endeavours, DFP has not helped, but we shall continue on.

Mrs Overend: What information is contained in the Commission's equality scheme?

Mr Cree: I thank the Member for her question. The equality scheme outlines the Assembly Commission's arrangements for a list of things, which I shall gallop through quickly. It has arrangements for assessing its compliance with section 75 duties; assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity; monitoring any adverse impact of policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity; publishing the results of such assessments; training staff; and ensuring and assessing public access to information and services provided by the Commission.

Gender Action Plan

5. **Ms McGahan** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the gender action plan. (AQO 6330/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for her question. A gender action steering group was established in June 2013 at the request of the Clerk/Chief Executive to discuss how the secretariat might examine the existence of any barriers, whether perceived or real, in relation to gender in the Northern Ireland Assembly and to consider what actions might be necessary.

In late 2013, a questionnaire was developed by the gender action plan steering group in consultation with the Equality Commission and the Assembly's internal communications group. The questionnaire was also sent to the secretariat management group for information. In February, the questionnaire was circulated to secretariat staff, with a closing date of 3 March 2014. There were 192 respondents to the survey. The draft report on the questionnaire's results was completed and discussed by the group at its meeting on 2 April, and a copy was issued to the Clerk.

The gender action plan steering group has since examined the questionnaire's themes and comments against current policies, along with the organisation's decision-making structures, and is in the process of writing its final report. The group's report will make a number of recommendations, which will be presented to the secretariat management group and then to the Assembly Commission.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Member for her response. When will the report be completed?

Mrs Cochrane: The full report, which will include the details of the questionnaire as well as the subsequent gender action plan, will be made available after it has been presented to the Assembly Commission. It is anticipated that that will happen this autumn.

Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access

6. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Assembly Commission to outline its efforts to improve access to Parliament Buildings for people with a disability. (AQO 6331/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. The Assembly Commission is determined to make Parliament Buildings accessible to all, and strenuous efforts have been made over the last number of years to improve access for people with disabilities. In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, a major project was previously undertaken that included alterations to staircases, handrails, toilets and lifts as well as the installation of an additional lift at ground-floor level. Further to that, facilities in the Chamber were upgraded to include level access to the Floor of the House, hoist access to the Galleries and a viewing area suitable for wheelchair users.

In summer 2012, the Commission installed front-ramped access to Parliament Buildings to ensure that all visitors are able to use the primary entrance to the Building. Parking for people with disabilities is provided in the east and west car parks adjacent to the Building.

On the ground floor of the Building, a “changing places” facility provides fully accessible toilet facilities for people with profound disabilities. The Assembly Commission also holds the Louder than Words Charter Mark, which demonstrates its commitment to improve access and services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In November 2012, the Commission became the first organisation to receive the National Autistic Society autism access award. I hope that the Member will agree that the Commission has demonstrated its commitment to making Parliament Buildings accessible to all.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Commission member for her response and welcome the wide range of work undertaken by the Commission to make Parliament Buildings accessible to people with disabilities. What arrangements are available to assist disabled visitors in getting from their parking space into the main Building?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. If disabled visitors make their visit known to the head of Usher Services in advance, parking arrangements can be made in either of the upper car parks adjacent to the Building entrances, subject to availability. The parking spaces reserved for disabled users are adjacent to the access ramps and accessible lifts at the side entrances to the Building. If access via the front entrance is preferred, there is also now smooth level access from the parking spaces to the front access ramps.

Mr G Robinson: Can first aid facilities be better marked so that visitors and Members know exactly where to go?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for that very helpful suggestion. We can look at that. There are first aid facilities where security staff are situated at the different

entrances. However, we can take on board the point about making them more visible.

Mr Flanagan: When we look round the Building, we see that it is not very accessible for disabled people, particularly the Chamber. There is no room in the Chamber for a Member elected to this place if they are in a wheelchair. We had a situation in which a member of a Minister’s advisory staff sat blocking a door for two days because they were in a wheelchair and there was nowhere for them to sit in the Officials’ Box. Will the Member bring that to the Commission to try to resolve the problems in the Chamber?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his point. I said that some changes had been made in the Chamber to allow some access, but, obviously, there are still some difficulties. We can take that away and look at it again.

Mr McKinney: I acknowledge and welcome the good work that has been done. Can the Member explain why there was such a delay in repairing the east lift recently, which specifically affected access for disabled users?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member. The lift at the east side of the Building suffered a mechanical breakdown in May 2013. The service engineers concluded that it would not be safe to bring the lift back into operation until essential repair and refurbishment work had been done. That was due to be carried out during the 2013 recess. However, the operators of the service contract, DFP properties management branch, were not content with the appointment of the contractor for the proposed refurbishment at that time, so the works had to be re-tendered. The contract was subsequently re-tendered, and the contractors successfully completed the works during the Easter recess. We apologise for the delay. However, throughout that time, access for disabled users continued to be available via the West Door.

Parliament Buildings: Carbon Footprint

7. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the current carbon footprint of Parliament Buildings, including the measures in place to reduce it. (AQO 6332/11-15)

Mr Cree: I thank the Member for her question. I have another fulsome answer, so I will probably have to clip it a little as I go along.

The sustainable development office works closely with DFP’s energy management unit to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to reduce our energy costs and carbon footprint wherever possible. The current display energy certificate gives the Building a D rating — I am sure that you knew that — which equates to around 155 tons of carbon a year. That is a creditable achievement for a building of its nature and age. In the past, we worked with the Carbon Trust, which made a number of recommendations, the majority of which have now been implemented.

The roof refurbishment project, which is under way, will incorporate a range of measures that will positively impact on the Building’s energy performance. They include replacement of the existing insulation, refurbishing or replacing the existing roof-mounted mechanical and electrical service plant and the addition of renewable technologies, including — I know that you will like to hear this one — solar thermal panels and photovoltaic panels. I will leave it there, Mr Deputy Speaker.

4.00 pm

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage

Debate resumed on motion:

That the Second Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014 be agreed. — [Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel).]

Mr Deputy Speaker: I invite Danny Kinahan to conclude his remarks.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I will remind Members of where we were. I had just made a point about asking for funding to make sure that we encourage shared education. I just want to thank the Minister because, in the intervening time, I noticed that, in one of his responses to me, he pointed out that there will be part funding through Delivering Social Change. It is good to know that that will happen. That makes it worthwhile asking questions for written answer and speaking today. So, thank you, Minister.

I want to move on. Before we finished, we were discussing the special needs area of education. Legislation is looming, and, although the special needs budget is meant to be ring-fenced, I am not convinced — I got this from school principals whom I have met in the last few weeks — that there is a thorough system in place to make sure that we know exactly what the needs are in the special needs area. Many schools are limited to assessing only five children a year, but more may need to be assessed. So, Minister, I am asking you today to ensure that there is funding in the Budget to make sure that we have the correct figures before we embark on special needs allocations in a Bill in the future. I know it is extremely important.

I want to move on to the common funding formula. Every school feels under threat at the moment because they only know that their funding will stay as it is for this year. Will the Minister take action to make sure that the Education Minister knows his budget as soon as possible? I know that politics are being played with the Welfare Reform Bill at the moment, but schools are expected to budget for three years, and yet the Department cannot do so. So will the Minister look at giving the Education Minister even a bottom-line budget or some indication of his budget so that we can allow schools to properly budget for the next few years?

I will move on to a different matter: transport. At the moment, there is an under-the-radar consultation on school transport, which does not seem to be listening to parents and pupils, although it is talking to many other stakeholders. Once again, will the Minister make sure that funding is in place in the budget system to ensure that we have proper school transport in the future? From a meeting that I was at two or three years ago, I know that one company felt that it could take on the whole school transport cost itself at a very different and lower figure.

I will move on to early years education. At the moment, we have a split between OFMDFM and the Department of Education, with each carrying out work in certain areas of early years education. I wish to highlight the Bright

Start proposals, which were brought to my notice in my constituency recently. If we go ahead with the proposals, those who are only paying £3-60 or £3-80 an hour may well find themselves paying, through a statutory system, £7-90, which is a huge cost for working parents. So will the Minister make sure that there is funding so that we can look into how OFMDFM and the Department of Education are going to work together? That is just one of the areas in early years education. We need to find a way for the Departments to work much better together.

I will move on to health in schools. Again, principals raised with me the point that they are teachers, not nurses, and that there is no joined-up thinking about how health services should be delivered in schools, be that through a matron, a nurse or someone else. Again, will the Minister make sure that, when he is working out the budget with the Education Minister, there is money there to help? For health and special needs, we need to make sure that we know what is needed in and amongst schools. Another area that is not properly assessed — again, it needs money sitting there and waiting — is the newcomers. Many schools now have much larger numbers coming in, and the present allowances do not help them where there are larger numbers of those who cannot speak English. We need to find a way to make sure that the schools can function properly, because if you have too many pupils with special needs and too many newcomers, it can be very difficult to teach your class effectively.

Minister and Deputy Speaker, I know that it has been raised by others, but I will reiterate the point: we saw £16 million-plus being wasted on ESA as it did not get there. I know that we opposed it and, therefore, are partially to blame, but so much money was put into a policy before it had even got there. Can we please put something in place that allows people to look at what spending is actually necessary in each Department? I come back to my point before Question Time that we need to find an effective way of being able to scrutinise what Ministers and Departments are doing.

The same could be said about assessment. We have had computer-based assessment, Key Stage assessment and large amounts of money being spent when, in fact, the teachers and principals know their assessment world much better than the Department. We need to find a more effective way of using our money. The same matters come up when we look at Protestant underachievement. We come back to the same problem I have raised about health and special needs. Will we look at putting funding in place so that, if we are to have focus groups, action zones or transformation zones working in areas as pilot projects, we do not just have the pilot but have funding in place so that we can deal with that matter effectively with joint working between Departments?

I will move on to an area that I always feel we do not budget for enough; it is not quite in the curriculum, but it is. That is learning for life and learning how you can fit in in society when you leave school, whether it is learning how to carry on your own finances or, at a different end of the scale, as been very pertinent in the last few weeks, learning about race and learning to admire and understand each other. That applies not just to racism but to sectarianism. People can begin to understand who everyone else is and that their rights and cultures are just as important as our own, and we need budget to be put

into the system somewhere so that all children in every school learn about everybody else. It is phenomenally important, and we have seen that in the last few weeks.

Minister, I have thrown in a whole lot of little points and bits and pieces, and I have been trying to link them to the Budget and the budgeting that is going on rather than just having a gripe about the education system. However, £114 million went through to the Department with further funding from the draft Budget process, and, as yet, we do not know what that is being used for. So, again, I come back to the point about transparency and having the right figures in front of us so that we know what we are scrutinising. There is a great deal that could be done better in giving us information and a great deal that could be done better in having budgets in the right place. I look forward to it all working better in the future.

Mr McCallister: Just in case anyone thought that Mr Wells was my new colleague and was doing a runner there, I can assure the Minister that he has not joined just yet.

Mr McNarry: You must be used to everybody running now.

Mr McCallister: I am well used to it now.

I will start by looking at some areas that may cause the Minister some problems and some of the areas of disagreement within this Government. The big one, as I mentioned yesterday, is welfare reform, and virtually every Member has talked about it today. You also have disagreements in education now that the ESA has bitten the dust. There is all the debate around what to do with the Maze project and the stopping and moving away of the European money to other projects. There is the ongoing debate about health and TYC and whether the Chair of the Committee is right in saying that TYC is dead.

Look at other policy areas. Looking at agrifood and delivering the agrifood strategy, I think it is widely accepted that the agrifood industry was one of the things that kept our economy going through a very difficult period. We had the ongoing debate about CAP reform. We have the power derogated from Europe to make decisions on different regional policies with the single farm payment. I draw Members' attention to my declaration of interest on single farm payments. I also stress the issues around modulation and the Minister's court action last year against his colleague the Agriculture Minister.

There are other government policies around what was to be the A5; the Haass talks — or whatever is following on from that — delivering on the T:BUC strategy; and all the issues around policing, parades and dealing with the past and what we are doing with that. All those issues could throw the Budget almost into irrelevance. This is one of the big challenges that the Minister faces. Any one of these issues could derail the Budget in such a comparative way.

I will pick up on some of the issues around welfare reform. The Sinn Féin Member for North Antrim, Daithí McKay, talked about trying to make changes to welfare reform, while all the Government parties in Northern Ireland have bought into the idea of corporation tax. So, you throw all those things together: how is it going to work? The parties in Government agree on corporation tax. It is no great secret that I have concerns about its volatility and the economic data. The Minister said in response to a question yesterday that he is not concerned about the economic data. With regard to volatility, I will point out what he

said yesterday about corporation tax. He talked about Lord Strathclyde's report and said that it was a politically motivated document. The one thing that I will credit Lord Strathclyde with is that he was doing it for the benefit of the Union. I do not think that anyone could question Lord Strathclyde's unionism or commitment to keeping Scotland in the Union.

So, even when we talk about not only corporation tax but having a commission to look at the various tax powers that we might want to have and the various fiscal responsibilities that we might want to devolve to the Assembly, be it income tax or not, we need to move away from looking at these purely through the prism of unionism or republicanism. We need to look at whether they are good for Northern Ireland. Do they deliver for Northern Ireland and the very citizens that we are all elected here to represent? Is it advantageous?

Yesterday, Mr Wilson talked about some of the capital allowances. He was right in his point that there is an allowance up to £250,000 at the moment. That ends in 2015. If that were proven to be useful, to work and to be meaningful, we would have the power to change it if we had tax-varying powers here. We would have the power to extend it, reduce it or move it to whatever was deemed to work best for Northern Ireland.

As I have said before, one of the challenges facing Northern Ireland and the entire UK is that we need to rebalance the Northern Irish economy, but we also need to rebalance the UK economy in that we are desperately London-centric and south-east-centric. Our entire economy is dependent on the UK economy and must deal with the difficulties that it faces. Even when you look at housing in London, the bubble mentality is starting again, and that could have a knock-on effect on the economy. It could change the level of interest rates that might have to be set to deal with housing in London at a very difficult time when Northern Ireland is only just starting to come out of recession.

We have heard from a Sinn Féin Member about welfare reform. When Sinn Féin said all that about tax powers and a commitment about being signed up to corporation tax —

Mr Maskey: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: In a second. We hear all that from Sinn Féin, yet there is a refusal even to look at and be serious about welfare reform.

From where does Sinn Féin think that the money that the Minister of Finance needs to fulfil all those commitments will come? I give way to Mr Maskey.

4.15 pm

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. I listened to him yesterday and again today, and he referred to welfare reform on quite a number of occasions. However, he clearly does not listen to others — certainly to no one on this party's Benches — who have spoken about it.

This party has made it very clear. We are not satisfied at all with the cuts agenda in the Welfare Reform Bill, and that is why we are currently blocking it. Yes, we want to work with all the other parties, including you as a Member of the House, to try to get a better deal for all the people whom we represent and, presumably, the people whom you represent.

The Member is quite happy to criticise and take potshots at every other party. He talks about the Government. Will you advise the House as to whether you want the Welfare Reform Bill as it is currently constituted imposed? It might help the debate for us to know where you stand. It is all right to criticise somebody else, but tell the House and the people out there what you want to do about the Welfare Reform Bill. Impose it or not? It is a simple question.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Member for bringing that up. I am very happy to say that. *[Interruption.]* It would be very easy for me to sit here and vote against welfare reform. It would be easy for me to vote against pension reform. It would be easy for me to vote against everything that you, as a Government, bring up.

Mr Maskey: No, we do not bring it up.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McCallister: But would it be responsible governance if I were to do that, even as a Member sitting on the opposition Benches? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McCallister: The very point about welfare reform is this: like it or loathe it, it is a policy by a mandated Government of the United Kingdom. Whether you like that Government or support it, it is the coalition Government in Westminster that voted the policy in. *[Interruption.]* The DUP and the Finance Minister —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask that all remarks be made through the Chair, not across the Floor.

Mr McCallister: The Finance Minister and his colleague the Minister for Social Development have to deliver on some of those policies. The alternative that Mr Maskey suggests is that we do not do welfare reform, or that we design our own welfare system. The question that Mr Maskey and Sinn Féin have never answered is this: how are we going to pay for it? I do not detect from the Finance Minister that he is finding a lot of extra money that Sammy Wilson left him as a legacy.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. I appreciate your time on this. Some time ago, we tentatively reached a deal on certain mitigating measures, including, for example, that this Executive would pay for the bedroom tax. That is one example. You are a Member, and the Assembly and the Executive will underpin the bedroom tax. We are not going to pass it on to your constituents, even though you want us to do so.

The point that I am making is that you can find ways of mitigating welfare reform, because the Executive parties have already tentatively agreed to mitigate some of the measures in the Welfare Reform Bill. My party argues that we can mitigate a lot more, if we have a direct and serious discussion with the British Government and seriously put our minds to it. However, bear this in mind: imposing the Welfare Reform Bill, as it stands, including the measures that we have tentatively agreed, will still cost the Executive tens of millions of pounds. We are supporting that. We are prepared to find other moneys to support those most vulnerable out there.

All I want you to do is give us a simple answer. Are you happy enough to impose the cuts that your Union Government wants to impose on us? Are you happy enough to do that? Just declare your hand and tell the

people out there that you want the cuts imposed. We are saying that we do not.

Mr McCallister: I think that I have been pretty straight with the honourable Member on this. He is in this position: he is saying no to welfare reform and yes to corporation tax. I am saying that to hold those two positions is completely inconsistent.

He talks about the bedroom tax. I do not know all the details of the deal that was done between the DUP and you or about all the mitigation measures. Would I rather not have to do welfare reform? Like probably every Member of the House, of course I would rather not do it. Would it be fiscally responsible to oppose it? No. There is no choice. Either oppose it, say where you are getting the money from and try to get the mandate to back that, or get on board and do the deal with your coalition partners. Those are the choices that Sinn Féin has to make. It needs to face up to the reality that it is the second-largest party in the Government, and it has to face up to what it needs to do. It cannot be constantly locked in a place of wanting to give only good news. That has wrecked the Assembly for many years now. We want to deliver only the good news, the sweeties and the trinkets. We never want to face up to the difficult choices.

The Minister has to face those choices as he cuts and top-slices every budget in Northern Ireland. He will take money off the Health Department. Does Sinn Féin want a Health Department that, by the Health Minister's admission, is £160 million short? That is starting to sound much closer to the shortfall that Michael McGimpsey warned about. If the Finance Minister has to top-slice the health budget, then add another £68 million, I think. Where does he think that that will hit the hardest? It will hit the Department of Education and every Department in the Northern Ireland Executive. Do I think that saying no to welfare reform would be much easier? Absolutely. Do I think that it is the fiscally responsible thing to do? No.

Sinn Féin, as a party of government, has to face up to that challenge. Either it wants to be in government and make the tough and unpopular decisions that sometimes go with that, or it should not be in government at all. That is the point and that goes right through so many of our problems; we do not face up to any decisions. We do not get a deal. There is no collective responsibility among the partners in this Government, so Government policy tends to be all over the place, with Ministers doing solo runs if they are not in the bigger parties. There is no agreement on welfare reform. There is no agreement on education, whether it is the ESA, rebooting the library boards or transfer. Mr Kinahan talked about the model of sharing education, and there is no agreement on that.

Look at the relationships with the Maze development. What is happening there? What about the Agriculture Department's new base at Ballykelly? There are disagreements and problems with contracts and strategy in the Government on the new police and fire training college at Desertcreat. All those problems are hitting this Administration.

I sat on the Health Committee for a number of years. Look at the difficulties and the relentless rise in demand on the health service, and then look at the £160 million. Many parties warned that that would be a problem at the start of this Budget cycle. In fact, if memory serves me right, it was

one of the reasons why the Ulster Unionist Party did not vote for the Budget in 2011.

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: Yes.

Mr F McCann: I am sorry that I am late; I was in a meeting. Alex just reminded me that you have made a litany of complaints without a solution to any of them. That is quite typical of you, John, and the likes of the Ulster Unionists. When they were in power, along with you when you were in that party, they did absolutely nothing. I was going to say this to the Minister: there will be between £500 million and £750 million of cuts here because of welfare reform. It will hit those most in need in society. It will hit the disabled and the elderly. It will hit housing. People will end up homeless. What is the solution to that? You are going to lose more out of the economy through welfare reform. The DUP plucks figures out of the air and cannot back them up.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members to address the Chair so that they are picked up by the microphones.

Mr McCallister: I will let the Minister answer the question of where the DUP plucks its figures from. However, I say to Mr McCann, using his figure of £750 million, although there would be some debate over the accuracy of that —

Mr F McCann: It came from the NICVA report.

Mr McCallister: I am aware of the NICVA report. He proposes to add maybe £400 million to that £750 million through corporation tax. That is what I have difficulty with: the inconsistency of the two approaches. That is the problem that Sinn Féin has with this debate: it cannot ride these two horses at once, wanting to give a tax break to large businesses while saying that welfare reform is a non-starter. In those two policy issues alone, and using their figures, you are talking about over £1 billion. Where does he think that Mr Hamilton will find that?

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he not understand that the issue is simply that the Executive have agreed that, if we have discretion on corporation tax, that may be — may be — a tool to generate greater foreign direct investment, which will enable us to create more jobs? On welfare reform, we all agree on one thing, which is that it is critical to realise that the best way to take people out of poverty is to give them a decent job. Does the Member agree?

There is no contradiction in saying that we should look at discretionary powers to use corporation tax as a measure that might help us, as part of a toolbox, to generate extra employment that would reduce the requirements for benefits and welfare support. Therefore, there is no contradiction at all in saying that we want to be able to find other tools to allow us to create employment and a bigger, better economy and that, at the same time, we are opposed to the kind of cuts that will be devastating to many people, including those in the Member's constituency, whom he seems to keep ignoring.

Mr McCallister: That is the very point that I am making. I have no objection to any Member wanting to equip the toolbox that Mr Maskey talked about. The problem that the Minister will have is this: who will pay for the toolbox? Nobody is putting up their hand to say that they want to pay for both. We do not want welfare reform; according to Pat Ramsey, the SDLP voted against pension reform; and

we do not want to do anything on tuition fees. We do not want to do any of these things, but we still want corporation tax powers.

The Minister will know my concerns about corporation tax. I am in favour of a commission looking at the whole idea of devolving tax-varying powers. That could be a real game-changer for Northern Ireland. The particular difficulty with corporation tax is the data, especially the volatility of the level of tax, which, in some years, could leave a shortfall that the Minister would have to find.

One of the big dangers of devolving tax is that we would have to change the structures here to suit that. We have to get back to what I have talked about before: we need a road map to a proper, normal, functioning democracy with a proper coalition Government, an opposition and all of the structures that go with that. To devolve tax-varying powers here, we would have to change the Assembly, because we could not devolve those powers to an Assembly and Executive that are, quite frankly, so dysfunctional and have no sense of collective responsibility.

I think that it was Mr Bradley who said that there was no link between the Budget and the Programme for Government and the priorities set out in it. Read through some of the strategic aims of the Programme for Government: we are not meeting any of them. We are not doing the Maze, we are not doing the A5, or we are doing bits of it and not other bits of it. No one really knows where we are going. The procurement for Desertcreat is a mess. Is it needed? Is it a strategic option? Has any of that been discussed and agreed with Executive colleagues? That is what has to change. This Assembly needs to reform into a proper, functioning Assembly with collective responsibility and a mandated Government, rather than just writing a highbrow Programme for Government that bears no relation to this Budget.

That is the crux of where we get into so much difficulty.

4.30 pm

I turn to other comments that Members have made. Yes, the Northern Ireland economy is growing slightly, but that is mainly due to the effects of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. Mr Weir talked about the rates issue and said that Northern Ireland had the lowest rates — or the equivalent — in the UK. We are also the part of the UK with the lowest disposal income, and that makes us vulnerable to any increases. How is the economy going to grow out of that?

On the health issue, there is a shortfall of £160 million in health spending. Where is that going to come from if the Finance Minister has to keep top-slicing? Mrs Cochrane gave us the figure of £87 million to find. That will be very difficult to find throughout the year, and that problem will increase every year that we put this off.

One issue that has probably saved the Northern Ireland Executive in budget terms is the fact that the coalition Government in Westminster had ring-fenced health and protected education spending, which, with the Barnett consequential, protected the Northern Ireland block grant to some degree. What happens next year, when whatever colour party is returned to Westminster? It seems clear that we are a long way off double-digit increases in public spending. We are many years off those types of increases. Even to balance the books has taken the Chancellor of the

Exchequer significantly longer than was initially projected. That will be a struggle for Conservative, coalition, Labour or whatever it happens to be. It will be very difficult for any Government and for this Executive to face up to.

I am also looking at some of the issues in my constituency. It is fair to say that we need to make sure that the Minister, the Budget and all the Government focus on growing the economy. For a Member like me in South Down, that means tourism, agriculture and aerospace. We have concerns over the factory down in Kilkeel, getting a better connection to the electricity grid and the fact that we have no competition in that marketplace, which causes difficulties for companies of that size. In our fishing industry, we need money and investment in places like Kilkeel harbour. I am fairly certain that the next Member to speak will support some of those aims and objectives. We need that collective responsibility between Governments, not only the Northern Ireland Executive, but between the new super-councils and industry to see whether we can progress and deliver on some of those projects. Can we use European funding? Can we tap into that?

Look at the dereliction in many of our small towns and even some of our larger towns. Some of our high streets are really struggling. What can we — the Assembly and the Finance Minister — do around rate relief and changing policies to encourage small businesses in our town centres? I look at towns like Rathfriland, Kilkeel or Downpatrick right across the board, and I see too many vacant properties. I know that the Minister sees that in his constituency. We need to look at other things and at where we are moving. Where is the newbuild for Down High School? Those are things that I want and need to see in budgets going across to the Department of Education. As an Assembly, we have to be realistic about what we can do. Effectively, at the minute, we are just spreading the jam as best we can, but we could do better if we had a more collective and more strategic approach to how we spend and what we do, instead of sometimes spending millions on reports or sending millions back to Europe. We look at some of the lost opportunities with the Narrow Water bridge project. I know that, at least, it was not this Minister who was to blame for that, but there have been missed opportunities.

I also want to touch on the European funding aspect and how it ties in with our budget process. The last couple of times that Pat Colgan from the SEUPB has appeared before the Committee with departmental officials, he has told us that there is an age-old problem that we in Northern Ireland are too slow in responding to European funding applications. We are gold-plating them. Programmes that start off in Brussels get slightly gold-plated in London and even more gold-plated when they get to DFP. That is something that the Minister has the direct power to challenge. If the European average is 26 or 30 weeks to get approval, why is it 56 weeks in Northern Ireland? Why oh why can we not do better?

I will quote briefly from Mr Colgan's remarks about the need for economic appraisals at one of the last Committee for Finance and Personnel sessions:

"The requirement for economic appraisals is a Northern Ireland managing public money requirement. It is not required by EU regulations. It is not required by our programme requirements. It is not required by the

Dublin Government. It is not required by the Scottish Government. It is a requirement of the Northern Ireland accountable Departments, and the question we have to address is how we meet that need and that requirement in an effective and an efficient way and how we stitch that into the design of the programme management and implementation structures."

We look at how that links in with our Budget, European funding and a strategic approach to how we deliver some of that. There are requirements in Europe for economic appraisals when you hit spending limits of €50 million, yet we seem to do them on nearly every project. The Minister has the direct power and responsibility to challenge that, to make a difference and to dramatically speed up that process. There are many things that we can learn from our colleagues in the Republic and in Scotland about how they do it and how they speed it up. I am keen that the Minister should take that up and see how all that ties in with a much more strategic approach to the way that we do government.

I would also like the Minister, in his response, to tell us where he sees us going on issues such as the agrifood strategy. Is that going to be built into some of the budgets? Is there agreement on that between the Minister, the Agriculture Minister and the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister? Where does he see CAP reform and single farm payment going? Does he see any place for negotiation between him and his colleagues in Sinn Féin to deliver that? That will have a major impact on our farming communities. That will have a major impact, and we should move to at least a two-tier system of payments to make sure that we target that money where production in agriculture is. That is the key point, and I know that the Minister's colleague Diane Dodds MEP would support that approach. I am interested in hearing whether the Minister thinks that that is deliverable.

There are many thorny issues that this Administration face. We are heading back into a summer of parades. There are some signs that we might have some sort of post-Haass talks to look at parading and the costs associated with parading, flags and all of that. This Minister can probably ill afford to be spending huge amounts of resources, but he has to balance the rights of everyone, from those who want to parade to those who do not. We have to look and be realistic about the resources that we have in difficult times. If we do not move on welfare reform, that will put even more pressure on an already stretched Executive and give this Minister difficult decisions to make, including, indeed, whether the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, which is already £160 million short, can be sustained or will be heading for meltdown or almost bankruptcy at that point.

Mr Wells: Never believe an MLA from NI21 when he tells you he will speak for 10 minutes. That was quite articulate, but it was certainly an awful lot longer than that. I could not agree with much of the content, but at least the presentation was fairly useful. Unlike the other Member for South Down, I will not come with a shopping list of my favourite projects for south Down, although I support him on the harbour.

I will concentrate on health, because the Health Department, as we know, is the biggest Department in the Executive by a long shot. It takes £4.7 billion, and

that is before monitoring round money. Needless to say, the budget for health basically dictates everything else because it is such a dominant factor. Some of the statistics around the health budget make difficult reading, and that is putting it mildly. Last year, the Department came in at £120 million overspent. Fortunately, efficiencies were then implemented, and the carry-over was pared down to £13 million. So, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has lived within budget over the past three years. That has been a remarkable performance because, as Members will know — the statistic is often quoted — the actual increase allocated under the CSR to the Health Department was 1.9%. That covered only the health element, as opposed to the social care element. Therefore, social care basically stood still, but, of course, demand rose. The actual increase was implemented on the medical part of the Department's budget, which is about three quarters of the budget.

While all this was going on in the past three years, demand has risen inexorably. Some of that is due to an ageing population, and some is due to the fact that many in our community have a lifestyle choice that leads them to poor health. Indeed, it is reckoned that about 40% of the people who present themselves at A&E are there as a direct result of their lifestyle choice. Some of the demand came from left stage, as it were, for instance the increase in the number of overseas people living in Northern Ireland who are giving birth. The Southern Trust, for instance, has a very large number of Portuguese, Lithuanian and Polish people giving birth. It was very difficult to predict that happening, and it puts incredible stress on the maternity units in that area. We have no idea who is coming, what stage they are at in their life cycle and whether they are likely to have children. It looks like an awful lot of them have had children very successfully delivered at Craigavon and Daisy Hill hospitals but at a cost that has to be borne by the taxpayer of Northern Ireland.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Minister, having basically balanced the books successfully for the past three years, has also in that period achieved, depending on what way you look at it, either £600 million or £770 million of efficiency savings in the Department. That was because the Minister looked rigorously through every line of the budget and found items of expenditure that could be frozen, reduced or cut entirely without affecting front line services. There was low-hanging fruit there. He inherited a situation where there were budget lines that could be dealt with and were dealt with very effectively. The Minister has been rigorous in bringing about massive savings, savings, by the way, that are more than two or three of our smaller Departments combined. He has achieved that.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: I certainly will.

4.45 pm

Mr McCallister: Would the Member care to give us the figure for the savings from the Department of Health in the previous CSR period? I may be able to jog his memory. I think that the Department of Health contributed around £750 million, even though his list of excuses sounds very much like the reasons that we used to give the DUP for more money.

Mr Wells: I am very surprised that the honourable Member for South Down, having jumped ship to NI21, spends most of his life defending Ministers and colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party. That is quite strange, to put it mildly. Maybe a tentative transfer bid has been put in to bring him back to the fold. Maybe Wayne Rooney is being considered in part exchange, and the Member will be restored to his position in the Ulster Unionist Party.

Mr McCallister: No transfer bid has been required or requested by either side.

It is important to put on the record the truth about the £750 million and the difficulties that we all warned that health services would face. You are now finding difficulties in managing that Department.

Mr Wells: There is a fundamental difference here. I notice that he did not say that he would refuse any transfer bid, which is quite interesting. It is worth saying that, when the present Minister took over, he was able to find massive savings in his own Department that the Ulster Unionists, in the form of Mr McGimpsey, had not been able to tackle. The current Minister was able to go into that budget and take out issues that were of use and benefit to the Health Department but that it could do without, the savings from which he could then channel to the real pressures, which, of course, are A&Es, GPs, prescriptions etc. Therefore, money was in the kitty and available at the time, and the Minister has been rigorous and fastidious in finding that money.

However, the problem is that the low-hanging fruit has been picked. There is very little in the way of additional savings that can be achieved in year 4. Indeed, in order to stay within budget, the Minister established further savings of £170 million through various efficiencies in the Department. That will be extremely challenging to achieve. I think that we all realise that. When you consider the control of acute beds, the reduction in waiting times, and the tackling of no-shows for elective surgery and GP appointments, you can see that it will be very difficult to achieve £170 million savings. However, the Minister is determined to tackle it. After all of that has been achieved, the prediction is that the Department of Health will be £160 million short in the 2014-15 financial year. That is bad enough. However, this is where I do not understand where Sinn Féin is coming from. It will say that the next figure that I quote is made up, is fictitious and does not exist. The Finance Minister is building this figure into his budget, yet it does not exist. The Department will have to find at least an extra £50 million to make up for the intransigence of Sinn Féin and the SDLP on welfare reform.

I actually agree with Mr McCallister. Nobody in the Chamber, not even perhaps Mr Allister, wants to be in this position — none of us does. None of us wants to inflict pain on our community — we do not. We are in a very difficult position. However, the UK Budget holder, who is the Chancellor, is saying to us, "You can do what you like, Mr Northern Ireland, but you will pay for it". He will simply deduct anything extra that we have off our block grant. We have no control. It has been over 50 years since Northern Ireland was a net contributor to the British Exchequer, and, if we were in that position, it would be fine. However, we are totally at the mercy of the Chancellor on the issue, and he is saying that he is not giving us the money. Sinn Féin has a sort of whimsical wish list, in that we will go to the Chancellor and demand more money. Let us just say that

George Osborne were to listen to the articulate views of Mr Maskey or whomever and say, "That is fine. We will give you the extra money. You do not have to implement welfare reform". How long would it be before Scotland, Wales, the north-east of England, inner London, Devon and Cornwall were knocking on the door demanding exactly the same treatment? You could not have someone in Basingstoke being treated less favourably than somebody in Belfast. It just could not happen. Therefore, the Chancellor, by the very nature of the process, cannot discriminate in favour of Northern Ireland.

On top of that projected overspend of £160 million, the Department of Health has to find —

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: Certainly.

Mr F McCann: At the outset, the Minister for Social Development said that there was no way that we would be treated any differently on welfare reform than Norwich or Manchester. However, when a bit of pressure was put on, he went away, then came back and said that he had got some movement on split payments and the bedroom tax. So if you put pressure on, you can get things to deal with the worst excesses of welfare reform.

Mr Wells: There is a fundamental fallacy in that argument. We are paying for those minor technical changes and amendments. That is the point. The Chancellor did not say, "Brilliant idea, Mr McCausland; here's an extra dollop of money". That money is already coming out of our Budget.

When you move to the really big-ticket items, such as personal independence payments, we have to pick up the tab for all that. The figures that the Minister of Finance is giving are accurate. You will know that they are accurate when Departments, including Sinn Féin-controlled Departments, start to take a slice out of their budgets to pay for it. That means that Education, Agriculture and DCAL will have to face those cuts as a direct result of the intransigence of the two parties on the Benches opposite.

Technically, given the constitutional arrangements for Northern Ireland, you have a right to do what you are doing in the sense that, technically, you can block this, but have you thought of the implications for the future of the Northern Ireland Departments? There will have to be very severe cutbacks in all Departments to pay for it.

In former days, there was an arrangement whereby health was treated differently because it was seen as a special case. I think that we all accept that. The Minister might correct me on this, but, given the magnitude of what we are facing and the huge segment of the Budget that health represents, I do not believe that the Minister can give the Department of Health a by-ball. I do not think that it is possible because it is such a big budget. If he were to do that, he would have to absolutely savage the other Departments to achieve the savings required.

To make matters worse, we are getting only a small insight into the problem this year because it builds and builds. I am hearing figures of £800 million or £900 million being quoted — I could be wrong — as the final outcome of this process. If the Department of Health is being asked for its cut of that, it is about £360 million, and that is on top of the £160 million shortfall that we have this year and, perhaps, in following years. Where on earth could health possibly get that? It is absolutely impossible. That means that

doctors' surgeries, clinics and hospitals will suffer because the low-hanging fruit has been picked.

Mr McKinney: Thank you very much for giving way. Does the Member accept that the transformational plan at the heart of the health service for producing savings and making the difference in health for years to come needs significant measurables and targets? Will the Member acknowledge that they are simply not there?

Mr Wells: If the Minister — the Minister? Hopefully not for a long time. If the Member genuinely feels that he is not getting adequate information from the Department on the implementation of Transforming Your Care, the one thing he has to say is that the present Minister's door is always open. At every opportunity when he is asked to come before our Committee to give evidence on that issue, he has come. I believe, in fact, that the Health Minister has come to his Committee on more occasions than any other Minister has come to theirs. Therefore, if the issue is a lack of information, I am sure that the Minister is more than happy to deal with that.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for "an" answer, but it is not "the" answer. That is a perfectly logical way of proceeding, but we have asked. There have been three or four debates in the House, and all parties are agreed on this issue. Is it not time for his party, the Minister and the Department to accept that the mechanism that they are using for these changes to evolve is not measurable, is not working, is underfunded and does not have an implementation plan at its core?

Mr Wells: I have no doubt that the Minister has taken into consideration the points raised in the most recent debate on the issue and the comments from the Committee. Knowing the Minister as well as I do, I think that he will come back with an answer that most in the Chamber will find to be more than adequate.

I accept that there is some merit in what the Member says. There is merit in having more information on the table and in people being made more aware, but we are in a perfect storm as far as health is concerned because we need to have that —

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: May I just finish this sentence? We need this significant change in how we deliver healthcare to prevent the system, in my opinion, crashing in 20 years' time because we simply cannot afford to continue the way we are going. However, we need the money to do it, and it is being done in a very difficult financial situation.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for indulging me, and I would like to progress the point. You say that we need to go elsewhere for the money, but the arguments put forward so far and accepted by the House surely point in the direction of further interrogation of efficiencies, not just financial efficiencies but process efficiencies, to achieve better outcomes. In other words, we need to make sure that the plan is working fundamentally before we reach out elsewhere. If we are reaching out elsewhere at this stage, we are reaching out in panic.

Mr Wells: I am content from what I have seen in the Committee that the Minister has been rigorous in achieving massive efficiencies in his first three years. No one has been able to criticise him for the sheer scale of what he has been able to achieve. Now that the Minister has

achieved that, most logical people would accept that it is highly unlikely that anything like a similar scale of efficiencies is available in the future. Even after achieving the £600 million, he has set himself the target of a further £175 million in one year. You have seen, in the report that the Committee got for the June monitoring round, that the issues that he has decided to tackle are extremely challenging. They are not simple ticket items such as making a certain drug unavailable, freezing the building of a hospital, pay cuts or a reduction in new pay grades in the health service. The Minister is looking at fundamental processes and trying to make them more efficient. That is extraordinarily challenging; even the Minister admits that.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for giving way again. Has the nature of the course that the Minister has chosen — not funding the community side of the proposals and instead taking money out of the expensive side — not led to further pressures on the expensive accident and emergency side? Were he to follow the TYC plan logically and in its originally conceived way, would he not be properly spending to save?

Mr Wells: The Member fails to recognise that, even if TYC did not exist, the Department would be under the same pressures because of the inexorable growth that he and I have no control over: an ageing population, lifestyle choices and immigration. We simply have to deal with that; it is demand-led. Therefore, it is wrong to say that TYC has led to the difficulties that health faces. There are other trends that the Minister can do very little about. He cannot stop us ageing; it will be very difficult to turn the tanker of people adopting lifestyle choices that are extremely deleterious to their health; and we cannot predict how many people will seek to live in Northern Ireland and perform very important roles in manufacturing or whatever.

We have gone off on a bit of a tangent. What I am fundamentally saying is that you cannot blame TYC. You can blame forces that are completely outwith the control of the Assembly. The Department faces a difficult time in the future, and we have to face up to that unless the economic situation in the rest of the United Kingdom rapidly improves and the Chancellor says, "I got it wrong. Growth rates are much higher. I can loosen the purse strings". Remember, though, that he has a £1 trillion debt to pay off. Somebody told me the other day that, if he continues to pay it off at the same rate, it will take about 2,000 years. I am absolutely certain that George Osborne does not want it to be repaid on such a long-term basis. Therefore, I do not think that we will have a knight in shining armour coming over the hill in the form of extra cash from the Government at Westminster. As a community, we will have to prioritise and ask whether health is worth protecting. I believe that it is. As far as the public are concerned, it is the most important Department, and we will have to work very hard.

5.00 pm

The last thing that we need is this huge millstone around our neck of lack of agreement on welfare reform and the rapid growth in demand that it will place on health through budget reductions. We have to crack this. The only thing that I agreed with Mr McCallister on was that we will have to start taking difficult decisions in this Assembly. It is dead easy to introduce free public transport, abolish prescription charges and not move on water charges. That is dead easy, and we all take our day in the sun. The measure

of any form of government is its ability to take the really difficult decisions, and they do not come any harder than welfare reform — I accept that. We will have to be mature and sit down and explain to our community, "We don't want to do this, but we have no option. We will have to bring it in. Please understand why we are in the position we are in. We will do our best around the edges to reduce its impact on you, but we're stuck with this and we have no choice". At least then we can go forward without our Departments having a year-on-year reduction because of a decision that has been taken for party-political purposes so that we do not offend our community. We need to grow up, and we need, jointly as an Assembly, to take the criticism that will undoubtedly come our way because we have done this. We cannot start closing essential health services to pay for someone's difficulties with a UK-wide decision.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Listening to Mr Wells and Mr McCallister, I thought that they agreed on everything, not just one or two things. Obviously, the Tories are alive and well and living in Stormont.

As I listen to all the rhetoric about welfare reform, it seems to me that there is a lot of talk about the economic cost and very little talk about the human cost. If we look at statistics in Britain, we can see that quite a few people have already been driven to suicide by the imposition of the bedroom tax. Mr Wells talked about England, Scotland and Wales and the effect there. A Sheffield University report estimates that at least £750 million would be taken out of our economy by welfare reform. How would that affect our economy? In Belfast, £840 would be lost per year per adult of working age. That would also affect Newry, Derry, Strabane and other places. In Britain, the figure is approximately £450, so we would pay double. You need to get your facts straight.

Everybody else has talked about welfare reform, so I might as well talk about it. The welfare reform legislation is not about tackling poverty; it is about tackling the poor. We need to be straight about that and not go around the houses. That is what it is about: cuts that affect the vulnerable.

We talk about health, but what about the unforeseen consequences of welfare reform, such as the knock-on effect that it will have on those with mental health issues and on people with disabilities? The benefit cap, if introduced, would put approximately 4,000 more children into poverty. Child poverty is something that the Assembly has vowed to eradicate in the shortest time possible. When we talk about the consequences of this, that and the other, let us look at the real consequences of welfare reform.

The change from DLA to the personal independence payment will mean that 20% to 25% of people will lose their benefit. Those are people who are vulnerable, people who are disabled and people who rely on that extra money to give them a reasonable quality of life.

You talk about savings in the health service. You were a member of the Health Committee, as I was, last year — I think it was last year — when a health economy expert, Professor Normand, gave evidence. He said that any health service like ours could save between 8% and 10% without cuts just by being more efficient. I assume that that has not really been looked at. You talked about the Minister making efficiency savings. If we were being cynical, we

would see Transforming Your Care as a shift not to the left but towards privatisation. That would presumably save some of the money that you are talking about. Let us get real about these things.

We have been told that welfare reform has to be imposed. Where it has been imposed in Britain, it is not working. In the pilot scheme for universal credit, they have already written off £142 million for their IT system. At this stage, there were supposed to be over one million people on the system for universal credit: there are approximately 11,000 on it. The only reason they are on it is that they are single males, who are the easiest to put on. It simply is not working, so why should we impose something here that does not work and has been proven not to work? Again, we need to get real about these things.

The DUP voted against welfare reform in Parliament, but its Members are obviously not going to vote against it here. We need to present a united front. We have been told about all the mitigating measures but have not been given the detail on them unfortunately. We were told that the bedroom tax would save £18 million — *[Interruption.]* Maybe the lights going out is an omen. Obviously the Assembly is already starting to save money. I am sure that the Minister has already spoken to the people who control the lights. Have you? Saving a few quid on electricity. Maybe that will go towards the bill that Mr Wells and Mr McCallister have been talking about.

The point I was making is that we need to present a united front. Concessions or mitigating measures can be achieved. We were told that the bedroom tax would save £18 million. Then we were told that it would cost £21 million to implement. How is that a saving? It is absolutely ridiculous, because it costs more to implement, in many cases. In Britain, in some of the London boroughs, following the imposition of the bedroom tax they pay up to £100,000 more a week for bed and breakfast, because people have had to leave their home.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Brady: Yes, I will.

Mr Wells: It would have been good if your five MPs had gone to Westminster and made those very points. Whilst I do not agree with them all, they are legitimate points. However, the horse has well and truly bolted. That decision has been made. MPs voted against welfare reform, but now we have it. What does he propose to do if someone goes to George Osborne and he says that there is no extra money? What on earth does he expect the Finance Minister to do in that situation?

Mr Brady: I thank the Member for his intervention. Your MPs did not seem to make much difference, to be perfectly honest. Do not preach at us. We have a principled stand of abstentionism. The fact is that your MPs are in Parliament and really do not seem to make a huge difference. You talk plenty about it, but, as somebody once said in the House of Commons, the poor are often talked about in this House but never entertained. That could also apply to this House. I think that it was Isaac Butt who said that in about 1864, but do not quote me on that.

The Finance Minister has been throwing about figures: £5 million a month; £1 billion over four or five years. The British Treasury, as far as I am aware, has not actually

given us definitive figures, unless the Finance Minister knows what they are and —

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Do you want to hear them?

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us have comments through the Chair.

Mr Brady: Give us those figures. To date, we have not got them. They have been coming up with all sorts of figures, going back over years.

I will move on from welfare reform, because I think that I have said enough about it. Everybody else has preached ad nauseam about it today, and I am sure that other people will before we finish the debate.

I particularly want to talk about housing. In the Programme for Government there is a commitment to build social housing. On 24 March, in the CSR, 4,000 additional houses were mentioned. In the monitoring round, the Minister asked for £15 million for co-ownership. That would provide approximately a further 360 homes. There is a waiting list for social housing of about 40,000 people, and over half of those are in housing stress. There was no bid for social housing. About £7 million was handed back by DSD which should have been put towards planned maintenance. In 2009, the Savills report said that, here in the North, we had some of the best housing in Europe. That was five years ago. Obviously, you need to maintain those houses to maintain that stock, otherwise it will go into disrepair. That has consistently happened. The Minister has, in the past financial year, handed back —

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Brady: Of course.

Mr F McCann: That is a very important and valid point, as the Minister will know, because he sat on the Social Development Committee for a while. There is a serious problem in the allocation of funding in the Budget towards co-ownership. Co-ownership may be good for a number of people, but, let us face it, there was another application for £10 million to go towards it and you may find that, over the past couple of years, upwards of £100 million has gone in that direction. There is a waiting list of 600 people for co-ownership, and yet not a penny extra has been bid for to deal with the 40,000. In my constituency, over 4,000 people are on the waiting list, many of them in hostels and many in stress. Not one house extra has been bid for or built.

Mr Brady: I thank the Member for his intervention. Certainly co-ownership helps people who want to get on the housing ladder, but it certainly does not go any way towards alleviating the plight of the over 40,000 people on the social housing waiting list or indeed the people, particularly in areas such as Belfast, who have been in hostels for three to four years. That is an issue that needs to be addressed. The Minister seems obsessed with co-ownership. In the June 2013 monitoring round, there was a bid for £15 million for co-ownership, and in the October 2013 monitoring round there was a bid for £10 million. However, very little has been done to alleviate the social housing situation. That is maybe something that he needs to concentrate his mind on.

I will move on to neighbourhood renewal, which is transferring to councils. There are issues around the budget for that. In a recent presentation to the Committee

for Social Development by DSD officials, some Committee members were of the view that this has not been fully thought through. We are not convinced that there will be a transfer of staff in order to carry out what is required effectively. We accept that it needs to be cost-effective, but it also needs to deliver.

OFMDFM has committed to draw down an extra 20% of EU funding across Departments, and four more desk officers have been appointed. I ask the Minister to give us feedback on this and advise the House how the money is being drawn down and how it will be used.

Mr McCarthy: I will not detain you very long, Mr Speaker. I will try to be as brief as possible, as most of the important subjects have been covered.

Although today we are discussing the Budget (No. 2) Bill for the 2014-15 financial year, the debate could be described as being a somewhat artificial discussion because this Budget may and probably will have to be revised significantly come the end of this month unless there is political agreement on the regrettable but inevitable implementation of — guess what — welfare reform in Northern Ireland.

There is a choice for Members and society to make. We must recognise the constraints within which we operate and acknowledge that what we are being asked to do on welfare is not of our making. Equally, for us to pursue the current course of not addressing the reality of welfare reform will bring significant cuts in public services and in our ability to create jobs and, in doing so, will hurt the very people whom we are trying to help and protect.

Already, Departments are hamstrung by the uncertainty of what may or may not happen with the Budget. If further cuts are required, it will surely impact on services, including early years education, public health initiatives, mental health services, job programmes and training initiatives. All these measures have a positive impact on people's life chances, including life expectancy, educational opportunities and attainment and, indeed, employment prospects.

The Executive have recognised this reality through their Delivering Social Change framework. I agree with Mr Wells's comments in that I regard health as a priority. If you have a healthy population, you have a prosperous and peaceful population. We know that our health service is already under severe pressure with respect to performance and the finance available, and we heard harsh realities from the Health Minister at Question Time earlier today. There is a real challenge to ensure that Northern Ireland keeps up with other regions and jurisdictions in investing in new diagnostics, new drugs, new treatments and technologies and funding for specialist illnesses such as multiple sclerosis (MS), diabetes, cancer and many more. We had a full room of people with us yesterday representing those with muscular dystrophy. Their needs are as excessive as anyone else's, and we must do our best to cater for that.

We have funding shortfalls in spending per head in key areas such as mental health, despite a much higher incidence of mental health conditions. There are major structural issues relating to health inequalities and poor public health relative to other regions. We have emerging pressures from changing demographics and particular pressures around social care. There are ongoing crises in

the performance of accident and emergency departments and the efficiency of waiting lists. How, indeed, are we to provide for our elderly and infirm?

Alliance continues to recognise that the status quo in our health service and social services sector is not sustainable. We continue to support the broad thrust of Transforming Your Care while expressing, like others, growing concerns as to how it is being delivered.

No one should be left behind.

5.15 pm

Transforming Your Care offers the potential for a much more strategic and integrated approach to the population's changing health needs. The Health Minister and the Executive as a whole have a balance to strike between ensuring that the future direction of the health service is properly resourced while addressing the more immediate challenges. Many investments in reformed service delivery have the potential to produce savings, or, rather, to free up existing resources to reinvest in new areas. The Alliance Party believes that there is a strong case for full benchmarking of the profile of health and social services expenditure in Northern Ireland against other neighbouring jurisdictions. There are areas in which Northern Ireland will be shown to be spending proportionately more than other regions and some areas in which we are spending much less. Such an analysis should guide further spending priorities as the local Budget is rebalanced.

I note that the Health Minister is currently making perhaps the largest and most comprehensive set of bids for the June monitoring round, which ironically comes at a time of greatest stress on Executive budgets. By contrast, the implications of even a 1% cut, never mind a much greater cut, on the health service, especially when taking into account its current configuration, would be catastrophic. Already stretched services would be forced to breaking point. We must do all that we can to avoid that fate.

In conclusion, I want to speak on a few constituency matters. First and urgent is the ongoing saga with Exploris, the Northern Ireland Aquarium in Portaferry. That regional facility, situated on the edge of Strangford lough, has provided Northern Ireland with a fantastic aquatic experience. As the name "Exploris" suggests, it is an exploration of the Irish Sea. For almost 30 years, the facility has been owned and managed by Ards Borough Council and has brought the wonders of Strangford lough and its environs to a great many people. It has been of tremendous educational benefit to a great many schoolchildren.

The Minister will know of Exploris, as it is his constituency also, and of how Ards Borough Council has now sought regional support through funding from the Executive. The council has now provided the Executive with a sound business case to ensure the future of Exploris. The Minister of the Environment, Mark H Durkan, local councillors, Friends of Exploris and others have worked extremely well and hard together. Mr Durkan has agreed to secure the seal sanctuary into the future and has supported the capital funding required to modernise Exploris. We now await approval from the Minister of Finance and Personnel and the Executive.

Today, I appeal to Minister Hamilton to support the business case through the Executive at the earliest

opportunity. Exploris has been a major tourist attraction in Portaferry and the entire Ards peninsula, Strangford and the Lecale district, right into Downpatrick and further afield. Given its importance, it goes without saying that so many jobs in the hospitality industry depend on a successful conclusion to the present upgrading of all activities around Exploris.

On funding for the Department of Agriculture, I want to say that we recently had in our constituency severe flooding and a breach of the sea defences around Strangford lough. The Minister is aware of the desperate plight — in fact, he visited the site — of residents around Rowreagh and Lisbane outside Kircubbin and further along the coast at Bishop's Mill. The Minister visited the Saltwater Brig, the old church and local dwellings that had suffered the breach of the sea wall early in 2014. Some investment has to be made to prevent a similar occurrence taking place. There was a similar event in Antrim last weekend, happening for the fifth time. I am pleading with the Minister to do his utmost to ensure that Strangford residents do not have to wait until a breach happens five times for something to be done.

I have to say how devastated locals were when the Agriculture Minister replied with sympathy but said that her Department's Rivers Agency could undertake works only where they were cost-effective. In other words, she is walking away from those people. If flooding occurs again, too bad, because she and her Department have nothing to offer.

I ask the Finance Minister not only to have sympathy for his constituents but to offer investment to the Rivers Agency to prevent further breaches of the sea wall, to give people peace of mind and to prove that a local Assembly acts for local people.

Finally, I appeal to the Finance Minister to make further progress on what started off a few years ago as my Apartment Developments' Management Reform Bill. The Law Commission produced a report, but it did not go as far as I would have wished. Apartment owners and dwellers want real improvements to be implemented sooner rather than later.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to today's debate as Chair of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. I think that we can all reflect on the many pressures that are across many Departments and on those that are very clearly across the Health Department. However, it remains the case that the Transforming Your Care agenda now has a funding gap of £42 million, which is needed for the transition of that initiative.

As I advised the House yesterday, the Committee held a briefing with departmental officials on 28 May to explore some of the challenges facing the Department of Health in the 2014-15 Budget. The Department told the Committee in no uncertain terms that, this year, it is facing a funding shortfall of £160 million. The Department told the Committee that, if that £160 million is not forthcoming through the monitoring rounds, it has a number of options to bridge that gap.

The first option is to see whether any more savings can be extracted across the health and social care service.

Savings of £170 million have already been delivered in 2014-15, so it is difficult to see where further savings might be made.

The second option is to introduce charges for services, such as reintroducing prescription charges. However, the Department has acknowledged that that would not generate a huge amount of money and that most of the revenue generated would not be realised until 2015-16.

The third option is to impose pay restraints on staff. That would obviously have implications right across the public sector.

The fourth option is to reduce the range of services offered to the public. However, there was no real detail provided on what services are seriously being considered under that heading and how much they would deliver in savings.

The fifth option is that the Executive provide the Department of Health with additional recurrent resources, which would obviously impact other departmental budgets. However, it is not clear which of those options the Department favours, should the current shortfall of £160 million not be met through the monitoring rounds.

I acknowledge the budgetary pressures that the Department is under this year. We realise that some changes are more difficult than others to make and that there are some short-, medium- and long-term savings to be made, but we need to know more about the options available to the Department for the time period in which the savings could be realised, whether those options require a policy or legislative change and, importantly, the impact that they would have on front line patient care and safety.

Mrs D Kelly: As Mr McCarthy said, at this stage, it is very difficult to add anything new, but I will try to reflect on some of the First Minister's comments when the Assembly was reinstated after the elections in May 2011. He said:

"there is no mistaking the message of the electorate; it is as plain as a pikestaff. The electorate made it very clear to all of us as we went around the doors that they wanted to see us create and safeguard employment. They want us to help the vulnerable in our society and improve front line services. However, they also want to see us unite this Province and create a shared society. In short — my party managers would not forgive me if I did not say this — they want to see us moving Northern Ireland forward."

He later said:

"Four or five years from now, we will not be judged on the size of our first preference votes but on what we have done to make life better for the people whom we represent. We will be judged on delivery." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 64, p11, col 1].

Three years on, if a critical eye were cast over the mandate thus far, we would have fallen far short of the expectations, not only of the First Minister but, more importantly, the electorate. We have fallen short in the creation of a shared society and in dealing with contentious issues, and neither the Budget nor the Programme for Government has any resource allocated for dealing with the past.

Earlier today, when I asked the Justice Minister about expenditure on resources required by the coroner to deal with the Stalker report, I found that there had been no

request for resource in the monitoring rounds. I do not know whether the Finance Minister would look favourably on such a bid in the monitoring round, but he has not been asked.

We have also failed. It is only in the last few months that we agreed a sort of, kind of childcare strategy. We see a lot of hand-wringing in the Chamber by political parties in relation to tackling poverty and social exclusion, but the Executive, when forced and embarrassed into moving on a childcare strategy, published one that puts most of the money towards social enterprises. That is a laudable effort, but, unfortunately, that has a track record of not being sustainable. A lot of money has gone into rural areas but nothing to the private sector, yet we hear, particularly from the party opposite, that we should grow the private sector and reduce the public sector. There has been little evidence of that in the childcare strategy, and we all know the importance to working families, and to people trying to get out of poverty, of accessible childcare that is affordable and near home, including preschool places. That has not been good.

In terms of fuel poverty, the introduction of assistance for our older people is another anti-poverty measure on which we are falling behind GB and the South of Ireland. In Britain and the South, they have set aside a fund to help older and vulnerable people to pay their electricity bills. There is no talk about it here and no innovation in this Budget or this Programme for Government. Of course, when we settled on the Programme for Government and Budget some three years ago, it was set out, as my colleague Mr Bradley said earlier, as a four-year Budget. So it is very difficult to make any inroads on that Budget. Of course, at that time, welfare reform was not on the agenda.

Before I leave fuel poverty, on average, pensioner households in the North spend £1,602 a year on heating. That is something like £400 more than their peers elsewhere, yet we are the only jurisdiction that has done nothing to help to target that group of people. Earlier today at the Social Development Committee, we learnt that the issue of an alleged overpayment of some £18 million on a maintenance contract has still not been settled. The contract was signed to allow maintenance to resume on 1 May, but no work will be on site potentially until late autumn. We all know that much of that work is improving insulation and windows by, for example, installing double glazing. Therefore, many people face another winter of rising fuel costs and heat loss because of substandard housing. That is a great disappointment to us.

I do admire Sinn Féin for, on the one hand, wringing its hands about the health budget, but Sinn Féin signed off on a health budget three years ago, something our party pointed out that it was wrong to do. That Budget took some £600 million out of the health service, yet we saw the display by the Chairperson of the Health Committee about how dreadful it all is. It is a pity that it did not think of that three years ago. Unfortunately, Mr Wells is not here, but I recall very vividly, as, I am sure, do you, Mr Speaker, the shouts and cries and abuse faced by the previous Minister of Health when he was told that he had enough money to manage the health service within his budget. We all know now how false that accusation was. We know that the health service is in dire straits, as we see, in each

monitoring round, more and more money going towards the health service.

5.30 pm

The First Minister referred to employment. We see rising inequality among middle- and low-income families. That is not a fact that I have established; it is one that the Institute for Fiscal Studies has established. It has the graphs and evidence to show it, if one would care to look up its website. So, we are seeing wages being held well below the waterline for many in our society against a backdrop of rising costs. It is not enough to say that it is in and around welfare reform and then talk about the health service as if there is no correlation between poor health and poverty. Poor housing and low income inevitably lead to poor health outcomes because of the high levels of poverty and, particularly, childhood poverty in the North.

It had to be Westminster that brought forward legislation to force this jurisdiction to publish an anti-poverty strategy, which was only laid before the House on near enough the last day that it could be laid. I think that, at that time, we were in recess. We always know how to bury bad news by publishing at a time when there are not too many watching.

Others have referred to the failure to spend on social housing. I have to say that I have many concerns about the management of that portfolio by the current Minister for Social Development. I think that there is a lot of evidence gathering apace about his management and his refusal to acknowledge his obligations under the equality legislation. We hear from others how equality legislation and moving forward on equality has been one of their main achievements, yet we see the rollback of many of the equality provisions. In fact, whether it is race relations, general equality provisions or provisions for older people for equality in goods and services, we are behind the other jurisdictions on these islands.

We are far from doing the job that we were encouraged to do. With regard to the transformation of the society that had held so much promise and was endorsed by the people, any reasonable, objective observer could only conclude that we have failed. I urge the Minister and the Executive to get round the table and start doing some collaborative partnership work, putting the people at the core of their decision-making and not ensuring that it is something for your community and something for my community, because that is not going to move Northern Ireland forward.

Mrs Overend: As Ulster Unionist spokesperson for enterprise, trade and investment, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Second Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill. I will take this opportunity to raise some questions about the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's spending priorities at the start of this financial year of 2014-15, in the context of the five-year Budget for 2011-15, which was voted through by the Assembly but not by the Ulster Unionist Party in March 2011.

It is interesting to check the estimated 2014-15 Budget published figures in the 2011-15 Budget document with the just published Budget position in the Main Estimates. Not surprisingly, the big spending Departments of Health and Education have seen an upward revision in their budgets. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, on the other hand, has gone the other way. Originally, there

was an estimate of £205.5 million in the resource budget that is current expenditure and £29.2 million in the capital budget, but now we have £190.2 million in the resource budget for the current financial year and £35.6 million in the capital budget. So, resource allocation has gone down, while estimated spend on capital projects has gone up. I wonder whether the Minister has an explanation for that.

Invest Northern Ireland has traditionally consumed about 65% of the DETI budget. There have been complaints in previous years that Invest NI has been unable to spend its budgetary allocation and has had to return money to the centre. In 2011 and 2012, considerable criticism was directed at Invest NI and DETI when money had to be returned to the centre. The explanation for the underspend was that firms were postponing their investment plans due to the difficult economic climate and, therefore, moneys set aside for Invest NI grants were not being drawn down during the economic downturn. It seemed at the time hard to understand, from a layperson's point of view, how that body, charged with attracting and encouraging business activity, could not spend its allocated budget during a period following a recession. Today, however, we see in the June monitoring round that Invest NI is now seeking reinstatement of £7.7 million resource budget along with a further £2.8 million resource allocation, making a total resource bid of £10.5 million, due to the economic recovery.

I assume that the Minister will confidently point to that as an indication that we are on the up economically. I hope, in advance, however, that the Minister will temper his remarks in the knowledge that the latest statistical release by the Office of National Statistics shows that we have the lowest regional gross disposable household income in the whole of the United Kingdom, with the average person having only £13,902 per annum. That is less than two thirds of the figure for London, which has the highest gross disposable household income per head. Northern Ireland has the weakest growth, at 2.7% per head of population between 2011 and 2012.

As we look forward to better economic prospects for Northern Ireland, albeit they will arrive somewhat more slowly than in rest of the UK, it is important that an ideal environment is created to enable businesses to access advice and support to grow exports, innovate and achieve DETI's *raison d'être*, which is:

"to promote the growth of a competitive and export-led economy".

Talking about exports, the agrifoods industry has been recognised as the key driver of Northern Ireland's economy, with great potential for exports. However, I am concerned that the Going for Growth strategy remains stuck in the Executive. Detail of funding for the Going for Growth strategy in the 2014-15 Budget would be welcome, if the Minister could provide it.

Turning to tourism, in the Main Estimate for DETI, grant-in-aid provision includes just under £22 million for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and £13.9 million for Tourism Ireland Limited. I was disappointed in yesterday's debate on the Main Estimates. Tourism was dragged into a party-political dispute about flags, parades and protests. Suffice to say that we all need to recognise that tourism is the major potential growth sector for our economy, and

anything that sends out negative images of our country should be avoided.

The latest figures for external visitors to Northern Ireland, which were published on the 29 May, show that Republic of Ireland visitor numbers were down by 7% and numbers of holidaymakers were down by 15%, along with a decrease of 18% in spend from Republic of Ireland tourists in 2013. In the 2014-15 Budget, £3.4 million has been allocated for tourism development, arising from a bid from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board against the events fund. That will cover another major event, the Tall Ships Races 2015. Again, this is another prestigious international event, following on from the recent Giro d'Italia, which really put Northern Ireland on the map for all the right reasons.

When investing in prestigious events in Northern Ireland that have huge potential to encourage visitors and holidaymakers from outside Northern Ireland and the UK, those spending the money must be careful to invest properly and make sure that work is done to inform people and promote events worldwide that will result in an increase in the numbers of holidaymakers and tourism spend in Northern Ireland. Yes, from a worldwide point of view, Northern Ireland is only a small corner, but we have much to sell and celebrate.

The Minister may have heard the doubt that the Justice Minister expressed during Question Time regarding plans for the Community Safety College at Desertcreat outside Cookstown. It will be interesting to see the outworkings of the current analysis of the plans, and I wonder whether the Finance Minister can enlighten us any further on that.

I look forward to the Minister's response.

Mr Attwood: I will start with Mr McKay's comment of a few hours ago about the Finance Committee getting the monitoring round paper on Tuesday, in advance of its meeting on Wednesday.

I raise that because the Minister will obviously be very protective of the accountability mechanisms of the Assembly, not least around monitoring rounds and the input of various Committees to that process. Mr McKay, on behalf of the Committee, said that he regretted the fact that the paper had not been provided a wee bit earlier so that it could have been circulated to other Committees. He was right to make that point. How telling is it that, last Wednesday, two hours before the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister met, the monitoring paper from that office was received by the Committee? Two hours before the Committee met. As a consequence, the Chair and Deputy Chair excused themselves from chairing the session on the monitoring round paper from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. There was a good understanding in the Committee of why the Chair and Deputy Chair excused themselves from chairing that part of the meeting.

Mr Weir: That is why it carried on.

Mr Attwood: I missed that comment; do you want me to sit down?

Mr Weir: The Member says that there was good understanding. My understanding is that the Committee carried on and that there was vigorous discussion. Indeed, Mr Spratt, who chaired that part of the meeting, praised the work of the members. That is maybe slightly at variance with the "good understanding". Whatever our

feelings about the late delivery of papers, surely it is the duty of any Chair or Deputy Chair to carry on and do their duty by chairing the meetings that they are paid to chair.

Mr Attwood: I admire the skills of Mr Weir. He is pretending to the House that he can explain what happened at a Committee meeting at which he was not present.

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will let you through in a minute. I was present, and I will give you my understanding. More than one member of the Committee said that they understood why the Chair and the Deputy Chair excused themselves. They were concerned that, if they discussed a paper, given their status as Chair and Deputy Chair of a Committee, they would then be culpable for things that might not have been fully understood or interrogated because the Committee —

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: In a second. The Committee received the paper two hours — two hours — before the meeting. Is that what accountability now means to the Chamber? That an office of the Executive can hand over a paper two hours before a meeting. In order to try to have some threshold of accountability, the meeting proceeded and questions were asked. Let me read into the record of the House the record of that Committee meeting. Questions were asked about why the paper was not received in good time. Hansard shows that questions were asked on a number of occasions —

Mr Weir: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that there is a wide range of discussion in any Budget debate. However, even the Member has admitted that his point is about the June monitoring round, which has nothing at all to do with the Budget. We are now delving into details of a Committee meeting about the June monitoring round rather than the Budget. I appreciate that we may well have a fairly lengthy submission from Mr Attwood, but surely he should at least stick to the Budget.

Mr Speaker: In taking the form of the point of order as it was raised, I have to say that the debate yesterday and the debate today have been wide-ranging. All Members have had the opportunity to bring almost anything into the Budget debate. I agree with the Member slightly: we are now treading very much into Committee business. We have to be careful, but, when it comes to the Budget, it is wide-ranging.

Mr Attwood: It seems to me that when Members cannot win an argument on material grounds, they try to intervene on procedural grounds, and it says an awful lot about those who make the argument rather than those who try to face up to the substance of the point. I will now read the substance of the point into the record.

5.45 pm

A senior official from OFMDFM is asked why an important paper, whether a monitoring paper, some other budgetary paper or whatever — in this instance, it was on a budgetary matter, which is relevant to this debate — came to the Committee so late. He was asked:

“Was the delay at an official level or a political level?”

Answer:

“The delay was in the Department.”

Question:

“Was there any delay at an official level?”

Answer:

“There were delays in the broader process in the Department.”

Question:

“You are the senior official responsible for the monitoring returns, are you?”

Answer:

“I am.”

Question:

“Was there a delay at your desk?”

Answer:

“As I said, there is a whole range of processes that have to be gone through, and that involves — “

Question:

“I understand the processes... Do you think that you are responsible for the failure to get papers to the Ministers quickly enough and, thereafter, the failure to get papers to the Committee quickly enough?”

Answer, and listen to this one:

“It is about all aspects of the process. There are parts of it which perhaps could have been done more quickly, but circumstances were difficult, and, unfortunately, we were not able to get them to the Committee on time.”

Can anyone explain to me what the Committee was being told about why we got a paper about an important budgetary matter two hours before the meeting convened? Quite clearly, the officials could not give an explanation. The point is important: we do not have a full, annual Budget process in this House and, as a consequence of what happened at the Committee last week, we do not have a full and proper process to assess monitoring bids. I ask the Minister today, in the light of all that, whether he will comment on it if he feels capable of doing so; whether he can confirm when monitoring papers were meant to be submitted to his office about the June monitoring rounds; and whether the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, or, for that matter, any other office of the Executive, failed to do so?

To conclude on that matter, and before I go back to what others might view as more substantial questions, yesterday, I asked the junior Minister during questions for oral answer whether she could explain it, given that the official at the Committee clearly could not. The junior Minister replied:

“I will certainly look into it”. — [Official Report, This Bound Volume, p17, col 1].

I am sorry to refer to Mr Weir in these terms, given his clearly quite anxious state of mind, but he talked about

the delay around welfare having an impact on the most vulnerable. There was another Member — I cannot remember who, although I think that it was a Member of the Sinn Féin Benches — who replied, “Whether it is £500 million or whether it is £700 million, that is impacting on those who are most vulnerable and most in need in our society.”

I want to try to reconfigure the whole discussion around welfare in order to try to get a better conversation going at an Executive and political level about where the issue is going. I am not going to pretend innocence. This party has said before that, at this stage, we are prepared to accept the £5 million a month of budgetary pressures arising from the London Exchequer around welfare reform. However, we will not ignore the fact that London continues to impose that and threatens us with more regardless.

The responsibility on Ministers and on this House is to try to interrogate the issue in a way that brings some clarity and some better conclusion. That is the responsible political position. For all the toing and froing in this Chamber today, that is where we have to get back to. In my view, that is where the Finance Minister has to go, given that he has failed to go there since the Final Stage of the last Budget debate on 24 February of this year, when various points, questions and requests were put to him, and, as far as I can work out, none of them has been taken forward. I will come back to that.

So, what are the conclusions that we have to draw? The first is that, if we want to learn about the impact of the bedroom tax, we should look to where it has been in place now for over a year. We only have to look to Scotland, because they are already living with the consequences of the imposition of the bedroom tax. The Scottish Government, which, as I tirelessly and tediously say, are the best Government in these islands, set up a Committee to keep the passage of the UK Welfare Reform Bill under review and monitor its implementation as it affects welfare provision in Scotland, and to consider relevant Scottish legislation and other consequential arrangements.

So concerned was that Committee about the impact of the bedroom tax that it published an interim report in recent times in relation to that impact. The membership of the Committee comes from across the House of the Scottish Parliament. SNP, Labour and Conservative all sit on the Committee. It published its interim report, which, as far as I know, was passed with consensus. If we want to anticipate what is going to happen with the bedroom tax in our more severe circumstances in Northern Ireland, we should look to what they are saying in Scotland today about the experience a year after it was imposed there. They said:

“The Welfare Reform Committee believes that the under-occupancy charge, also known as the ‘bedroom tax’ is iniquitous and inhumane and may well breach human rights.”

“Iniquitous and inhumane”, yet there are people in this House and outside who say, regardless of something that is iniquitous and inhumane, let us impose it anyway. I will come back to that.

The report also says:

“It is having a real and harmful impact on people’s lives, and often the most vulnerable in society — those with disabilities, children in separated families etc.”

“Many people are ‘trapped’ into paying the ‘bedroom tax’ in that there are not enough one bedroom properties available to down-size to.”

That is what the Housing Executive told us about the profile of housing and social housing stock in Northern Ireland: people would be trapped into the bedroom tax because of the consequences of the profile of our housing.

The report continues:

“Although the ‘bedroom tax’ will reduce the housing benefit budget, it introduces a number of new costs to tenants, housing associations, local authorities, the Scottish Government and others — the tax may cost more than it saves.”

It concludes:

“The Welfare Reform Committee believes that the only way to deal with the ‘bedroom tax’...is to abolish it.”

The Welfare Reform Committee notes that the power to do so remains reserved to Westminster. The Committee therefore calls on the United Kingdom Government to abolish the ‘bedroom tax’ immediately.

If it does not, the Committee believes that the Scottish Parliament should be given the powers and resources to abolish it.”

Are we going to carry on regardless and ignore the experience of Scotland, where a cross-party Committee of the Scottish Parliament draws those conclusions just a year after the tax is introduced? That is the point I will make to the Finance Minister.

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: Yes.

Mr Weir: Whatever the implications regarding welfare reform, there has already been agreement for mitigation among the parties in the Executive to ensure that anyone who is currently a tenant will not actually be subject to the bedroom tax. There are specific measures that are ready to be put in place. I agree with a lot of the criticisms that have been made of the bedroom tax but it is something that, to be fair, the Executive have faced up to and are ready to deal with. In many ways, the Member, while being rightly critical of the bedroom tax across the UK, is raising a red herring in the debate.

Mr Attwood: The reason why it is not a red herring is that the Welfare Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament says, “abolish it”; it does not say, “mitigate it”. The Scottish Parliament calls for the power and resources to abolish it because mitigation does not do all that it is meant to do. I will come back to the point, because the Member makes a fair point about mitigation so far.

I am saying to the Minister that it is not a matter of mitigation in part; it is mitigation in full. If he cannot convince London to abolish it, he should mitigate in full, for not just existing tenants but future tenants. That is the point that I am making to the Minister. Given that the bedroom tax arguably costs more financially than it saves and that it is now politically more bother for London than it is worth, this is the moment to strike it down. That is what the Minister should have been doing since February, when I and others outlined to him a strategy for dealing

with that issue at an Executive level and at a Government to Government level, given the fact that DWP has the measure of the DUP and DSD on the matter. It is not any longer a matter of mitigation for existing tenants. It is a matter of mitigation for all tenants. It should be one of the templates against which we judge whether that is going to be achieved.

More than that, our Finance Minister should be sitting down with John Swinney and the Welsh Finance Minister so that they can go to London and say collectively what the Scottish Government have already said: if you are not prepared to give us sufficient discretionary funds to mitigate the bedroom tax in full, we will, on a pound-for-pound basis, compensate those tenants who have to pay for it.

That is the second thing that I am saying to the Minister. We in Northern Ireland should say that we will mitigate the bedroom tax for each and every tenant on a pound-for-pound basis. We should seek from London that approach, which it has apparently agreed with the Scottish Government and which, as I understand it, the Scottish Government intend to implement over the next period. More than that, all three Finance Ministers should now go to London and say that, because the costs may be greater than the savings and because the proposal has politically run out of steam, now is the time to strike it down. Think laterally and imaginatively. Do not just do the bidding of the London Government on the matter.

Yesterday, the Finance Minister made a number of comments at the end of his contribution that touched on welfare. I want to go back to those comments, because they were significant and could be game-changing if you were to draw a conclusion from the Minister. The Minister said:

“we stand to lose over 1,400 jobs at service centres in Belfast and Londonderry, as DWP, I am certain, will relocate that work if we fail to make progress on welfare reform.” — [Official Report, This Bound Volume, p51, col 1].

I want the Minister to confirm to the House that that is his view and why that is his view. Who said that to him? When did they say it to him? Where did they say it to him, and did they put it in writing? Those are very severe words that carry a very severe threat, and they were said unambiguously by the Finance Minister, without any doubt or any lack of conviction. The Finance Minister told the House that there are 1,400 jobs that, to use his words, “we stand to lose” and that he was “certain” that those jobs will be relocated if:

“we fail to make progress on welfare reform.”

That is a very serious matter to state with such a lack of ambiguity and such certainty. I ask the Finance Minister — I will give way — to confirm to the House who said that, where it was said, in what terms it was said and whether it was put in writing.

6.00 pm

I know a bit about this because, when I was in DSD, we fought to get more back-office social security jobs in Northern Ireland. We won that argument because of our cost base, our service delivery, the quality of our staff and the efficiency of our response. Those were standards against which DWP allocated work to Northern Ireland,

and it was done very successfully and against very proper standards. We need to know whether those standards have been thrown out the window and whether DWP is now saying that the cost base, the service delivery, the quality of our staff and the efficiency of the response by our social security staff are not relevant and that you will lose your jobs if you do not do welfare reform. From what the Minister said yesterday, I can only draw the conclusion that that is what London is saying. If that is what it is saying, that is arbitrary government. That offends against due process and is bad practice. It is legally questionable that work that is awarded against proper standards to a devolved Administration is then somehow overturned on the whim of a DWP Minister who says that, if you do not do welfare reform, you do not get the work. We need some clarity today, given the unambiguous nature of what was said in the House yesterday. I look forward to that reply when the Minister responds because he did not take the opportunity of my offer to give way.

When the Minister was summing up yesterday, he said that there were serious concerns in Northern Ireland about our ability to deliver welfare if we did not do London welfare, given the IT impact. He was right to make that point. As I understand it, it is not conceivable and not financially sustainable that we would create our own IT system, given the costs involved, so the Minister made a good point. However, a point that he did not make, and the reason why he should be going to the Executive to make arguments to go to London with, is that the IT system in London is failing anyway, and evidence is growing about how it is failing.

Let us go through the timeline. In November 2010, a welfare White Paper was published. In January 2011, the project’s design-and-build phase commenced. In mid-2012, following concerns that had been raised by a number of third parties, Iain Duncan Smith sent in what he referred to as an “emergency red team”, revealing later:

“I was concerned that the relationship between the security and the online aspects wasn’t going to work.”

In February 2013, the Major Projects Authority (MPA) in Britain did a review that expressed serious concerns about DWP having no detailed blueprint and transition plan for universal credit. In response, the head of the MPA was asked to conduct a 13-week reset between February and May 2013, which was not made public until September. So, a situation was developing whereby, on the IT and implementation side, questions began to be raised about the viability of the IT system and other processes on universal credit.

Look at what has happened since last summer. In September 2013, the National Audit Office released a report that stated that universal credit was beset by:

“weak management, ineffective control and poor governance.”

It revealed that Ministers had already written off £34 million on failed IT programmes and that the Department might be forced to delay a national launch beyond 2017. In November, a London newspaper revealed that Ministers had been presented with a radical plan to restart universal credit and write off work that had cost £119 million over the past three years.

In January 2014, minutes of a Whitehall meeting revealed that friction between DWP and the Cabinet Office was

causing high-level risks to the delivery of the programme. A Cabinet Office elite team pulled out of the project, leaving DWP urgently searching for new IT specialists. In May 2014, the true ramifications of the Major Projects Authority reset emerged when it revealed that universal credit is now considered to be a brand new project. That was last month.

The point of all of that is as follows. We are being asked to buy a pig in a poke, because, for all the ambition of universal credit to make work pay, which is a proper ambition, universal credit is falling on its face because of the difficulties of trying to create a system that, on a rolling real-time basis, can assess people's income against their need for benefit. That is what has happened.

The Audit Office report and the MPA commentary tell us that, two or three years after the welfare universal credit programme began to be deployed, it is still only the pathfinder areas that administer universal credit. The number of people is still measured in the low thousands, and it deals only with the easiest claimants — people who are, by and large, single, childless, unmarried or unemployed. So we are being asked by the Minister and by others in the House to endorse universal credit when, for the only time in the MPA's history, it said that a programme's delivery was in such jeopardy that it had to be reset. Yet we are being told that we must accept this imposition.

My question to the Minister is simply this: if it is the case that the implementation of universal credit has slowed so much in Britain, if the full roll-out of universal credit is moving to 2016-17 in Britain, and if, only last month, the MPA warned the Government about the IT concerns in the deployment of universal credit, why are we in a rush to do welfare reform legislation? Why is it that when London tells us how high we have to jump on welfare, we jump as high as it wants? That is the only conclusion to draw. You and your colleagues in the Executive are asking us to accept welfare reform legislation when its deployment in Britain is, in many respects, falling in on itself. Given the serious concerns articulated in places of great authority, I ask the Minister to use this opportunity to tell London, "We note where you are. You should suspend the penalties being imposed." Between now and when a moment arises when we have to introduce welfare reform, if that moment arises, let us negotiate further to get it right.

I say to the Minister that, in the Budget debate on 24 February, I asked him to think about a number of projects. To date, I have not heard a reply in respect of those. The first was this: if it was feasible to negotiate at an Executive level for the Presbyterian Mutual Society, and if it is necessary to negotiate across Departments at an Executive level in respect of corporation tax, why has the opportunity not been taken to ask London to negotiate at an Executive level when it comes to welfare reform? If the issues of corporation tax and the Presbyterian Mutual Society are so central to the lives and experience of our citizens and communities, as the Finance Minister and the person who comes here and threatens us with Treasury penalties, why are you not saying to the Executive, "Let's go and have a further discussion with London, at an Executive level"? Use the template of corporation tax and the Presbyterian Mutual Society to say that to London, on the basis of the Scottish experience and the warnings about IT problems in London in deploying universal credit.

Why are you not taking the opportunity to have another conversation? If your colleague Mr Weir was right when he said that they do not like the impact of welfare reform on so many citizens in Northern Ireland — if that is correct — why not have a further roll of the dice? Why not escalate the negotiation with London to the Executive level as opposed to leaving it at DSD level, where, as I outlined, DWP has sometimes indicated that it does not think that there is much fight over there? Why do you not, just on the basis of good governance and hard politics, say, "Let's take this opportunity to drive home the experience of Scotland, and that of London in the collapse of IT around universal credit"?

I also asked the Finance Minister to meet an alliance of anti-poverty groups in Northern Ireland. I do not know whether that opportunity has been taken up. He has a very busy diary. The reason why I asked —

Mr Hamilton: No invitation.

Mr Speaker: Order. Order. Let us not debate across the Chamber.

Mr Hamilton: I cannot accept an invitation that I did not get.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member has the Floor. Order.

Mr Attwood: I am not surprised. I read into the record the commentary from a range of anti-poverty groups in Northern Ireland. Among other things, they rely on information published on the OFMDFM website about child poverty in Northern Ireland. A report commissioned by the highly reputable Institute for Fiscal Studies said, as far as I can recall, that rather than having child poverty down at 10% by 2020, it would be, in real and absolute terms, up at 31% and 38%.

I do not know about you, Minister, but I found the argument that is up on the OFMDFM website and the lobby from anti-poverty groups so compelling that I would not wait for an invitation. I would go and get the information. I ask you, again, to go and take up that opportunity because, if it is published officially on our government website about where we are going on child poverty, and mindful of what came out in Britain yesterday about where it is going with child poverty, I think that that would bring a sense of reality to some of this debate. It would galvanise people to go and have the conversation with London that we have long argued needs to be had to ensure that there is the potential for fresh light to be focused on the approach of DWP and Treasury. I ask the Minister to take that forward.

Before I move on to one or two final matters, I will say this. We have argued for that approach in the new talks process that, we hope, is about to commence. We have argued that not only should we have a further conversation around the three issues in the Haass talks but there should be parallel negotiations in respect of the National Crime Agency and welfare. We argued for that because the view of the SDLP is that, given the character of politics and where our citizens and communities are at the moment and given the sense of disillusionment, alienation and despair, we need a paradigm shift to rectify all that. That shift is around the Haass issues, the NCA, welfare and all the other unresolved issues at the Executive table that Members have spoke about. If we need a paradigm shift, its character needs to incorporate welfare. I trust that the Minister will, on this occasion, take forward some of the opportunities that were mentioned.

6.15 pm

I have a number of questions for the Minister. I do not expect him to be able to answer them all, but I ask that he might get officials to respond in the fullness of time. Firstly, I concur with Mr Ramsey's comments about the north-west and the issue of Magee. In the Budget debates in February, Mr Ramsey and I, and, I think, other people, spoke about the strategic imperative of securing the 10,000 places at the Magee campus. I support Mr Ramsey in making that call again today.

In understanding that issue, Minister, it needs to be understood that, certainly from my experience over the past four months going around Northern Ireland, especially in parts of Belfast, the north-west, Fermanagh, Strabane and Omagh, there is a sense of abandonment and anger. We as a political constituency have to recognise that in a lot of local constituencies that is the sense of things, that when it comes to government and Belfast, there has been abandonment and there is a growing sense of anger.

You can sense that up in Derry when it comes to the issue of Magee. You can sense that in Fermanagh when it comes to jobs and the roll-out of broadband. You can certainly sense it in Omagh, where the chamber of commerce told me that it had no sense of recovery coming across as far as Omagh, whatever might be happening in eastern parts of Northern Ireland.

We have a responsibility, Minister, to recognise that there is that sense of abandonment and anger. How do you respond to it? You must respond by having, as a strategic outcome in the budgetary period coming up, the argument and resources for the 9,000 or 10,000 places at Magee. However, that would be only an expression and representative of a subregional strategy. Whilst this is somewhat outwith the Minister's responsibility, the decisions about resourcing, especially in the Budget period 2015-16, and more generally in the subsequent Budget period, are the strategic questions that need to be interrogated in the next year or two in order to have the right answers in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

I am asking him again, as I asked him on that occasion in February, to deploy his efforts and wisdom to ensure that there is a subregional strategy when it comes to Invest NI and other investment in Northern Ireland. That sense of abandonment and anger that is felt in many parts of the community needs a political response, which is to have a subregional strategy for investment.

It is not just about Magee. It is about areas of Belfast that do not benefit from investment in the way that the corridor between Queen's and Titanic clearly does. I ask the Minister to have that approach at the heart of his thinking and decision-making over the next two years.

Why do we still have three economic units in government: in DFP, DETI and OFMDFM? My sense of things is that too many cooks spoil the broth, and some of that effort and the money around it is not well deployed. So why, six years after the SDLP raised the issue, do we still have three economic units in government?

Why, three years after the Budget, are we investing, as I heard earlier, £43 million in an asset management strategy? What is the rationale and the resource requirement for investing £43 million in an asset management strategy to see how we dispose of public

sector accommodation? There may be a very good argument for doing so. If so, I look forward to hearing it, or at least reading it in Hansard, as I may not hear it in person —

Mr Hamilton: I have to listen to you.

Mr Attwood: Sorry?

Mr Hamilton: You may as well stay around for the answer.

Mr Attwood: That is the job of a Minister. I never once complained about any Member speaking to me during a debate. I am a bit surprised that the Minister —

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us not have a debate across the Chamber. The Member has the Floor.

Mr Attwood: It is the duty of a Minister to listen, even if you do not like it, and clearly the Minister does not.

Why do we not have any progress on the issue with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, which is still the most profitable organisation in the Northern Ireland economy and is still making one third of gross profit on annual turnover? Why have we not had any material progress in respect of the Harbour Commissioners, its assets and its reserves in a way that could better help the workings of government in the public interest?

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: Yes.

Mrs D Kelly: I think it was about two years ago that there were proposals to merge DEL's functions with the Department of Education and/or DETI. Those proposals seemed to fall by the wayside. There was also a review of the Assembly and its membership, which was prioritised for December 2011, and that has fallen by the wayside. Those are just two examples that come to mind of failure in the delivery of promises.

Mr Attwood: With the Harbour Commissioners, there seemed to be unanimity around the Executive table — at least I thought that there was unanimity — that the issue with the organisation, its income and reserves needed to be dealt with. I am inquiring where the issue is three or four years after it was first raised, when there appeared to be unanimity about an approach that might be taken.

Where are Departments in respect of the government commitment to 500 placements? Whether they were in Steps to Work or other placements in Departments, there were meant to be 500 placements. Where are they, given that DOE has led the way?

Where are we in respect of further moneys for heritage-led development? In the October monitoring round, the Minister allocated £4 million to heritage-led development, which was a strategic and worthwhile investment. Does the Minister anticipate further moneys being released for heritage-led development? Does he think, without telling the Environment Minister how to do his job, that heritage-led development might become part of the baseline in the next full budgetary round?

Finally, Minister, could you give us some information about where we are in respect of the 2015-16 budgetary cycle and where we are with the budgetary cycle for the years thereafter? I can only imagine that the Treasury and the people whom you and your officials deal with in the Treasury are in discussions about the budgetary

situation post 2016, given that the Chancellor has said that he anticipates £25 billion more of cuts, £12 billion of which will be in welfare. At the time of a Budget Bill, it would be useful to get his thinking on what he anticipates might be the case, in the 2015-16 Budget round and in the budgetary CSR thereafter.

Mrs Dobson: The Budget (No. 2) Bill will give effect to the 2014-15 Northern Ireland Main Estimates, and the health and well-being of the community generally, particularly the most vulnerable in our society, should be catered for in any Budget agreed in the Assembly.

I wish to highlight the inadequacy of the health settlement in the Budget. Some £2.117 billion of resources were approved on account for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in the earlier Budget Bill. This Bill would authorise a further £2.347 billion, giving a total of £4.464 billion of resources for the Department of Health. Whilst we all must recognise that that is a huge amount, it is clear that it is insufficient to meet the needs of providing safe and sustainable healthcare to the local community.

Why do I say that, Mr Speaker? The facts show that most health costs occur when we are very young and when we are older. We do not need study after study to show us what we already know: Northern Ireland's population is increasingly ageing. If we are to provide a top-class health service and look after those who have worked all their lives and need help and care, it is beholden on the House to prepare our Budget to meet demand. We have the statistics. We know the facts. However, when we look at the 2011 settlement for Health, we see that it is totally devoid of any plan to prepare for the future. It has been said many times, inside and outside the House, that there is a crisis in the health service. Those are issues for debate. However, when the reality of poor, failing or delayed healthcare is presented to families who have worked hard all their lives, it really does bring home to people the problems that we have today.

My colleague Michael McGimpsey, the former Health Minister, warned of the growing funding gap as a result of the 2011-15 Budget settlement. I will give some examples. At the end of March this year, the total number of people waiting for a first outpatient appointment had risen by over 27,000, or 27.4%. The number of patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for an appointment had also risen, from 5,573 in March 2013 to 19,173 at the end of March this year: a 344% rise.

Indeed, during the first three months of the year, Craigavon Area Hospital, which I know has one of the best records of any hospital, dipped below 70% of patients being admitted or treated within four hours. I remind Members that the NHS target is 95% and that, overall in Northern Ireland, we achieved 70.5% in March this year. The difference is that, as Minister, Michael McGimpsey ensured that in-year monitoring could cope with changes. I note that, last year, despite over £100 million from in-year monitoring — a record amount — the Health Department estimated a deficit of £14 million. Three years on, the Department and the Minister are now warning that they need an additional £160 million to maintain services. In a letter to the Health Committee dated 29 April, the Minister said that, without that level of additional funding, we face cuts to services or charges for health. I note from his letter that the Minister described that as an unresolved funding gap. He goes on to say:

"In light of the scale of the financial pressures facing DHSSPS in 2014/15, it is clear that they cannot be resolved entirely within the Department's existing resources."

Those existing resources are a result of the 2011 Budget settlement, which we on these Benches opposed. The Minister then goes further in his letter. He lays out, as he sees it, the five implications if that unresolved funding gap is not plugged: increased savings across the health service, although he admits that the scope is narrow; imposing charges on patients, including the possibility of ending free prescription charges, which raises many more questions than it answers and, indeed, would be contrary to the Minister's party's own canvassing guidelines at the recent election, which describe free prescriptions as a "Good decision" of the Assembly; imposing pay constraints on health service staff, which could further increase pressures on already hard-working front line staff; reducing services; or providing additional recurrent resources to the Department.

All of this is to be achieved without compromising the safety and sustainability of service. That is an incredibly difficult, if not impossible, tightrope act for the Minister to perform.

6.30 pm

Three years on, it is clear that there are health pressures exceeding the 2011-15 Budget settlement and evidence that this Budget contains an inadequate health settlement. Surely we should fix the Budget, such is the scale of the problem. The track record proves that in-year monitoring cannot be relied on. What a way to run a health service; what a way to organise a Budget. In all, it is a DUP fail to prepare, prepare to fail approach to our health service. The 2011 settlement was short-sighted because it failed to allocate the funds that were necessary to support young and old alike, and it has failed the people of Northern Ireland.

Perhaps, in his summing-up, the Minister will inform the House whether he will carry out what his predecessor Sammy Wilson MLA said he would do in his final statement on the 2011-15 Budget on 4 March 2011:

"in the event that it" —

the performance and efficiency delivery unit (PEDU) —

"concludes that additional funding is needed and, indeed, required, I will happily bring proposals back to the Executive to top-slice all Departments to provide the established level of funding." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 62, p419, col 2].

The Minister's clarification on this statement would be very welcome.

Our health service is in crisis, and I remain to be convinced that £160 million is nearly enough to bring the service back to full health. The Health Minister has received his iceberg warning since 2011. A steady-as-you-go approach when in stormy waters is not what you expect to hear from the captain of the Titanic. It is now beholden on the Finance Minister to steer the Health Department to calmer waters before we see yet more hard-working families fail to receive the care and attention they have worked all their lives to pay for and have the right to receive.

Mr McNarry: It has been a far-reaching and, at times, far-stretched debate. Having sat through much of it for two days, I wonder which party, out of the five Executive parties, actually supports this Budget. Indeed, one would ask this question: why are some staying in the Executive if their opinions of the Budget as transmitted here yesterday and today are so low?

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

This event, the most important in the calendar year, is close to becoming a ritual rather than the inspirational, visionary, confidence-building debate it should be. It is a debate of stutter, punctuated with the “If onlys” and the “What might have beens” — a doing of one’s best in trying circumstances — and it all has been caused by other or outside influences. It has been a nauseating blame game with, it seems, no self-inflicted or party-political stunts.

Of course, the Minister is doing his best. His presentation demonstrates his obvious skill in allocations, and yet, as this day has gone on, it is abundantly clear that the easy come, easy go attitudes of the spending Ministers remains entrenched in their protectionism, self-centred on a financial carve-up of individual priorities, not, as one would expect it should be, a focus on the corporate priorities and spending policies for the most urgent and needy areas in government.

Yet, in the midst of it all, one issue drawn to my attention indicates this cavalier attitude in, I suspect, all Departments, but is clearly shown by the example of the Department for Regional Development. The example illustrates that DRD has loads of money to throw away or, in this case, give away. I refer to the proposal supported, I am reliably informed, by all parties and Ministers in the Executive: to give away over 350 off-street car parks. Millions of pounds’ worth of land assets across the country and their revenue-earning car-parking charges are to be handed over free of charge to the super-councils with no conditions, allowing those councils to flog them off if they so wish, because, as one departmental official told me, they can do what they like with the car parks. There we have an example that illustrates that easy come, easy go attitude. Unfortunately, we have come to expect it from too many Ministers.

The Finance Minister has said that he was proposing a 1.5% cut across all Departments because of a failure of the Executive to implement welfare reform legislation passed by Parliament on 1 March. Let me underscore the wording “failure of the Executive”: if the five-party coalition cannot agree, it is a corporate failure and not down simply to the blocking veto of one or two parties.

The Minister is also reported as saying that £105 million will have to come off departmental spending. If that happened on a simple pro rata basis, the Department of Health would lose between £40 million and £50 million, the Department of Education would lose around £20 million and DETI would lose between £2 million and £3 million. That overall loss has been equated to 2,500 nurses or 2,100 teachers. Of course, neither 2,500 nurses nor 2,100 teachers would be dumped on the streets. However, in times when it is clear — we hear this almost daily — that medical staff are needed, where is the provision for recruitment?

Given that yesterday’s Estimates debate indicated that it is to be presumed — let me assume that I am right to presume — that the overall £105 million that is spoken of has already been taken off the Supply resolution for the Main Estimates. It is gone. It is irretrievable, lost and cut from the budgets. In his absence, I ask that we have a categorical assurance from the Finance Minister that health funding is ring-fenced. Surely that, at least, would make sense to the public and be a welcome statement of where some of the Executive’s priorities lie.

Clearly, an overall reduction of £105 million prompts us to discuss the matter intelligently and in the informed way that is relative to a Budget. We need to know about the different models for implementing that reduction that are being discussed at the Executive table. I presume that an agreement to alter significantly the Budget as it stands has been discussed. I would like the Minister to confirm that it is the case that alternatives have been discussed, because I suspect that such discussions have produced models to cope with the reductions. Let us be pretty blunt about this: we are calling them reductions, and they are everybody else’s fault, but what we are talking about in this category are cuts caused by Sinn Féin, the SDLP and no one else. Therefore, we need to know about all the potential impacts. We need to have this spelt out: when does crunch time actually mean crunching the numbers?

Quite recently, I publicly suggested that only the Departments whose Minister refused to implement welfare reform should be affected. I hold to that because it is only fair that the Ministers blocking welfare reform in Northern Ireland should pay the price for their folly and be publicly denounced for doing so by the Assembly, not with silly motions but with outright condemnation of Sinn Féin. That party has been caught again in the headlights because of its headline-grabbing policies about attempting to unify Ireland against cuts when, here in the United Kingdom, it is instrumental in causing cuts. Cuts should not fall on the Departments whose Minister is willing to progress the welfare reform demands, but the cutters — DARD, DCAL and the Department of Education — should pay. That also includes the DOE, which is run by the SDLP, because it is also adopting an unrealistic approach to welfare reform. As usual, the SDLP is fence sitting and prevaricating over health funding while being willing to punish patients.

Obviously, there would have to be protections. The single farm payment needs to be protected. Clearly, no school budget should be hit. However, what principally needs to be hit are the costs of bureaucracy — the cost that we cannot handle or get our heads around. Should the Culture Department, for instance, be abolished or merged with another Department? As was said previously, why is the Department for Employment and Learning still afloat, when, ages ago, agreement to remove it seemed likely? These are Poundstretcher Departments, where the pound gives no real value in return. Perhaps this failure to live within a budget — that is what it could be — presents us with an opportunity to trim down and restructure our Departments.

London may be showing signs of economic recovery, and good luck to it. We will all benefit from that. However, although we are seeing improvements here, we are a long way from the growth that we require to meet people’s expectations and deliver good government. The issues from last week, last month and last year about individual

prosperity, which we know about from our constituents, in our homes and from our families, remain by and large the same because costs are not reducing, services are not improving and some are worsening, pay is not increasing and people are still feeling the pain.

I believe that the Minister of Finance understands the situation. However, the question out there — perhaps it is unfair to ask him — is this: although he understands it, are all his ministerial colleagues on the same message? Yesterday, we heard of contingencies held in the Education Department. Can you believe it? I now know what Minister O'Dowd meant, when, after being challenged by me, he spoke of back-pocket money. He keeps the contingency in his back pocket. No one else knows how it got there. What is the position of this Department on holding contingencies? How is it that any Department can hold on to cash as a contingency when the surplus cash, as I understand it, should have been returned whence it came and recycled for all to benefit from?

6.45 pm

I want to hear the Finance Minister's view on contingencies held in a spending Department, not for the purpose for which it was originally given but for a purpose decided, it must be said, unilaterally — to hell with everybody else — by the Education Minister in his Department. Is the practice that I describe authorised by the Executive? Worse still, could it be or is it carried out by any other Ministers? It is shambolic if a Department holds in its back pocket, so to speak, contingency money for its own purpose and own use. It is despicable, and the House needs to know what the situation is.

I believe that the Finance Minister and the Health Minister have the toughest jobs in this place. The Finance Minister needs, quite clearly, the support of all Ministers, and might I suggest that — he is young enough to do it — he needs to crack a few heads, not just on policy issues but on securing value for money and, more importantly, distributing that money for priorities? He is in for a rough time, but he has grown well into the job, and I wish him well over the next few months, especially when he needs his Ministers.

Mr I McCrea: I agree with many of Mr McNarry's comments. He made a number of the points that I intended to make. It is not necessarily a bad thing, given that we have agreed on many of the issues.

People can bury their head in the sand on welfare reform and expect that it will go away. Mr Attwood went on and on and on and on and on and on and kept going on, but he eventually got to the point and said that the penalties should be suspended. His view has slightly changed from the one that he took during a previous Budget debate, and it is important to put his words on record once again:

"I want to put the SDLP's point of view on the record. If a penalty of £5 million a month is imposed by the Treasury arising from the failure to bring the Welfare Reform Bill back to the Chamber, that is a price that should be paid." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 92, p106, col 2].

I am not so sure that the people in Northern Ireland picked up on that. I am not sure that he even had it in his European election manifesto that he was content for the block grant in Northern Ireland to continue to be

penalised at £5 million a month. The Minister has declared the amounts involved: it was around £13 million last year and will amount to over £100 million as this year goes on. I have to be honest and say that I am disappointed that he has left, because I would have been happy to take an intervention from him, maybe to explain how he has gone from the point of view that it is definitely a penalty worth paying to asking for the penalties to be suspended.

He is not here, and, unfortunately, we will, no doubt, hear from him in the future, and he will maybe answer that point. It is unfortunate that there is no one here from the Sinn Féin Benches because the reality is that they can bury their heads too. It is not going to go away. The only way that they are going to get this sorted is to sit round the table, thrash it out and get it sorted once and for all.

We can look at all the negatives of all the aspects of the Budget. I had intended to refer to the good aspects of the Budget, but if I do that I will go against the grain in respect of what everybody has said. However, it is worth referring to the point that, in my constituency of Mid Ulster — I see Mr McGlone across the Chamber — we have not done too badly over the years in respect of capital funding that has been put in to the constituency. It is probably more so in the education sector where St Pius X College, Sperrin Integrated College, Magherafelt High School, Magherafelt Primary School and Magherafelt Nursery School have all had newbuilds. Mind you, he and I and others will continue to fight the good fight for the Rainey Endowed School. Maybe, at some point, we will get that.

It is also worth pointing out the funding that has been finally approved. On behalf of the people of Mid Ulster, and more so Magherafelt, I want to put on record that we are getting our Magherafelt bypass at a cost of around £40 million. That is a good news story out of the funding and the Budget allocations for my constituency.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Desertcreat College. It is in a bit of a mess, but let us hope that things move forward. I have heard that other constituency MLAs, and I am not necessarily pointing the finger at any in my own party, have been jumping on the bandwagon suggesting that the college should be placed elsewhere. I am not so sure that I agree with that. In fact, the wording that I have here is "they can get lost". I am glad that the Justice Minister is still on board. I hope that the other Departments involved are on board and we can get it built once and for all.

It is important that we move the Budget process forward. Given that Mr Attwood is not here, he will not divide the House, so maybe that is a good news thing. I support the motion.

Mr Hamilton: My notes say "thanks" to Members. I am not sure whether that is appropriate or not, but I thank the Members who, at least, have stayed to the end of the debate. There may be fewer still as I read through all the notes that I have made. Mr Maginness is nodding very enthusiastically, which suggests that he will be one of the first out of the door. In all seriousness, I thank the Members who contributed and, particularly, thank Chairs and Deputy Chairs who contributed during yesterday's debate and today's Second Stage debate on the Budget (No. 2) Bill. It is very useful for me, as Finance Minister, to hear the views of the respective Committees and sometimes even find out things that I did not know

and find out a little bit more about their views on the important financial and economic issues that face this Administration.

I have noted down many of the issues raised by Members. I do not think that I will get through all the issues that have been raised or we could be here very late this evening, but I will endeavour to respond to as many as possible in my closing comments. I will try to do it in sequential order as people spoke.

Mr McKay spoke first on behalf of the Committee before speaking in a personal capacity. I thank him and the Committee for their work in not only scrutinising my Department's budget but playing that overall, overarching oversight role for the entire Budget and, particularly, for granting accelerated passage for the Bill. As the House knows, without accelerated passage, the Bill would not be through in time, and there would be serious issues in terms of legislative cover for our Departments to spend in the rest of the year.

Mr McKay raised a number of issues, and I want to come to one in particular, which he has raised before. That is the issue of air connectivity. He reminded us this morning that he had come from a breakfast that was hosted by Belfast City Airport. When he said he had come from breakfast, it was fairly current. Breakfast had only been a couple of hours beforehand. It is now closer to suppertime, as I get around to addressing the points that he said were raised at that breakfast.

Air connectivity is an issue that I am, of course, interested in, and the Enterprise Minister and I initiated an air connectivity study, which is due to report by the summer of this year. I come at this issue from the simple, basic point of view, which is that, as Westminster is responsible for causing the problem — and I accept that there is a problem — why should Northern Ireland be asked to pay the price? And a price would have to be paid. It would be approximately £60 million initially, rising very rapidly, like an aircraft taking off, to £90 million annually. That is the price that would have to be paid by this Administration.

It would mean £90 million worth of reductions in spending on public services, and that would be on top of other taxes that we have already devolved, including long-haul APD, and other taxes that we desire to have devolved to this Administration, including corporation tax, which would, of course, be significantly higher in price than £90 million. The figure of £90 million is, of course, close to the cost of welfare reform, a topic that I will come to in greater substance later. So, even in terms of affordability, it is not easy to devolve something that costs £90 million when we are losing more than £90 million this year as a result of the penalties for non-compliance with welfare reform.

I have laid out consistently, in this House and elsewhere, the fact that I am not against devolving more tax-varying powers to the Assembly, but for me a couple of tests must be met, and APD has to be judged against them. They must have clearly defined economic or social benefits and they must be affordable. We can take a decision that £90 million is affordable if we are prepared to take the commensurate reductions in public services as a result of that. Whether there are defined economic and social benefits is something that, I hope, the air connectivity study will look at in detail.

There are about five issues that I think have to be considered in respect of air connectivity. If we eliminate air passenger duty, there is no guarantee that the price reduction will then be passed on to customers. There is little evidence that that would be the case, and probably, in a lot of cases, it would be used to make routes that are borderline profitable or more profitable. There is no guarantee of new routes, then, because of that.

I take on board the points that Mr McKay made that there are certain routes to hub airports, the likes of Frankfurt, Berlin, Amsterdam or Paris, from which there is better conductivity, particularly into the Middle East and the Far East. It would be good to attract more of those routes; I want to see more of them attracted. I know that, even without having air passenger duty for short-haul flights devolved, the Enterprise Minister is keenly and actively involved in trying to attract more of those routes. I know that she has been involved in that in person over the last number of weeks. An argument could be mounted for doing something to reduce APD to attract those sorts of good routes. Other routes — not bad routes, because they are the sort of routes that take people like me and others on summer holidays — do not have the same easily-defined economic benefit that routes to somewhere like Berlin, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Paris or other airports in central Europe might bring to Northern Ireland.

There are also questions for the airports themselves about what they are doing to attract new routes. If you look at the long-haul APD issue as an example, you will note that that power has now been devolved for close to two years. Unfortunately, not a single additional route has been added as a result of it. In my view, this weapon or tool has been handed, principally in this case to our international airport, to go out to try to attract other airlines into Northern Ireland, and it has not done that so far. I appreciate that it is making efforts in that regard, but the point is that it shows that having no tax, in and of itself, does not attract new airlines and new routes to Northern Ireland. There are other factors at play.

One of those is what the airlines themselves could be doing about their price structure. I have had conversations with at least one airline about its price structure. Whilst it would describe the Northern Ireland situation as unique, it is not prepared to price flights in Northern Ireland in a unique way. They keep customers in Northern Ireland on a UK pricing structure, which is different from the Irish pricing structure. That means that it is more attractive for people to drive to Dublin to fly to Heathrow to connect to somewhere else in the world instead of going from Belfast to Heathrow to do the same.

There is work that not just our airports but the airlines could do. If they recognise that Northern Ireland's air connectivity situation is unique, our airlines could be doing things with their pricing structure to make it more attractive for people to fly out of Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport or City of Derry Airport.

7.00 pm

I turn to Paul Girvan — he is escaping; he has run away at the very mention of his name. He made many points, but he dwelt, as did Mr Weir later, on the issue of rates and what we, as an Executive, have done over the last seven years to assist businesses in Northern Ireland through some very difficult times. We have tried to help them in

probably the best way that we can through trying to soften the blow of rates.

There are quite a number of positive things that we, as an Executive, have done and continue to do, including the introduction of the small business rates relief scheme. That scheme has been extended not once but twice, to the extent now where over half of all business properties in Northern Ireland are getting at least 20% off their rates bills. Industrial derating was something that the then Finance Minister, and now First Minister, ensured remained in place. Many manufacturing firms have to pay rates for only 30% of their total liability. That has ensured that over £300 million has been kept in the coffers of many local firms, which has allowed them to thrive over the last number of years.

The business regional rate has been frozen in real terms throughout this Budget period. That has given a degree of certainty to many local businesses. I am very pleased to report that more than 250 new shops have opened across Northern Ireland as a result of the introduction of the empty premises relief.

It is not just through business rates that we have offered assistance. Domestic ratepayers in Northern Ireland pay the lowest household taxes in the whole of the UK. That ensures that more money is kept in people's pockets for them to spend or to ensure that they can offset some of the rising costs of living that many people across Northern Ireland have experienced. Whether it is small business rates relief, industrial derating, freezing the regional rate, introducing empty premises relief or having the lowest household taxes in the whole of the UK, it is a record that we are justifiably proud of.

Dominic Bradley, who has returned to the Chamber, rehearsed many of the issues that he rehearsed yesterday during the Estimates debate, but Members raising the same issue time and again is nothing new in the House in these types of debates. He dwelt for a time on his and his party's belief that a one-year Budget process would be better. As I said to him yesterday, I appreciate the point and understand where he is coming from, particularly having greater transparency and openness and having greater involvement of the House in the Budget. If you were in entirely different political circumstances, that might be something to which we would aspire.

However, as Mr Weir pointed out, it is interesting that the last Labour Administration moved to multi-annual Budgets and spending rounds to give a degree of certainty. That is the most important point, particularly in respect of capital. If you have three- or four-year Budgets, as we have had in the past — we are in the last year of a four-year Budget — you can give Departments a degree of certainty about expenditure that might not be the case in single-year Budgets. I think that many Members would find that, if we moved to that situation, organisations uncertain about what the next year's Budget was going to mean for them would lobby Members on an ongoing basis. With multi-annual Budgets, at least we can give some certainty to them, even if it is not always good news. But we are not in a position because of the politics of this place and having the problems of a five-party coalition — Westminster has agreed a one-year Budget to get through the election, and it has only two parties in its coalition Government. It is much harder for us to agree one across five parties. Although it may not be a perfect excuse, it is, nonetheless,

a valid reason that the time devoted to doing that would be better spent.

Mr Bradley criticised our multi-annual Budget process because, he said, it had no flexibility. I beg to differ with that conclusion. If you take the financial year that has just concluded, 2013-14, and look at the monitoring rounds included in our Budget process precisely in order to allow us to have a degree of flexibility where public money is spent, you will see that, where Departments find that they cannot spend money either on the current or the capital side, it can be recycled and spent elsewhere in order to address pressures in Departments' budgets. In that one year alone, we have been able to recycle over £500 million on resource expenditure and over £280 million in capital. That means that not far off £1 billion of last year's Budget has been moved from one Department to another or from one priority in a Department to another. I would argue that, far from being inflexible, our process of having three monitoring rounds in a year permits flexibility when close to £1 billion can be moved around or within Departments inside a year.

Mr Bradley encouraged me to go back and look again at the proposals that the SDLP put forward in a document that I think was called 'New Priorities in Changing Times', or something like that. No matter how many times I look at that document, the City of Derry airport is still not ours to sell. It does not matter how many times I look at it, that asset does not transfer from the ownership of Derry City Council to the Executive, so I cannot sell it and raise any revenue for this Assembly, unfortunately. In fact, I struggled to find the document on the party's website. It seems to have mysteriously disappeared.

Mr Bradley and Mr Cree mentioned revenue raising and capital receipts in the Budget. The 2011-15 Budget incorporated £900 million of additional revenue raising, including additional capital receipts. To date, of the £611.4 million that was forecast to the end of the last financial year, 2013-14, I expect that £577.4 million will be realised. When added to expected EU income, that will represent a significant injection of additional funds into the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr Bradley also raised issues around tax-varying powers, some of which I have addressed in response to Mr McKay's comments on air passenger duty. However, I remind the Member that the June 2013 'Building a Prosperous and United Community' document includes a commitment between Her Majesty's Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to examine the potential for devolving specific additional fiscal powers over and above corporation tax following the completion of an initial scoping exercise. That is being taken forward by my officials, and the deciding factor will be whether the benefits to the people of Northern Ireland from devolving a tax and moving away from a national system of rates or allowances will be sufficient to clearly outweigh any costs. The recommendations from this analysis should be put to the Northern Ireland Executive and Government Ministers by this autumn.

To conclude on what Mr Bradley said, he also mentioned something positive in passing about recent economic news and job announcements. He was then a little more down in the mouth about our economic prospects. I remind Mr Bradley and the House of some of those recent job announcements: 107 jobs were announced at Spence and Partners; 130 by the Wright Group; 400 by Capita; 241 by

Schrader; 333 by Convergys; and 486 by Ernst and Young. Over the last two months, close to 3,000 new jobs have been announced around Northern Ireland.

Invest Northern Ireland reported a record year of business in 2013-14, with over £1 billion of investment and the promotion of 11,000 jobs. That has helped to create thousands of new jobs across Northern Ireland. Although unemployment is still high and causing concern, particularly around youth unemployment, our claimant count has now gone down for 15 consecutive months. Although work is still required, I think that that is something that we should be celebrating as an Executive and an Assembly. Only the doom merchants and doom merchants of the SDLP could see the downside of news like that.

Mr Cree mentioned the office estate. My Department is working in partnership with the asset management unit of the Strategic Investment Board to transform the management of the Northern Ireland central government office estate in order to improve asset management and increase efficiencies in the strategic use of land and property assets.

In addition to increased efficiency, that reform will also ensure that the standard of the overall estate is improved.

Mr Attwood, who is, as he promised, absent at this stage, asked why bids of £40 million were being made by my Department specifically for asset management. He can hopefully pick this up in Hansard tomorrow. That is targeted at doing things such as, for example, buying ourselves out of expensive leases and PFI contracts such as the contract for the Invest Northern Ireland headquarters, which we have bought ourselves out of. That then releases resource expenditure savings, which is where the real pressure is moving forward. So, we are using, in an invest-to-save way, capital money, which is, in relative terms, more abundant than resource expenditure, to ensure that over the longer term we make savings on the resource side. It is using capital wisely to save money where money needs to be saved moving forward.

Mr Cree mentioned that £75 million for the Department of Education is included in the Budget. The £75 million given to the Department of Education in 2014-15 is the final-year allocation of a package discussed and agreed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Finance Minister and the Education Minister in January 2012. The first year of that was agreed by the Executive in the January 2011-12 monitoring round, and the subsequent years were confirmed in the allocations agreed by the Executive on 7 November 2012. The rationale for the allocation is to help address pressures on school budgets, protecting front line services as far as possible whilst the Minister of Education moves ahead with implementing strategic reform aimed at creating a more efficient and effective education sector. The Education Minister is confident that his Department will utilise the full £75 million.

Mr Cree mentioned our Hillsborough sites, which, we have established, are the sites gifted to the Assembly as a result of the Hillsborough Castle Agreement and not sites located in Hillsborough, County Down. I will address some specifics in respect of those sites.

A parcel of military housing associated with the St Patrick's Barracks site in Ballymena has already been sold for use as social housing. The remainder of the site was subject to a trawl among public sector organisations in early 2014,

which resulted in a number of expressions of interest that are currently being evaluated.

A working group has been established to consider the development and planning options for the St Lucia site in Omagh. I understand that that group has met on several occasions.

A soft market test on the Shackleton Barracks site at Ballykelly concluded on 24 January this year and over 40 expressions of interest were received. Although options are being considered, the site continues to be used for outdoor activities, with motor sport events approved for 6 July and 3 August and a countryside fair planned for August.

I will address a final issue raised by Mr Cree, who has a habit of raising a list of issues. If I fail to address any of them, I am sure that he will pick them up in correspondence or in questions. He referred to the £50 million RRI borrowing for the capital projects being taken forward under Together: Building a United Community and asked why that additional borrowing was required when there was £80 million in the social investment fund last year. To clarify, the £80 million allocated to the social investment fund is profiled across the four-year Budget period. Of that, £15 million of capital funding was available to OFMDFM for that area last year.

Turning to the RRI borrowing available for projects aligned with Together: Building a United Community, I do not see any risk to that funding. Indeed, the First Minister and deputy First Minister are in the process of finalising an additional borrowing arrangement with the UK Government.

I will turn to comments made by Mr Jimmy Spratt in his capacity as Chair of the Regional Development Committee. He is behind me. He mentioned the issue of the transfer of off-street car parks to local councils, which I think Mr McNarry also mentioned, if I am not mistaken.

With respect, I caution the Committee a little and encourage it to consider wider opportunities presented by the transfer of off-street car parks to our new councils. I think I understand the point that the Chair of the Committee made — and, again, I think it was echoed by Mr McNarry — about the transfer of an asset and perhaps the loss of the value of that asset. Car parks, particularly off-street car parks, can present development and regeneration opportunities. Huge-surface car parks in prime redevelopment sites have the opportunity to regenerate our towns and cities if used properly. We have to remember that, whilst we are transferring car parks in this instance, we are transferring responsibilities. We need to be cautious about handcuffing our new councils in respect of the transfer and saying that they cannot sell those assets or use them in a particular way. That could stifle or, indeed, stop regeneration or development opportunities.

7.15 pm

On structural maintenance — an issue that Mr Spratt has raised with me on several occasions in his capacity as Chair — I understand the points that have been made about when money is spent in-year, and, in a perfect world, I would attempt to address that. The issue, of course, is that I do not always have at the start of the year all the money that the Department for Regional Development

thinks that it could spend on structural maintenance and road repairs. I also, to be perfectly honest, like previous Finance Ministers, I have relied to an extent on the likes of the Department for Regional Development, which has a very good record of spending money quickly towards the end of the year, and I have given it money that other Departments give up, sometimes unexpectedly.

Whilst I understand the points that have been made about value for money and efficiency, I am concerned that front-loading that expenditure might soak up the capacity that there is in the industry and the sector and that we may not be able to spend all the additional money that becomes available through the in-year monitoring rounds. It is a fine balancing act, but I seek some solace in the fact that the past four years have been record years for expenditure on structural maintenance by the Department for Regional Development. It has spent over £400 million on structural maintenance in the past number of years, even though it has perhaps started off the year with an initial allocation that seemed quite low.

Mr Pat Ramsey raised a range of issues that primarily focused on the Foyle constituency. He asked me a couple of questions that I am going to try to answer. He asked whether they were my responsibility or somebody else's. An answer that it was somebody else's responsibility would be very short, so I will try to give him a slightly more elaborate one.

He asked me about Magee College and its hopes to become a university. The new Magee College teaching block project was included in the initial set of proposals that were submitted to Her Majesty's Treasury under the Together: Building a United Community borrowing proposals that I addressed when dealing with Mr Cree's comments a few moments ago. Unfortunately, that particular project was not agreed by the Treasury for inclusion in the package of shared education and housing projects that were eligible to access the additional borrowing power under the pact. Therefore, that was not a decision taken by my Department but by Her Majesty's Treasury, which felt that that did not tick the box of being a shared education project.

Treasury deemed that there was no clear link between a teaching block and the promotion of a shared society. Of course, it is the ultimate paymaster in that respect, so we have to heed what it says. It also deemed that the wider objective of interaction with schools in disadvantaged areas did not sufficiently contribute to the wider shared society objectives. The final package of projects will be announced once agreement has been reached with the UK Government, and it will be for the Department for Employment and Learning to prioritise the new teaching block at Magee in the first instance and to table bids as appropriate in future Budget and monitoring round exercises. I will, of course, look at those in the same way in which I look at any bids that are put forward to me.

Mr Ramsey also raised the issue of youth unemployment and the surrender of, I think, £1 million in 2013-14. The Minister for Employment and Learning is better placed to give you the minutiae of that situation, but I understand from his Department's monitoring return last year that the uptake for the youth employment scheme in its first year was slower than expected, and that resulted in a surplus provision of £1 million in 2013-14. The Department anticipates that the need for future years' allocation will not

be affected by that, and I understand that it will invest £15 million to address youth unemployment in 2014-15.

I now turn to Danny Kinahan, who almost had split sites in his speech. He briefly mentioned the words "shovel-ready". He at least provided a caveat by saying that he knows that I abhor the phrase, but he was right to talk about the greater prioritisation of projects. I know that the Member could not be here for Question Time yesterday, but that issue was raised in response to a question from Stephen Moutray. I have endorsed recommendations from the subgroup of the procurement board that I set up, including the establishment by the Executive of a list of prioritised capital projects. That would, of course, include schools if the Minister of Education wants to get on board with the proposal. I think that it is important to have a list of capital projects across the board — whether in education, health, roads or whatever else — that are warmed up and ready to go should the money arise in-year or in future years. If something like what happened with the A5 were to happen again, that would allow us to spend that money quickly, and on strategically important projects.

That is not to say that we spend our capital money, when it becomes available, on projects that are not important. Every project has an importance and a value, but there are, as you will appreciate, much bigger projects that have wider economic significance for the whole of Northern Ireland, and it is important that we concentrate as much of that money on those strategic priorities as we possibly can.

I agree entirely with Mr Kinahan that there is a need for greater budget transparency across the board, particularly with the Department of Education, an issue that Mr McNarry also raised. It was hoped that this greater transparency would be delivered through the review of financial processes, but that has been held up by the Minister of Education. My predecessor and I have tried to address that by compromising on our position to try to meet the concerns of the Minister of Education only to find that he has a whole new set of concerns. It is a frustrating situation, which is why we are here for a second day debating exactly the same issues four months after they were previously debated. It is unsustainable to continue with financial processes that we inherited from direct rule and that, ironically, are being supported by Sinn Féin Ministers. It is an opportunity for us to show that we can do things and reform things in Northern Ireland.

Whilst I am talking about education, I will address Mr McNarry's points about contingency funds and ignore the fact that he called for an Executive-wide contingency fund to be established roughly five years ago and seems to have changed his tune a bit. It is not, in my view, good practice to hold surplus funding in a Department, and it should be surrendered to the Executive for reallocation. However, I have to be exceptionally careful about micromanaging other departmental budgets, as tempting as that may be from time to time, and be careful about what exactly is meant by such a fund and the circumstances surrounding its creation. If it is surplus funding, it should be returned to the Executive table for reallocation as quickly as possible.

Mr McCallister spoke about his concerns. He spoke at length and had a bit of a ding-dong with Sinn Féin about corporation tax and welfare reform, which found its way in somehow, as it did to most contributions today. To be

fair to him, he is consistent in raising his concerns about corporation tax, although I am still passionately in favour of its devolution to Northern Ireland. Over the last number of months in particular, we have been able to attract new investors to Northern Ireland and to encourage existing investors to expand their investment. Even with all our economic difficulties, we have been able to achieve those successes in the last number of months.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

If, on top of having great skills, good infrastructure and a world-class telecommunications infrastructure, we were able to sell the fact that we have a low corporation tax base, I think that the opportunities to transform our economy would be pretty clear. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's economic advisory group estimates that around 58,000 jobs could be created by 2030 in addition to the jobs that would otherwise be created as a result of devolving and reducing corporation tax. I am still exceptionally positive about it. I am pursuing it vigorously with the Treasury and hope for a positive outcome in the autumn. The concerns that the Member tried to raise are not new and are not issues that have not come across my desk or Minister Wilson's desk when he was in post.

Clearly, there will be a price to pay. I never thought that I would use Alex Maskey's comments to defend this sort of position, but whilst there would be a sizeable cost to pay, clear economic benefits would derive from devolving corporation tax, which would get many thousands of our people back into work. That would help to address the welfare reform situation.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for giving way. Has there been any assessment of the uptake of the patent box across the UK, geographically or otherwise? If that research has been done, are particular regions benefiting from the 10% corporation tax rate that is attached to the scheme?

Mr Hamilton: I am not aware of any specific analysis of what has happened in Northern Ireland. It is an interesting question to which I might be keen to find an answer.

Many of the tax changes that Her Majesty's Government have brought in over the past number of years, including a likely reduction in the headline rate of corporation tax to 20%, their expansion of capital allowances, the introduction of enterprise zones — we now have our first pilot enterprise zone — and the patent box, which, you are right, allows the payment of corporation tax at a rate of 10% for anything patented and developed here in the United Kingdom, are good initiatives. It is an interesting question, and I will take it up with officials to find out exactly what has happened in Northern Ireland.

The point that Mr McCallister raised about the downside of corporation tax being that we would incur a cost is not new to us. We know that that will be the case. It does not affect this year's Budget, and it will not even affect next year's Budget. Therefore, if a positive decision is taken in the autumn — we hope that it will be, because we made a very good and robust case — that gives us plenty of time to plan for it. However, his point about welfare reform was exactly right: if you throw money back to the Treasury to the tune of hundreds of millions of pounds in future years as a result of non-compliance on welfare reform but want,

at the same time, to reduce spending in Northern Ireland by hundreds of millions of pounds to pay for corporation tax, it makes my job and the job of the entire Executive incredibly difficult, and it makes the job of the Assembly in agreeing those Budgets incredibly difficult.

I found it hard to reconcile the Member's doubts about corporation tax with a headline on the BBC website from 16 November last year. It was a report on NI21's first party conference — perhaps its last party conference as well — and the headline was "Give Stormont Tax Powers".

Mr McCallister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Let me make the point, and then you can try to come back.

Mr Basil McCrea, still the party leader of NI21, said:

"So I pledge today that NI21 will pursue the devolution of more powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly including, but not restricted to, income tax and stamp duty."

One of the arguments that Mr McCallister threw up against devolving corporation tax was the volatility of taxes, and that, of course, is a reality. I use the word "against", and he can correct me if I am wrong, but yesterday, and more so today, he sounded as though he was against the idea of devolving corporation tax. It is not fully understood in the House that, once you take on those powers, there may be benefits, but there will also be the downside of volatility, and that will affect public spending in a way that the block grant system insulates us from. However, look at the HMRC estimate of income tax raised in Northern Ireland and the change from 2008-09 to 2009-2010. Income tax receipts, according to HMRC figures, went down from £2.746 billion in 2008-09 to £2.350 billion in 2009-2010. NI21 advocated the devolution of income tax, but, in that year alone, the shortfall that the Northern Ireland Executive would have picked up was £396 million, a drop of 14%. There was a fall in stamp duty between 2007-08 and 2008-09, and that figure encapsulates pretty much the economic crisis that we went through in Northern Ireland. Stamp duty/land tax receipts fell from £290 million in 2007-08 to £70 million in 2008-09, a drop of £220 million, which was a 75% reduction in that tax take in a single year. The volatility of corporation tax is a valid point, but NI21's stated public position is that it wants the devolution of income tax and stamp duty and not just those two. Those are two examples of where volatility, which is the argument that the Member puts forward against devolving corporation tax, would have seriously damaged the Northern Ireland budgetary position. I will give way now.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister. Perhaps he will also give us the estimate of what the cost of corporation tax would have been. I am pleased that he accepts that there is volatility in all taxes, particularly corporation tax. That is why Lord Strathclyde, in a recent report for the Scottish Conservatives, said that it should not be devolved. Yesterday, the Minister said that the reason was politically motivated. However, the Calman commission, which was set up to look at the issue in Scotland, reported the same finding: corporation tax is, because of its volatility, a difficult one to devolve. That is why it is an important argument. We have consistently said that we should have a commission to look at these issues,

because we are behind the rest of the country in even having the debate.

7.30 pm

Mr Hamilton: I am happy to compare Scotland with Northern Ireland, Wales with Northern Ireland or anywhere with Northern Ireland, but, if you are going to compare them, you have to compare like with like. If you want to compare them on the issue of corporation tax, you are not comparing like with like; you are comparing apples with oranges.

I reiterate that I would have been incredibly surprised had a Tory commission led by Lord Strathclyde recommended the devolution of corporation tax for Scotland. That is never going to be on the table, certainly in the short term, for political and economic reasons and the reality that there would be of businesses in England transferring to Scotland to avail themselves of lower corporation tax in a way that I do not think they would in Northern Ireland.

One of the reasons why even Calman rejected the devolution of corporation tax in Scotland was that the cost was so much more than it is in Northern Ireland. That is because the economy, particularly the industrial and manufacturing base in Scotland, is infinitely different from that in Northern Ireland. Scotland is the UK average or slightly better, whereas we are, in economic terms, one of the lesser regions in the United Kingdom. The impact of reducing corporation tax in Scotland from 20-odd% to 12.5%, 12% or even 10% is hugely greater than it would be in Northern Ireland. Yes, there is volatility in corporation tax. Even in those years that I quoted, there was a dip in the corporation tax take in Northern Ireland, but it was nowhere near as severe as the dip in stamp duty or income tax, both of which the Member's party advocates. There would not be the same other benefits in having those two powers. Whilst volatility means that there would be a hit to public spending, with corporation tax there are other economic benefits in that people are in work and paying income tax and other things. For income tax alone and not corporation tax, there are not the other spin-off economic benefits. In fact, I can think of very few economic benefits solely from having income tax devolved to Northern Ireland. That is unless you want to radically reduce it, which I do not think the Member would want to do either because of the impact that that would have on public spending.

I will move on to other comments made by Mr McCallister. Mr Wells assured us that he would not give a long list of projects in his constituency, not least because Mr McCallister seemed to. He wants a newbuild for Down High School, something that I support; a new electricity grid; and more money for high streets and town centres. He wanted the Narrow Water bridge. There was a fairly lengthy list of projects and schemes. I have to say that some of them are meritorious, but he offered nothing as to how I or the Executive should pay for any of them. Yet, he went on to lecture us in the Government on tough decisions, and he went on to lecture others on fiscal responsibility, after giving a long list of projects that he wants to see but no other side of the ledger in how he wanted to pay for that.

Mr McCallister and, indeed, Mrs Overend mentioned the agrifood sector, which has done incredibly well during the downturn and could do better as well into the future.

The sector has performed extremely well in economic conditions. As I have said on many occasions, the Agri-Food Strategy Board's 'Going for Growth' development plan has my full support. It will be important to ensure that the ambitions set out in the 'Going for Growth' document are translated into actions by the relevant Ministers to ensure that we exploit the huge potential in Northern Ireland's agrifood sector.

I turn to other comments made by Mrs Overend. She mentioned the DETI budget and made reference to changes in the DETI capital and resource departmental expenditure limits for 2014-15 since the position reported in the 2011-15 revised Budget document. The Executive agreed the revised 2011-15 Budget on 7 March 2011. Since then, the Executive have agreed a number of exercises that adjusted departmental expenditure limits. For example, the Invest NI resource budget was reduced by £7.7 million in 2014-15 as part of the Budget realignment exercise in January last year. As, I am sure, the Member will understand, in managing a four-year spending plan, it is inevitable that minor adjustments will be required.

Mrs Overend and Ian McCrea raised issues about the Northern Ireland Community Safety College. I am not sure that I can add much to the position outlined by the Justice Minister earlier. My understanding is that, despite extensive engagement, the preferred bidder, who was appointed in December 2013, was unfortunately unable to demonstrate that they could offer an affordable and compliant bid. In light of this, the Northern Ireland Community Safety College programme board discontinued the preferred bidder process. While this is disappointing, it is not the end of the process. I understand that the programme board remains totally committed and supports the development of integrated training for the three services. The programme board commissioned a review of the project. The main elements of that review have been completed and are being considered by the programme board. The future progress of the project will be determined following a full analysis of the review's findings. The review considered the college design, education and training functions and procurement strategy. On the basis of the analysis of the results, the programme board will make recommendations on the overall timescales for any next steps. That work will also inform the business case and the procurement processes.

I turn to Kieran McCarthy's comments about Exploris. My Department has already approved the economic appraisal for Exploris. Any decision to allocate resources is, though, for the Executive to consider. The mechanism for the Executive to consider bids for capital investment and other allocations is the in-year monitoring round process. If a bid is submitted by any Department for the redevelopment of Exploris, it can be looked at by the Executive in the June monitoring round, when it can be considered in the context of the overall public expenditure situation and against competing pressures.

Dolores Kelly began her comments by quoting the First Minister, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, when he said at the 2011 Assembly elections that we should be judged on delivery and not on our first-preference vote. I am sure that the SDLP themselves would have the hope that they should not be judged on their first-preference vote, given that the recent European election result was the worst ever SDLP election result. Yet Mrs Kelly comes

here today and lectures us — the Executive — on our performance. She lectures my party on our performance. She lectures the Executive, of which her party is still a member. You would think, to listen to her excoriating the Executive, that they had nothing to do with the Executive, yet the Environment Minister remains in post in the Executive, as guilty of poor performance as any other member of the Executive on her barometer. She comes to the House after the worst European election result for the SDLP — not even European election but the worst election result ever for the SDLP — with no humility and continued conceit.

Talking about no humility and continued conceit, I want to move to Alex Attwood, the man responsible for delivering the SDLP's worst ever election result. It really was Groundhog Day stuff, the same contribution, by and large, as he made to the Budget debate back in February. He did a bit of a run through aspects of welfare reform. He stood up and, like Mrs Kelly, lectured me, my party and the Executive as a whole on, first of all, the bedroom tax. He gave us a bit of a lecture about a report published in Scotland about the consequences of the bedroom tax. Whilst the report was alarming in its detail, it would have been worth pointing out to Mr Attwood, had he stayed in the House — some of us had to stay to listen to him — that in Northern Ireland we have negotiated an exemption, which, of course, we have to pay for, so that anyone deemed to have a spare room will not be impacted on by the bedroom tax. He is lecturing us about a report in Scotland when we in Northern Ireland have ensured that people already in social housing and deemed to have a spare room are not affected by the bedroom tax. He seems to be enamoured of his beloved Scotland and is oddly infatuated with John Swinney, so gushing are his comments about the Scottish Financial Secretary. John Swinney and the Scottish Government are green with envy. They are jealous of what we, as an Executive, have managed to wring out of the Westminster Government and what Scotland has not. Every time I go to Finance Minister quadrilaterals, it is an issue that the Scottish and Welsh Finance Ministers raise with me because they are jealous of what we have been able to do and the benefits that we have been able to accrue through having social security responsibility devolved to this Assembly. He accuses me of sitting on my hands doing nothing, when, in fact, what we have done in this Executive is achieve exemptions. So, while we are achieving exemptions to the bedroom tax, the Scottish Government are writing reports. Unlike Northern Ireland, they have not achieved a single exemption from anything in the welfare reform package.

Of course, Mr Attwood knows a lot about welfare reform — the current process started on his watch while he was Minister for Social Development. So concerned was the SDLP about welfare reform that it avoided the Department for Social Development in 2011 when d'Hondt was run after the election. What concessions or exemptions did Alex Attwood wring from the Department for Work and Pensions when he was Minister for Social Development? It is an easy answer: none. Not a single exemption or concession did Alex Attwood, when he was Minister for Social Development, get from the Department for Work and Pensions on the Welfare Reform Bill. We had to wait until Nelson McCausland took over as Social Development Minister to get exemptions on payments and the aforementioned exemptions on the bedroom tax. Mr

Attwood has the cheek to come to the House and say that DWP has the measure of the DUP when he got absolutely nothing from DWP when he was Social Development Minister.

Of course, Mr Attwood has experience of welfare reform, having been the Minister responsible for the last Welfare Reform Act. Sometimes it is forgotten that the SDLP was responsible for social security in Northern Ireland for four years. The last Welfare Reform Act was shepherded through first by Margaret Ritchie when she was Social Development Minister and was finished off by Mr Attwood when he was Social Development Minister. I cannot remember who it was, but someone from the Sinn Féin Benches yesterday was outlining the various concerns about that welfare legislation. I used to rely on Mr Brady when I was Chair of the Committee for Social Development as a bit of an oracle on the finer details of social security legislation. He can correct me if I am wrong, but I think that that legislation moved people off income support or incapacity benefit onto either jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance (ESA). It was responsible for the work capability assessments, which have been raised time and time again as a cause for concern. That was welfare reform legislation brought through the House by Alex Attwood when he was the Social Development Minister. He stands here as if he had clean hands on welfare reform. He puffs out his chest and says how terrible this welfare reform legislation is. A lot of the people who are experiencing pain today as a result of welfare reform legislation have him to thank for it, because he was the Minister who brought it through the House in 2010-11.

Mr Attwood accused me of not raising the issue of welfare reform with Her Majesty's Government. I have done so repeatedly, and the message that the Social Development Minister and I get back is loud and clear: there will be no changes. Why would there be changes when you have a Government who are ideologically committed to welfare reform in the way that our Government in Westminster are? Why would they make changes for Northern Ireland above and beyond those that we have agreed with them and have to pay for? Why would they do that when they are enforcing these draconian things on their own constituents?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury told me that one of the pilot areas for universal credit is Inverness, which is his constituency. It is happening to his constituents before it happens to anyone else. Why does anybody think that he has any concern for the people of Northern Ireland? Why does he give a damn about our constituents, when he is happy to push this onto his own constituents? Why would we expect any change from the Government in Westminster?

As well as speaking to Her Majesty's Government, I have spoken to the Labour Party. It is clear that Labour would make no changes to welfare reform legislation above and beyond eliminating the bedroom tax. So nobody on the opposite Benches should be crossing their fingers and hoping for a Labour victory next May in the hope that they will do anything radically different. Aside from the bedroom tax, Labour has said that it will continue as the current Government have.

That leads me neatly into welfare reform, which was raised by the bulk of Members who spoke today. There

are serious consequences of non-compliance with welfare reform for the Assembly and the Budget.

7.45 pm

The first of those, and probably the one that concerns me most in respect of my job, is the financial penalties that the Executive is not facing, but now actually having to live with. Suggestion has been made by the party opposite that I and my party are making up the figures. These are not my figures. They are figures from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

On 31 March, I received a letter from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. To prove that I am not making the figures up, that they are not things that I have plucked from thin air but figures that are coming from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to me, I will tell you that he points out in the letter that he wrote to my predecessor in June 2013, confirming the Government wanting to support us taking forward welfare reform legislation. He also points out how he made it clear that the delay in implementing the reforms is having a negative impact on the Exchequer and that the UK Government would be entitled, as it is, under the principles set out in the statement of funding policy, to seek to recover any such costs.

He points out in the next paragraph that it is necessary to begin making adjustments to our departmental expenditure limits to offset the foregone AME savings. He goes into the detail of how that will be done and, in a helpful table that he provided in the letter, points out that the adjustment for January to March of last year is minus £13 million and, for 2014-15, the current year, minus £87 million, and that the proposed reduction for 2015-16 is £114 million. So, it goes back to the point that Mr Wells made in his contribution. This is not something that we are living with this year — £100 million combined that we have to take out of our Budget this year. A further £114 million is to be taken out of our Budget next year, and that will go up and up and up and up as welfare reform, whether we like it or not, is implemented incrementally across the water. As the savings that the Treasury should be deriving from Northern Ireland do not materialise, it is going to have to find that money from somewhere.

Mr Wells: I thank the honourable Member for giving way. I am glad that he raised that point, because the Members opposite, including Mr Brady and Mr Maskey, accused Members on these Benches of making this up and clutching fictitious figures out of the air. Given the import of that letter, is there any way that it could be made available to Members, or at least the gist of it made available, perhaps by means of a question for written answer? It is absolutely essential that the honourable Members opposite know exactly the implications of where they are going and where you are getting your figures from.

Mr Hamilton: I suspect that I have probably read enough of it into the record that it is no longer private correspondence. The Chief Secretary of the Treasury himself is on record saying that this is going to happen. However, in the face of the accusation that was made by Members opposite — that we were making the figures up — I thought it important that I point out precisely where the figures are coming from. They are not figures that have been made up by me. They are not figures made up by the Minister for Social Development. They are figures coming from the Treasury. Whether we like it or not, the Treasury

wants its money and it is going to get its money. It has the means to get its money. Already this year, the Treasury has reduced our baseline for the year by the £13 million that we did not save last year. It will reduce it further, later in the year, by £87 million, and it will do that, year on year on year, by adjusting our baseline by whatever it is that it expects to have saved as a result of welfare reform.

There are many aspects of welfare reform that I do not like and my party is not supportive of. That is why, again as Mr Wells pointed out in his contribution, our MPs were in Westminster voting against the Welfare Reform Bill, in the appropriate place to do so. It is not as though we are wholly enthusiastic about it. However, it is a reality that we are being penalised already and will continue to be penalised, to the tune of £114 million next year, rising and rising to about £1 billion over the next five years. That is a lot of cash to be taking out of any Government, but particularly a Government such as Northern Ireland's, with all the social and economic problems that we have. As we pursue corporation tax to try to transform our economy and get people into work, we will be hit with reductions as a result of that as well.

Mr F McCann: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: I will.

Mr F McCann: Just a comment I raised when Jim Wells was talking. You are talking about a £1 billion loss to the economy over the next couple of years, but when you take into account the loss in benefits and the people that it will impact on, that could come to a total of about £3 billion over the next four years.

Mr Hamilton: That is the point that is always thrown back by the Members opposite; that money is going to be lost to the economy as a result of welfare reform. Whether we like or not, that money is gone, because the reductions in benefit levels have already been implemented by the Government across the water. That money is gone. That is money that no longer exists. If the Member is arguing the point that the Executive should now be starting to pay all the benefits that were previously in place, that would amount to hundreds of millions of pounds on top of the hundreds of millions of pounds of penalties that are there.

It is also wrong that, as is often the case that is made by the parties on the opposite Benches, welfare spending in Northern Ireland is going to be cut. It is not planned to increase at the same rate as it did in the past, but it is worth pointing out that in 2014-15, without welfare reform in Northern Ireland, spending was to be £5.8 billion and by 2018-19 that was to rise to £6.2 billion. With welfare reform, spending this year will be £5.7 billion, rising to £6 billion in 2018-19, so it is less than it was, but there is still a £300 million increase in our welfare spending by 2018-19, which is £273 million less than it would have been without welfare reform. However, there is still a £300 million increase in welfare spending in Northern Ireland planned for the next number of years, so it is not accurate to say, as is often the case, that welfare spending itself will go down.

The second consequence and fear that I have about not moving forward with welfare reform is the risk that there is to 1,400 jobs in social security offices and service centres in Londonderry and Belfast. When Mr Attwood was here, he asked me to outline what I thought this was based on and whether I had correspondence on it. It is, of course, an issue on which the Minister for Social Development will

deal directly with the Department for Work and Pensions. However, you do not have to have a letter. He wanted a letter that told me, or spoke to me, or something like that. You do not have to have that; you just have to apply logic and common sense to the situation.

If we have 1,400 people in those service centres in Northern Ireland doing work on welfare spending for a region in England but do not have the same system — which we will not have — and if our people are not trained to work the other system, why would any Minister in the Department for Work and Pensions want to keep those jobs here? It makes no sense. We do not have the system and they are not going to spend the money on the system for us. I am sure there are many English MPs, particularly Conservative MPs, who would quite fancy taking those jobs back to their constituencies. If we have thumbed our noses at them and said that we are not going to do their welfare reform here, and if we do not have the same system and training in place, why would they keep those jobs here? You have only to apply logic and common sense to the situation.

The third consequence is that of the IT system. That point was also made to me by Danny Alexander in his correspondence about developing and maintaining a separate IT system. We have estimated that the cost of a replacement IT system is £1.6 billion — £1.6 billion that this Executive could ill afford on top of the penalties that we would face for non-compliance on welfare reform. Nobody on the opposite Benches is telling me where I am to get that £1.6 billion from to pay for an IT system that we do not need if we just comply with welfare legislation from across the water.

To be fair to Mr Attwood, he said:

“it is not conceivable and it is not financially sustainable that we would create our own IT system”.

I agree with him on that. With a price tag of £1.6 billion, it is not conceivable nor financially sustainable for us to have our own IT system. The current UK system, as Mr Attwood said, is failing. It is over 20 years old and it would be preposterous for us to take that on board and pay for the maintenance costs of that. It would probably be knackered, to use the vernacular term, fairly quickly anyway.

The fourth consequence that I fear is if we were left with a situation where we had to develop our own IT system. Mr Attwood outlined some of the significant problems that they have had across the water in developing their IT system. It has taken them much longer than they expected and it has cost them much more to develop than they initially anticipated. That would be something that we in Northern Ireland would face as well.

Do not forget that DWP does not require its old IT system any more. We rely on that old system and when DWP starts to switch it off in 2016 it will be gone and we will no longer have access to it. That means that we will be unable to pay people in Northern Ireland the benefits to which they are entitled. What that means in reality is this: the fear is that, by the end of 2015, 207,000 low-income families will no longer receive the help to which they are entitled through family and child tax credits, because those will have been abolished and incorporated into universal credit. By the end of 2016 —

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for giving way. Is he confident that the IT system that he is talking about will be fit for purpose, considering that £142 million has already been written off in the pilot scheme in the north-west of England because it is not fit for purpose? As I mentioned earlier, at this point in time, there were supposed to be over one million people on the universal credit system. Initially, there were 3,600 people. There are now around 11,000. They are all single males, because they are the easiest to put on the system. I think that the Minister is being slightly over-optimistic when he talks about it being fit for purpose by 2016.

Mr Hamilton: The actual delivery of it is not a concern for us. That is a concern for DWP, which is the owner of the system. It has to develop a system that is competent and workable and can be transferred to Northern Ireland. There is no cost to us in its being delayed. If we pass the legislation, and there is any delay in implementing welfare reform or the IT system that underpins it across the water, the costs are not passed on to us in Northern Ireland. However, the cost of non-compliance will be passed on. If we have to develop our own IT system for Northern Ireland, the cost will potentially be billions of pounds, or hundreds of millions of pounds at least. There is the very real prospect that not only will those 207,000 low-income families be affected, but, by the end of 2016, around 34,000 claimants will not be able to claim housing benefit, because it will also have been rolled into universal credit by that time, or whenever the time will be.

Therefore, without our own IT system, which would take years and years to develop and would prove incredibly expensive, we face a gap period in which vulnerable people in Northern Ireland who are entitled to benefits will not be able to receive those benefits. I am not in politics to go out to people and say that there is money that they are entitled to but that we are not able to pay it.

People can dismiss the figures. I have tried to show that they are not my figures but Treasury figures — money that it is taking off us. There is a fear and a risk that jobs will be lost. There is the real prospect that we will have to develop our own IT system. We can debate and talk about those things around the edges all we want, but when you face a situation in which hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people in Northern Ireland may not get the benefits to which they are entitled, there are serious questions for Members from the party opposite.

Mr Ian McCrea pointed out the comment that was made by Alex Attwood in his contribution to the previous Budget debate, and that was that the penalties were a price worth paying. Now, Mr Attwood is not here to answer, but I wonder whether he thinks — or, more importantly, his constituents in West Belfast, never mind the rest of the people of Northern Ireland think — that it is a price worth paying to have almost £1 billion taken out of public services over the next five years, affecting vulnerable people through reductions in health services, education services and other public services; to build our own IT system at a cost of £1 billion; to lose 1,400 jobs; or to have people in Northern Ireland not get the benefits to which they are entitled. I do not think that it is a price worth paying, and I think that most sensible people in Northern Ireland would agree.

Of course, all that reality around welfare reform did not prevent Members opposite in Sinn Féin and the SDLP

from coming forward with a long list of public spending requests. They ran from Mr McKay, who, as I mentioned before, wants us to devolve air passenger duty for short-haul flights at a cost of £60 million to £90 million. He wants us to do all sorts of things for cycling. Good idea, but it still comes at a cost. He wants us to develop tourism and particularly events in Northern Ireland. He wants us to bring the Tour de France here. That is another great idea, but it does not cost thin air — it costs money.

Pat Ramsey, as I said before, wants a new university for Derry/Londonderry. Dolores Kelly wants fuel poverty measures, including a fund to pay people's electricity bills. Maeve McLaughlin, who is in the House now, echoed her suggestion yesterday that the £160 million shortfall in the health budget should be plugged in its entirety. I have not been able to tot up the exact cost of all of that, but it runs into hundreds and hundreds of millions of pounds. Plugging the shortfall in health, attracting new events such as the Tour de France and building a university in Londonderry whilst addressing fuel poverty are all noble aims.

They are exactly the sort of things that Members should bring to the House and be calling on me to fund for other Ministers to deliver. Do those Members think that my job in funding other Ministers to bring more events, to develop our university infrastructure and to address shortfalls in funding for health is helped or hindered by the fact that we are squandering tens and tens of millions of pounds because we are not agreeing welfare reform legislation?

8.00 pm

As I come to the end of my response, I will turn to Alex Attwood's and Mr McNarry's comments. I thank Mr McNarry in his absence for his very fulsome and kind remarks about me, which I noted were kinder than any remarks by my own Back-Benchers during the debate. He gave his view that only Ministers who are not complying with welfare reform should suffer. I understand the superficial attractiveness of such a proposition. It would be better if those Ministers were paying the money, but, in reality, it comes from the budgets and the areas of public spending that they are responsible for: education, agriculture, culture and the environment. Although I understand where the Member is coming from, I ask him to think again about the impact that it could have on vulnerable people, particularly through the education system, and also on our farming community and others if we were to follow through on that.

Mr McNarry and Mr Attwood asked me about future Budgets. This is the last year of our four-year Budget that is agreed, and we have yet to agree a 2015-16 Budget. I hope to present that in draft in the autumn and have a final Budget agreed by December. I am ever the optimist. Future Budgets are unclear until after the next general election and the expectation that Her Majesty's Treasury will conduct another spending review.

Whilst it is unclear what our situation in Northern Ireland will be, this much is clear: times are getting tougher, especially on our resource side, which is the money for running our hospitals, schools and many of our public services. All the projections from the Office for Budget Responsibility and everything that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is saying make it clear that the switch from current expenditure to capital expenditure is permanent

and that the proceeds of growth in the economy in the UK will be applied against paying down debt as well as investing in our capital. So there will be continued pressure on the resource side of our Budget, and whilst the platform in Northern Ireland may not be burning, it is definitely getting warmer, which is why there is a need for continued reform in improving our public services and in how we deliver those and achieve value for money.

I will attempt to end on some better news; I do not want Members to go home in a gloomy mood. I mentioned the attraction of new jobs into Northern Ireland, which we should celebrate, but the better news, even since the Budget debate earlier this year, is about the recovery in our economy and the embedding of growth in our economy.

The Northern Ireland composite index, which is the indicator of growth in our economy, was published recently for the year to quarter 4 of 2013, and it showed growth of 2.6%. The Northern Ireland residential property price index, which is published by Land and Property Services in my Department and is an authoritative view of house price sales and housing sales activity, showed that, over 2013, house prices in Northern Ireland rose by 4% and that there were record levels of sales since 2007.

The recent Ulster Bank purchasing managers' index (PMI), which was published yesterday for the month of May, showed that, encouragingly, the private sector is driving economic growth in Northern Ireland. It showed record increases in new orders, and our construction sector, which has been much beleaguered over the past number of years, is also improving. It showed increases in employment across all sectors. Danske Bank's consumer confidence survey, published in April, showed the highest levels of consumer confidence on record since the survey began.

I appreciate that the recovery is not being felt in every part of or by everyone in Northern Ireland, and I note the comments made by many Members about Northern Ireland having the lowest disposable income in the UK. However, look at the composite index and the residential property price index and listen to what the Ulster Bank is saying through the PMI and what Danske Bank is saying. Look at our unemployment figures and our attraction of foreign direct investment over the past number of months. It is clear that better days lie ahead for this economy. It is encouraging that the private sector is driving growth in the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Wells: That is all excellent news. We should all pay tribute to the work of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, who has done so much to achieve those results, but I am intrigued to know how any of it helps his position. The extra income that will come through corporation tax, VAT, income tax and national insurance is, I am sure, very welcome, but none of that comes back to Northern Ireland. Does any of it help the very difficult financial situation that he finds himself in?

Mr Hamilton: I was trying to end on a positive note. *[Laughter.]* My next two words were "in conclusion". Mr Wells is, of course, right that it does not benefit me per se in my job of being responsible for the stewardship of public finances in Northern Ireland. He is absolutely right:

as the economy grows, more businesses pay tax and more people are employed, so there is more income tax and VAT etc to swell Treasury's coffers, but it does not necessarily come back to us in Northern Ireland.

The Executive entered this mandate with the objective of growing our economy and set it as our number one priority. Much maligned as Invest Northern Ireland has been — I have heard much criticism in the House of it and its strategy — it is very clear that what the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest Northern Ireland have been doing is starting to pay off. Confidence is being restored to our economy. I hope to be able to use increasing capital expenditure to boost our construction sector even further to assist the economy in Northern Ireland to employ more people. In that respect, we are achieving our number one goal as an Executive, which is to grow and start to transform our economy, and, hopefully, with the devolution of corporation tax in the next number of years, we will have a step change in the economy and grow it even further. It does not benefit public spending, and there will be challenges for us as a Government, which is why I have been preaching the message of reforming our public services so that we continue to improve how we do things and change how we do things so that we can get more for less. However, I still think that the House should celebrate the growing and transforming of our economy in the way that those figures show.

I could continue debating the issues, but, listening to the noise behind me, I do not sense that there is much appetite for me to do that. I see that the Minister of Health has arrived, which is a gentle nudge that he wants to conclude his business in the House. Tempted as I am, I will draw my remarks to a close.

I have tried to respond to as many of the relevant issues raised as possible. I am sure that, if I have failed to respond to an issue, Members will pick it up with me in other ways. As always, the debate was, at times, lively, and many significant points were raised. I am thankful to Members for that. It is imperative that the legislation debated today continues its passage through the Assembly so that public services here can be delivered without delay or interruption. I ask Members to support the Bill, thereby authorising spending on public services by Departments in 2014-15 beyond the provision in the Vote on Account passed in March.

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That the Second Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill [NIA 36/11-15] be agreed.

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Speaker.]

Adjournment

Cancer Services: South Belfast

Mr Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes. All other Members who wish to speak will have up to eight minutes.

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to bring this Adjournment debate to the House. At the outset, I thank the Minister for staying so late to contribute. This is a very important issue, and, first, I wish to highlight the positive work going on in my constituency of South Belfast in cancer treatment and research.

One of the seminal reports dictating the nature of cancer services was the Campbell report of 1996. It made a number of key recommendations, including the establishment of a cancer centre, appropriate training and action to tackle waiting times for cancer sufferers. We have come a long way since then. If we look at the achievements that have been made, we can see that, throughout the last 10 to 15 years, the calibre and range of treatment have constantly been expanding. In 1993, breast cancer screening was established throughout all of Northern Ireland; in 1994, the first cancer registry was established; in 1999, the first cancer incidence data was compiled; in 2004, the Northern Ireland Cancer Network was established; and in 2006, the Cancer Centre was opened. All these are evidence of a progression that must be welcomed and one that is ever more important, given the prevalence of cancer here and across the world.

I would like to touch on incidence and mortality rates. Whilst incidence rates are going up, and this is a trend that is not confined to Northern Ireland, mortality rates have gone down here. In the 15-year period to 2009, mortality rates decreased by 1.3% for males and 0.6% for females.

Some of the facts around cancer point to why we must do all we can to halt its progression. Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in 28 out of 53 European countries, and it is projected that by 2035 someone will die from cancer every 10 seconds in Europe. That is a startling forecast. Here, nearly 13,000 people are diagnosed with cancer every year and just over 4,000 lose their battle with the illness.

It is against this backdrop that the improvements in research and innovative treatment in Belfast are heartily welcomed. From a clinical perspective, the Cancer Centre, which opened in 2006 and is located in the City Hospital, has made a huge difference to cancer provision here. It offers an extensive range of specialist treatment, including radiotherapy, in a modern and professional setting.

Additionally, the centre for cancer research has played a pivotal role, as has Queen's University as a whole, in improving cancer treatment here. The research centre has a wide array of core competencies and is filled with the expertise of over 300 cancer clinical and basic researchers who specialise in techniques such as bioimaging, tissue processing and bio-banking amongst others.

We have seen recently how the research taking place here can have a demonstratively positive effect. The work of Almac has produced information that will improve treatment of ovarian cancer. I would also like to commend the role that Invest NI played in that particular piece of work in terms of capital.

Professor Paddy Johnston of Queen's University and others have begun to set a real ambition for extending the focus of having south Belfast as a real centre not only for local but for global health innovation. I have been particularly struck by that global ambition articulated by Professor Johnston. We can achieve that by excelling in a research capacity. I have also been struck by the prospect of the local benefit that there should be in jobs as highly-qualified local people achieve excellence in their field. One example of this is the molecular diagnosis research currently ongoing, and this is where clinicians can point out, through analysis, which treatment will work on certain individuals, thus attaining great accuracy in treatment.

There is, however, a huge gaping hole in the provision of cancer services here. I have already stressed the good and positive work that is being initiated and which is sustained by both the medical and academic sectors here, but the current policy in the provision of cancer drugs is a source of great emerging inequality.

The UK as a whole, in recent times, has had varying positions on cancer drugs provision. The coalition Government established the cancer drugs fund. That was put in place to eradicate the difficulties in access to drugs that had previously existed. While others may question the motive behind the fund, it was a significant step nonetheless. In response to that, the Scottish Government also moved to eradicate the difficulty in access to cancer drugs. There, the peer approved clinical system or PACS has replaced the individual patient treatment request. It is estimated that that new system, which incorporates increased patient/clinician engagement, will help up to 1,500 people in the first year.

So, England and Scotland have moved significantly to enhance cancer drugs provision, but here we have not. I appreciate that the Minister has indicated that he intends to review the process, but we still operate within the individual funding request system. The problem with this, as has been highlighted by charities, clinicians and the Rarer Cancers Foundation, is that it operates with an exceptionality clause. That means that, unless your strain of cancer is uniquely different from others, you will not receive a drug that is not approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

That inconsistency is given further weight when we realise that many of the drugs are developed and trialled here but are subsequently not available here. It is an issue of equality of access, and we are dragging our feet.

8.15 pm

Additional funding of £40 million has been spent here on cancer, and that is to be welcomed, but, if we put it into perspective across the jurisdictions of the UK, it pales in comparison. The Minister has indicated that he is taken by the Scottish model. In this and other ways, we are assuming that the principle has been won. I wonder whether he is aware of how the Scottish model was paid for. He often mentions prescription charges as a

method of funding cancer drugs. As far as I am aware, the Scottish Government did not need to do that, so why do we? Furthermore, through research into the topic, we have become aware of what is called the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. That is one of the ways in which the Scottish Government paid for their new cancer drugs provision. That scheme is a voluntary arrangement to control the price of branded drugs. It is negotiated between the Department of Health, acting on behalf of the UK Government and Northern Ireland, and the branded pharmaceutical industry, which is represented by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI). I am sure that the Minister is aware of that scheme and the agreement therein that stipulates that money must be returned to each Government for use on new drug treatment. I have a number of questions in that regard. How much money, if any, has been returned? Is it being used for new drug treatment? Could it be the basis on which to create a cancer drug fund model?

I know, through discussions with clinicians and cancer patients, that doctors are being placed in a difficult position of a moral and ethical scale when it comes to prescribing treatment for cancer. They know the gravity of any potential diagnosis. They know the chances for survival. Most importantly, when they talk directly to a patient who is very sick, they know that they are not giving them the most up-to-date information and that they are not about to give them the most up-to-date treatment. I will be writing to the professional bodies involved to ask them about their thoughts on the moral and ethical considerations that current health service policy imposes on them. It is unacceptable. It is primarily unacceptable for the patients, but it is also unacceptable to put clinicians in the position in which they know that the best outcomes cannot be assured as the treatment will simply not be made available.

We have heard a lot in the past few days about welfare reform. Let us look at it in relation to this topic. Substantial work has been done by the Macmillan cancer group and others. Research has shown the financial impact of receiving a cancer diagnosis, with some, on average, £290 worse off each month in Northern Ireland as a result of their illness. Let us look at the Department's logic and how it will not work for people here. First, the cancer patients are not getting the drug. Secondly, when they are diagnosed, they know that they are nearly £300 worse off each month as a result. As a solution, the Minister wants a more punitive welfare reform system before he considers giving them the drugs. They are worse off with cancer, and they will certainly be worse off with welfare reform. It just does not stack up. Contrast that with the exciting developments throughout the 1990s and the vision and ambition of developing cures and life-extending drugs.

There is a humble constituency out there burdened by cancer and its impact. When that constituency speaks out singularly or collectively, society almost instinctively reaches out to help. I argue that it is the responsibility of the health service to underpin that instinctive reaction with a strategic vision and ambition for cancer infrastructure here.

Mr Spratt: I intend to be brief with my remarks. I appreciate that Mr McKinney brought the topic here today, but it was a debate for the whole House. Cancer does not affect just South Belfast; it affects every area of the Province and further afield.

Nobody knows better than me in the past two years of the fantastic cancer service in this Province, from the clinicians, consultants, oncologists and everyone who works in the cancer centre, which is in South Belfast, to those involved in the research that goes on in Queen's University. However, when it comes to cancer treatment, I have been treated in every part of this city — north, south, east and west — indeed, I have been around every place. Someone suggested to me that the only place that I had not been treated at was the Royal maternity hospital. The bottom line is that I believe that, when someone gets into the critical area of cancer, which, sadly, I have been, you suddenly find that all the stops are pulled out when it comes to cancer treatment in Northern Ireland.

I appreciate that there are some issues around drugs, but, in fairness to the Minister, and I thank him for being here tonight, he is very willing to address that. He has suggested the possibility of having a minimal charge for prescriptions or something similar. My understanding is, from looking at replies that he has made recently, he has already submitted a paper to Executive colleagues about issues around cancer drugs.

Treatment is changing. Drugs change on a regular basis, but I think that it would have been better had Mr McKinney brought the debate before the entire House so that we could have brought the Minister along to a wider and full conversation about it, rather than the four of us being stuck in the House this evening to discuss the matter.

I want to record my very deep appreciation to all those whom I have been involved with. Over the past two and a half years, I have journeyed along with many other folks who are suffering from cancer. Mind you, you do not hear too many complaints about the treatment that the people you meet as you travel through radiotherapy, chemotherapy and the various treatments available get, either as individuals or families. I think that it is incumbent on all of us to try to find a solution to help the Minister. You heard about the financial difficulties that he is facing because of the many issues in the health service. I think that it is incumbent on all of us to help him to create some sort of fund.

I feel extremely bad about one thing, and I spoke to a consultant the other day who told me exactly the same: whenever I go to the chemist to get prescriptions, which I do on a regular basis, I do not have to pay anything. I recognise that there are folks who cannot afford it and I recognise the issues that Mr McKinney raised in relation to people who suffer from cancer, but there are many who can afford to pay a minimal charge. If there was a minimal charge on a prescription for those who can afford it, and that money was being ring-fenced for cancer drugs, I think that that would have wide support from those who can afford to pay. I am not suggesting that anyone who cannot afford to pay should pay; there should and could be exemptions.

I do not want to take the debate any further tonight because I think that it is a wider debate that concerns areas outside South Belfast. It is a debate to be had Province-wide and probably beyond.

Thank you to all who helped me on my journey.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Conventionally, we thank the Member for bringing a local constituency-based Adjournment debate, but, like Jimmy

Spratt, I also believe that this is a debate better placed for a wider audience, because it is a wider issue above and beyond the constituency. I echo Mr McKinney's congratulation to those involved in the regional cancer facility at the City Hospital for the tremendous work that they do day and daily. Each and every one of us, regrettably, knows far too many people who have had the burden of cancer inflicted upon them. Many of us have journeyed with some people to the end and have seen the devastating effect it has on them, the courage of the people who have been afflicted by cancer and the absolutely wonderful work carried out by everybody from the clinicians to the nurses.

Only down the street, we have the Marie Curie organisation, very close to this Building, which, along with Macmillan and others, tends to people who are going to their deathbed, basically, with such care to give them the maximum dignity that they can and to support their families through a very traumatic experience. So, like Mr McKinney, I congratulate and commend all those involved in the medical side of things and the clinical side of things in support of patients and their families. Of course there is also, as I have said, the likes of Queen's University, which is an internationally renowned institute for doing the type of research that has been referred to.

I think this evening's debate is one that needs to be had in a wider format because of all the issues that the Member has raised about funding, which I do not want to go into this evening. Clearly, there is an issue around drug availability and the costing of all that. I do not know enough detail about that, so I do not want to enter into it, but I do think that the Minister has a job of work on his hands. I do not know whether it is just that the older you get, the more people you know who have suffered from cancer. We all know that cancer is an ongoing plague on many people.

I think that the health service, by and large, does a tremendous job in how it cares for people with cancer. As Jimmy Spratt pointed out earlier, once you are diagnosed and into the system, it seems to be all systems go on your behalf. I sometimes see examples of people waiting too long to get a diagnosis. None of that is specifically pertinent to our local constituency, and that is why I am making a wee bit of a distinction. I have not heard anybody suggesting that there is a deficit of services available in South Belfast as opposed to anywhere else. Clearly, the City Hospital is in South Belfast, and the nature of the facility in itself adds to the employment of people living locally, but, overall, I think the topic is a wider and broader issue.

I thank the Member for bringing our attention to the cancer services. He has raised issues like drug availability and the funding needed for that. I am interested to hear the Minister's response, but, again, like Mr Spratt, I think it is a matter for a wider debate for people who are involved in the wider health portfolios.

Ms Lo: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the important issue of cancer services. First, I would like to praise the hardworking staff of the cancer centre at the City Hospital. Every two minutes someone in the UK is diagnosed with cancer. More than one in three of us will develop cancer in some form during our lifetime. The cancer centre provides treatment for people living in Belfast as well as a number of specialist regional services for people throughout Northern Ireland. Our community

has greatly benefited from the expertise of the staff at the cancer centre, and people have drawn strength from the care they receive as they cope with that awful disease.

According to a recent Cancer Research UK survey, the majority of people asked said that getting cancer was their number one fear. As legislators, we need to ensure that our community has full access to all the support available. The Alliance Party supports the full implementation of the service framework for cancer prevention, treatment and care. It is vital that Northern Ireland has speedy access across the lifespan to cost-effective, top-class surgery, radiotherapy and medicines, including new advances. In our last manifesto, Alliance called for parity of treatment and access to treatment with those available in the rest of the UK, including equity of access to drug treatments. Every person with cancer should have access to a clinical nurse specialist, a personalised comprehensive benefit and advice service and better post-treatment care. Earlier cancer detection is a priority. Increased public awareness, uptake of cancer screening, access to new and existing means of diagnosis and cancer research should be supported.

8.30 pm

Through the cancer drugs fund that was set up by the Government in 2010, a total of 36 treatments have been made available, but only to people living in England. The cancer drugs fund costs £200 million a year and, three months ago, was extended for another two years. Forty-two thousand patients in England have benefited, and that success has resulted in plans for the fund to be extended to Scotland and Wales by the Rarer Cancers Foundation so that cancer patients there have the same access to the drugs. In Northern Ireland, cancer patients have to apply through an individual funding report for any of the drugs on the list, and statistics show that only one in eight who applies is given access to the drugs. Unfortunately, most are refused due to costs.

Research by the Rarer Cancers Foundations shows that 278 patients in Northern Ireland would benefit from the fund every year at a cost to government of £5.7 million. That breaks down to £3.20 per person a year in the Province. A cancer patient was quoted in a recent newspaper article as saying:

“When you are dying of cancer the last thing you want is to have to fight the system – it should be working for you not against you.”

I urge the Health Minister to do all he can to rectify this gross inequality.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I would like to thank the Member for securing the Adjournment debate. The contributions have raised issues about cancer, and I hope to respond to the points that have been raised during the debate if time allows.

Cancer is a particular challenge to our healthcare system. However, it is recognised as a global problem and not one that affects only patients in Northern Ireland or, indeed, in South Belfast. Around 9,600 cancer cases were newly diagnosed each year in Northern Ireland between 2008 and 2012, and almost 54,000 people in Northern Ireland were living with cancer between 1993 and 2010. So the challenge is significant.

A growing ageing population means that the numbers of people who will require cancer treatment in the future will continue to rise, with consequent cost pressures to the health service. The ever-increasing number of new technologies and treatments for cancer, whilst good news for early diagnosis and treatment, also contributes to those pressures. Although accepting the reality of the constraints we face in the current economic climate, I look to the Health and Social Care Board to work with the trusts to ensure that we are delivering the most efficient service that we can for all cancer patients, including those in South Belfast.

Cancer services were reorganised and are now provided on a regional basis. All the evidence tells us that regional specialist centres with highly skilled professionals supported by multidisciplinary teams will provide the best outcomes for patients regardless of their age or where they live. The improvements in cancer services have been brought about by significant investment in cancer services and a major refocusing on how the service is delivered. The Belfast Trust and the services it provides in South Belfast has been at the heart of that transformation.

There are now five cancer units in Northern Ireland for the management of patients with more common cancers and the provision of local chemotherapy services. Those are the Belfast City Hospital and the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children; Antrim Area Hospital; Altnagelvin Area Hospital; Craigavon Area Hospital; and the Ulster Hospital.

The Belfast Trust's regional cancer centre at Belfast City Hospital in South Belfast includes the regional radiotherapy services and serves as a tertiary centre for the population of Northern Ireland. Through Queen's University, it is also home to a huge amount of academic research into cancer and its treatment, with many significant efforts being made to make breakthroughs in the treatment of cancers.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is one of the largest in the United Kingdom. It has approximately 2,000 beds and provides cancer services across four hospital sites: Belfast City Hospital; the Royal Victoria Hospital; the Mater Hospital; and Musgrave Park Hospital. The trust delivers local cancer care to approximately 340,000 citizens in Belfast and part of the Castlereagh area.

The regional oncology service is delivered from the Cancer Centre and employs a team of more than 35 consultant oncologists. The centre acts as the hub for cancer services throughout the Province. The team provides an oncology service to the local Belfast population, including south Belfast; oncology chemotherapy services for the core tumour sites, such as breast, lung, genito-urinary (GU) and colorectal at the four other HSC trusts on a hub and spoke model; and regional/specialist services for patients across Northern Ireland. In recent years, we have seen further major changes in how we deliver cancer treatment and care through the launch of the cancer services framework in 2011. To date, there have been a number of achievements in implementing the framework within existing resources. We will continue to work towards the full implementation of the framework.

South Belfast is also home to the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, which is a major cancer research centre of international repute. The centre includes academic and clinical studies, and its work is

funded from a wide range of government, business and charity sources. The Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre and Network, collocated with the Centre For Cancer Research and Cell Biology in south Belfast, enables patients and others from across Northern Ireland to participate in clinical trials of potentially beneficial prevention strategies, diagnostics, treatments and care. The new HSC R&D strategy for Northern Ireland will seek to build on the excellent work that is being taken forward by cancer research institutions to benefit patients in Northern Ireland.

Although those positive developments in service delivery are to be welcomed, with more to come that I will talk about shortly, they have been delivered only through significant public expenditure in cancer services. I want to see that investment continue, but, as I said, we face significant pressures on the health and care budget, and we therefore have tough choices ahead if we are to make the best possible use of resources. Access to cancer drugs is an area in which we must be particularly vigilant about gaining maximum benefit from expenditure for all patients. New specialist drugs, which include cancer drugs, place significant pressures on the health service budget. New drugs are emerging every year, usually at a high cost. Many of them also require an expansion in service provision to ensure that they are delivered safely and effectively and that patients using them are properly monitored and reviewed. Both the HSCB and the NHS commissioning bodies in England are guided by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in determining what cancer drugs should be routinely available. It is important to note that all NICE-approved cancer drugs that are routinely available in England are either recurrently funded or available via a cost-per-case mechanism in Northern Ireland. The Health and Social Care Board has a clear process — the individual funding request (IFR) — by which unapproved cancer drugs can be made available to patients by means of an individual funding request setting out the clinical circumstances that support that request.

The issue of access to specialist drugs, including cancer drugs, is very much a priority for my Department. Although the IFR process for accessing unapproved drugs is working, I have instructed my Department to evaluate whether the process is meeting its objectives. The evaluation will take account of the measures that other devolved Administrations are considering in their approach to access to unapproved specialist drugs. The terms of reference are being finalised, and the evaluation will be complete later this year.

In considering where to prioritise expenditure, it is important to note that prevention programmes and awareness campaigns have an important role to play. The Public Health Agency (PHA) is developing a programme aimed at improving the awareness of cancer in our population. As part of that programme, the PHA will include specific messages about tumour sites such as ovarian cancer. The PHA recently hosted a stakeholder workshop to ensure that key individuals and organisations, including cancer charities, are fully engaged in planning and supporting the cancer awareness programme.

There has been major progress, not just for South Belfast but for all of Northern Ireland. Cancer services have moved from a position in which fragments of treatment

were provided at all our hospitals in a way that was not ideal for providing a uniform standard of care to a position in which we now have a network of dedicated cancer units staffed by specialist multidisciplinary teams delivering high-quality care to recognised international standards of excellence.

I am pleased to say that one of the benefits of the planned opening of the new radiotherapy centre at Altnagelvin Hospital in 2016 will be the further improvement of capacity at the regional cancer centre at Belfast City Hospital. Delivery of the Altnagelvin centre is a high priority, and the Executive have made the necessary funding — £66 million for both current and capital — available. That includes an investment of some €19 million from the Republic of Ireland towards the capital costs of the project, which will provide services for patients from the adjacent border areas in the ROI.

As Health Minister, I have met patients who have undergone the trauma and stress related to cancer treatment. I empathise completely with them and their families, and I assure everyone that I want our health service to strive to be the very best in the cancer services that are available to them. That is my clear aim for South Belfast and right across the Province.

Adjourned at 8.41 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 16 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Lord Morrow: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On 31 May, an interview with the deputy First Minister was broadcast by RTÉ, during which he said that he was in prison at the time of the murder and secret burial of Patrick Duffy. In fact, it transpires that he was not in prison during this period, and he now claims that this was a lapse of memory. I find it hard to believe, as I am sure the House does, that someone would forget where they were at the time of a murder, especially when they were accused of being involved in it.

Mr Speaker, if RTÉ was misled, and it appears that it was, can you review Hansard and establish whether the House was misled by the deputy First Minister?

Mr Speaker: I hear what Lord Morrow has said. Lord Morrow, there is no doubt that you now have that on the record. Certainly, let me review Hansard, and I will come back either to the Member directly or to the House.

Executive Committee Business

Justice Bill: First Stage

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to introduce the Justice Bill [NIA Bill 37/11-15], which is a Bill to provide for a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts; to amend the law on committal for trial; to provide for prosecutorial fines; to make provision in relation to victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings and investigations; to amend the law on criminal records and live links; to provide for violent offences prevention orders; to make other amendments relating to the administration of civil and criminal justice; and for connected purposes.

Bill passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Consideration Stage

Moved. — [Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel).]

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to group the seven clauses for the Question on stand part, followed by the three schedules and the long title.

Clauses 1 to 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules 1 to 3 agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

Mr Speaker: That concludes the Consideration Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

The regulations further amend the principal regulations, which set out the arrangements for automatic enrolment, to ensure that they give effect to the original policy intention.

As I have said before to the House, I am conscious when dealing with pensions that it is easy to get lost in the maze of technical provisions and pensions jargon. However, the rule we are considering is somewhat technical. Whilst I will try to keep my comments at a fairly high level, some jargon is inevitable, but I will do my best to keep that to a minimum.

First, to be used as a qualifying scheme for automatic enrolment, in addition to satisfying the quality requirements for defined benefits schemes, a career average pension scheme is required to revalue accrued benefits by at least a minimum level while the member is in employment. This is so that the value of the benefits is given a degree of protection against the effect of inflation. Final salary schemes do not need that revaluation in service because, historically, salaries have tended to at least keep pace with, if not outstrip, inflation.

The regulations provide for schemes that revalue by a change in average earnings or potentially by reference to another measure not to be excluded from being a qualifying scheme, so long as the scheme's funding and statement of funding principles assume that revaluation will be at or above the minimum in the long term. That is consistent with schemes that are allowed to revalue by reference to a discretionary power, where funding assumptions can be considered under the principal regulations. It also allows schemes maximum flexibility over the period of revaluation they use, so long as it can be assumed from the scheme's funding that the minimum level will be provided.

In addition, the regulations provide for new public service career average schemes that revalue by reference to the annual order under section 9 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. If they revalue at the rate specified in the order, they will not be prevented from being a qualifying scheme. Explicit reference is made in this way as such schemes are not able to consider funding assumptions in the same way as funded private sector schemes, which are required to have a statement of funding principles or an equivalent.

The regulations also restore the policy intention to allow hybrid schemes that certify money purchase benefits under alternative requirements set out in the principal regulations to phase in contributions under the transitional provisions for money purchase schemes.

In summary, the regulations ensure that employers using good career average pension schemes are able to do so without any unnecessary impediments and that all employers using hybrid pension schemes under automatic

enrolment are treated alike in phasing in minimum contributions.

Mr Brady (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. The Committee first considered the original SL1 pertaining to this legislation at its meeting on 6 March 2014 and was content for the rule to be made. The Committee subsequently considered the rule on 3 April and agreed that it should be confirmed by the Assembly.

The Department advised the Committee that the rule allows greater flexibility for certain pension schemes to meet minimum revaluation requirements while ensuring that the benefits of those types of schemes remain protected. The rule also restores a positive policy intention to allow all schemes to phase in contributions under the transitional provisions for money purchase schemes.

The outcome of the rule is therefore a positive one, and the Committee recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

Mr McCausland: I am pleased that there is a consensus across the Assembly for the regulations. Again, I thank the Social Development Committee and its Chair for the positive way in which they have dealt with them. As I said in the opening comments, this is simply to ensure that good quality career average schemes are not prevented from being used as qualifying schemes for automatic enrolment.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Committee Business

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 35/11-15].

On Tuesday 27 May 2014, the Assembly referred the Local Government Bill to the Committee for the Environment for scrutiny. Sorry, my notes are wrong: it referred the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to the Committee for the Environment for scrutiny.

The Bill will amend provisions in the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Road Traffic (New Drivers)(Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Road Traffic Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. Those amendments will make major changes to the processes for new and learner drivers, lower the limits for drink-driving and make the wearing of protective headgear mandatory for riders and drivers of quadricycles.

The Committee agreed to call for written submissions from interested organisations and individuals, and, in addition to signposting notices in the local press, stakeholders have been contacted directly. The Environment Committee firmly believes that it is essential that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on this Bill.

This is an important Bill that will save lives and make our roads safer for everyone in Northern Ireland. It is clear, however, following Second Stage, that the process will not be easy, as many issues were raised and need to be given due consideration by the Committee.

The Committee's public call for evidence does not close until 21 August 2014, and we anticipate a high volume of submissions. After considering those submissions, the Committee plans to invite respondents to take part in a stakeholder event so that members have a wider opportunity to explore the views expressed. The Committee also wishes to bring its concerns to the Department for its response.

The Committee believes that it is essential that it is afforded the time to fully exercise its scrutiny powers on this highly significant legislation. I ask, therefore, that the House supports this motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to 27 March 2015, and I can assure Members that, following discussions with the Department, this extended date will not delay the progress of the legislation.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 35/11-15].

12.15 pm

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion

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 the motion and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. Mr Kelly will have 10 minutes to make his contribution. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes. I inform Members that a valid petition of concern was presented today in relation to the motion — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Allister: Shame.

Mr Speaker: Order. The vote, therefore, will be on a cross-community basis and postponed until tomorrow, when it will be taken as the first item of business.

Before we begin the debate, I remind the House that the motion relates only to the Committee's report and recommendations following complaints about an incident that took place in the Carrick Hill area of north Belfast on 21 June 2013. I would like Members to be very clear about the rules of the debate from the outset so that, if Members stray into another area, for whatever reason, they are well warned. I will not allow reference to any other incidents, convictions or allegations — *[Interruption.]* Order. Members must keep their remarks to matters dealt with in the report and sanctions recommended by the Committee on Standards and Privileges. Members who disregard the ruling will be asked to resume their seats and we will move on.

I remind Members to be mindful of the dignity of the Chamber and to treat each other with courtesy and respect. I remind Members of the authority of the Chair. Members have been well warned. Sometimes, Members feel that they can rise to their feet and weave in and out of a particular debate. When the Chair rises in his place to calm the Member down or warn the Member to be careful in where he is going, the Member looks at you, as much as to say that they did not know that they could not do that. All sides of the House are well warned in this debate.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges): I beg to move

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges [NIA183/11-15], imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution.

I move the motion on behalf of the Committee on Standards and Privileges. In doing so, I ask the Assembly to agree to impose upon Mr Kelly the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days. However, given that a valid petition of concern was lodged this morning, I suggest that that is incredibly unlikely.

All Members should have already received a copy of the Committee's report on the four complaints about the conduct of Mr Kelly on the evening of 21 June 2013 in the Carrick Hill area of north Belfast. The Tour of the North parade took place that evening. Mr Kelly had been in attendance but departed when it appeared that the area was calm. However, tensions in the Carrick Hill area were subsequently raised, and Mr Kelly was asked to return. Upon returning, Mr Kelly learned that a young man

from the area had been arrested. Mr Kelly approached a police Land Rover and spoke to one of the officers in the vehicle in relation to that youth. It was what subsequently happened that formed the basis for the allegations in the four complaints.

Our Commissioner for Standards investigated the complaints and, having watched a number of videos of the incident, sought further information from the four complainants; obtained information from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Police Ombudsman and the Official Report; and interviewed Mr Kelly under oath. He made certain findings and established a number of facts.

First, the commissioner was satisfied that, at the relevant time in this case, Mr Kelly was acting, in part at least, in his capacity as a Member of this House. Mr Kelly accepted that. That is important because it meant that Mr Kelly was required to act in accordance with the requirements of the Assembly's code of conduct. The commissioner then went on to establish that Mr Kelly made his way to the location, having been advised of the situation that was developing, and became aware that a youth had been arrested. Mr Kelly approached the first in a line of police Land Rovers and spoke with the passenger. As a result of that exchange, he believed that the vehicle would move forward a short distance and then pull in to facilitate further discussion.

Mr Kelly asked the small crowd that had assembled to clear the way so that the vehicle could move forward, and the crowd complied with his request. The first vehicle did move forward, but did not stop; the second and third Land Rovers in the line of vehicles followed the first vehicle. The fourth vehicle in the line moved forward slowly with its blue lights and headlights flashing. Mr Kelly walked directly in front of the moving vehicle and shouted at the driver to pull in. The vehicle continued to move forward very slowly. The siren was sounded once, and Mr Kelly took hold of the grille on the bonnet of the vehicle and was carried forward slowly for a short distance before the vehicle stopped.

The commissioner also pointed out that, whilst Mr Kelly was being carried on the bonnet of the vehicle, and for a short time after it happened, a number of the crowd struck the vehicle. Following this, Mr Kelly challenged the senior officer at the scene. Mr Kelly claimed, and the officer accepted, that he was trying to defuse the situation. Mr Kelly then asked the crowd to stand back from the vehicle to allow it to move away, and the crowd complied with this request.

The driver of the vehicle and Mr Kelly later accepted informed warnings for their part in the confrontation. Mr Kelly accepted his warning for impeding the police. It is important to note that impeding a constable in the execution of his duty is a criminal offence, contrary to section 66 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. Mr Kelly signed the certificate of informed warning immediately below text, which read:

"I admit the offence outlined and understand the meaning of an informed warning".

This is an important point. In accepting his informed warning, Mr Kelly admitted the offence of impeding the police. Although Mr Kelly has described his acceptance of this warning as a technical admission, made only after he had taken legal advice, the acceptance of it was a clear

admission of guilt of criminal conduct. The public duty principle of the code of conduct provides that Members have a duty to uphold the law. It follows that, in committing the offence of impeding a constable in the execution of his duty, Mr Kelly failed to uphold the law as required by the Members' code of conduct.

The principle of leadership in the code of conduct states that Members should promote and support the other principles:

"by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the people of Northern Ireland, and to ensure the integrity of the Assembly and its Members in conducting business."

The Committee acknowledges that Mr Kelly did seek to demonstrate positive leadership on the evening in question. His intention had been to defuse a tense situation, and he used his influence positively to direct the crowd and facilitate the passage of the police. However, despite this, Mr Kelly failed to demonstrate leadership when he obstructed the police vehicle. His actions set a poor example and resulted in a number of the crowd striking the police vehicle.

The Committee believes that the unlawful behaviour of a Member is a serious matter and that Mr Kelly should, therefore, apologise in the Assembly for his conduct. Notwithstanding any such apology the Committee believes that, in this particular case, it would be fully justifiable to impose a sanction upon Mr Kelly. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Assembly imposes upon Mr Kelly the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days.

In coming to the conclusion that this sanction would be appropriate, the Committee has taken into consideration the following factors identified by the commissioner. First, that Mr Kelly was an experienced leader; secondly, that he attended the scene with good intentions to try to defuse a tense situation; thirdly, that the poor example he gave by breaking the criminal law resulted in others striking a police vehicle; fourthly, that his criminal conduct was undertaken on the spur of the moment without due regard to the consequences; fifthly, that the illegal conduct received widespread media coverage at the time; sixthly, that before and after that conduct Mr Kelly used his influence to calm the situation; and, finally, that, as a result of his conduct, Mr Kelly received an informed warning.

Members of the Assembly are influential leaders to whom the public often look to provide an example. The Committee, therefore, recognises that Members can play a constructive and welcome role in lowering community tensions. The Committee accepts that Mr Kelly had intended to make a positive contribution on the evening of 21 June 2013 and that some of his actions assisted in defusing a tense situation. It is, however, most regrettable that Mr Kelly undermined his positive actions when he obstructed the police. While Mr Kelly acted on the spur of the moment, his conduct was, nevertheless, unlawful. The Assembly's code of conduct requires that Members uphold the law through their actions, and any failure to do so should be dealt with seriously by the Assembly.

I will now make a few personal comments before opening up the wider debate.

I am surprised by the actions, particularly of the SDLP this morning, in signing a petition of concern, not least because of a number of factors. First, nobody on the Committee, including Sinn Féin members, argued that this was not a breach of the code of conduct. Therefore, it follows that there should be some degree of sanction. By its actions this morning, the SDLP has decided that no sanction should follow Mr Kelly's actions. The SDLP had the opportunity to put down an amendment to the motion on the Floor of the House. It could have argued that perhaps a lesser sanction is appropriate in this case, but the SDLP chose not to do so. The only conclusion that one can reach is that that party has decided that Mr Kelly's illegal actions should not be punished by the House. I find that disappointing and surprising.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. When his Committee debated that particular incident, what actions did the SDLP take when it came to the vote?

Mr Ross: From recollection, I do not think that the SDLP representative remained at the Committee for the discussion with the Commissioner for Standards. The SDLP member did not take the opportunity to ask the commissioner any questions on the report and did not vote in any way after that discussion.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ross: I will give way to Mr Allister.

Mr Allister: Picking up on what the Member is telling the House, is it then the case that the SDLP representative on the Committee absented himself, took no opportunity to oppose or question what was being discussed, took no opportunity to vote against or even to abstain and, in fact, acted as spinelessly on the Committee as that party is acting today in supporting this petition of concern?

Mr Ross: Mr Allister's observations are correct. The Member could have chosen to ask the commissioner questions if his party was concerned about the report and could have stayed in the Committee to discuss with other Committee members the sort of sanction that would be appropriate to bring to the Floor of the House. The Member chose not to do either of those things.

I am also disappointed that one of the signatories to the petition of concern is a member of the Policing Board because I believe that the issue we are talking about today is one of the most serious breaches of the code of conduct that we have had, given that a Member of the House has broken the criminal law. I am surprised that a member of the Policing Board does not believe that that would merit a sanction from the House.

Mr McGlone: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Will the Member clarify whether he is speaking as Chair of the Committee or in a personal capacity? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member made it clear that he was speaking as the Chairperson to start with, but indicated that he wanted to make a few personal comments, which he is now doing.

Mr Ross: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am glad that everybody else in the Assembly was listening to my comments.

I look forward to listening to the contributions from other Members, particularly those from the SDLP, who have taken the decision to support a petition of concern. I am

disappointed. It is regrettable, particularly given that they left it until the last minute before making any utterance of their view on the issue.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom labhairt in aghaidh an rúin seo. I rise to speak against the motion. I just want to pick up a couple of points from the point of view of the Committee. At the very outset of the debate, I heard people shouting, "Shame" when the petition of concern was mentioned. It is not that long since a petition of concern was brought forward here in respect of another Member who had come to the Committee — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: The main issue for me is how we actually go ahead with the Committee on Standards and Privileges and how it conducts business in future. As in the case of the previous Member Mr Wells, it seems to me that the Committee is getting to the point where it will be heavily politicised in terms of vote management and what it brings to the Chamber, as opposed to undertaking the role for which it and that of the commissioner were designed.

The Chair mentioned the actual debate that took place. On a number of occasions, I sought clarity from the commissioner about a few issues relating to the technical admission and technical breach. It is not as though we ran away from it in the Committee.

12.30 pm

I want to pick up on a few points in the report itself. I refer to one person who wrote to the commissioner to complain about the matter. On pages 57 and 59 of the report, the person states that Mr Kelly had been involved in other incidents of that type way back in the 1970s and 1980s. Mr Kelly could not have been involved in those incidents, because he was not out and about to be involved in them. Clearly, you are looking at the level —

Mr Allister: Maybe it is a memory lapse.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: There goes the heckler again. The heckler will no doubt have his say in due course.

The people who wrote to complain about the case refer to matters that clearly Mr Kelly could not have been involved in at that time.

I also want —

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Boylan: Yes.

Mr Clarke: The Member makes a point about someone's recollection of Mr Kelly's involvement in events. Is the Member then disputing what we saw broadcast on television, which was Mr Kelly standing in front of and obstructing the police in the line of duty?

Mr Boylan: I will say this in response to the Member: when Mr Kelly got up that morning, he did not decide, all blasé, to go out on to the street with the intention of affronting anybody. He was there in a leadership role, trying —

Mr Clarke: Obstruct the law.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: — to resolve issues and calm a situation down.

Mr Clarke: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: It is funny that the Member should say that, because I can quote a number of incidents that have come to the Committee. Some of those are not admissible, but maybe after we get through this process on the code of conduct —

Mr Speaker: Order. I am listening to all Members very carefully. Let us not stray into other incidents or other areas. It is vital that we deal, as far as is possible, with the motion before us. I am trying to help the Member.

Mr Boylan: I accept your point, Mr Speaker. The only point that I was trying to make is that we are going through a process at the minute, and, as part of today's debate, we have to learn to take the process forward. I was only trying to make the point that Members are quick to get up to ask questions about this matter, but there are a number of other similar issues.

Mr Clarke: It does not matter what —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: I just want to —

Mr Speaker: Order. Members who want to contribute to the debate can do so, but let us not have a debate across the Chamber. The Member has the Floor.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Thank you.

The reason that I brought up the issue of one of the complainants is that it was the same person who notified the commissioner of the section 66 ruling, which was raised in this matter.

I want to make another point. We are all saying that Mr Kelly did this and Mr Kelly did that. If you look at the report on what happened on the day, you will see that there were three informed warnings given — three. Those were given to Mr Kelly, a PSNI officer and a young man. Mr Kelly set about doing his duty to try to find out exactly why the young man was arrested. He was there with his local community trying to assist. Not one person throughout the whole process, even in Committee, said anything. Unfortunately, I am up to speak first, but I would like to hear some other Members talk about the actual conduct of the PSNI officer, because —

Mr Ross: Will the Member give way?

Mr Boylan: Yes.

Mr Ross: It may be useful to remind —

Mr Speaker: Order. The motion has absolutely nothing to do with a police officer. Let us not stray into areas that are not in the Committee report. Let us be very careful here. I am trying to manage a very difficult debate. I will allow the Member to continue.

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for giving way. I was also hoping to help the House by reminding it that only one of the three individuals who received an informed warning

is a Member of the House, so the House has the remit to propose a sanction against only one of those individuals.

Mr Boylan: Mr Speaker, I am trying to put into context what happened on the day and to bring it back to my colleague who was acting in a leadership role. That is what this is about, and it is actually in the report, but I take your guidance.

Like I say, some Committee members never said anything when this came up. With that mind, I do not intend to support the motion.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Boylan: No. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr A Maginness: I oppose the motion.

A Member: Shame.

Mr A Maginness: Just hear me out before you —

Mr Speaker: Order. I have already warned the Member. The Member has the Floor. Allow him to make his contribution.

Mr A Maginness: I invite Members to listen to what I say before arriving at a premature judgement in relation to what I am going to say. I recall the events of 21 June 2013. I was there. I was there when this particular incident took place. It was in the aftermath of a very heightened situation arising out of the Tour of the North in north Belfast in the Carrick Hill area. It was a very tense situation and people were getting very aggrieved about what was happening in the Carrick Hill area.

There was an attempt by me, by Carál Ní Chuilín, by members of the concerned residents committee of Carrick Hill, who are a very good, outstanding body of people, and by Gerry Kelly to try to defuse what was becoming an extremely difficult situation. That situation was inflamed — I have to say "inflamed" — by the premature arrest of a young man. That young man was taken away in a police vehicle, and the problem arose out of his arrest at that point in time. Yes, he may well have — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr A Maginness: Yes, he may well have needed to be arrested but not at that particular point in time when there were many people about and there was an extremely difficult situation.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: No, I will not give way. Just hear me out and listen to me, please. I believe that Gerry Kelly's intervention was well intentioned and was an attempt to defuse the situation, which the Committee has accepted. So, we get to the nub of the situation, which is that Gerry Kelly accepted an informed warning. That technically means — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr A Maginness: That technically means that he breached the code, but what are the consequences that flow from that? We have to be mindful in this House that any sanction imposed on a Member of this House should be proportionate. Given the circumstances in which Mr Kelly made his intervention in order to try to defuse the situation, does that not mean that that technical breach

of the law that took place should, in fact, be looked at in a different light and that the penalty being imposed —

Mr Craig: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: Just give me a moment. The penalty being imposed by the Standards and Privileges Committee of this House is, in my view, disproportionate to whatever breach took place. I further add this: Ms Lo proposed at the Committee that an opportunity be given to Mr Kelly to apologise. The Committee rejected that opportunity. So, Mr Kelly did not have an opportunity to apologise to the House or to the Committee for what happened. I believe that that was a poor decision by the Committee —

Mr Ross: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: — and what the Committee wanted to do in circumstances was to impose an excessive and disproportionate penalty on Mr Kelly.

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for giving way. It is a very simple point. If that is the view of the SDLP, why did the SDLP not bring an amendment to the motion this morning as opposed to blocking it altogether?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute on to his time.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you very much. The point that has to be made is — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr A Maginness: The point has to be made in terms of this particular motion and report coming to the Committee. It is not possible to do that. You have to accept the package. You cannot amend the report. This is a Committee report. It comes to the House. The House has to make a decision.

The House is, in a way, a court of appeal, and, therefore, all Members have to listen to the report as delivered by your good self.

A Member: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: I am sorry; I really have to finish off the points that I am making.

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

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Ross: Mr Speaker, will you clarify for the House whether it was possible for a Member to table an amendment today that would have changed the sanction? Mr Maginness is claiming that that was not possible.

Mr Speaker: Order. I will clarify the situation: any party could have brought an amendment to the motion — not to the report but to the motion. *[Interruption.]* Order. I hope that that clarifies the situation. *[Interruption.]* Order. Allow the Member to continue.

Mr A Maginness: I accept the advice from the Speaker on that. The report coming to the House clearly states that there was a breach, and it highlights and underlines that the penalty for that should be five days' suspension. My party and I believe that that is excessive.

You criticise the SDLP for signing a petition of concern. A petition of concern was signed by you, the DUP, in relation to Jim Wells. *[Interruption.]* You did.

Mr Speaker: Order. Address your remarks through the Chair. Order.

Mr A Maginness: So you cannot criticise the SDLP for signing a petition of concern on this. I say to you — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Will the Member bring his remarks to a close? *[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr A Maginness: My final point is this: any —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time has gone.

Mr A Maginness: Any sanction should be proportionate. The sanction recommended by the Committee is not proportionate.

Mrs Overend: From the outset, I would like to express my exasperation with the SDLP, and Pat Ramsey, Colum Eastwood and Dolores Kelly in particular, for the disregard for law and order that they have shown today. I am not sure whether they somehow believe that Gerry Kelly is innocent or have publicly buckled under political pressure from Sinn Féin. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mrs Overend: Sadly, it leaves me once again questioning whether the values of the SDLP are the same now as when the party first entered the Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Order. This debate is not about the values of any political party. It is clearly about the report. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let us not get into the values of parties in the House.

Mrs Overend: It brings me no pleasure that a Member of the Assembly has breached the code of conduct and broken the law in the way described by the Chairman of the Standards and Privileges Committee. It brings me no pleasure that video footage of an Assembly Member, showing him taking hold off the grille of the bonnet of a PSNI Land Rover and being carried on that bonnet for some time in an attempt to stop the police officers while a number of people in the crowd violently struck the sides of the vehicle, was transmitted via the airwaves to news channels worldwide. It brings me no pleasure, just embarrassment, that such actions could be taken by a Member of the Assembly.

What Mr Kelly was thinking when engaging in such thuggish behaviour is beyond me. He should be ashamed of himself. It is 2014, and there are ways and means of engaging with police officers. Gerry Kelly, in obstructing a PSNI Land Rover, impeded the police and broke the law, specifically, section 66 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. His actions had the potential to escalate the situation and further provoke the crowd, which was clearly demonstrated when the police Land Rover, which he impeded, was then attacked by those present.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Overend: Yes.

Mr A Maginness: You say that his actions would have provoked the crowd or escalated the situation. In fact, the

crowd was not provoked; the crowd calmed down. In other words, the opposite happened.

Mrs Overend: The report, as I read it, said that his actions meant that others hit the side of the Land Rover.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. I know that there must be embarrassment about the issue amongst those in the SDLP. Will the Member not agree with me that, first, whether or not the crowd was provoked, the act was illegal, and, secondly, the aftermath showed that the crowd attacked the Land Rover as a result of the actions of Gerry Kelly?

12.45 pm

Mr I McCrea: It is true. That is what the reports says.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member has an added minute.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Member for his intervention. No matter what was happening that night, I do not think that there is any excuse for being on the bonnet of a PSNI Land Rover. There are ways and means of dealing with the PSNI. You certainly would not catch me on the bonnet of a Land Rover.

The subsequent decision to take legal action against the Chief Constable was, similarly, seriously misguided. It again demonstrated contempt for the rule of law, but that is hardly surprising. It was rightfully withdrawn. Gerry Kelly and Sinn Féin are not above the rule of law. They cannot pick and choose when to obey it.

For once, the Commissioner for Standards was unequivocal in a ruling. He found that Mr Kelly had breached the code of conduct. When the Standards and Privileges Committee met to discuss his report, I proposed that Mr Kelly should apologise to the Assembly and that a motion be put forward to exclude him from proceedings for five days. I am pleased that the Committee agreed that proposal.

When each of us was elected to the House, we signed up to a code of conduct, which states:

"Members have a duty to uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them."

Mr Kelly has clearly failed in that regard. Members also have a duty to show leadership; again, Mr Kelly has clearly been found to be in breach of that duty.

I also question, as others have, what respect Gerry Kelly showed for the police and the rule of law in his actions, and how those actions could be seen to be promoting good relations.

In his accepting an informed warning, in January of this year, I welcome the fact that Mr Kelly admitted his guilt. However he chooses to term it, it does not change the fact that he broke the law, and, by breaking the law, he failed in his duty as a Member to uphold the law.

Today's motion is not about point scoring but about holding Members to the standards that they should adhere to when they are elected to the House. It is about protecting the integrity of our devolved institutions. It is a shame that this is far from the only incident that Gerry Kelly should apologise to the House for; it is a shame that this is far from the most serious incident that Gerry Kelly should

apologise for. Unfortunately, however, the Commissioner for Standards has been found wanting on many other instances, in my opinion.

If Gerry Kelly and his party are serious about reconciliation, I urge them to apologise for their part in the 30-year terror campaign that cost this country countless lives. Only last week, Gerry Kelly's refusal to appear before the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee showed disdain for those victims who questioned —

Mr Speaker: Order. I have warned Members many times. We are straying into an area that has nothing to do with the report. I beg the Member to come back to the report and the specifics within it.

Mrs Overend: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I reiterate my disappointment that a petition of concern has been used by Sinn Féin and supported by the SDLP Members. The Sinn Féin Member across the way complained of the DUP's misuse of the petition of concern, but two wrongs do not make a right. What a terrible place Northern Ireland would be if all MLAs were to set their standard —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mrs Overend: — by the actions of Gerry Kelly MLA. I support the motion.

Ms Lo: As Mr Maginness alluded to, during the debate in the Committee on Standards and Privileges, I proposed that the Committee should establish if the Member would apologise to the Assembly for breaching the code of conduct and, if so, that the Committee should report that it considered the matter to be resolved. If not —

Mrs Overend: Will the Member give way?

Ms Lo: Yes.

Mrs Overend: Does the Member accept that the report asks for Gerry Kelly to make an apology to the House, that today's motion is on his being withdrawn from the proceedings of this place and that he should still make an apology?

Ms Lo: I thank the Member for her intervention, but I ask her to listen to the rest of my speech. I said that he should come, first, to the Assembly to apologise, but if he would not, that the Committee should consider the issue of seeking to impose a sanction. There was certainly a precedent in using that approach in relation to the complaint against Mr Wells, last year, regarding his negative comments towards a DCAL special adviser.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member for giving way. I may not get an opportunity to speak later. Does the she agree that the conduct in the House today contradicts the conduct in Committee, where the discussion of these matters was often very civil, and that the DUP and Sinn Féin, in bringing petitions of concern when their members are sanctioned, disrespect the Committee, including their members on it?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Ms Lo: Thank you. I absolutely agree with that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Lo: However, my proposal was not agreed to. The proposed exclusion we are discussing today was backed

by unionist MLAs on the Committee, but it was opposed by Sinn Féin. I abstained from the vote.

The Alliance Party firmly believes that elected representatives should lead by example in terms of their actions and behaviours. That is essential to encourage high standards of behaviour in others and to help to build public trust and confidence in the integrity of the public office or institution. The fact that Mr Kelly accepted the reprimand is an acknowledgement that he broke the law. The Alliance Party supports sanctions, but I agree with Mr Maginness that the proposed sanction is excessive.

Whilst we are discussing the issue — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Ms Lo: No. I am sorry.

Whilst we are discussing the issue of the conduct of MLAs, I feel it is necessary to put on record my grave disappointment at the level of DUP hypocrisy today. When Ruth Patterson, a councillor —

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, we are straying away from the report. Let us deal with what is in the report; nothing more and nothing less.

Ms Lo: Mr Speaker, it is about consistency in relation to today's debate. When Ruth Patterson, a DUP councillor, was charged — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, the Member will know that this will be a very difficult debate. Help me to manage this debate. I say that to all Members. The Member is straying into a different issue and a different incident. We really must come back to the report. I am really trying to help the Member.

Ms Lo: Mr Speaker, I believe that this is relevant to us debating this issue. At that time, her party was very quick to support her. Similarly, it is beyond my comprehension — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Lo: — that Mr Wells and Mr Givan, also from the DUP —

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

Mr Speaker: I almost know what the point of order might be.

Mr Wilson: It is a genuine point of order. This is the third time that the Member has ignored your ruling as to whether what she is saying is relevant to the debate. Are you going to put her out for five days, or are you going to impose some other sanction on her so that she comes back into line?

Mr Speaker: Order. This goes for all Members: the Chair will decide what is appropriate and what is not in any debate. Let us please move on. That goes for all Members from all sides of the House.

Ms Lo: Mr Speaker, thank you for your guidance.

It is beyond my comprehension that Mr Wells and Mr Givan, also from the DUP, were allowed to interrogate a sex-worker representative during a Justice Committee — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I really must warn the Member now — *[Interruption.]* Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. This goes for all sides of the House. A number of Members from all sides of the House will make their contribution later, so this ruling goes for all sides. We have some Members who think that rules are for them and them alone. They are for all Members. This is a final warning to the Member: she needs to get back to the report.

Mr Givan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Member named me and Jim Wells about an incident to do with the Justice Committee. The Member is fully aware that the Commissioner for Standards investigated and indeed exonerated Mr Wells and me, but she abused her position to pursue us on that Committee. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Even points of order and interventions should be on the motion before the House. I ask the Member to continue.

Ms Lo: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I certainly respect your authority on the matter.

Now is a sensitive time, as we try to heal from our past and come to terms with a changing and more diverse society. Tensions are undeniably heightened. Now is the time for strong leadership, not for pettiness. Now is the time for uncompromising respect, not just for the rule of law, but for each other.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I respect the efforts that you are making to try to get order in the House for this debate. I obviously oppose the motion.

When you look at and listen to the demeanour and attitudes of the Members opposite, you see that this is a farce, this is a charade, a pantomime. The laughs, the faces, the guffaws and the interventions show that, not only do the Members know that it is a farce, but they are demonstrating that it is. I am tempted to say that, rather than Mr Kelly offering any notion of apology, he is a bit confused, as he is more used to the back of a Land Rover than the front of one and much more experienced in that regard.

On the seriousness of this business, the way in which the matter has been taken to the House by the Committee is nothing short of a disgrace. If you look at the facts found during the inquiry, Mr Kelly has been, in my view, almost entirely exonerated. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Maskey: In his earlier contribution, Mr Maginness made very clear the scenario on the day in question and the environment in which he, Carál Ní Chuilín, Gerry Kelly and many others including the residents' association and the local clergy were in. Those people were working very hard and in a very determined way to maintain order in that area against a very negative backdrop.

We know that, unfortunately and tragically, so to speak, that particular area of Belfast has now become one of the more dangerous flashpoints and has seen a lot of public disorder. A lot of people have ended up in court, a lot of people have ended up being charged, convicted and fined and have had other, serious custodial sentences implemented. If I recall correctly, none of the Members

opposite, many of whom have been involved in those activities, have ever seen the inside of a court, and I have to say that there remains a big question mark over the consistency.

It is all very well for Members opposite doing what they are doing here, which is trying to rabble-rouse or to showboat — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Maskey: I think that I touched a raw nerve there, Mr Speaker. No, I will not give way, because the Member will have ample opportunity to speak.

The fact of the matter is that the environment that Mr Alban Maginness referred to earlier on was created, for the most part, by Members opposite. Some of the Members opposite who were involved in rabble-rousing, who are trying to do the same thing here today, who brought people out on to the streets, who brought people out into protest scenarios and activities and parades —

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, I say to the Member that, as far as possible, he should come back to the report. Let us not discuss any other issue that may have happened now or may do in the future. Let us get back and deal with the recommendations in the report that are before us this afternoon.

Mr Maskey: Thank you for your direction, a Cheann Comhairle. I respect that entirely.

I just wanted to make the point that the environment in which Mr Kelly found himself on that particular occasion was a very negative and polluted one because of the political environment on the ground at the time and that has already been testified to.

Mr McNarry: Will the Member give way?

Mr Maskey: No, I am sorry. I have already refused to give way, so I want to be impartial in that.

For me, when you read the report, the facts found and established were that, very shortly after the vehicle stopped, Mr Kelly engaged in a robust way with a senior police officer present.

During that exchange, Mr Kelly asserted that his actions had been an attempt to calm things down, and the officer accepted that as being correct.

1.00 pm

So, at no time did Mr Kelly decide to go out that day — I think Cathal Boylan made this point — and create trouble. In fact, his only and exclusive intention on that day, as it was before and has been since that day, was to maintain calm to the best of his ability. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, order.

Mr Maskey: Most objective observers, including the police officers involved, have recognised that the activities of Mr Kelly brought calm to the situation, rather than inflaming the situation and making it worse than it had been. I make the point that Mr Kelly has consistently continued to maintain calm in that area against a very difficult background, with Members on the opposite side of the House — I make the point again — continuing to

cause problems in that area, which people, including Mr Maginness, Carál Ní Chuilín, Gerry Kelly and many others, have to try to pick up the pieces from.

As far as I am concerned, the Committee has taken a partisan and unfair decision. It is not acceptable to us as a party, which is why we wanted to trigger the petition of concern and we are pleased to have got support for that. Mr Kelly was at all times trying to maintain calm. The Committee has abused its position in trying to impose an arbitrary five-day sanction on the Member.

Mr I McCrea: I think it is about time we got back to what we are here to debate. There are some facts that some Members are overlooking. The fact is that we are here today to debate a Committee on Standards and Privileges decision following a report and investigation by the commissioner in respect of the actions of Mr Kelly. That is something that no one in the House can try to change, as it is a fact. It is also a fact that Gerry Kelly, following the event where he took a spin on the front of a Land Rover, accepted an informed warning on 21 June. That is another fact. It is also a fact that, in speaking to the commissioner, he accepted that the informed warning was an admission of breaking the law. That is another fact.

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr I McCrea: I will.

Lord Morrow: Does the Member agree with me that a powerful message is being sent out here today by both Sinn Féin and the SDLP that criminality is OK on occasions?

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added on to his time.

Mr I McCrea: Thank you, and I thank my colleague for raising that point. I think that does unfortunately set a precedent for Members who break the law while serving in their duty as an MLA. That is a debate we are having in another part, but we will not stray into that. In essence, that is one of the issues that we have difficulties with. I have to say that I am disappointed in the members of the SDLP who have signed the petition of concern because that is exactly what they are accepting. They are saying, "It is OK to break the law; we'll cover you. If it's Sinn Féin, we'll cover you. We'll sign the petition of concern and give you the cover so that no sanctions will be held on you."

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I take on board what he has just said, but can we really be surprised? The SDLP has aligned itself with Sinn Féin in refusing to have the National Crime Agency fully extended to Northern Ireland to deal with crime and criminality.

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, let us not go down a road that we are not debating this afternoon. Let us get back to the motion.

Mr I McCrea: I would certainly agree, but I will try to stay in the sense of the debate. It certainly will not be lost on anyone who is watching or listening to this debate, or, indeed, reading it in the press tomorrow, that the SDLP is supporting those who break the law. I think that is a shameful position.

Cathal Boylan tried to use the excuse that what we did previously in respect of petitions of concern on other Members is the reason why they did it in this case.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr I McCrea: I have given way, and I want to just make a couple of other points. I will come back to you.

Mr Boylan is correct. He did raise the issue that that this was a technical breach with the commissioner. However, the commissioner, given the discussions he had with Mr Kelly, accepted that there was an admission that an informed warning was a breach of the law. I cannot see how we can look at it in any other way in today's debate. The facts are that Mr Kelly broke the law and we are here today based on a decision of the Committee to sanction a Member. If the Assembly cannot see its way to sanctioning a Member who has admitted breaking the law, I am not sure of the point in having the Committee in the first place. I will give way to Mr Clarke.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for giving way; I think he went on to qualify his point. The admission of guilt is key. Whilst Sinn Féin Members tried to draw parallels with others who have been before the Committee, the fact is that, in this case, an illegal act was admitted by the Member whose party is trying to block the sanction.

Mr I McCrea: That is the entirety of what we are here to debate today. I have said it in Committee before and I will say it again: if something is right, I will vote yes, and I will vote no if it is not. As the Chair said, not one Committee member denied that there was a breach of the code of conduct. So, we have to accept —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr I McCrea: With respect, I heard enough from you earlier. I do not think that you made anything other than a pathetic attempt to try to encourage this side of the House to understand your point.

It is an absolute disgrace that the House will not sanction a Member for breaking the law. I think that we are sending out a very serious negative message to Northern Ireland. People have made their decisions already on the good and bad of the House, but I think that they will be disgusted today.

Mr Craig: I am one of those who put in an official complaint in the first place. Unfortunately, my party colleague has got it right: this is a day that will go down in infamy because this is a day when it has been made clear to the Assembly that any Member can breach the law without consequence. That is very telling.

Have a look at the history of all this: Gerry Kelly MLA, Policing Board member and former Minister of the Crown, broke the law while acting, as it was proved, as a Member of the House. That behaviour is the zenith of hypocrisy. As an MLA, you sit here and allegedly write the law in the first place. You also sit as a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and allegedly scrutinise those who implement the laws that are passed in the House. You are Sinn Féin's representative for policing and justice, telling others to obey the law, yet, by your actions, you have breached that law. If you ever had any credibility as a representative of the House, it is now down the drain. Your disregard for the law in this situation encouraged others and will encourage others, unfortunately, to impede the police and break the law. That, in itself, is deeply regrettable.

There were other —

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Craig: I will.

Mr Clarke: Given that you and the Member we are discussing today are members of the Policing Board, is it not also regrettable that, if someone follows the line of actions that Mr Kelly has followed, they may see the rigours of the law falling hard on them, yet Mr Kelly seems to have gotten off with the light-glove touch with the sanction and the informed warning?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Craig: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I accept that intervention. What is happening in the House today contrasts very poorly with a young loyalist who stood on top of a Land Rover and ended up getting a three-month sentence from the court. What is going on here today with the pan-nationalist front is an absolute disgrace, and it is sending out the wrong message.

I ask a very serious question, because Mr Kelly was not the only public representative at the scene on the day. Mr Alban Maginness tried to explain away the actions of Mr Kelly to the House. I will ask him this very simple question: Alban, why did you not jump on the bonnet of that same Land Rover and try to impede its progress? Is the simple truth that you knew from day one that that was illegal?

Mr Speaker: Let us have remarks through the Chair.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Craig: The Member will give way.

Mr A Maginness: Let me explain the circumstances. Mr Kelly was at the side of the vehicle. He then approached the front of the vehicle when it was starting to move off. In those circumstances, as the vehicle was building up speed, he had to hold on to the grille; otherwise, he would have been crushed and seriously injured. There is absolutely no doubt about that in my mind. That is an entirely different circumstance from mine, in which I was standing at the side of the vehicle and attempting, with others, to communicate with the police officers inside. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Craig: Again, I have heard nothing that tells me why Mr Maginness did not impede the movement of the vehicle. I think that that is because it is very simple. With your legal background, you knew that it was illegal to do so.

The other question that arises is this: was the individual who was arrested actually in that vehicle? We all know from the facts that have since come out that the answer to that is no, so why was that vehicle being impeded in the first place?

The commissioner decided, and the Committee agreed, that there was significant evidence to say that Mr Kelly broke the leadership principle of the House. When Members try to make the argument that there is no real evidence, that the report does not really tell you what happened and that there was not really a breach of the code, it reminds me of Sinn Féin's attempts to rewrite the history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Now it is trying to rewrite this report, and I am not going into any other outside issue. It is trying to rewrite the report. It cannot be done. It is there in black and white. It is very clear. The commissioner was very clear that this was a clear breach of the code of conduct for Members. When others are

using their petition of concern to bring down the report and stop the sanctions in it, they are sending out a message to the public that it is OK for a Member to break the law and breach the codes of the House, because no sanctions will be applied. What a message. Is it any wonder that we have issues and problems on our streets in this country?

Mr McCartney: Ba mhaith liom labhairt in éadan an rúin seo. I will be speaking against the motion.

Two things strike me about most of the contributions made to date, particularly those from the unionist Benches. It is striking how many Members who have contributed have not, in my opinion, read the report but are coming at the issue from a purely political and partisan view. Their mind is made up, and they are coming in to turn what Alex Maskey has already described as a farce into a farce in reality.

The second thing that strikes me is that none of them is taking any account of people who were there on the day. Alban Maginness, when he spoke, gave an account. If people read the report, they will see that the report states very clearly that Gerry Kelly did exercise leadership at Carrick Hill on the day in question. It states:

"I do not doubt that Mr Kelly's intention when attending at Carrick Hill was to diffuse [sic] a tense situation and to calm things down."

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: Yes, I will.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member acknowledge that Douglas Bain, in his report, goes on to state:

"Overall his actions reflect that intention but his obstruction of the police had the opposite effect albeit only for a short period."

His actions had the opposite effect, and the situation could have deteriorated significantly and endangered the lives of police officers.

1.15 pm

Mr McCartney: And then, let the Member say, "But it didn't". It did not deteriorate. As a matter of fact, Alban Maginness — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us have debate through the Chair. Order.

Mr McCartney: Through the Chair, as Alban Maginness, who was on the ground, pointed out, it did not deteriorate, and it did not deteriorate, in my opinion, because of the type of leadership that Gerry Kelly has shown. I listened to —

A Member: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: No, I gave way once, and my time is short enough. I listened on a number of occasions to television interviews, and I heard members at Committees that I attended saying that the police have phoned them to come to the site of illegal roadblocks, and they said that they have stood on the road to try to defuse the situation. In anybody's book, that is breaking the law, but for a lot of people, perhaps at the right time, it is the right thing to do. I think that the people who have come in here today have totally and absolutely ignored that.

A number of months ago, in relation to the debate around Jim Wells, I said that we were turning the Committee into a farce. There was a petition of concern, Jim Wells was deemed guilty of being intimidating and using abusive language, and the DUP put in a petition of concern. I will ask the Ulster Unionists what way they voted on that day. In many ways, we have the outworking of that today, which is that we are not coming to these Committees with the proper intention. People are coming with a made-up position, and they are trying to maximise political gain, because nobody who spoke today, including the Chair, through you, a Cheann Comhairle, has explained why they wanted it to be five days. No explanation has been given to the rest of us as to how the Committee decided that it would be five days. I will give way to the Chair, if the Chair wants to give us an explanation as to why your Committee decided that it would be five days.

Mr Ross: It is very simple. The Committee came to the decision that five days would be a proportionate response to the breach of the code of conduct in the same way that it comes to determinations on every issue that comes before it, which is that it gives a proportionate response, including, I should add, when members of his own party are judged to have been involved in bad behaviour and complaints have been received and the Committee decides that it was not a breach of the code of conduct. That is how we do all business in the Committee.

Mr McCartney: I do not see why, in the case of Jim Wells, you voted against a particular sanction, but in this case —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr McCartney: — you decided that you were going to give five days. I think that you have to try to provide an explanation. In my opinion, the explanation is very, very simple: it is political partisanship. The DUP saw an opportunity to get at Gerry Kelly because of the leadership that he was showing. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr McCartney: I have heard people come to the House and defend people for doing a jig outside a Catholic church, and the DUP Benches were not only silent, but, that day, they were rabble-rousing and cheerleaders.

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, let us not stray outside the motion before us this afternoon. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let us get back to the motion.

Mr McCartney: Therefore, our use of the petition of concern is to ensure that we will not allow people to be partisan in their approach. When the report set the context very clearly, and when you listen to people like Alban Maginness, who was there on the ground, you get some sense of the environment in which this took place, and it is for that reason that we put in the petition of concern.

A Cheann Comhairle, today is my first opportunity to offer my apologies — not for any actions of Gerry Kelly — for not being in my place when the Minister for Employment and Learning was answering questions.

Mr Eastwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do not envy you today. This is one of those debates where the Back-Benchers seem to be lined out to try to continue whatever debates were going on outside the House over the last number of months. We have to recognise the context of all this. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Eastwood: We have to recognise the context of this, Mr Speaker, if they would maybe give me a chance to speak. We are facing into another very long and hot summer. In the constituency — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Eastwood: The constituency where this event took place will be at the forefront of all that, and it is incumbent on all of us — every single one of us — to try to ensure that tensions are calmed and that the heat is taken out of this summer.

Just for the record, because I know that there will be a number of hecklers, I am the SDLP member on the Committee for Standards and Privileges. I left the meeting, but not because I was “spineless”, as Mr Allister said. If I were spineless, I would not be standing here talking right now. People know that I have no problem taking difficult positions. I had to leave the meeting. There was a very good reason for that, and it was unavoidable.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: No, I will not.

I also have no problem giving way in most debates, but I think that we have a duty to try to keep this as calm as possible. I know — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Eastwood: I know that it is your day out or whatever, you are allowed off the leash, and it is “Let the DUP Back-Benchers get their heckles up” day. That is fine, but our bigger responsibility is to what is going on outside the House. We have to do our best to ensure that we can calm tensions, particularly in the constituency that we are speaking about, because lives are at stake, and we have had far too much of this stuff in the last couple of years. The world looks at the North of Ireland in a very different way than it did a couple of years ago, when it thought that we had moved on. We have, at times, really been a bit of an embarrassment. We, as leaders in here, need to do everything that we can to calm those types of situations.

Mr Maginness is a political opponent of Mr Kelly. They look for the same votes in that constituency. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Eastwood: They will fight each other in an election in two years’ time. I do not see what benefit Mr Maginness would get from coming here to support Mr Kelly if he did not think that it was the right thing to do. I know Mr Maginness very well. He is a very honourable person. He has come and given us — none of us was there — his account of the situation. I have been in situations like that before, and it is not easy. People are there trying their best to calm the situation. Mr Kelly, and it has been recognised, came to that situation to try to prevent a riot. Sometimes, that is a difficult role, but people need to understand that people do that work every single day — people on the opposite side of the House, on this side of the House and even people whom I am a political opponent of. Sometimes, you have to be big enough to recognise when people are doing that kind of work.

Our difficulty with the motion is the proportionality element. When Mr Wells was found to be in breach of the code —

it is important to put it on the record because I spoke in that debate as well — he was offered the opportunity to apologise. He did not take up that opportunity. Why was the same opportunity not afforded to Mr Kelly? That is our difficulty. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Eastwood: That is our difficulty. *[Interruption.]* I know that you all want to — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I have warned the Member on at least four occasions. You might smile about it — *[Interruption.]* Order. You might smile about it, but a good politician, a professional politician, sometimes has to listen to a contribution that is different from theirs. That is the style of a good, professional politician. Order. I know that the Member may not have much respect for the Chair. That is up to him and his conscience, but I warn him to allow the Member to continue.

Mr Eastwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There are certain people in the House who never want to listen to an opposing opinion, and I do not think that that does this place any service at all. It would be far better if we could have this debate in the way that most debates are had in the Standards and Privileges Committee, which is normally a very good Committee in terms of people working together.

Let me just end by saying this: we have a responsibility, and I have said it already, to know what is going on outside the Chamber and on streets not that far from here. We have a responsibility to try to calm tensions, to ease tensions and to ensure that we can have as peaceful a summer as possible. If we do not take those responsibilities seriously, God help us all. We need to start taking them seriously, and maybe people will put their name on the list and get up and speak rather than speaking from a sedentary position.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I am pleased to be here. I feel like thanking the DUP for the numbers in which they have turned out to hear the debate. They do not normally come out in such numbers.

Although this is about a single incident, I think that it is worth putting a bit of context on this, so I hope that the Speaker will give me a small amount of latitude. On the day, there were a number of parades going up past St Patrick’s chapel on Carrick Hill. They had passed up and down a number of times. There were multiple breaches. The PSNI did not act. That is not a criticism of the PSNI. We have discussed this many times with them and their argument, which to a great extent I accept, is that the situation could get worse if they moved straight in on a parade where there are multiple breaches, and then we are in a very difficult situation, but with the caveat that action is taken later.

When the parades had passed, I had an appointment in Ardoyne at a sporting event. I discussed with a few people there that it looked as if the parades had passed reasonably peacefully, and I went on up to the event. Then, of course, I got a call saying that things had gone “belly up”, I think was the term, and I came back down. When I arrived, things had started to calm down again. There had obviously been an incident on the far side of Carrick Hill, in North Street around the supporters who were going in that direction. There was a huge line of police and Land Rovers

at that end of Carrick Hill and, indeed, at the other end of the street at upper Library Street. I would say that there were between 30 and 40 Land Rovers, but things had started to calm down, and we had our discussions.

I would like to thank my colleague Alban Maginness, who was there. It is important to say this: Alban Maginness was there on the ground — nobody else from here. In fact, the four complaints that were put in were done off the TV. I found it a bit extraordinary, or at least interesting, that none of the MLAs from North Belfast put in a complaint. I can tell you that none of the residents put in a complaint. The two others, outside of the political reps, who put in complaints live nowhere near north Belfast.

However, I was told that there had been an arrest. I found it extraordinary, since things were calming back down, that that was the thing to do. I know now that the police officer in charge — who was not on the ground, by the way — gave an order for five jeeps to come in and arrest this young man, completely contradicting the attitude towards the multiple breaches that were occurring and the violence at the other end on North Street.

I do not know — I did not know at the time, at least — anything about the arrest. I had no opinion on the arrest. I went over simply because a mother came to me in a distressed state and wanted to know what was happening to her child, as she saw it — a teenager.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr G Kelly: No, I will not.

Mr Clarke: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr G Kelly: I went over and spoke to the passenger of the Land Rover in which, I believed, the young man was. In fairness to the passenger, a police officer, he spoke to me very politely. He said, "I did not realise the mother was there. Look, I will just pull over there." A small crowd had gathered around the jeep. I accepted his word. It turned out that he was telling lies, but he was very plausible at the time. I accepted his word and said to the ones around the Land Rover, "Look, move away. We are going to get this sorted out."

All I was interested in was giving this mother some notion of where her son was being taken and the charges. The jeep drove off after that. Was I annoyed? Yes, I was annoyed. I am an elected representative. I was there trying to calm the situation. I had been given an assurance by a police officer, and he had broken that assurance and then a number of Land Rovers after that.

I hear all the notions from over there, and I will not go through them all, but I noticed that Sandra Overend, who, I believe, was on her way out of the country at an airport and was ordered back to make sure that she put the case for sanction at this Committee, said that I had taken hold of the grille. Jonathan Craig talked about jumping on the jeep, and a number of other people used that phrase. That is not what happened. I tried to stop another Land Rover to get attention, and believe me it was the only way to get attention at the time. The jeep moved forward, and I grabbed onto the grille, because if I had not, I would have been under the jeep.

It is as straightforward and simple as that. You saw the videos, so look at them again. If I had not done that, I

would have been under the jeep. I grabbed onto the Land Rover and it drove off. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr G Kelly: That is the incident. Those are the facts of the matter.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr G Kelly: No, I will not, especially not to you.

Mr Allister: A compliment.

Mr G Kelly: I always like to give you compliments, Jim.

So, a judgement was made on that day that I think was wrong.

1.30 pm

When I arrived, and it is worth saying this again, Alban Maginness, people from a number of the residents' groups and Carál Ní Chuilín had calmed the situation right down. The action that triggered all of this was the police action. *[Interruption.]* Aye. The police on the ground — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Clarke: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, you have given the Member some latitude, but we are now discussing the attitudes and the actions of the police. This sounds like the new book by Gerry Kelly and that this is the first chapter of his biography. Maybe we could get down to what we are supposed to be speaking about: the report by the Committee.

Mr Speaker: Order, order. The sanction is against the Member who is now speaking. The Member has every right to set the background to the event. *[Interruption.]* Order. That is exactly what he is doing. I assure the Member that, should Mr Kelly stray from what we are debating this afternoon, I will pull him up on it like I have pulled other Members up. Let us be careful. Allow the Member to make his contribution and set the scene. Order.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle.

The reason that is relevant is that three informed warnings were given out: I accepted one and the police officer who was driving the jeep accepted one, as did the young boy who was arrested. That showed that the police were trying to deal with this in a proportionate way, unlike the DUP and the Ulster Unionist members of the Standards and Privileges Committee.

Did I break the law technically? Yes, I did. That is why I accepted the informed warning. Let me say this to all Members, especially those who are sitting across the way, to deal with these difficult situations you need the flexibility to make decisions on the spot that you, as an elected rep, think will help situation. That is exactly what I was doing —

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr G Kelly: No, I will not give way.

That is exactly what I was doing on the day. I have listened to your heckling all day: I wish you would shut up for a minute. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, order. I remind Members to be careful of the language that they use in the Chamber. Be very careful.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr G Kelly: No. Well — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr G Kelly: As I — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Clarke: — *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Allow the Member to make a contribution. I warn the other Member that I will sanction him should he continue on the road he is going down, because he does not have respect for either the Office of the Speaker or myself in the Chair. That is quite obvious, and it is something that he is going to have to live with and deal with.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat.

In the report, the commissioner talks about the intent on the day. I offer this to anyone who has been in the same situation: they might have made a different decision from the one that I made on that day, but they would have made it because they were there, I hope, trying to calm the situation, as I was.

The situation could have been sorted out in a two-minute conversation if the Land Rover containing the police officer who said he would stop had stopped. The anger was building around the mother of the young fella who was there. Unfortunately, that is not what happened. It is accepted that before and after the incident I was trying to calm the situation, which is what all MLAs should be at.

This is political parties taking their stances. We will make decisions in all sorts of situations. Sometimes they will be right, and sometimes they will be wrong. I will maintain the flexibility in any given situation to make what I think is the proper decision for the people who elect me. Someone said earlier — I think it was Jonathan Craig — that I have lost credibility. We will leave that up to the electorate and see what they say.

Members across the way were involved during the flag protests and the protests around the primary school. If this is the yardstick, they have broken the law so many times that I would not be able to count them.

The difference is that action was decided in this instance, and no action was decided in the other instances. If they are honest with themselves, they will know that that is the case. There is a whiff of political hypocrisy coming from the unionist Benches.

Let me say this, to be very clear: I accepted the informed warning. I know that I technically broke the law. I took legal advice on it and took that step.

Mr Allister: Will you apologise?

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr G Kelly: I maintain that any other MLA — I know it to be true, whether they accept it or not — would, given not necessarily the same but similar circumstances, make their own decision on the day, and nothing that I or anybody else says in this room will make a tot of difference.

Mr Ross: I thank everyone who has participated in the debate today. Before I address some of the specific points, it is important to put some general comments on record. Mr Boylan talked about the politicised nature of the Committee, and Mr McCartney made comments

about the partisan approach. We on the Standards and Privileges Committee deal with some difficult and sensitive matters. Mr Agnew made the comment that the tenor of today's debate was in contrast to how the Committee generally approached things. That is right. It is important, therefore, to put it on record that, in the vast majority of complaints, whether they be against Members from Sinn Féin, the Democratic Unionist Party or any other party, the Committee will come to conclusions in a unanimous way. Indeed, during this mandate, since I have chaired the Committee, there have been only five Divisions from 39 complaints. So, in the vast majority of cases, no matter who the person complained of is, the Committee will come to its conclusions in a unanimous way. However, as I said, some complaints are particularly difficult to deal with, and I think that this has been one of them. We must, as a Committee, address each case in an objective and unbiased manner, relying on the facts identified by the commissioner and testing those against the provisions in the code of conduct. Disagreement is not typical, and it is therefore disappointing when it occurs.

Let us remind ourselves of the purpose of today's debate. The Assembly is not being asked to decide whether Mr Kelly has breached the code of conduct; the Committee has already decided that he has. Whilst some members abstained when the Question was put, no member of the Committee opposed the motion. What we are doing today is debating what sanction should be imposed in the light of the breach of the code that has occurred. The Committee believes that exclusion from proceedings for five days is the most appropriate and proportionate sanction. In coming to that conclusion we have taken a number of factors into consideration. We accept that Mr Kelly attended the scene with good intentions, something that I said in my opening speech and repeat now. He did try to defuse a tense situation, and, before and after his criminal conduct, Mr Kelly did use his influence to calm the situation. We also accept that he acted on the spur of the moment without due regard to the consequences. However, none of that excuses the unlawful obstruction of the police.

Mr Kelly is an experienced leader, yet on that evening he set a very poor example. He broke the law, and that resulted in others striking a police vehicle. The unlawful behaviour of a Member is a serious matter, and, for that reason, the Committee said that Mr Kelly should apologise to the Assembly — it is a shame that he has not done so. Leaving to one side the issue of an apology, the Committee believes that a sanction should be imposed. I should point out that the sanction of exclusion from proceedings is a serious one, as Members have said during the debate. Proceedings of the Assembly are all the matters that are governed by Standing Orders. If the motion had been agreed, Mr Kelly would have been excluded from, for example, speaking in or voting on proceedings in plenary, participating in Committee meetings or even tabling motions or amendments in the Business Office. We do not bring the motion forward lightly. The fact that we do indicates how seriously we take the matter.

Mr McNarry: I thank the Chairman for giving way. Will he perhaps tell us where his Committee now rests with the issue? As someone who was probably in a similar position to Mr Kelly, although I am not going to admit it in this court, I wonder whether the action of Mr Kelly, which we have

been debating all morning, is a precedent for the many young people with convictions, who are probably in jail thinking that they did far less and noting that their sanction was criminality. Is it the ability of the Committee to bring forward at a later stage, in the Chairman's view, whether or not it is a precedent, in that all MLAs can resort to the same action as Mr Kelly and expect nothing to happen to them? That is exactly what will happen today.

Mr Ross: I will address the issue as quickly as I can. There is a danger that the public perception will be that this creates a precedent. We will look at similar circumstances when deciding on sanctions or actions that the Committee will take. Criminal behaviour, as the Member will know, is a matter for the courts and for the PPS and they decide whether to take forward prosecutions on that basis; I will make no more comment on that. However, in terms of how we cope with the behaviour of Members of the House, it does, perhaps, set a dangerous precedent.

I want to respond to some of the comments that were made, because I have only five minutes left. Mr Boylan, Mr McCartney and a number of other Members raised the issue of Mr Wells. I appreciate that we are here to debate the code, but given that it has been raised by so many Members, it is appropriate that we make some comment on it. The issue concerning Mr Wells is not comparable with this one. All cases have to be judged on their merits, but the circumstances, by any measure, are very different. In Mr Wells's case, we were not talking about a breach of criminal law. Of course, during the Committee's deliberations on the incident involving Mr Wells, there was no agreement on whether he had actually breached the code of conduct in the first instance. Therefore, it followed that there would not be agreement on the sanction proposed by some members of the Committee at that stage. So we are not comparing like with like.

Mr Boylan also talked about the political nature of the complaint that was made. Again, I cannot speak for the motivation of people who make complaints to the Commissioner for Standards, not least members of the public. However, it is a red herring, of course, because the complaint that was lodged was upheld. Indeed, the complaint that was made and upheld was not opposed by the Sinn Féin members of the Standards and Privileges Committee, because it was acknowledged by Mr Kelly himself that he broke the law in his actions and, therefore, failed to uphold the law, which is a key part of the code of conduct. It was not in question at all.

It also has to be said that, in terms of the political nature of this complaint, there have been other instances where complaints have come to the Committee on Standards and Privileges, even about the Member whom we are discussing today. Even though the Committee was criticised for not taking action against the Member on that occasion, it came to the balanced view that freedom of speech in that incident should be upheld, and it found that the Member had not breached the code of conduct. It is not a political matter, because, if there were a political motivation on the part of members of the Committee, we would find that, every time a complaint was made against one side or one community or the other, the Member concerned would be found to be in breach of the code of conduct. That does not happen. In the vast majority of cases we find agreement, and in most cases we find that Members have not breached the code of conduct,

irrespective of whether the complaints are politically motivated or not. It is very important to put that on the record.

If there is any political posturing, perhaps that accusation could be levelled at other parties for the actions they have taken today. Mr Alban Maginness spoke about an extremely difficult situation, and, again, nobody disputed that fact. Indeed, in the Committee's report, we acknowledged how difficult the circumstances were at that time and the fact that, in his actions, Mr Kelly was well intentioned and tried to calm the situation, but it does not change the fact that Mr Kelly, as a Member of the House, broke the law and that, therefore, a sanction should follow.

Mr Maginness and others talked about how sanctions should be proportionate. I absolutely agree with that, but it was the SDLP who previously argued that Mr Wells should be suspended for seven days for failing to make an apology to the House. I am not sure that too many members of the public or others watching this debate would compare a failure to make an apology with someone who broke the law. Indeed, we are dealing with a circumstance today where a lesser sanction is being put forward.

I will make the point that I made to Mr Maginness again now, because I thought that a man of his standing would know the procedures of the House. Had he or his party felt so strongly about it, they could have brought an amendment to the House and had it debated, but he chose not to do so. Indeed, in proportionality terms — we have commissioned research from the Assembly's research —

1.45 pm

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ross: I will not give way because I have very little time left.

If we look at other Members, in the House of Commons or Scottish Parliament, who have been suspended for a period, we can judge it against that. If anyone has been suspended for a period of five or seven days, it has been due to a serious breach of the code of conduct. I do not think that anybody could argue that this was not a serious breach of the code of conduct.

I have very little time left, so I will hover over some of the other comments. Mrs Overend talked about how there was no pleasure in tabling the motion. She is right: we do not want to see this kind of behaviour from Assembly Members. She mentioned the fact that some of Mr Kelly's behaviour led to others attacking the police vehicle. That is acknowledged on page 12 of our report. She is right to mention that.

Ms Lo talked about proportionality. I think that I have addressed that. Of course, Ms Lo's colleague, who used to sit on the Committee, wanted to suspend Mr Wells for an indefinite period until an apology came.

Mr McCarthy: It was not going to happen, and you knew it.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Ross: I am not sure that that party is always on the right line with regard to proportionality.

Mr Maskey talked about it being a farce. I do not think that members of the public would think that it was a farce that

the House would debate sanctioning a Member who has broken the law. It is disappointing that he said that. Other Members have gone on similar lines. It is disappointing that there is no agreement on the issue and that a petition of concern has been lodged. It is important that, when a Member of the House breaks the law, we are seen to sanction that Member. That is what the public would expect.

Mr Speaker: That concludes the debate. The vote will be taken as the first item of business tomorrow morning.

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014

Mr Speaker: Order. The next item of business is a motion from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014. 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 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 that 16-22 June 2014 marks Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014; further notes the respective themes of shared future and building a united community; and expresses its support for Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, particularly in relation to their shared aim of facilitating positive encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage greater understanding, overcome hostility and build a shared society.

I am pleased to bring the Committee motion to the House, move it and commend it to Members. Not only does it give the Assembly the opportunity to recognise the real issues facing refugees and asylum seekers in Northern Ireland and give support to some of the most vulnerable people in our society, it provides us with an opportunity to recognise the work being done by many community and voluntary organisations across Northern Ireland, with the aim of encouraging better understanding between our various communities.

The theme for Community Relations Week 2014 is "Building a United Community", while Refugee Week focuses on "Different Pasts, Shared Future". Indeed, it is fitting that Community Relations Week and Refugee Week coincide in 2014, providing us with a timely reminder that, when we speak of uniting communities, we must look beyond the two traditional communities in our society.

Before moving on, I would like to pay thanks, on behalf of the Committee, to the organisations that have helped to raise the issues and challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees here. They include the Law Centre, the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS) and Red Cross Northern Ireland. May I also record thanks to the Assembly's Research and Information Service for the very useful briefing papers that Committee members received at our last meeting on Wednesday?

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, at the end of 2012, there were 15.4 million refugees worldwide or eight and a half times the population of Northern Ireland. Of those 15.4 million, 46% — nearly half — were under 18 years of age. During that year alone, an average of 23,000 persons per day were forced to leave their home and seek protection from conflict and persecution. Mr Speaker, I think you will agree that these are awesome statistics that only highlight the vulnerability of refugees and the need to support them as they flee persecution.

Indeed, we have to look no further than the current events in northern Iraq to appreciate the ongoing nature of that fundamental problem.

Closer to home, the figures are much smaller but no less significant. In fact, a key issue with them is the lack of disaggregated data for Northern Ireland, which makes it difficult not only to assess accurately the number of refugees here but to target resources and services specifically to where they are most needed.

The most recent statistics indicate that, in 2012, there were 240 applications for asylum in Northern Ireland. That was less than 1% of the total UK applications, which stood at 28,000. Of the 240 applications, 80 were successful.

Members, as you aware, asylum and immigration are excepted matters. However, the issue is very much on our doorstep. The Home Office operates an immigration office in Belfast and an immigration removal centre in Larne, which has been operational since 2011 and while the issue of asylum is dealt with by the UK Government, our devolved Departments have responsibility for providing services such as healthcare and education.

Indeed, the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has always taken seriously its responsibility to deal with those issues. In the previous mandate, following representations from the public, the Committee visited the Dungavel House immigration removal centre in Scotland. The Committee also visited the UK Border Agency office at Drumkeen House in Belfast and was taken through the process of how an asylum seeker can seek refugee status.

Stakeholders report that those seeking asylum face complications with the process for claiming asylum; access to healthcare for unsuccessful applicants for asylum; and the treatment and safety of child asylum seekers. Once an asylum application has been successful, there can also be problems with the integration of refugees into society here.

That brings me on to the long-awaited racial equality strategy. It is now nearly two weeks since junior Minister McCann advised the House that the consultation on the draft document would be published in the “next few days”. On 8 May, the Committee wrote to the Department requesting an update on the racial equality strategy and to enquire whether the Department was considering a refugee integration strategy. The Department responded on 28 May to advise that officials were finalising the racial equality strategy for submission to Ministers and that the issue of whether a refugee integration strategy is required is to be addressed in the consultation document itself.

Clearly, the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees — some of the most vulnerable people to arrive on our shores — cannot and should not be ignored.

Refugee Week is a time not only to highlight issues and challenges but to celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout Northern Ireland and, indeed, the whole of the United Kingdom. That can be done through a programme of arts, cultural and educational events. I commend the Different Pasts, Shared Future programme to the House and encourage as many Members as possible to attend events celebrating the skills and abilities of people who have chosen to come to Northern Ireland to make their life better and to make our lives more diverse and enriched.

Let me also say a few words about Community Relations Week, which, for the first time, includes events across all 26 of the outgoing council areas.

In the foreword to the 2014 Community Relations Week booklet, the chief executive of the Community Relations Council (CRC) writes:

“Building a united community is as urgent now as it was when the peace agreement was signed in 1998. We have plenty of examples of our capacity to slip back into animosity and old ways of thinking. There is no room for complacency.”

That echoes the words of the Department, which stated in ‘Together: Building a United Community’ (T:BUC):

“we recognise that there is no room for complacency, and we must all face up to the difficult issues that stand in the way of further progress.”

The Committee agrees that building community relations and uniting communities is a priority for the Executive, for the House and for wider civic society to create the ability to celebrate diversity and promote good relations.

The Committee is committed to monitoring and scrutinising developments in and the progress of Together: Building a United Community. Only last week, members of the Committee were briefed on the outcome of the consultation on the draft good relations indicators, which are to be used to monitor progress on the T:BUC strategy. I hope that the Department will take on board not only the views expressed by Members during the meeting but those of stakeholders when the indicators are finalised over the coming weeks.

Some of the challenges faced in building a united community are more long term. That is reflected in Together: Building a United Community, particularly in regard to the target to remove all interface barriers. The Committee recognises the need for engagement with local communities and young people in tackling some of those deep-seated issues. In January, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into united communities, and members will again consider that in more detail before the summer recess.

Community Relations Week is promoted and driven by the Community Relations Council, and the Committee is aware of proposals to bring together the work of the CRC and the Equality Commission through the creation of a new equality and good relations commission. I understand that progress on developing the consultation for the proposed legislation is well under way, and the Committee looks forward to its future scrutiny role in that regard. I trust that initiatives such as Community Relations Week will not be lost through the creation of the new structures.

Community Relations Week is about highlighting the great work that goes on all year round in uniting communities, often quietly, in the background, without fanfare or fuss. Mr Speaker, I was delighted to hear that you were presented with an award recognising civic leadership in the area of good relations at the launch of Community Relations Week last Tuesday. We all have our part to play. Indeed, I, along with the Deputy Chair and other colleagues from this House, will be playing our part at the World United football tournament to be held near this House later this week. You nod in amazement, Mr Speaker. It is a comeback after some 35 years.

I commend the motion to the House and trust that the activities promoted through Community Relations Week

and Refugee Week will meet their aim of facilitating encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage understanding, overcome hostility and build a truly shared future.

Mr Moutray: I rise as a member of the OFMDFM Committee to support the motion before us today. It is very apt, given that today sees the start of both these weeks of awareness raising around the work that has been done to date and the much work that still remains to ensure a truly shared society.

The need to continue to work towards positive relations with our neighbours cannot be underestimated. As someone who represents a constituency that has suffered at the hands of division and strife, I remain committed to working positively to try to foster better and closer relations between people no matter what their race, religion, creed or skin colour.

I commend the outgoing 26 councils, which are embracing Community Relations Week. I have looked across the areas to see a range of events of all types and initiatives that will challenge people's perceptions and endeavour to create and build upon positive relations. Community Relations Week will undoubtedly bring about a focus and a concerted effort, particularly when relationships are so difficult as at present.

I know that the Community Relations Council has been to the fore this week, and I hope that the events will go some way to meeting its objective of promoting a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. Refugee Week, however, is a wider based UK programme of arts, cultural and educational events and activities that mark the contribution of refugees to the UK and promote better understanding of why people seek sanctuary.

This week provides a platform for images of refugees to be promoted in order to further work towards a better shared future. There remains a lot of hostility and negativity around the asylum issue. Perhaps this week of awareness raising will aid to stem that negativity.

When we look at the report, we see that applications for asylum seekers remain relatively low in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom, with it being less than 1% of the UK total. Our Executive Departments have a responsibility to refugees on issues such as health, education and social security. I know that those issues are not taken lightly. Undoubtedly, the House knows that there is a need for creating an understanding of different cultures. There needs to be greater respect and consideration given to such. I believe that these awareness-raising weeks provide a specific time for events and information sharing that will help to foster and create greater consideration for others by all of our constituents and help to build a united and shared future.

Mr Speaker: As Question Time begins at 2:00 pm, I suggest that Members take their ease until then. The debate will continue after Question Time, and the next Member to speak will be Bronwyn McGahan.

The debate stood suspended.

2.00 pm

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

Oral Answers to Questions

Regional Development

Traffic-calming Measures

1. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many locations in the eastern division have been assessed for traffic-calming measures by Roads Service since May 2011. (AQO 6338/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): From 1 May 2011 to 31 March this year, 216 locations in the eastern divisional area were assessed for the provision of traffic-calming measures. In the same period, my Department invested approximately £3 million in traffic-calming measures throughout Northern Ireland, including approximately £1 million in the eastern division.

This is, perhaps, an opportune time to advise Members that the operational boundaries of Transport NI changed on 1 April 2014 to reflect the new council boundaries, which are due to take effect in April 2015: for example, Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn council areas remain in the eastern division operational area, whereas Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey borough council areas are now part of the northern division operational area. North Down Borough Council area is now included in the new southern division operational area.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for his answer. In the areas that have been assessed, what percentage of schemes were progressed? What is the Minister doing to allocate additional resources to the clearly overstretched traffic-calming programme? I am sure that we have all had a similar response, which is that whilst a traffic-calming scheme would be beneficial, other schemes in the area are deemed to be of greater priority.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for her supplementary, and I agree that we are very much oversubscribed in terms of traffic-calming requests. Those requests are very fairly and expertly assessed by my officials, and we will continue to do that. On additional funding, my Department has submitted bids totalling £5.2 million for local transport and safety measures, which include traffic calming, as part of the June 2014 monitoring round. Obviously, we hope that that bid will be met.

Mr Kinahan: I, too, was going to ask a question on the funding, but it seems that we have a difference of opinion on whether traffic calming works. Many people are against it. There are studies of it, and I wonder whether the Minister can clarify what is thought of traffic calming, starting with road bumps, as a preferred way forward.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. Indeed there are differing opinions on the impact of traffic-calming measures. However, I can confirm that they are still very much sought after by local communities concerned about dangers in particular housing areas. All that has to be borne in mind. That is

why careful consideration is given to all applications and every assessment made.

Mr Wilson: Can the Minister confirm that his Department has no plans to implement the mad policy of traffic calming in town centres by imposing blanket 20 miles an hour speed restrictions, as have been requested by some members of the Green Party and other fringe parties?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. He seems to be intent on pursuing his issues with the leader of the Green Party, even though, I understand, he is a former pupil of his. The issue of the implementation of 20 miles per hour schemes is being carefully looked at. We are bringing forward pilot schemes to better inform our view on that. I think that that is a sensible approach, and preferable to an approach of implementing widespread changes that people and communities are, perhaps, not prepared for.

Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme

2. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timescale for the Bangor sewerage infrastructure improvement scheme. (AQO 6339/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The £10 million capital investment in the sewerage infrastructure in Bangor is split into six phases. Phases one and two, located at Luke's Point and Bangor marina, are presently under construction and expected to be completed towards the end of June 2014. Phase three, which includes a major wastewater pumping station replacement planned within the grounds of Castle Park and an additional pumping station planned for within the grounds of Clandeboye Primary School, is targeted to start in autumn 2014 for 12-month duration. That timescale is subject to obtaining necessary statutory approvals, including archaeological requirements within Castle Park and the grounds of Bangor Abbey. Phases 4 to 6 of the investment, which are smaller in scale, are located in the areas of Brompton, Strickland's, Carnalea and Bangor west and are programmed for completion within Northern Ireland Water's (NIW) PC15 capital works programme covering the period 2015 to 2021.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for his full response. What measures have been put in place to control disruption during this period, particularly when other works are ongoing at this time?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question and, indeed, for his interest in the issue as a local Member for North Down. The Member will appreciate and, I think, support the belief that the scheme will improve and provide important infrastructure for homes and businesses in the area. Of course, as is the case with any major scheme, there will be some disruption. However, the majority of the planned work throughout the town will not take place on the public road; therefore, disruption to traffic will be limited and kept to a minimum. NIW has been asked to take steps to mitigate any disruption. It is liaising with statutory agencies, including DSD and DRD, and North Down Borough Council, the chamber of commerce and traders, to ensure that good communication and healthy cooperation is the order of the day.

Mr Dunne: Following on from my colleague's question, can the Minister give us an assurance that DRD will work

with other contractors on the sewerage scheme, as it progresses, primarily contractors engaged through DSD carrying out the public realm work? Will they do all that they can to minimise disruption during this busy summer period when we have so many tourists coming to an attractive place like Bangor in north Down?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I am aware of public comment in an article in a local newspaper claiming that NIW was delaying the public realm works. Due to the necessity of routing the major pipework along Abbey Street in Bangor, to avoid risk of damaging elements of Malachy's Wall — part of the larger medieval Bangor Abbey site and, itself, a site of international Christian heritage significance — the council and the DSD public realm contractor have reprogrammed a section of work along Abbey Street to allow NIW to lay its sewers before the public realm work proceeds in that short section.

It is a reprogramme of the public work in a very short section of the overall scope, and it will not delay the overall programme. My answer indicates the level of cooperation between Departments and agencies.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for agreeing to take a question from the leader of a fringe party. I am delighted that I was elected and that I have the opportunity to ask one. How are residents who may be affected by the works being informed of the likely disruption?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. Of course, he has nothing to be modest about. He should not seek to hide his light under a bushel, and nor does he. *[Laughter.]* It is important that we liaise with all those impacted. NI Water liaises with the council, other public representatives and agencies, and, not least, the chamber of commerce and residents to keep them informed of progress and likely scenarios that may impact on their ability to move freely. All that is taken on board, and that will continue to be the case.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call you, Mr McKinney, I draw your attention to the fact that this is a constituency-specific question, if that makes any difference to what you intended to say.

Mr McKinney: I will give it a try, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Clearly, improvement schemes like that in Bangor are welcome, but what steps is the Minister taking to avoid future heavy fines as a result of our sewerage system falling beneath European standards?

Mr Kennedy: That is quite a timely question in relation to this particular project. We want to ensure that we comply with European regulations for our drinking water in that area and that we do not incur infractions. NI Water plays its part in helping to meet the more stringent standards laid out in the revised European bathing water directive. Those standards are in place, and we have to be aware of them. The scheme will reduce maintenance costs, improve the appearance of the existing infrastructure in Bangor and reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding during periods of heavy rainfall.

Car Parks: Council Control

3. **Mr Byrne** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his proposals for the transfer of car parks to local councils. (AQO 6340/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The decision to transfer off-street parking functions from central government to the new councils has been agreed by the Executive as part of local government reform. In order to implement that part of the Executive's proposals under the review of public administration, my Department proposes to issue an Off-street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill for consultation soon. It is scheduled to be introduced to the Assembly in September. The Bill would transfer to district councils the powers my Department has in relation to the provision, operation and management of off-street parking places under the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. The Bill would also create certain decriminalised powers of enforcement to enable councils to issue penalty-charge notices where parking contraventions occur in those car parks. Those powers would broadly reflect those available to my Department under the Traffic Management (Northern Ireland) Order 2005. The Bill would come into effect on 1 April 2015.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for his comprehensive answer. I welcome his announcement regarding the future of car parks in towns. What level of income do the new super-councils hope to earn from having the responsibility for such car parks? Will the new super-councils be in charge of arrangements and local car parking charges for such?

2.15 pm

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. It is envisaged that over 300 free and charge car parks with an estimated value of some £46 million will transfer to the new councils. To be clear, that is what they are worth, not what they earn. Work is ongoing to determine the final list of car parks that will transfer. Those pay car parks generate in the region of £8 million a year.

Mr Spratt: The Minister will be aware that the Committee has been discussing the Department's proposals and has been concerned about the transfer of these assets without any apparent safeguards being set in the legislation. That could allow some very lucrative sites in city centres etc to be sold off at a loss to the public purse. The figure that the Committee was originally given was £300 million, but today the Minister mentioned a figure of £46 million. What is the true figure and what safeguards can be put in so that public assets are protected under the legislation?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. He raised this with me in a recent brief meeting. We need to be aware that councils have long sought powers in some DRD matters. The transfer of car parks has been at the lower end of that expectation, but, nevertheless, it is my intention to transfer it. The legislation is due to come through the House.

I understand the point that the Member makes. He will be aware that car parking spaces in towns and cities in Northern Ireland are sometimes at a premium because of the need for their provision as a public service. I would be concerned if councils went down the road of selling sites that would impact on car parking arrangements for the wider public. That is bound to be a consideration that would weigh heavily on them before they would undertake such a course of action. It is a matter that will come before the House and whether or not mechanisms should be put in place will be decided and deliberated on at that stage.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. People are employed by DRD in connection with car parking, such as car park attendants, for example. Can the Minister tell us what will happen when that responsibility shifts to councils?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. The Bill will provide councils with the powers to employ their own traffic attendants. Some local government representatives have inquired about the possibility of my Department's traffic attendants continuing to provide an enforcement service for the new councils. That arrangement has been recommended to councils by the RPA transfer of functions working group and could be put in place, but, as yet, there are no firm indications as to how many, if any, of the new councils will wish to proceed on that basis.

Grass: Cutting Responsibility

4. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development who is responsible for cutting the grass, in public areas, within private housing developments. (AQO 6341/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The majority of grass areas in private housing developments are not adopted or maintained by my Department and, consequently, responsibility for grass cutting lies with either the developer or the appointed managing agent. My Department is responsible for cutting grass on areas of the public road network. In those instances, grass cutting is carried out only for road safety purposes or to prevent the overgrowth of roads and footways. My Department does not cut grass for appearance or amenity purposes. If the member has concerns regarding a specific area he should contact officials in my Department, who will be in a position to clarify responsibilities in relation to grass cutting.

Mr I McCrea: I thank the Minister for his response. He will know that there are many private developments that are adopted but, unfortunately, in some instances the developer is no longer there or has gone bust. In circumstances like that, does the Minister agree — he has mentioned the sort of contracts that are available — that the best way forward is to set up some type of maintenance contracts with residents for green areas? Would his Department be willing to be involved in that process?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. I am somewhat loath to go down a route that would even potentially involve expenditure on that. It is very much the case that private developments and private developers are and should be responsible for a proper maintenance regime for housing areas that they have created and have accrued some considerable financial benefit from the sale of. The onus is on my Department to ensure that developers live up to their responsibilities. To that extent, I am happy to assist with that.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I declare an interest as someone who lives in an area with about eight feet of uncut grass in front of his house. It is not my garden; it is the common area, of course. I would cut my grass. In terms of a private development where the owner is now in administration or liquidation, can the Minister provide any advice as to how householders can try to get that grass cut by whoever has

the responsibility in that case, which is becoming more frequent in developments?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question, and I encourage him to continue to cut grass, particularly in public amenity areas. He will find it very therapeutic. *[Laughter.]* I cut grass in the front section of my own home and, technically, it belongs to the Department for Regional Development. I see it as public service. World Cup commitments aside, I hope to do some grass cutting tonight.

Back to the basis of your question. Obviously there is, or should be, legal recourse for those who find themselves in an unfortunate position where developers no longer exist and are not in place any more to provide the services that they are legally entitled to provide to householders. It is a difficult one. It is akin to the issues where developments remain unfinished as a consequence of financial impact to developers. One finds that providing water services or completing the developments becomes a real challenge. Whilst I have sympathy for those who find themselves in that situation, I think legal advice is probably the best way forward.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer and his continuing interest in the subject. I know that the World Cup is on, but I suggest that it is not just the grass. It is the footpaths, the street lighting, the roads and the sewerage that have left thousands of people in an awful dilemma following the collapse of the building industry some years ago. Can the Minister tell the House if we are any closer to legislation that would protect those people who are the unfortunate victims of what happened and who may well not be watching the World Cup?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to Mr Dallat for his supplementary question. Maybe he is not a football fan, but I thought that the World Cup has been very good so far.

To be serious, I understand the importance of the issue, particularly to householders who find themselves living in unfinished estates and where the prospect of pursuing legal issues is not perhaps attractive or financially beneficial. I continue to have ongoing discussions with the various parties involved, including officials from my Department, the Law Society and the construction industry to see how those legacy issues, if you like, can be addressed. It is not easy and it is a challenge, not least with the potential bill and cost that would be involved in upgrading and putting right estates and housing developments all over Northern Ireland.

Mr Beggs: On grassy areas, developers sometimes develop extensive flower beds and fronts that require considerable ongoing maintenance. Is the Minister aware of any proposals to ensure that all potential new homeowners are aware of any ongoing costs that would be associated with such maintenance? Is he aware of any proposal from the Department of Finance or the Office of Law Reform to give greater clarity on this issue and ensure that there will be better management of such proposals with lower administrative costs to homeowners?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the point that he raises. It is a point that is worthy of consideration by the agencies he mentioned, not least those with legal responsibilities, as they advise their clients and potential homeowners. Basically, that is where the responsibility should remain. I do not envisage my Department being in

a financial position, on a widespread basis, to undertake the work that has been promised by house sellers, private developers or, indeed, their legal representatives.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Gregory Campbell. I remind you that Mr Wilson is behind you.

Schools: 20 mph Limit

5. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether, as part of the new schools safety policy, he will introduce a 20mph speed limit in areas adjacent to rural schools. *(AQO 6342/11-15)*

Mr Kennedy: The new road safety at schools policy, which will be authorised this summer, will provide for the installation of part-time 20 mph speed limits at schools in all areas. The schools will be prioritised according to the level of perceived risk, with those located on roads where the national speed limit applies attracting a higher priority. The implementation of schemes will commence in this financial year, with the number completed dependent upon the availability of funding.

Mr Campbell: My being in the Chamber one hour and 20 minutes after leaving Royal Portrush Golf Club proves that I went more than 20 mph, but I did not exceed the speed limit.

I thank the Minister for his response, but I indicate to him that there are a number of small rural schools that are adjacent to quite significant roadways, where speeding occurs from time to time. They should be at the very top of the Minister's priority list for any reduction in speed limits such as this.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I will not question him more closely on the speed he drives at on the very good network that we, in DRD, have provided.

As I indicated, all schools will be considered in line with the school assessment sheet, regardless of the measures already in place. Obviously, some schools have had safety engineering measures installed within the past five years, and considerable investment has been provided there. Therefore, perhaps available resources would be better targeted at other schools where there are currently no measures or where older measures have been installed.

We will carefully consider all those as we move forward.

2.30 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions, and we now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Belfast Rapid Transit System

1. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development what other Belfast rapid transit (BRT) system work is going on in his Department to make sure that the service will be fully embraced and successful when it becomes operational in 2017, given the road and pavements works that are to start in the Ballyhackamore area in the next couple of weeks. *(AQT 1261/11-15)*

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her topical question on Belfast rapid transit. It has the potential to transform public transport in Belfast, initially in east and west Belfast, and then, hopefully, be extended across all areas of Belfast.

The Member will know that we have started work on the new park-and-ride facility at Dundonald, and we continue to carry forward work in that general area. Work is due to start next week on the section of the Belfast rapid transit route on the Upper Newtownards Road between Sandown Road and Knock Road. The work will include minor carriageway widening to facilitate the future introduction of bus lanes in both directions for BRT. The resurfacing of almost 1 kilometre of carriageway and adjoining footways will also be undertaken, along with works to improve pedestrian crossing facilities. The scheme is programmed to ensure that as much of the work as possible in Ballyhackamore is undertaken over the summer months, when traffic levels are lower and schools are on holiday. I hope that that is a flavour and indication of the approach that we are adopting to the work of BRT and, indeed, in Ballyhackamore.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he agree that the key to BRT being successful is getting more traffic off the road and that one way to do that is to offer free public transport to all schoolchildren? Further to the motion that I brought to the House in 2013, has any progress been made on the feasibility study into making that a reality?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question. I well remember the debate that we had in the House. Even free public transport does not come without cost. We have to be realistic about that, and I know that the Member will want me to be realistic. We would have to give very serious consideration to an extension of that because of the pressures that we currently have.

I have to say that there are substantial issues before the Executive that are not resolved. I can think of at least three issues. In education, there is the whole debate around the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), and there are the issues with welfare reform and CAP reform. All of those have the potential to impact on future budgetary settlements and the financial position of not just the Departments involved but other Departments, including mine. Therefore, I am cautious about adding to the size of the financial requirements that I need to run my Department effectively and efficiently.

Protocols

2. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister for Regional Development what protocols are in place to allow local management to discuss various problems with elected officials. (AQT 1262/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his topical question. I consider myself to be a Minister with an open-door policy. I think that the Member and other Members know that. I also encourage that in the work of my officials as they liaise with public bodies or, indeed, public representatives. There is huge benefit to be gained in greater coordination and cooperation between Departments and government agencies with not only the public at large but public representatives.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for that response. The south-eastern area headquarters has been moved to Craigavon, which you touched upon. Is that really helping the dialogue with local people?

Mr Kennedy: The Member will know and appreciate that there were issues around RPA that the Ulster Unionist Party, to which both of us belong, did not agree with, and that included the number of new councils. We favoured making them coterminous with parliamentary and Assembly boundaries. However, that argument did not carry the day, and now we are in a situation where, in some cases, it is hard to see how local government means local government because of the distances that have to be travelled by elected members and because of some of the services. So, as we approach the full implementation of RPA, which is due next April 2015, I, like him, will be very interested to see how that impacts and truly relates to people on the ground.

Traffic Chaos: Strabane

3. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with Roads Service in Strabane to try to resolve the ongoing traffic chaos caused by the closure of the A5 Victoria Road and the one-way system in Bridge Street. (AQT 1263/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her question. Indeed, she has raised the matter with me directly in the House. She knows that environmental improvement schemes, wherever they are, can bring a certain degree of traffic disruption and inconvenience. Every effort is made to ease the situation and, hopefully, that includes restoring two-way traffic flows at Bridge Street, Strabane as quickly as possible.

To safely carry out the reconstruction of the footways on Bridge Street and provide proper temporary provision for pedestrians and safe working space for the works, it is necessary to fence off part of the carriageway. The options for traffic management in that scenario were carefully considered at the planning stage. The introduction of the temporary one-way system to Bridge Street was considered to be the option that would bring the least amount of disruption and that, in turn, meant that, for most of the time, a single lane would be available for traffic.

At the planning stage, my officials in Transport NI examined the possibility of utilising traffic lights or a stop/go arrangement. However, such arrangements would have led to greater disruption due to tailbacks on both approaches on Bridge Street and into adjoining junctions.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for that. Given the demographic of Strabane and the ongoing roadworks on the A5 Victoria Road between Ballymagorry and Strabane, does the Minister agree that it was a lack of joined-up thinking by Roads Service to start the roadworks on the A5 Ballymagorry to Strabane when the roadworks were still continuing on Bridge Street? I say that given the demographic of Strabane.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question, but the answer is no, I do not agree with that. Careful consideration has been given. The point that I have made is that sometimes you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs. The work to the bridge was particularly necessary. Two-way traffic flow was reintroduced for one day on Saturday 7 June, and it was introduced on 14 June to ease the situation for the Summer Jamm festival held in the town centre. The contractor has sought to ease congestion wherever possible, but, when work is necessary, I am afraid that

some levels of inconvenience are unavoidable. I hope that the Member accepts that. I am sure that the public, in overall terms, will accept the benefits that we are trying to make to the road network in Strabane town centre and the approaches to it.

Transport Infrastructure: Portrush

4. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether, given the very best of news received today, which is that Royal Portrush is to be placed on the rota to host golf's Open Championship, possibly by 2019, with the potential to host further tournaments, he will give a commitment to consider, given that he has time before 2019, investing an even greater amount in the A26, the railway lines from Belfast to Portrush and from Larne to Portrush, and, indeed, the stations on those lines, to make sure that the infrastructure is in place for the Open. (AQT 1264/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. It is indeed tremendous news. I am sure that the whole House rejoices in the fact that it is now indicated that the Open will be held at Royal Portrush, hopefully, in 2019. Of course, we had the huge success of the Irish Open in 2012, and it is worth remembering that we are due to have a return visit of the Irish Open to Portrush before 2019 and to Royal County Down in the south Down area in 2015.

It is very important to improve the overall infrastructure and transport infrastructure. I am very happy and proud to say, as an Ulster Unionist Minister, that we brought forward a scheme that will upgrade the A26 Frosses Road. With moneys and the good intent that Mr Frew has indicated will come from his party around the Executive table, I think that I can look forward with confidence to getting more money to perhaps improve further that network of roads.

Of course, the Member will know that the Coleraine-Londonderry line was saved and, effectively, rescued by this Minister and this political party. So we are very conscious of our role and its importance, and we look forward with confidence that we will be supported around the Executive table as we bid for further funds to improve the road network.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for his commitment to lobby the Executive for additional funding for my North Antrim constituency and neighbouring constituencies. Politicking aside, Minister, can you also assure the House that any advancement in the area around Portrush will be compatible with the North West 200?

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Frew, for your supplementary. Again, the record shows that I, as Minister, have given considerable support to the North West 200. I have even had the experience — I am not sure whether he has — of having ridden the course. So I say, as a rider — *[Laughter.]* — that I am always aware of the North West 200 and its importance, not only to the regional economy of the north-west but to Northern Ireland generally, and I continue to be optimistic, as we go forward, in supporting events such as the North West 200, the Ulster Grand Prix and other road racing events.

Water Treatment: Electricity Costs

5. **Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his view of the costs, in economic terms, of the use of electricity in the treatment of water. (AQT 1265/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for the question. Electricity costs Northern Ireland Water (NIW) some £34 million a year. This figure, I think, will only increase in future years unless we actively explore ways to reduce the quantity of water entering the system and sources of renewable energy. We cannot simply treat larger and larger quantities of waste water; we will have to be cleverer in our approach.

2.45 pm

Mr Copeland: Would the Minister agree that the promotion of sustainable drainage solutions could be an excellent means of reducing not only energy costs but flood risk?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his interesting supplementary question. It is because of his representation of East Belfast, and having had to deal with historic flooding issues, that it is relevant. I certainly agree that we need to promote sustainable drainage solutions not only in new developments but, wherever possible, in retrofitting existing areas to make better use of these practical solutions. During my recent cycling study visit to Copenhagen, I met a Danish water provider and visited some of its forward-thinking SuDS projects. In some cases, those projects have not only reduced the burden on water treatment but have, as he indicated, reduced flood risk, so we have much to learn and to apply ourselves to.

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment gave notice to the Business Committee last week that it might not be possible for her to return from official business outside Belfast in time for questions. Of course, the very good news about the Open will allow Members to understand why that situation has arisen. The Minister of Finance and Personnel will, therefore, respond to questions on her behalf today. Thank you very much, Minister.

Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook

1. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions her Department has had with Thomas Cook with regards to the reported charging of air passenger duty on flights on which the tax was abolished. (AQO 6353/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The Department's trading standards service has not received any complaints to date about this issue. However, it is investigating to ensure that Thomas Cook's current advertising and information provided to consumers is not misleading in respect of air passenger duty.

The Consumer Council has been in direct contact with Thomas Cook since this matter came to light. The company confirmed that it investigated this problem and identified 32 passengers who were affected. Thomas Cook has confirmed that all affected passengers have been

refunded. The council is encouraging passengers who might have been affected and not refunded to contact the airline. If they are not content with the response from the airline, they should contact the Consumer Council, which can investigate the complaint.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Since the abolition of air passenger duty, we have seen no additional destinations. Indeed, we heard recently of the suspension of the only direct flight from the North to the United States. I wonder whether the removal of air passenger duty has not been as successful as was first anticipated.

Mr Hamilton: I think that it was successful, primarily in achieving its number one target in devolving long-haul air passenger duty powers to the Assembly. Subsequently, the Assembly reduced air passenger duty for long-haul flights to zero. It was successful in its primary purpose, which was to save the Newark to Belfast route. I share the Member's disappointment and the Minister's disappointment that that service is going to move from being a 12-month to a 10-month service, which will affect from mid-January to mid-March of next year. That is disappointing, although, if there is a silver lining to the news, I hope that it makes the route more profitable and, therefore, sustainable. I welcome the fact that United Airlines has confirmed that the route is secure, albeit that it will be reduced to 10 months.

There is an interesting point of discussion flowing from this that will feed into the ongoing work that my Department and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Department are doing in respect of an air connectivity study, which will, among many things, look at the impact that air passenger duty has on attracting and keeping routes. It is interesting to note that whilst we have zero pounds of air passenger duty for long-haul flights like the Newark flight, it has not been enough to keep it in place for 12 months. Interestingly, one of the four routes that have been affected — it is not that Belfast was singled out by United Airlines — is the Dublin route, where they also have a zero level of air passenger duty or its equivalent.

It is not as simple as Members who claim that, if you eliminate air passenger duty on all flights, you will see lots more routes opening up into and out of Northern Ireland have said.

Mr Dunne: What work has DETI done to encourage direct flights to Turkey, which would bring opportunities for tourism and business in Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: I know that the Enterprise Minister has been working assiduously to lobby a great number of airlines, not just about long-haul routes to places like Turkey, which the Member mentioned, but about routes that are shorter and closer to home. As I said in the House last week during the Budget debate on the issue of air passenger duty, which Mr Sheehan raised, it is vital that, as well as looking at long-haul routes — I welcome the fact that the aforementioned Thomas Cook has announced in the last week direct routes out of Belfast to Orlando and Las Vegas for the summer — we have better connectivity through hub airports such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris and Berlin.

Istanbul airport is a little further away, but it is a critical route and would give us penetration into that part of the Middle East, elsewhere in the Middle East and,

importantly, into emerging markets in the Far East. The Minister has been working closely with our international airport to attract a direct service to Istanbul. That is an issue that the Minister welcomed the opportunity to discuss with the Turkish ambassador on his recent visit to Northern Ireland. However, work that is ongoing on that route is, as you would imagine, commercially sensitive and of a confidential nature. Should such a service be introduced to Northern Ireland, the Minister's officials in Tourism Ireland would work with key stakeholders to highlight and promote the route in key markets overseas.

Dr McDonnell: The Minister mentioned shorter-haul routes. Can he enlighten us on any recent discussions the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has had with the Treasury or others about reducing air passenger duty on short-haul flights, including those that connect to other routes?

Mr Hamilton: The Member is right to focus on Westminster. They are responsible for bringing in air passenger duty. If there is a problem with it, which I believe there is, particularly for peripheral regions like Northern Ireland, the responsibility for solving that lies in Westminster. I have spoken in the House about my concerns, in my role as Finance Minister, about us trying to solve the problem, and I am not entirely sure it would solve the problem, at a cost of between £60 million and £90 million to our block grant. That is a heavy price for us to pay to mop up somebody else's mess. We avail ourselves of any opportunity that arises to make that point to colleagues and Ministers in Westminster.

I also very much welcome the fact that the Chancellor, in his recent Budget statement of 19 March, announced that he was extending the scope of the regional air connectivity fund to include start-up aid for new routes from regional airports, including Belfast, and is increasing the funding to £20 million per annum. It is important that the work that our officials in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment already do with their counterparts in the Department for Transport across the water is carried forward so that we can see whether we can avail ourselves of the opportunities to bring in new and additional routes, particularly the short-haul routes that I mentioned before and to which the Member alluded. There are measures other than the lowering of air passenger duty that can be introduced to attract those routes to Northern Ireland.

Mr Cree: I, also, was surprised at the Thomas Cook situation. Minister, you have touched on the matter and the wider field. We all aspire to having other long-haul destinations, but bearing in mind the experience of this one, is the Minister satisfied that we have sufficient critical mass to support further routes?

Mr Hamilton: There is no doubt that Northern Ireland is a small place; we frequently mention that fact in the House. The increasing inward investment that we are attracting to Northern Ireland helps to make routes like the New York route more sustainable, due to the business traffic that is going back and forward. I know that, for many of those businesses, that is an incredibly important factor in their investment. However, the Member is right: it is probably a little more challenging for us in Northern Ireland than, for example, our counterparts in the Irish Republic, with Dublin Airport's ability to attract routes because of its bigger population and slightly different economy. It is critical that Tourism Ireland, which has responsibility for

marketing Northern Ireland outside the island of Ireland, up its game so that we attract more visitors from beyond Ireland and the British Isles. That in itself justifies not just the New York flight but some of the other flights into western Europe, southern Europe and beyond.

Electricity: Local Generation

2. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what contingencies are in place to deal with the reduction in local power station electricity generation required by the EU emissions trading system. (AQO 6354/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The EU emissions trading system is not expected to result in power generation reductions in Northern Ireland. The Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister's officials have been working with the Utility Regulator and the electrical System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) to ensure that there is sufficient generation capacity after 2015, when there will be impacts from the EU industrial emissions directive. SONI recently took forward a competition for additional generation, which is to be available from 2016. The competition result is expected in early autumn 2014, thus allowing sufficient time for the additional capacity to be provided. Mutual Energy is continuing to work towards providing interim and permanent repairs to restore the Moyle interconnector to full transfer capacity.

Mr Allister: I note that, whereas Mr Gregory Campbell was able to make it back from Portrush and the welcome announcement about the Open, the ETI Minister — the Minister for photo opportunities — was not. Therefore, I ask the stand-in Minister whether the Department has really got a grip on how serious the situation could be, with Ballylumford B to be decommissioned, Kilroot to lose 50% of its production and the Moyle interconnector being temperamental, at best. Is the Department really saying, with absolute confidence, that, come 2016, we will have sufficient indigenous generation? Is there not a danger that, with Republic of Ireland companies now controlling the distribution of electricity in Northern Ireland, if hard choices have to be made about shedding the load, Ballymun is likely to do much better than Ballymoney?

Mr Hamilton: I am glad to see that the Member has met the good news about the Open with his traditional grumpiness. If being the economy Minister requires the Minister to be photogenic, I am glad that the Member himself is not the Minister for the economy.

To be fair, he raises a serious issue. The EU industrial emissions directive, which he did not raise in his original question, will have an impact, and he mentioned Ballylumford B power station. I state categorically that the Department, as well as SONI and EirGrid in the South, are aware of the issue that the Member has raised. There is an understanding that generation surplus in Northern Ireland will drop from 600 megawatts to 200 megawatts in 2016. Even though it will do that, I understand that the adequacy standard will still be met. That is why, in agreement with the Utility Regulator, SONI has, as I mentioned in answer to the original question, sought interest from the market for the provision of 220 megawatts to 300 megawatts of additional generation adequacy. That would increase our generation margin to around 450 megawatts from 2016. With the restoration of the Moyle interconnector

to full capacity, that would bring the margin to around 650 megawatts, which is higher than it currently is. As for the doomsday scenario outlined by the Member, the Department knows about and understands the issue and is active in working with partners, such as SONI and our power generators, to address it as quickly as possible.

3.00 pm

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire chomh maith. I thank the Minister for, at least, a good part of his answer anyway. I will not ask about the photogenic nature of power stations. What assessment has the Department made of the impact of the EU emissions trading system on the price of electricity for domestic and business consumers alike?

Mr Hamilton: As I mentioned in response to Mr Allister's question about this, the Department is very aware of that and is working with SONI, EirGrid and our partners in the Irish Republic to ensure that any reduction in generation adequacy as a result of the EU industrial emissions directive is addressed in advance. It is important that, because it will have an impact in 2016, now in 2014 we are addressing that.

I am not aware of what analysis has been done of the directive itself and what it means for electricity prices, although I am aware, as most Members are, of the concerns that many industries in Northern Ireland have about electricity prices. The Member will be well aware of the restrictions on the Minister and her Department's budget and on her ability to directly intervene on electricity prices. Of course, any intervention, small as it may be, that the Minister may be able to make will have an impact on other customers as well. There is always a fine balance to be struck in respect of electricity prices and the assistance that this Department can offer.

Mr Frew: I very much welcome the presence of the Minister in Portrush and the fact that she is, indeed, delivering for Northern Ireland while some can only grump and gripe from the sidelines about it. With regard to the generation margin for Northern Ireland for 2015, how essential is it that there is full restoration of the Moyle interconnector and that we get, as soon as possible, the proposed North/South interconnector?

Mr Hamilton: As I outlined in response to Mr Allister, in a situation where the EU directive will reduce our generation adequacy to about 200 MW of additional adequacy, whilst that is still within tolerable levels, it is important that the required repairs to the Moyle interconnector are brought forward as quickly as possible. That will get us back into a much more comfortable position.

The Member is also right to raise the issue of the North/South interconnector. I understand that Northern Ireland Electricity resubmitted its planning application and environmental statement for the Northern Ireland part of the electricity link to the Department of the Environment in June last year. The next stage is the resumption of the public inquiry. It is incredibly important that that moves forward, because it is a key part of our long-term security of supply to have that modern North/South interconnector in place.

The ETI Minister has discussed the issue, particularly the recent disappointing decision by the Irish planning board that will mean that this project will not come under

the transitional provisions of article 19 of the EU 10E infrastructure regulation. This has been discussed actively by our Minister with the EirGrid chair and chief executive, and her officials have met representatives of the Irish planning board. It is premature to conclude that there will be any further delay in the delivery of the project, as EirGrid has undertaken substantial work to support its proposed planning application. DETI will closely monitor further developments in relation to the EirGrid planning application as part of considerations on how best to deliver long-term security of supply for our electricity.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. As the Minister who sponsors the Utility Regulator, he will be aware of the proposal to cancel the generating agreement units. Given that Manufacturing NI and the Consumer Council have said that this will have a serious impact on the costs borne by consumers, what is the Minister's opinion of the proposal, and does he see it as a sweetener to incentivise existing generator companies to upgrade their generation equipment in a way that gets them and the Executive around any state aid implications?

Mr Hamilton: I am not aware of the particular issue that the Member has raised. He said that my Department — the Department of Finance and Personnel — is a sponsor of the Utility Regulator, but it is not. It appoints the chairman and the board of the Utility Regulator, but it does not have the same sort of role as the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has in that regard. I am sure that her officials will have heard what the Member asked and will correspond with him accordingly.

As I mentioned in response to Mr McGlone's question, there is concern about electricity prices generally. That is something that would, understandably, concern us if it were to have an impact on business investment in Northern Ireland. However, it is interesting to note that no evidence of that is being shown. Whilst the manufacturing sector is rightly concerned about electricity prices here, there is no clear evidence that those prices act as a disincentive or barrier to investment in Northern Ireland.

When Invest Northern Ireland provided evidence to the Enterprise Committee as part of its review of electricity prices, which I understand happened recently, it specifically indicated that, while it is alert to electricity prices being a potential issue, it has not lost any projects as a result of energy pricing. That does not mean that we are not concerned about it or that we should take our eye off it. It is interesting to note that it is not having a discernable impact on our economic strategy, particularly our inward investment strategy.

Derry: Investment Imbalance

3. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department's efforts to meet the Executive's stated ambition of tackling regional imbalance have addressed the historical neglect of the Derry City Council area with regard to investment. (AQO 6355/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Invest NI is committed to regional development across Northern Ireland, including the Derry City Council and surrounding areas. The ETI Minister was pleased to announce on 17 April 2014 Convergys's decision to undertake a £10.1 million investment in

Londonderry promoting 333 jobs, which Invest NI has supported with £1.4 million of funding. In December 2013, the ETI Minister also announced an £8.8 million investment by Fujitsu, which will create 177 new jobs in the area, also supported by Invest NI.

The most recent figures available from Invest NI, from 2008 to 2013, show that its assistance of £37 million has contributed to £161 million of investment in the Derry City Council area with the potential to create almost 2,000 new jobs. It is interesting to note that over that period the assistance per head of adult population in the Derry City Council area was £377 compared to a Northern Ireland average of £362 for the same period. Invest NI is currently working to finalise the 2013-14 figures for jobs promoted and created at subregional level, including in the Derry City Council area. It intends to publish that information when the figures have been fully validated.

Invest NI has a regional office in Londonderry. Businesses in the Derry City Council area have the opportunity to access the same levels of financial assistance and advice as those in other parts of Northern Ireland. Invest NI continues to work closely with Derry City Council and other stakeholders to develop a sales proposition to show the strengths and opportunities in the city and surrounding area that will ultimately attract potential inward investors to visit, locate there and grow.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for that very detailed answer. Given the very welcome work in the region, supported by INI, to develop that sales proposition and the integrated economic action plan, is there any intention, as a result of that proposal, to actually support or lobby for the north-west to become an economic zone, given the regional imbalances?

Mr Hamilton: When the Member says "economic zone", I interpret that as "enterprise zone". The first pilot in Northern Ireland was recently announced for the north-west in the Chancellor's Budget statement. I think that Coleraine is still part of the north-west. Mr Campbell to my right is nodding vigorously that it is.

Sometimes, when Members raise the issue of whether this area or that can be designated as an enterprise zone — the economy Minister and I have been lobbied by quite a few Members of the House and indeed by some councils — there is a misunderstanding of what the current iteration of an enterprise zone looks like. Many of the policy levers contained in enterprise zones that the Treasury is permitting are already within our purview as an Assembly. They include rates — we have a pretty attractive regime of rates relief — access to high-speed broadband and the ability to designate for particular planning purposes. They are all within the remit of the Assembly and Executive already.

The one thing that is missing from the current proposition for enterprise zones is enhanced capital allowances. That is why Coleraine was picked as the pilot zone, because it is absolutely perfect for that. The university site was absolutely ideal for the 5NINEs data centre project, because it was already on track. At that time, there was a time limit to get the projects on the ground and implemented before 2017. That has now been extended to, I understand, 2020. There are potentially opportunities for other enterprise zones, but enhanced capital allowances are attractive only to businesses that are investing in capital-intensive industries, and some of the jobs that I

highlighted that have gone to the Foyle constituency are not capital-intensive jobs. That does not mean that there may not be opportunities for an enterprise zone in that area or, indeed, elsewhere, but more work is required to flesh out exactly where the best place is.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Paul Girvan. Sorry, excuse me. Pat Ramsey is a constituency representative, so I will call him first.

Mr P Ramsey: The announcement and the efforts made by Minister Foster in the north-west are most welcome, but she should be mindful of the fact that Derry and Strabane still unfortunately have the highest levels of unemployment and youth unemployment and the highest levels of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland. Does the Minister not believe that there should be a more targeted inward investment effort in disadvantaged areas that have been hot spots for generations?

Mr Hamilton: Hopefully, what I outlined and, indeed, some of the other things that I know that the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has been involved in, whether it be an enterprise zone coming to Coleraine and the benefits that that will bring to that part of Northern Ireland and, indeed, to the whole region, or whether it be the concentration on getting high-tech, well-paid jobs in Convergys or Fujitsu, highlight that it is not a matter of the Executive or the Minister forgetting about the north-west.

I had the privilege of meeting the global president of Fujitsu in London towards the tail end of last year. He was incredibly complimentary about the standard of the workforce right across Northern Ireland and said that he wanted to bring the additional investment that he and I spoke about that day to Londonderry. He was complimentary about the workforce that is already there and saw it as a great opportunity for his business. I think that people in Londonderry should be proud of the fact that companies such as Fujitsu, which have billions and billions and billions of pounds in their portfolios, and which could invest that money anywhere in the world, are choosing to invest in Londonderry and to avail themselves of the excellent skills and wonderful infrastructure there.

Nobody could, in all honesty, stand up and criticise the Minister, her Department or Invest Northern Ireland for their efforts in the north-west, whether those be for local business start-ups, of which 165 were approved in the Foyle constituency between 2012 and 2013; through the jobs funds, which promoted 567 new jobs in the Foyle constituency between 2011 and 2013; or through the loan fund, which has seen nine companies offered support of £2.695 million. Efforts are being made, and work is happening to attract businesses and to start or grow existing businesses in the north-west.

The Member talked about youth unemployment and a range of other issues. He will, of course, be mindful of the fact that the Minister for Employment and Learning has a responsibility for all that. He would, I am sure, be better taking up some of the issues with him.

Mr Girvan: I appreciate that a lot of the work done by Invest NI and the Minister is about encouraging and promoting existing home-grown industry and business. I know that we have had some very good results in south Antrim. However, Northern Ireland is a very small area, and I appreciate that people have to travel quite a distance to work. In two hours, you can go from one end of the

country to the other. How many jobs have been created in the south Antrim area?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: This was a constituency-specific question, so it is entirely up to the Minister to decide whether he wishes to answer the question asked.

Mr Hamilton: I am trying to find the information. In the past 10 years, Invest NI assistance and investment in south Antrim has resulted in 2,057 offers. There have been 175 offers of inward investment in the South Antrim area. That has created 693 new jobs and secured 130. That accounts for about £18.63 million worth of assistance. South Antrim is an area that I am reasonably familiar with, Mr Deputy Speaker, as of course you are, and it is home to many good companies, such as the likes of Radox and others who are good, indigenous Northern Ireland grown companies that are exporting far and wide and bringing much pride to the Northern Ireland economy.

3.15 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We are all in awe of your quick-footedness, Minister. I call Tom Elliott with the same health warning.

Mr Elliott: I know that time is running out. DETI is obviously responsible for tourism. How much money has been provided to the Walled City project in Londonderry and to the tourism project of Destination Fermanagh?

Mr Hamilton: This is incredibly tangential from the question about the north-west. The Member's heart obviously lies inside the walls of Derry asking a question like that. There has been sizeable investment. A lot of it has been around the UK City of Culture to develop our cultural infrastructure in Londonderry. There has been investment in a number of assets, including £1.4 million in the Walled City lighting strategy, and investment, as the Member will be aware, in the likes of the Apprentice Boys' memorial hall, First Derry Presbyterian Church, the Playhouse Theatre and other assets in the north-west.

I do not have the Fermanagh figures to hand, which I humbly apologise to the House for. The Member will be aware of not just the benefit that the successful hosting of the G8 summit a year ago this week brought to Fermanagh but, building on the Irish Open success in Portrush a number of years ago, the Open, the Irish Open — I said "the Open"; now, that would be news — has been secured for Fermanagh. The Irish Open has been secured for Fermanagh in, I think, 2017. Building on the success of the G8 and the Irish Open in the north-west, Fermanagh is well positioned to benefit from the growth in our tourism sector.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for oral and creative questions to the Minister. We now move to topical questions.

Creative Industries: Tourism

1. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline how DETI is exploring the tourism opportunities flowing from the growing creative industries sector, especially exposure through TV shows such as 'Game of Thrones'. (AQT 1271/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: We should note and welcome the fact that Northern Ireland is getting an increasing amount of global exposure as a result of our burgeoning creative industries

sector, particularly in film and television production. The Member mentioned 'Game of Thrones'. We have now completed the filming of four series of 'Game of Thrones' in Northern Ireland. I think that seasons five and six have also been secured for Northern Ireland. I understand that up to season three has generated some £80 million for our local economy, but that excludes revenue flowing from tourism spend as a result of it.

There is a lot of work going on and concentration on trying to avail ourselves of the tourism opportunities that come from having an international series like 'Game of Thrones' filmed here in Northern Ireland. I am sure that Members will be aware of bus tours and walking tours that are being organised, of the interpretative signage that has been put on some of the filming locations and of the campaign that is running from April to June by Tourism Ireland to advertise and showcase, with the permission of HBO, who are the makers of 'Game of Thrones', some of Northern Ireland's most attractive scenery, which has been the backdrop for many of the scenes in 'Game of Thrones'. That has been sent around the world, and, hopefully, we will be able to attract not just those who are interested in the series and have seen Northern Ireland in the series and wondered perhaps where that scenery was, but others who are just interested in going to such a beautiful place.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the clear importance of the link between Tourism Ireland and HBO, what is the Minister's view of the recent comments by HBO executive, Michael Lombardo, when he said:

"Belfast is not the most cosmopolitan of cities to spend half the year."

If there is truth in that comment, what can be done to change it?

Mr Hamilton: The World Cup is on at the minute, and there is an old football saying in this part of the world, "We're not Brazil, we're Northern Ireland". So, when it comes to filming locations, we are not Hollywood; we are Northern Ireland. I understand that the comments made by Mr Lombardo were, as the Member said, about being away for six months. I am sure that for anybody, no matter who they are, being away from home and family for six months is difficult.

I have to say, though, that the relationship between HBO, Northern Ireland Screen and the Northern Ireland Executive has been incredibly productive. As I said in my previous answer, seasons 5 and 6 of 'Game of Thrones' have already been secured for Northern Ireland, so it seems that we are doing something right for HBO. I think that everybody in the House and further afield would acknowledge that Belfast is a city much improved from 10 years ago. Ten years ago, we would not have dreamt of attracting any sort of series from HBO, never mind six seasons of its biggest show ever. We are a city that is developing and maturing. Belfast has some great restaurants and an improving nightlife. It hosts world-class events and has developed cultural facilities such as the Lyric Theatre, the MAC and the Grand Opera House, all of which are important in attracting visitors.

More importantly, to combat some of the comments made about Belfast, look at other international investors, the likes of Allstate and Citi, which keep coming back to Northern Ireland and investing time and again. Our cultural offering is very important to them and, more importantly,

to the staff whom they employ. So I think that Belfast is doing well. It is doing some things right if it is attracting companies such as Allstate, Citi and others that we have heard about over the last number of weeks and months, and we have retained HBO for six seasons of 'Game of Thrones'.

Labour Mobility: Cross-border Possibilities

2. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what efforts are being made to enhance cross-border labour mobility, given the results of a recent survey, which showed that some 14,800 people regularly commute between the two jurisdictions on the island for work or to study. (AQT 1272/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure how those 14,800 people are divided into those travelling for work and those travelling for study. I suspect, knowing the issues that the Employment and Learning Minister has, particularly in the North West Regional College, where students from the Donegal area come to the facilities in Londonderry, that the bulk of student movement is northward. Equally, knowing the problems that students from here have accessing Southern universities, particularly the likes of Trinity and others, I suspect that the bulk of that movement, too, is northward. Obviously, some people will choose to do that for personal reasons. Others will be forced into it because of courses or because work dictates that they go in that direction. I am not completely versed in what the Minister and her Department are doing directly about this, but I am sure that we can investigate and furnish the Member with some details.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin.

I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the current challenges of unemployment and emigration, what steps will he take to ensure that both businesses and individuals can benefit from local and island-wide opportunities?

Mr Hamilton: The Member will be familiar with the work of InterTradeIreland, which, as I read over the weekend, has exceeded its targets this year for encouraging companies to innovate and export across the border. As we try to grow our economy and get firms in Northern Ireland to look beyond Northern Ireland for market opportunities, the Republic of Ireland market is an easier first step for many of them than perhaps even Great Britain or continental Europe. So the work of InterTradeIreland is important in ensuring that the market between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which has been growing over the past couple of years, continues to grow. As the economy in the South improves, it is important that firms in Northern Ireland avail themselves of the opportunities of a growing economy there, just as they do of the growing economy here at home.

Open Championship: Royal Portrush

3. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what role DETI played in bringing the Open Championship to Northern Ireland, given that Members will all agree that today's main topic, from a sporting and tourism point of view, is the announcement that Royal Portrush in the East Londonderry constituency will host that golfing tournament. (AQT 1273/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I am surprised that we got as far as topical question 3 before this came up. I join the Member and most of his constituents in welcoming the news that the Royal and Ancient Golf Club is requesting that Royal Portrush be put back on to the rota for Open Championships. We are obviously looking forward to that being agreed and the Open Championship coming back to Northern Ireland for the first time since 1952 or 1953. It has been a long time away, and it will be good to get it back, building on the success of the Irish Open.

The Member will be familiar with the work that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Northern Ireland Executive are doing to secure not just the Open but other events such as the Giro d'Italia, which was so successful recently. The Irish Open was an incredibly successful event for the European tour; it was its first sell-out event in its history. That is the sort of success that proves that we can host events of that magnitude, and which has whet the appetite of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club again. It has led to us hearing this positive announcement today, and we look forward to the Open coming back to Northern Ireland before the decade is out.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for his answer. What can be done to provide greater hotel accommodation in the north coast area to cater for the potential of more tourists coming to the area because of the golf announcement?

Mr Hamilton: The Member is right to highlight the potential tourism opportunities that flow from the Open Championship. It is one of the primary reasons why Minister Foster and her team have pursued the Open Championship and worked with Royal Portrush to get it back on the rota. There is an estimated combined tourism promotion and economic return from the Open Championship of some £70 million. That sounds like a lot of money for one event, but you should realise that, last year, when the event was held in Muirfield in Scotland, outside Edinburgh, over 4,000 hours of television and radio coverage were broadcast. So, there is a huge potential for opportunities. Whilst it is one of the world's biggest sporting events, attracting crowds from far and wide, the fact that it also broadcasts the wonderful scenery and the great golf course in Royal Portrush to that big an audience will reap tourism benefits.

Invest Northern Ireland is very much open to considering support for projects to develop accommodation in the north coast area, particularly projects that will underpin a signature project, such as the Causeway coastal route, as well as the tourism action plan up to 2020. Invest Northern Ireland continues to work with existing hotel operators to support business improvements and competitiveness. An example of that is the support provided to assist the £10 million expansion of Galgorm Resort and Spa, which includes an additional 50 rooms.

As the Irish Open showed us when it was here a couple of years ago, even though we in Northern Ireland perhaps consider that the travel time between here and the north coast is a lot — as I hear when listening to some questions to the Regional Development Minister — that is not how it is considered by people who come in from far and wide to stay in Belfast. They travel up and enjoy the scenery, and they will enjoy the Open Championship and perhaps spend more time in that area.

Business Red Tape Review

4. Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the review of business red tape, given the very real challenges to businesses from increasing levels of bureaucracy. (AQT 1274/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I agree with the Member's concerns. In my role, I regularly hear about such concerns that businesses have about government always getting in their way and costing them money. I see that particularly in some of the surveys that officials from my Department send out to businesses. I am trying to find the information on the red tape review, because I know that I have it somewhere, but I cannot lay my hands on it. I know that the Minister was very keen to take that review forward; she understands that there is that concern. I understand that there is a concern among business, and I think that it is important that we as an Executive look at all of the "red tape" for want of a better phrase.

There is also a responsibility on business to come forward with what it perceives to be concerns about red tape, because, when I travel around the country in my capacity as Finance Minister, I hear people saying, "Government keeps getting in our way" or "Red tape is a problem", but, when you ask for specific examples, sometimes they are few and far between. So, I think that there is an onus on businesses and business groups to come forward with precise examples of what red tape means. The advisory panel on the review of business red tape was scheduled to meet a group of business representative bodies on 12 June, which was last week, and a seminar workshop for regulators to discuss a number of key issues relating to the review also took place at the start of this month.

Those were very constructive events that will feed into further business engagement.

3.30 pm

An innovation laboratory will be held in the last week of June to consider independent scrutiny of regulatory impact assessments. That issue is being taken forward by my Department. DETI has been keen to join in with that public sector innovation laboratory. There are also two research projects on fees and charges and a possible regulatory business hub. Those are both progressing well, and they will report by the end of June or early July.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for that. I appreciate that he had to access the information. Is there any thinking specifically around the challenges of growing businesses in border constituencies or on a cross-border basis?

Mr Hamilton: I do not think a distinction is being made in the review between Belfast and the south, north, east or west of Northern Ireland. If there is a problem in respect of red tape, it will be uniform right across the country.

The Minister for Employment and Learning is taking forward a review of employment law. One of the common concerns raised with me, and, I am sure, with my colleague the economy Minister, is our overburdensome employment laws in Northern Ireland. That is something that the CBI, the Institute of Directors and others regularly raise. There is an opportunity for all of us to get behind the

review that the Minister for Employment and Learning is conducting.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Stephen Agnew. We are almost out of time, Mr Agnew, so please move quickly.

Mr Agnew: I will be quick. I wanted to ask the Enterprise Minister about meetings she has had with the Finance Minister, so we have an appropriate stand-in. *[Laughter.]*

Business Tenancies

5. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what meetings she has had with the Finance Minister about the business tenancies order and the differences in legislation between here and GB that are restricting the growth of free solar PV schemes. (AQT 1275/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: This is for me — you will get me answering no matter what — in my DFP capacity. My understanding is that the civil law reform division in my Department is looking at work on business tenancies and a range of other land-law type issues in Northern Ireland. We will not progress it in the short term, but the Department is looking at it in the medium to long term. I am happy, in my capacity as Finance Minister, to write to the Member to give him a little bit more detail. Perhaps we can correspond about the particular detail to see whether it is something that can be incorporated into any review of business tenancies.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the House to take its ease while we change the top Table.

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

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly notes that 16-22 June 2014 marks Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014; further notes the respective themes of shared future and building a united community; and expresses its support for Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, particularly in relation to their shared aim of facilitating positive encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage greater understanding, overcome hostility and build a shared society. — [Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister).]

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. In light of it being Refugee Week, which coincides with Community Relations Week, it is important that the Assembly sends a strong message that refugees and anyone who seeks asylum are welcome in our communities. There is no point in marking Refugee Week and Community Relations Week unless we act to ensure that people seeking asylum here are treated with equality and dignity. While it is fine to mark Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, we must demonstrate by actions that we are sincere in developing strategies that make a difference.

Refugees come here not out of choice but because they have been forced out of their own countries for many different reasons, including social, political and economic, and they end up in different countries. These refugees face many problems, including racism and isolation. They have difficulty in finding out information on many things that we take for granted, such as how to access benefits and medical treatment and how to have children enrolled in schools.

Sectarianism ranks alongside racism as a hate crime that we must eradicate. Again, we need to demonstrate through actions that we are sincere in tackling this scourge on our communities. While immigration is an excepted matter, nevertheless Departments have responsibilities to provide for communities, their economic development and the elimination of poverty. They have responsibility to provide education; employment; adequate and appropriate housing; healthcare, and mental health care in particular; other health promotion, including treatment for addictions; recreational, social and cultural infrastructure; childcare and adequate parenting support services; programmes to prevent social isolation and alienation; and the promotion of equality between groups. All these have a positive impact in building a shared future and a united community. Failure to deliver on those social goals has a negative impact on our society.

There are a lot of realities to be addressed. The slave and the master might have had a good relationship, but it was not based on equality. Good relations must be underpinned by principles of equality, diversity and interdependence. We need to promote equality of opportunity and inclusivity across all cultures in order to

have a society that is unified and cohesive and which will embrace diversity. People who come to make a home in Ireland should be treated with respect and given equality with every other citizen. As austerity forces many of our young people to emigrate, I would hope that they do not find the same intolerance that many of our ethnic communities and foreign nationals have faced in the North recently. Those who come here make a valuable contribution to our society, and we must provide leadership by standing side by side with these communities in facing down hate crimes and other potential difficulties that they may encounter.

The racial equality strategy has been agreed by Martin McGuinness and should urgently be agreed by the First Minister and quickly go out for public consultation. That strategy is an essential part of the overall equality agenda; it demonstrates the Executive's commitment to eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunities and develop good relations. It is key to identifying the real needs of our ethnic minority population; it will promote racial equality and tackle racism; it will increase awareness of the issues and responsibilities in this area; it will foster good relations; and it will thereby promote greater social cohesion and equality of opportunity for everyone.

Community Relations Week provides us with an opportunity to take stock and renew our efforts in developing better relations through the programme of events that has been organised.

Mr Attwood: Previously in this House, I have referred to the 2011 Programme for Government for Scotland, which has a number of paragraphs about the requirement for political humility. As a Government going into office in 2011, they warned themselves not to get carried away with themselves; that is why they refer to the need to show political humility.

I was reminded of that story two or three hours ago at a Community Relations Week event held at the 174 Trust on the Antrim Road where Denis Bradley talked about the need for parties in the North to show humility when it comes to the issues that face us at this time, not least the multiple issues of community relations. I agreed with him that we have been arguing month after month and year after year that parties in this Government and Assembly should be humble enough to admit that the community relations issues that we face are of such scale and volume that we now need to say that we can resolve many of them only if we have the two Governments working with us.

So, given that this is Community Relations Week and that the motion says that we look to facilitate:

“positive encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage greater understanding”,

is it not, in this week of all weeks, the time and place for the parties to say to each other that, for all of the achievements of the parties and institutions in the North since the Good Friday Agreement, and for all of the efforts made in various talks and negotiations, in order to get the community relations issues like flags, emblems, symbols and identity dealt with comprehensively and fully, we now need to be humble and call in the two Governments to assist us in that enterprise? We cannot say to our society, in the week that is in it — Community Relations Week — that we are not going to interrogate those issues to

the point of exhaustion and closure unless we recognise that we need help to do so, and that includes the two Governments.

In facing up to the scale of this week and of the community relations issues, one of the decisive ways in which we can move forward is to move forward with the two Governments around Haass and other issues in an effort to resolve all of that. This should be the week when we have the humility to recognise that, to say that to each other and, from a position of strength, not weakness, call upon others to assist us in that enterprise. In that way we will best serve the ambition of Community Relations Week and best serve the resolution of the community relations issues that have so many difficult and turbulent expressions across the face of this society.

In doing so, let us not make holes to jump into, one of which would be to transfer some of the functions from the Community Relations Council to the Equality Commission, as has been proposed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It would be folly, at the very moment when we should be concentrating our attention and our fire on community relations issues through more resources and more opportunity for the Community Relations Council, to then take away some of those functions and give them to the Equality Commission that, save some good work in recent weeks, has been a disappointment when it comes to fulfilling its statutory functions in terms of equality responsibilities in the North.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he acknowledge that that position in relation to the joining of the Community Relations Council (CRC) to the Equality Commission — the objection to that — was not the position held by the SDLP in previous rounds of talks in relation to those issues?

Mr Attwood: That is my understanding, but I have the humility to recognise that, if there is a stronger place to go to, you go to the stronger place. The stronger place is not to give some of the functions of the CRC to the Equality Commission that, in so many ways, has failed to live up to its statutory and other responsibilities since it was established under the Good Friday Agreement. If it is the case that the deputy First Minister has signed off on the racial equality strategy, let the measure of OFMDFM, when it comes to the publication of that strategy, be that it deals with all of the issues that it needs to deal with when it comes to the issue of immigration.

I have not yet read the leaked document of the racial equality strategy. Does it deal with the issue of access to primary and secondary health service for immigrants? Does it deal with the issue of simplification and simplicity around immigration processes? Does it have at its heart a child-proofing approach to ensure that the children of immigrants and those who are seeking to live in this country after refugee status will be properly protected and taken care of? If the racial equality strategy is to be published, let us ensure that, when it is published by OFMDFM, it deals with all of the refugee issues —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close.

Mr Attwood: — not only with the issues of racial equality.

Ms Lo: The 2014 theme for Community Relations Week is building a united community. I am glad to see that the week has the opportunity to showcase positive projects

that are taking place on the ground by many grass-roots organisations to promote a shared future and allows us to reflect on our need to do more.

Refugee Week recognises the contributions that asylum seekers and refugees make to our society. Asylum seekers often come to Northern Ireland looking for a sanctuary from wars, civil unrest or persecution. However, when settling here, even in small numbers, they face many challenges, including access to housing, education, English classes for adults and a complex welfare system. The assessment process can also be lengthy and soul-destroying for asylum seekers who are not allowed to work, even though they are highly skilled, and have to live on a meagre statutory allowance. A young Somali economist came to my office recently and told me that he has been waiting for two years to hear the outcome of his assessment. He was very frustrated and felt that he could have been working that whole time to support himself.

3.45 pm

I welcome the announcement from OFMDFM in February on the setting up of a crisis fund to help asylum seekers, migrants and refugees. That is particularly helpful during the interim period when they are waiting for the processing of benefits, which can be for weeks and weeks. It can also help destitute asylum seekers whose applications for refugee status have been declined but who cannot be sent back to their home country. An update to the House on the emergency fund would be welcome.

As we know, the growing diversity of our community has presented many cultural, economic and social benefits, but sadly, when wrongly perceived, diversity brings its challenges. Changes within communities often lead to some increased tensions, which have manifested themselves in sectarian and racist attacks. We need to do more than just condemn those incidents. We must recognise the importance of community capacity-building work in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to enable authentic and meaningful experience with, and of, one another.

Token multicultural events are no substitute for real intercultural and interdependent exchanges. Work needs to happen in areas where frequent racist incidents occur to promote mutual understanding and challenge sectarian and racist attitudes. We must also encourage reporting, supporting victims in a way that demonstrates care and sensitivity and ensures that the perpetrators of hate crimes are brought to justice and face the full weight of the law. It makes sense to invest in everyone who chooses to live in Northern Ireland to enable them to reach their full potential and afford them the opportunity to develop personally and contribute to society.

I would like to congratulate DEL on the success of its pilot scheme for free ESOL classes for asylum seekers. Early intervention is an effective early investment in tackling isolation and reduced social and economic mobility. That is the DE's responsibility too, and reinforces the idea that cross-departmental working is essential in tackling the issues that underpin inequality and, ultimately, discrimination. I wrote to the Education Minister, but his response was not very helpful, as he just referred to the inclusion and diversity service in his Department in respect of access to education and additional ESOL support for migrant and refugee children.

Society benefits —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Your time is almost up.

Ms Lo: — when people can hold open, mixed and multiple identities, can experience different cultures and express their individual creativity.

Mr G Robinson: As a member of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, I read the wording of the motion carefully and find that I can agree with its thrust and intent. I am not so sure that others in the Chamber can share my positivity.

It is important that Northern Ireland does not forget the crisis that is being experienced by refugees throughout the world, and I welcome positive encounters with those who have suffered first-hand. We should take into account that there are in excess of 15 million refugees and that a stark proportion of them are under 18 years of age.

Daily, we witness thousands of people in distress because of famine, war or weather. I could much better appreciate the impact on families or individuals if I were given the opportunity to speak to them directly about their horrific experiences. The people of Syria and Iraq are two of the most prominent stories today. We must also remember the people of Haiti, who are still in absolute poverty after the earthquake two years ago. Those people deserve our practical support as well as our thoughts and prayers. An opportunity to meet them could only be an educational and beneficial experience.

There are Members in the Chamber and their colleagues beyond it who have shown recently that their vision of a shared future is not one that I could subscribe to. I walked to church and was intimidated by protesters, and elected members of a number of bodies were among those gathered. The motion contains the buzzwords "shared future", so I pose this question: is this a shared future? Some seem to think that a shared future means one-way traffic but then complain when things do not go their way. That is bullying, not an attempt to share a future.

Across the world, much needs to be done and deserves the support of Northern Ireland and its people, but I firmly believe that we must look at our own difficulties as well as those of the rest of the world in trying to achieve solutions and overcoming hostilities. I will support the motion because we must support refugees throughout the world at the same time as finding solutions to our home-grown difficulties, including looking out for our migrant and refugee communities in Northern Ireland, who, in recent times, have been the victims of race hate. I also support Community Relations Week.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members to stick to the motion, please.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion, and, along with my party colleagues, I welcome Refugee Week and Community Relations Week.

Recognising the hard work that goes on throughout the year on these issues is extremely important in building the shared community that the majority of people here want to live in. It is important and necessary work, and there should not be any room for complacency in carrying it out. It definitely should not be taken for granted, and, of course,

we should also note that developing a shared community and building a strong economy are inextricably linked.

Community Relations Week presents us with an opportunity to showcase the great work that goes on on the ground all year round. That important work can sometimes be taken for granted, and it results in building and sustaining relationships across cultural divides. Refugee Week and Community Relations Week is a time for us to celebrate the ethnic and cultural diversity of our community, and it is important to note that long gone are the days when it could have been perceived that there are two or three communities here.

Ireland has changed and is changing, and in a pretty amazing way, I think. We are definitely better off for that. On a side note, when we talk about immigration or about people choosing to make their home here and bring up their family, I am extremely uncomfortable with how people's value seems to be assessed on their economic value. I think that that is a really cold way in which to shape the discussion on immigration, and we should step back and realise that we are talking about human beings who have so much more to offer. We should be welcoming everyone with open arms.

We do not really need to go into it, but the images of the North that were flashed across TV screens and the front pages of newspapers around the world did not exactly paint us in a great light. However, I think that, we have subsequently sent out a clear message that racism and sectarianism — in fact, any form of hate — cannot be tolerated. Unfortunately, it seems to be a minority that always make the most noise, but rallies against racism and different events have firmly shown that the majority of our population want to build a culturally diverse and welcoming society.

The media have an important role to play here as well. They need to take more responsibility for how much influence they have over people's mindset. At times, the media are guilty of sensationalising issues, which, as result, get blown out of proportion or almost feed on negativity. There are plenty of good-news stories out there that need to be given more space, and more space does need to be given to progressive debates. For example, we recently had a debate on equal marriage, and at least two programmes on different TV channels showed only people speaking against equal marriage. There was no balanced coverage.

I think that more space needs to be given to progressive voices, but I suppose that this week is about highlighting the good work that goes on on the ground.

I have problems with the way in which the conversation has been shaped in recent weeks around the word "tolerance". I do not really think that that is good enough. I do not think that we should simply seek to tolerate people. We should accept everyone for who they are. That talk about tolerance does not go far enough; in fact, it is the bare minimum and it lets people get away with the harmful views and opinions that they hold.

I want to highlight some of the good work that happens in south Armagh. Excellent community relations work is done by Iarchimí Ard Mhacha Theas, which is an ex-prisoners' group that plays a central role and works alongside former British soldiers and loyalist groups. I have been lucky enough to be involved in some of the different programmes

that it has run for young people. It has weekend itineraries, and young people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives are really challenged about their perspectives of other people. Lasting friendships are made as a result. I do not think that we can place any value on that work; it is absolutely invaluable.

I know that a lot of really excellent events have been organised for Community Relations Week. A few members of the Committee will be attempting to play football on Wednesday to highlight racism and to show solidarity with ethnic minorities who are living here. That is just one of the excellent events that have been organised for Community Relations Week and Refugee Week. I support the motion.

Mrs Hale: I very much welcome the debate so far. I know that my party colleagues have spoken about Community Relations Week and the need for greater understanding and respect for our indigenous cultures, especially in the run-up to the parading season, and I heartily agree with their comments. However, if I may, I will focus on the latter part of the motion, which looks to ensure that the Assembly facilitates positive encounters, especially in relation to refugees and diverse cultures in order to create greater understanding, overcome hostility and build a shared future.

As I stated in the House last Monday, the unprecedented growth in inward migration in recent years presents us with challenges and opportunities. We either show a strong united voice on the issue or we create a vacuum in which people draw their own conclusions, which can often end up with the most damaging of consequences. In recent weeks, we have seen that there is a greater need to understand one another's background, not only Catholic and Protestant, but those from other diverse and ethnic minorities living in Northern Ireland. A shared future has to be for all the people of Northern Ireland.

As I also mentioned in the Chamber, I have passionately worked with organisations, such as the Horn of Africa, which focuses on working to integrate refugees in the local community and to proactively find solutions to promote greater understanding. Those organisations and the individuals have highlighted a number of barriers that face refugees in relation to employment rights and entitlements. The most pertinent of those is the massive difficulty associated with the lack of understanding of the English language. Indeed, a representative from one of those leading organisations believed that the inability to grasp the English language was the single most important barrier facing refugees and ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland.

I have witnessed the sheer number of issues and problems that stem from the inability to grasp our language, including young children who have difficulty communicating with their peers and teachers, young adults trying to access employment but who are unable to fill in an application form or conduct an interview process, and elderly citizens who are unable to socialise with others due to their lack of linguistic skills and understanding.

There is very little support for those refugees over the age of 18 to access free English classes. Whilst any asylum seeker coming to the Province is admitted to free English classes, that is taken away once refugee status has been granted by the Home Office. The refugees in Northern Ireland are intelligent and very able people, and they want to become an integral part of our society. They want to

showcase their skills, and they want an opportunity to contribute to a better Northern Ireland for us all, something that we must understand and respect. Without the ability to communicate with the wider society, it would seem impossible to facilitate those positive encounters that we want to see flourish. The ability to understand one another's cultures and educate one another is also greatly diminished.

I hope that, as part of Refugee Week, we will seek to address a number of issues that stem from the lack of knowledge of the written and spoken English word. We need to do more to ensure that those who gain access to free English classes can do so. We especially need to see a change in the legislation that allows for those coming to Northern Ireland as adult refugees to access language classes. That will create a better opportunity for them and Northern Ireland, as they will have the ability to enrich society at a social and a fiscal level. Finally, this will allow people to communicate, educate and understand each other's culture in a way that is mutually beneficial for all. I support the motion.

4.00 pm

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I also support the motion and welcome the fact that all those who have spoken thus far wholeheartedly support the motion, as, I presume, will those yet to speak.

As previously cited, the motion is a simple statement of fact and asks us to note that this is Community Relations Week and Refugee Week. From that point of view, all Members will want to take an opportunity to condemn all forms of sectarian, racist and homophobic attacks, and to reject all those who wish to be racist, sectarian or homophobic in any way, shape or fashion through words or actions. They will equally want to commend all those across communities who work daily to build good community relations, promote racial equality and tackle homophobia and other sexual orientation offences.

On behalf of our party, I commend all people and organisations directly involved in working daily to build good relations across our community.

My party and I look at community relations more broadly: it deals with sectarianism and cross-community relations, in which people are euphemistically called Catholic and Protestant or unionist and nationalist. We also include race relations in community relations, as we do, of course, sexual orientation. We think that it is very important that the Assembly and Executive do all in their power to support those working on this daily, be they in faith groups, community organisations or other statutory, half-statutory, quasi-statutory bodies, arm's-length agencies — the whole raft of community organisations and the many individuals.

Certainly, in the last number of years representing the South Belfast constituency, I have come across an awful lot of people, very often individuals, working as best they can with refugees in our city. That is because, historically, a lot of refugees and asylum seekers have lived in South Belfast. I have had the benefit and privilege of meeting those people, who are very much unsung heroes. People in the House and across the length and breadth of this country are, unfortunately, all too well experienced, given the number of people from these shores who, over generations, have had to travel the world seeking refuge and benefiting from the support of other peoples in far-

flung countries. Therefore, it is incumbent on us — we who have the honour to host refugees seeking relief from oppression, injustice, often brutality and, in some cases, death — to do whatever possible to help them.

In recent weeks, much has been said about the need for a racial equality strategy as part of an overall tapestry. Just last week, I made it clear in the House that I do not believe for one second that any one of the 108 MLAs needs a racial equality strategy to behave themselves, moderate their language and work to build community relations. However, I will say that a racial equality strategy produced by the Executive and Assembly is important because it will demonstrate the Executive's commitment to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and develop good relations. Such a strategy will be key to identifying the real needs of our ethnic minority population and others who find themselves discriminated against.

The strategy will promote racial equality and tackle racism, and it should increase awareness of the issues and the various responsibilities, as another Member mentioned. The strategy also needs to address the issue of protection within the law, and that means enforcement of the law on behalf of the victims, be they of race, sectarian or homophobic crime.

I place on record that our party wants the racial equality strategy to be produced. I know that Martin McGuinness, as deputy First Minister, has signed off on it. I make it clear on the party's behalf that, if Sinn Féin were writing such a strategy exclusively, it would be much more radical, but we are trying to seek agreement with our partners in Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will you bring your remarks to a close, please?

Mr Maskey: I urge all those people out there, including Members of this House, to redouble our efforts to tackle sectarianism, racial discrimination and homophobia.

Mr Cree: Northern Ireland has changed a great deal in the past 20 years since the ceasefires. Unlike Great Britain, Northern Ireland did not experience widespread immigration from the Commonwealth countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Our society was essentially comprised of two main blocs, crudely described as Protestant/unionist and Roman Catholic/nationalist. I am glad to say that that situation is changing.

Since the ceasefires, we have witnessed an increase in immigration from within the European Union, especially eastern Europe, and from further afield. This has brought opportunities and challenges. It is perfectly acceptable that we should debate immigration and the impact that it is to have, and is having, on housing, education and employment patterns, but it is essential that that debate takes place in a respectful and sensitive manner and deals with the facts, not the myths or perceptions.

We need to decide what kind of Northern Ireland we want to build and to recognise the importance of respect and tolerance for all — Orangemen, nationalists, ethnic minorities. There has been much talk about building a shared future. This applies to all communities and groups in our society. Everyone should have the right to live free from attack or the fear of attack. No one should be subjected to physical or verbal abuse, have their home attacked or live in fear of such attacks.

Recently, we have witnessed a spate of disgraceful and shocking racially motivated attacks on ethnic minorities in all parts of Belfast — north, south, east and west. We still have legacy issues of sectarian attacks on people and property, especially in interface areas. We also have the type of intolerance whereby peaceful parades are threatened with violence by those who cannot show tolerance for those who may not share the same religious or cultural background as the protesters. These are all entirely wrong and must be condemned. A truly shared future will come about when everyone is free to live their life and express their culture free from attack or fear of attack.

We must focus on the contribution made by immigrants and refugees. Our lives have been enriched by the contribution made by the immigrants. You have only to look around any high street or supermarket. We eat in Italian, Indian and Chinese restaurants. No trip to the north coast is complete without a Morelli's ice cream, and if you want to go to Bangor, it is Caproni's ice cream.

In north Down, we also enjoy all these cultures within our community. Those in business contribute greatly to the local economy. Indeed, what would once have been called foreign food is now a staple in the diet of the people of Northern Ireland. More people holiday abroad and travel further afield than ever before.

There is a theory that much of the historical tension between the communities in Belfast was due to competition for jobs and housing. Attacks on ethnic minorities may be due in part to fears that jobs are being taken away or scarce housing resources are being used up and locals cannot get housed in their home area. The message that we need to get out is that the vast majority of immigrants are working, paying taxes and contributing to this society. Many are playing vital roles, especially in the health service, which quite simply could not cope without them.

This is, of course, nothing new. Our linen industry was built by Huguenot refugees and names like Molyneaux, Pettigrew and Lamont are testament to that. Although he was not a refugee in the legal sense, tens of thousands of Belfast families had cause to thank a certain citizen of Hamburg, a Mr Wolff, who came here in the 19th century to help to found one of the greatest shipyards the world has ever seen and provide employment for generations of our citizens.

As we mark Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, we must commit to working to promote tolerance and fairness and to restore the reputation of this place, which is friendly and welcoming. With Northern Ireland secure within the United Kingdom, we must now devote our efforts to building a united Northern Ireland. Surely that is something we can agree on.

Mr Agnew: I am delighted to speak at the beginning of Community Relations Week and Refugee Week on behalf of the Green Party in Northern Ireland, as it gives us an opportunity to move beyond the language of two communities. We have many diverse communities, including, it is worth mentioning this week, the refugee community, which is very well represented by the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS), which is a great NGO that represents the interests of refugees in Northern Ireland.

We have many diverse communities. We speak often about unionist and nationalist communities, which hold two forms of nationalism — British and Irish — but we also have internationalists. We speak of Protestant and Catholic communities, but we also have our Muslim community, which has been much in the news, our Hindu community and people of many diverse faiths and none, all of whom make up part the rich tapestry that is Northern Ireland.

We have our young people communities and our older people communities. We also have our online community, which should remind us more than any other that we are part of a global community. Sometimes, it is important for us to see ourselves in that context.

Community Relations Week in particular gives us the opportunity to talk not just about a shared future but about the shared now that exists in many parts of Northern Ireland in many different contexts. We have our 62 integrated schools, where young people from diverse backgrounds are educated together. We have shared workplaces, which are common throughout Northern Ireland. We have our shared social spaces, where the narrative of a Northern Ireland of two divided communities does not ring true.

However, we still have segregation; we have segregated housing and segregated education. Indeed, you could even argue that we have segregated elections, with a nationalist election, a unionist election and, arguably, a cross-community election, which take place separately. The segregation in those three institutions — elections, housing and education — is, in large part, the fault of the political institution and how we have operated in the past. We have to challenge ourselves about how we operate in the future to move forward, make this a more shared society and build on the shared now that already exists.

We had the recent comments by the HBO chief executive, who stated that Northern Ireland was far from being a cosmopolitan place. We should heed those words. People might get annoyed about them and say, "Look how much we have done for HBO". We should be upset, but not at the HBO chief executive: we should be upset at ourselves, because that is a genuine perception of life in Northern Ireland.

If we are to change that, we need to challenge some of the issues that we have in Northern Ireland. For example, we do not have a racial equality strategy. We were told very recently by a junior Minister that it was ready to come forward and would be published within the week. That was last week if not the week before. We need to bring it forward and show as an institution that we want to take forward improved community relations, particularly amongst our ethnic communities.

There is no doubt that gay rights are an issue for Northern Ireland. People coming from Los Angeles and Hollywood in the US, as opposed to Hollywood in my constituency of North Down, must wonder why we have such an issue with LGBT rights and with including LGBT rights in our society. If we want to be a cosmopolitan society, we need to tackle those issues.

We need to talk about immigration and be proud that people want to come to Northern Ireland. For generations, we have bemoaned the number of young people leaving our shores. When young people from other countries want to come here, we should be proud to say that not

only is Northern Ireland open for business but it is open for workers who want to come here to earn a living and to refugees who want to come here to seek sanctuary. We should be a welcoming and cosmopolitan place; we should be a place to which people want to come to live, work and raise a family.

4.15 pm

Mr Lyttle: I am pleased to be making a winding-up speech on today's motion on behalf of the Committee. It is welcome and extremely important that the Assembly has marked the start of Refugee Week and Community Relations Week. We are sending a positive message out today. All the Members who spoke unanimously supported the important work that is done in both those weeks.

Bronwyn McGahan said that refugees and anyone who seeks asylum in this community must be given a firm welcome. They must be treated with dignity and respect and have access to the public services to which they are entitled. That was a valuable contribution. She also cited the fact that the racial equality strategy has been agreed by the deputy First Minister. That is the second time that we have heard that in the House, and it really serves only to highlight the fact that, on another occasion when we are debating the important issues of community relations, immigration and asylum, of the four Ministers available to us today, none is in the House, as far as I am aware. I think that that is a real disappointment.

Alex Attwood spoke about a community relations conference that took place today — I was privileged to be at that as well — where Denis Bradley rightly reminded us that the Belfast Agreement was bigger than just this region and that, in order to deal with many of the outstanding issues relating to community relations here in Northern Ireland, we have to include the British and Irish Governments and, as Refugee Week shows us, cast that net even further and build a truly united community for all our citizens.

Anna Lo rightly said that building a united community is the theme of Community Relations Week. She highlighted how complex our asylum system can be at times, but welcomed the fact that OFMDFM is to introduce a crisis fund to assist people through those difficult times. She rightly welcomed and celebrated diversity and the social and economic benefits that it brings for our community. She reminded us, as is timely, that, whilst multicultural events make a good contribution to building a united community, we really need to see long-term, sustained, meaningful, multicultural contact and exchange across our community to build mutual respect and understanding and, indeed, to firmly challenge sectarian and racist attitudes that might prevail.

Megan Fearon rightly highlighted how central building a shared society is to delivering a strong economy in Northern Ireland. She said that the two are inextricably linked, and I agree with that. She also called on us to celebrate diversity and highlighted the recent rallies against racism, which did indeed demonstrate the strength of public opinion in support of people from all backgrounds in our community.

Brenda Hale rightly suggested that employment rights are an extremely important issue for immigrants in our community and mentioned the importance of sound

language assistance and other types of help that we need to promote integration in our community.

Alex Maskey also referenced the racial equality strategy. As other Members suggested, it is becoming increasingly frustrating that we are hearing that that is partly signed off but has not yet been delivered. I think it is high time that we get on with the public consultation and the Assembly and the community are given an opportunity to contribute to a robust racial equality strategy.

Lesley Cree called for respectful debate in our community — I agree with that — and tolerance for all. He rightly highlighted the contribution that migrants have made in our community. Indeed, one of the most famous is Gustav Wolff, who created a huge industry in my constituency of East Belfast.

Stevie Agnew highlighted the work of some of our local NGOs, in particular NICRAS, in offering much-needed help to refugees in our community. He reminded us to challenge discrimination of any kind and to be positive and proud that people want to come to Northern Ireland.

In closing, I will make some comments as a Member of the Assembly. This is an opportunity for us to take stock of how well we are doing as an Executive and Assembly in promoting good relations in Northern Ireland.

Today we heard the new head of the Community Relations Council expressing concerns in that regard and about the fact that an estimated 0.0001% of regional public expenditure is spent on promoting good relations.

At the community relations conference today, the MLAs who were present experienced first-hand the frustration of many of our local community organisations, which are working tirelessly to promote good relations at grass-roots level. The organisations expressed extreme frustration that they are not getting the resources they need. It is my understanding that OFMDFM's central good relations fund has experienced significant delays in the last financial year and this financial year in allocating resources to those grass-roots organisations that are at the coalface of dealing with sectarianism and racism and building positive good relations in our community. It is my understanding that no central good relations funding has been released for this financial year, and we are now into June. It is unacceptable to expect our community relations organisations to be able to survive and thrive in that particular climate.

The recent peace monitoring report also said that we are in danger of talking a cultural war into existence. Despite the fact that there are more loyalist marches and bands than ever, only a percentage of those marches are contested. The report also said that we are putting our police service in the place of acting as human shock absorbers. With another period ahead where we know that tensions can run high, it is extremely frustrating that some of those outstanding community relations issues, which many of the public want us to show leadership on and deal with, go unresolved. It remains unclear as to when talks to reach solutions on those key issues are going to be achieved.

I read a report today that contained one fairly simple line:

"Daddy, why is that man pointing a gun at us?"

That puts into stark perspective the narrative that we are leaving for generations after us at this moment in time. We

continue to have an unacceptable level of tolerance for paramilitarism and intimidation in our community, and it is high time that the Executive, and OFMDFM in particular with responsibility for good relations, showed leadership in tackling these issues.

The Together: Building a United Community strategy sets goals for ensuring that all public space is shared space and for delivering shared neighbourhoods and shared education — although highly disappointingly it makes little or no mention of integrated education — and it sets ambitious targets for interface removal. We are a year past the publication of the strategy and there is little information about resourcing, budgeting and action plans or target dates for the delivery of any of those fairly modest goals. We need to see urgency from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister if, indeed, we are to pay more than just lip service to these important aspirations that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland hold for our community.

I thank the Members who participated in the debate. I encourage Members to attend as many of the Refugee Week and Community Relations Week events as possible and to join together and redouble our efforts in building the truly united community that people in this community want to see.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes that 16-22 June 2014 marks Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014; further notes the respective themes of shared future and building a united community; and expresses its support for Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, particularly in relation to their shared aim of facilitating positive encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage greater understanding, overcome hostility and build a shared society.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to take their ease for a moment.

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

Private Members' Business

North Coast Transport Infrastructure

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

Mr G Robinson: I beg to move

That this Assembly calls upon the Minister for Regional Development to invest in the transport infrastructure at, and leading to, the north coast to assist the commercial, commuter and tourist sectors of the economy.

I am pleased to be able to put forward the case for infrastructure development and improvement at and around the north coast to enable all aspects of the economic development of the area to improve and meet the needs of the 21st century user. I acknowledge the work that has been and is being done. It is important that that work be acknowledged.

As the Minister is aware, I have mentioned to him, on a number of occasions, different projects that I believe are worthwhile for the north coast. A dual carriageway the whole way to Coleraine from the end of the M2 on a phased basis, a climbing lane at Gortcorbies on the A37 Limavady to Coleraine road and a bypass for Dungiven to alleviate the congestion and pollution problems in that area are all essential road projects. It is vital that I point out that the A37 is the route used by emergency ambulances transferring patients to Altnagelvin Area Hospital. The A26 is the main route for transferring patients to Antrim Area Hospital and the Belfast hospitals. Improvement in journey times could be viewed as being very beneficial to patient outcomes.

All the projects that I have mentioned would have a great and positive impact on the north coast. The area is home to many commuters. Enhanced road works would benefit them by allowing them more time with their families, by reducing congestion and, definitely in the case of Dungiven town, by reducing pollution.

I have heard local firms on the north coast say that it is frustrating for them, as staff and vehicles are often severely delayed by the tailbacks on the A26 and A6 arterial routes. Delays cost businesses money that could be used to employ more staff and enhance services. There is also the cost of fuel and the financial impact of that on businesses to be considered, as much-needed income is removed from the pockets of commuters. Many aspects of the economy would benefit if improvements to road infrastructure were made.

There has to be acknowledgement of the high number of people who have lost their life on the A26 and the need for improvements on the road.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he acknowledge that the Department has made quite an investment — £8.2 million — into the A26 as a result of

lobbying over a period from his good self and many others from the north Antrim area?

Mr G Robinson: I acknowledge the Member's contribution. I was just about to come to that.

Work needs to be done, preferably to build a dual carriageway to replace the existing old road, to help to minimise road casualties on a phased basis. I appreciate that that road project is among the Minister's priorities. However, I would like to hear a definite start date from him.

In public transport, we have seen much investment in the Belfast to Londonderry rail service. I appreciate that there are legitimate reasons for the delay in the signalling project. However, I am aware that people who are affected by the planned development between Coleraine and Londonderry would like clarity on progress so that they can make plans. I welcome the investment programme so far and eagerly await its ultimate completion, especially of the new rail platform development at Bellarena outside Limavady. As part of the investment in the rail infrastructure, there has been much interest in a rail halt at Ballykelly, especially since the relocation of the DARD headquarters to the site there was announced. I am sure that the Minister will not be surprised at my mentioning that. It would be a beneficial project for DARD staff and locals alike. Perhaps the Minister can give an update on any discussions that he has had with his DARD counterpart on the possible start date for the project.

I mentioned the Gortcorbies climbing lane, a project that the Minister and his predecessor will be aware of my commitment to. In recent years, the need for it has become increasingly obvious as traffic levels increase. Daily, there are long tailbacks at peak times. Regrettably, that results in some motorists taking chances to overtake, thus endangering lives. A climbing lane would enable traffic to flow much more freely on that arterial route. Inwards investors look for good transport links, which are essential for that investment.

4.30 pm

The north-west also has its own airport located at Eglinton, which I believe could be more fully utilised, with a side effect of saving the council money. That type of transport infrastructure is essential to develop our economy. When the area can boast Project Kelvin, the high-speed Internet project, let us ensure that we have the transport infrastructure to match.

All the projects that I mentioned will improve the connectivity of the north coast to the rest of Northern Ireland, with benefits in so many sectors. I believe that investment in such projects is good value for money, when and if the resources become available.

What I have not mentioned is the impact that transport infrastructure improvements will have on the tourist sector. I want to mention the importance of the Rathlin ferry to the tourist economy. We have been fortunate to host an Irish Open in Portrush and coped well overall. The British Open in 2019, which I warmly welcome, and which was announced today, will require roads improvement in the areas mentioned. Those events are, of course, on top of the annual North West 200 motorcycle race, the Milk Cup and the air show, which are smaller but equally important events that support the north-west economy, and which will benefit also.

Some families are feeling the financial squeeze, and I understand that staycations have become increasingly popular. In 2012, 8.4 million day trips were taken in Northern Ireland. Better transport infrastructure makes travelling by car or public transport a good option for such trips. That scenario supports business and offers a cost-effective option for staycations. Bearing in mind the widespread impact of these projects on the north coast in general, we can see how improvements in the transport infrastructure will provide value for money and be positive.

I appreciate that I may have overlooked specific items, but I am sure that other Members will raise them. I hope that all Members will see the benefit of supporting this motion for the entire population of the north coast. As we all know, all departmental budgets are constrained at present, and I acknowledge that. However, when funding becomes available, I hope that the Minister will consider the needs of the north coast for the reasons that I outlined.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion and most of the proposer's shopping list for the infrastructure that is undoubtedly needed along the north coast, from the north-east all the way over to the north-west.

In recent months, we have had the Giro in north Antrim. Obviously, the Open has been held and will be held again in the Port in the time ahead. I have always said that there is huge tourism potential from north Antrim and east Derry all the way over to Derry city. We have failed to realise that for a variety of reasons, one of which is infrastructure.

In recent weeks, we have referred to the issue of air passenger duty. If we want tourists to get to the north coast, we have to get them to the North first. The Executive and, in particular, the economy Ministers need to get to grips with that.

Last night, I was looking at a brochure for the Causeway Coast and glens, which stated that the route is one of the world's greatest road journeys. The Antrim Coaster, service 252, serves the bus route from Derry to Coleraine to Ballycastle all the way down to Carnlough and then to Larne. However, in the summer during the peak period, for the world's greatest road journey, there are only two buses a day from Coleraine to Larne, and vice versa. So, we need a proper bus service along that route not only for local people but for tourists. It is a case of build it, and they will come.

Historically, there has always been a deficit, particularly in the north-east. The train infrastructure runs to Coleraine, Portrush, Portstewart and Larne, but the transport infrastructure to Ballycastle has always been short. The figures outlined in the research paper that was provided by Dr Raymond Russell underlines that fact. In the North, 6.1% of people use public transport. In East Belfast, 13% of people use it. However, if you look at other constituencies, you see that, in East Derry, only 3% use public transport and, in North Antrim, only 2.5% use it.

That is not because people in those constituencies do not want to use public transport; it is because of the choices available to them. That indicates how poor some of our public transport options are. It is ironic that we in North Antrim, the place where we build buses, are least likely to use them. Most people there would like the opportunity to avail themselves of bus and train services, and we need

to ensure that those services are in place for our rural communities in particular.

I come from an area with a number of villages including Ballybogey, Stranocum, Dunloy, Rasharkin and Loughguile, and they are all just off the beaten track. I sometimes wonder about connecting such villages to Ballymoney and Ballymena, from where there is main transport infrastructure to Belfast and Derry. There should be a bus service for all those villages. If there was, the 2.5% figure would soon increase.

As outlined, a lot of lives have been lost on the A26, and I welcome the work carried out by the Department in moving towards an upgrade. There is a big opportunity there for park-and-ride facilities. Wherever park and ride has been provided, the uptake has been phenomenal, and that would be the case for the A26, too. It would serve the needs not only in the Ballymoney/Ballymena area but of the commuters who come down from Ballycastle on to the A26 in the morning, and they would, no doubt, use it. I have also argued that, if you provided a train stop at Dunloy, you would be able to tap into that arterial route from Ballycastle to the Drones and on to the A26. Many would use a train service if it was handy for their daily commute.

The proposer also referred to the Rathlin ferry. It is good not only for getting tourists to the island regularly but for the islanders. When I went to the island on the ferry recently, there was a lot of chat amongst the islanders that there seemed to be a bit of a baby boom, so the population of the island is starting to increase.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McKay: I am sure that a number of factors are involved in the population increase on Rathlin, but it goes to show that good transport infrastructure not only improves the economy and increases tourism but improves constituents' quality of life.

Mr Dallat: I was hoping that we would have a holistic approach to the debate, but I had no idea that we would get a baby boom in the middle of it.

The infrastructure deficit, particularly in the north-west, is steeped in history and goes back to partition. Indeed, if one were to read the playwright Harry Barton, one would see that it goes back to the sixteenth century, when the MacSweeneys, the McQuillans and all the other clansmen perhaps had a more sophisticated form of transport than we have today.

It was during the dark days of direct rule that the railway was in serious danger of disappearing, certainly north of Ballymena. Even today, despite the commitments of the Minister, it would require very substantial capital investment to bring it to a stage at which we can say that there is an hourly intercity service to Belfast and, hopefully, onward to Dublin, Cork, Galway, and so on.

Everyone here knows that Michael Palin described that railway journey as one of the wonders of the world. Recently, the Minister issued a press release on his future strategy, which I thoroughly agree with. I think that the strategy was courageous, and I look forward to hearing the Minister put the flesh on the bones it because I am very conscious that the Budget agreed here in 2011 by the DUP and Sinn Féin somewhat restricts forward thinking.

When the Minister took office, he immediately went to redress the empty money bag left by the previous Minister. I am sorry to be critical of anybody, but what happened was disgraceful. Despite Mr Kennedy being from an opposing party, I give him credit. He found £20 million and stopped what could have been the closure of that line.

I am sure that those who tabled the motion are happy to say that "infrastructure" includes other forms of transport, including roads, ferries, air travel and canals. The ferry service to Rathlin was mentioned, and I am disappointed that nobody mentioned the ferry service between Magilligan and Greencastle. Perhaps that is something that needs to be examined, with a long-term view to developing tourism going both ways, because international tourists know nothing of borders and partition.

I am not sure how we fit the Ulster canal into this motion; but we can, of course, because when the Ulster canal is open, tourists will come in their thousands and that will benefit the Lower Bann, the Foyle as well, and right over to Scotland.

Lots of these issues are European, and, again, I give credit to the Chairperson of the Regional Development Committee who spearheaded a visit to Brussels on this very subject. Again, the Minister has been to Brussels, and I know that the staff there are working very hard to attract funding.

There are, of course, three roads that are important; not just the one or two that Mr Robinson referred to. The A26 brings the traffic from Ballymena and the A6 brings it from Belfast, but remember that the A5 brings traffic from Dublin. Those three arterial routes are absolutely critical to the future well-being of the coastal area; and, of course, the coast runs right up to Malin Head.

I hope that the motion will stimulate thought and provoke action. I do not know of any other area where there is a greater need to develop a long-term plan that puts in place an infrastructure. That infrastructure will bring to the north-west — economically and socially deprived for too long — the enormous benefits of new inward investment and, particularly, international tourism. The relative peace that we have now has created new opportunities to start addressing issues, which were probably neglected throughout the 40 years of the Troubles —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Dallat: — but are now awaiting the interest of long-term investors who want to see a stable return for their money.

Mr Swann: I thank those who tabled the motion for bringing it to the House. I welcome the opportunity to speak on today's motion on north coast infrastructure. I start by acknowledging today's great announcement of the return of the Open to Royal Portrush, which will, no doubt, bring a very welcome headache for transport and logistic planners. When we look at the success — it has already been mentioned — of the Giro d'Italia, which took in so many of the north coast's best features, we actually know that they are up to it. And we cannot mention the Giro and the north coast without referring to Councillor Sandra Hunter's pink sheep and the fantastic tourist attraction that those were.

I acknowledge the great support provided to tourism by Translink, through its seasonal Rambler services, including the discounts available at some attractions to those

travelling with Translink. Those services supplement the conventional services, many of which are benefiting from new buses with the European funding component. I will return to that point later.

When we think of the contribution made to the north-west by the Department for Regional Development, we often forget about rural transport and community transport. North Coast Community Transport provides an essential service. It fills a gap for the many people who inhabit rural areas but, unfortunately, cannot readily access public transport services because of reduced mobility. This is a lifeline for many, and I am pleased that, once again, the Department under the Minister has guaranteed the budget for these important services. Some have been making mischief on that front in recent weeks by claiming that the budgets have been reduced, but I am assured — I am sure that the Minister will reassure us again — that, as he has done in previous years, he will seek to secure additional funding for those important services.

I return to European funding opportunities. DRD has the best track record of success when it comes to European funding, whether it is for new buses — I acknowledge the 40 Wrightbus buses now in service with Translink that have a component of European funding — upgraded railway stations or road improvements. I think of the funding secured for the A8 scheme, some £15 million, which is the largest single amount for any project in Northern Ireland. Indeed, European funding has been sought to develop not only a transport hub for Belfast but a signature station for the Waterside in Londonderry.

4.45 pm

I am also informed that European funding will be used for the new designs of the Rathlin ferry and the public information services that will be happening in July. Mr McKay referred to the baby boom that is taking place on Rathlin. As I am sure you know, Minister Kennedy is the Minister responsible for Rathlin; he can answer for his own actions on that later.

There has been mention of two ferries: the Rathlin ferry, which is not only of tourism potential but a lifeline to the island, and the Malin Head ferry. We also need to mention the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry and the tourism potential that it can bring to the entire north coast when it is running.

It is fair to say that, sometimes, a motion like this would be well served by a response from the Finance Minister in which he could set out what strategic projects promoted by other Ministers he is prepared to fund. The A26 Frosses scheme has started, and there is the intention to further dual the section of the road to Coleraine, with goodwill and future funding. That finance might not have come about had it not been for the well-placed photographing of Mr Campbell with the newly installed Finance Minister. That photograph acted as a catalyst for the funding that we secured for the continuation and start of the A26.

Much has been made of the tourism potential of the north coast and the area. It is something that the new council — Causeway Coast and Glens — will be looking to fully utilise, and it will want to ensure that the infrastructure is there to support that. We need to look at the strategic plan for the tourism potential of the north coast. We can look at the excellent facilities at the Giant's Causeway

visitor centre and the fantastic numbers visiting it, but it could have been so much better and greater if the road structure and infrastructure had been put in place before it was built or while it was being built. A complete, holistic package would have fully utilised what is a fantastic tourist attraction. I know that the Minister is supportive of the proposed cycle and walkway scheme from Bushmills through the Causeway centre to the Aird. I look forward to further announcements on that. We will support the motion.

Mr McCarthy: The Alliance Party supports the motion and, indeed, would support and encourage the Minister for Regional Development to invest in transport infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland, as it goes without saying that a region with a modern road and rail network can and will prosper through economic development, thereby creating much-needed employment for all our people. If we are to get our economy moving, we urgently need all parts of it to be working at their best. The north coast is an essential part of our economy, particularly because it is a significant tourist venue with attractions such as the Giant's Causeway, the glens of Antrim, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and many other wonderful places of interest and beauty. It is almost as pleasant as the Strangford constituency and the Ards peninsula.

Mr Campbell: Just almost.

Mr McCarthy: Almost. It is also an essential piece of our transport infrastructure as it connects our two largest cities. Given that they will be the economic hubs of Northern Ireland, easy transport between them is essential to the smooth running of our economy. As a result, it is crucial that the infrastructure be appropriate. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Kennedy. Somebody said that it would have been useful if the Minister of Finance and Personnel had been available, but on this occasion, not like the last, we at least have a Minister present.

I want to talk about the public transport infrastructure, which is where we should focus our efforts in supporting the motion. The train service between Derry and Belfast is a crucial part of the infrastructure, and it is a wonderful service for the towns that are part of the route. However, as has been said, it serves only the towns at which the trains stop. We should look to bolster that with an integrated transport system that would provide a simple way for people to travel to stations to catch the train, whether by private car or, preferably, public transport. Safe cycle storage should also be part of those plans. Likewise, bus transport should be more available to people who do not live close to the railways. I would be interested to see whether the bus service between Belfast and the Giant's Causeway could be increased to make it easier for tourists to visit that fantastic location. That would be one way of using public transport to stimulate our tourist industry in that area.

As a realist, I know that the roads system is a key part of the transport infrastructure. That is not only because we need to build roads for buses to go on but because it is likely to be the default transport method for many in the future. As a result, I ask the Department for Regional Development to begin to undertake a thorough survey of how roads infrastructure is coping and whether there are any specific bottlenecks or other issues that restrict the free flow of transport. There will be specific local issues

that could be fed into that. It could be a useful role for the new councils to highlight those and work with the Department to remedy them.

I have long believed that the north coast is a particularly important part of Northern Ireland for its tourist potential and for providing a link between Belfast and the north-west of this region. An efficient transport system for the area is vital. As a member of the Regional Development Committee, I encourage the Minister to support the motion and take the necessary action to invest in and upgrade the infrastructure of roads and transport around the north coast.

Mr McQuillan: I am sure that many people are all too aware of the beauty and attractiveness of the north coast of this Province. The Giant's Causeway, the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Dunluce castle, Portrush, Portstewart and Coleraine are all major attractions, with world-leading events such as the North West 200 and the Auld Lammas Fair attracting many thousands of tourists and visitors to the Province. The Giant's Causeway is, without doubt, the largest and most attractive of the entire natural heritage we have to offer. It attracted over 750,000 people in 2013. The Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge attracted over 250,000 people.

On the back of the motion, the BBC news correspondent Andy West decided that he would try today to get from Belfast to the Giant's Causeway by public transport. He left the Europa Buscentre at 11.40 am on bus route 252 to Coleraine at a cost of £11.50 one way. After numerous stops and one changeover at Coleraine, he arrived at the causeway at 3.14 pm, which is a travel time of three and a half hours. The question to the Minister is this: is that acceptable? Does it provide the most direct route to our largest tourist attraction from our capital city? The visitor figures are magnificent, and they demonstrate the attractions that the north coast has to offer, as well as its market value.

I also mention Rathlin Island and, particularly, the Rathlin ferry, which provides first-class transport to and from the island. It is important that that service is maintained and supported.

In 2013, when Londonderry was the UK City of Culture, an investment was made in the Coleraine to Londonderry railway line. That was in response to the demand to maintain the existence of the railway line to that historic part of Ulster in its 400th year as a walled city. I want to see that sort of investment in the north coast. The Causeway Coast and Glens tourist area plan 2012-17 states that the 2012 baseline provided for growth, especially in the wake of the opening of the new causeway visitor centre and the Irish Open at Portrush. There is, therefore, room for improvement and building on some of the best figures in Northern Ireland.

The motion calls for more investment in the transport infrastructure of the north coast. I echo the call for the Minister for Regional Development to act. Investment in the transport infrastructure would offer better access to the north coast, easy access being the foothold of any business. Such an investment would offer better access to the north coast and the north-west region in order to manage demand better, as well as to attract more visitors and tourists with more efficient transport infrastructure. It would offer an investment in the present market and in the

future, presenting a legacy that will sustain tourism in this part of our Province for decades to come.

Tourism is the heart of economic activity in my constituency. It sustains a significant part of the private sector in the form of small and medium-sized businesses such as retail outlets and accommodation. We must build on that and not ignore facts. The north coast offers the most attractive of places outside Belfast for visitors and tourists. Reducing travel time from Belfast and a more open and efficient transport system will make it even more attractive as a tourist destination, as well as opening up the travel corridor between Northern Ireland's two largest cities. This will offer an economic legacy in attracting more foreign direct investment and will increase our exports through a more reliable and accessible transport system that is open to the main ports and airports in Northern Ireland.

As well as attracting tourism, the north coast covers a large rural network with many businesses such as engineering and farming, to mention a few. Those businesses need the support of sustainable roads that are maintained and upgraded to meet demand. That has not been the case. There are many roads around the north coast, in particular, the A29 from the Bushtown Road roundabout at Coleraine to Garvagh, which has been neglected and is in a poor condition. Parts of the route are eroding into two tracks making it difficult to drive on. I have contacted the Minister about this stretch of road on at least three occasions but, as yet, to no avail. This is the main arterial route from mid-Ulster to the north coast and should, in my opinion, be a priority.

Another issue that is constantly raised with me is the deployment of the red coats on the north coast, particularly in the rural towns of Garvagh and Kilrea, which results in visitors being deterred from stopping and shopping in small, independent businesses in such towns and forces them into larger towns and supermarkets. I ask the Minister to review the deployment of red coats in such an area.

I commend the motion to the House and call on the Minister to act, especially as we are coming into a new budgetary period and given the news that the Open championship is to be staged in Portrush as early as 2019.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin seo. I support the motion, but I am surprised and disappointed that my amendment was not allowed as it sought to further define what is meant by the north coast and the north-west.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that we should not discuss an amendment that was not selected. We are here to discuss the motion.

Mr Ó hOisín: Thank you, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I suppose that, strictly speaking, the north coast of the North is what lies between Derry in the west and Belfast in the east. It is, therefore, through these two cities that many of our visitors filter. Two of the major bottlenecks in the North are on the A6, at Dungiven and Moneynick, and it is with great frustration and vexation that I see that those works have not progressed with urgency given the economic and tourist development that would accrue. Likewise, delivery of the A5 project would be of great benefit to the entire North. That said, I welcome the commencement of work on the A26 at Frosses and the announcement of the Magherafelt bypass.

The delivery of all these infrastructure projects will be a game changer for the wide variety of events that are on or may come. Today's announcement on the Open is very welcome, as would any announcement be on the all-Ireland fleadh, an Irish City of Culture in 2016 and the possibility of the European City of Culture being in Derry at a later date. That is as well as the top-flight events that we already have, such as the Milk and Foyle cups, the North West 200, the Auld Lammas Fair and visitor attractions such as Roe Valley Country Park, Bushmills, the blue flag beaches and, of course, the causeway.

Phase 1 of the Derry to Coleraine railway line has been completed, and phase 2 will hopefully start soon. This investment, whilst welcome, has unfortunately not led to an improved service time. Indeed, in a unique challenge next week, two of my constituents will attempt to highlight the dreadful amount of time taken by the Derry to Belfast train. Peter will leave the general post office in Derry, walk across the Peace Bridge and board the Belfast-bound train. John will also leave the GPO in Derry on his bicycle and will attempt to reach the central post office in Belfast before Peter. It will be a damning indictment if John were to come in first or even close after. By the way, the train takes nearly two and a half hours, and the distance by road is 75 miles.

Another vital piece of infrastructure that receives no subvention from either Government is the Greencastle to Magilligan ferry, which has carried millions of passengers over the years and can now operate only on a limited and seasonal timetable, a sure impediment to tourists and to social and economic development. A modest investment there would surely increase the number of visitors to the north coast. Indeed some years ago, when I was chair of the North West Region Cross Border Group, which included many of the councils in the area, we commissioned a report that showed that two thirds of travellers were going on to visit a north coast attraction or to shop locally. Likewise, the EuroVelo route that traverses the North was intended to attract higher spending cyclists from across Europe who wished to visit the most spectacular scenery in western Europe. It unfortunately does neither, and studiously ignores the north coast and its attractions. The possibility of the reopening of the Ulster canal would open up limitless opportunities in tourism. The idea that, once again, we could travel from Coleraine to Limerick, Dublin and Galway by boat would be absolutely wonderful.

The motion calls for an adequate investment in infrastructure in the area and that should include high-speed broadband and enterprise zones as well as transport infrastructure. I support the motion.

5.00 pm

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion. I welcome the debate, because the transport infrastructure that we have on the north coast, from Belfast to Larne, taking in the glens and right through to Donegal, is not up to standard for today.

One thing that nobody has mentioned, and I will dwell on it for a minute, is the question of health. More and more people are being sent to the hospital in Antrim, and more and more people from my area and around Ballycastle are being sent to Coleraine. If the Minister, under Transforming Your Care, closes some of the present services in

Coleraine, those people will then go on to Altnagelvin, which will cause bigger problems. At present, we have no transport to take people to Altnagelvin or even to Coleraine. You are in the hands of private hire.

I experienced the situation myself when I was attending the cancer unit in the City Hospital. To get from the glens or Ballycastle to the City Hospital takes far too long on the bus. You either go on private transport, or if you can get the train to suit your appointment, that is fine. However, if you go to Antrim Hospital from the glens or Ballycastle, you have to take three bus journeys. You can get to Belfast on one bus, but you cannot get to Antrim. Three journeys is far too long. Imagine some of our older people going to Antrim Hospital for a check-up and having to sit there all day waiting to coincide with the three buses before getting home. You could leave home at 8.00 am or 9.00 am and not get home again until 7.00 pm or 8.00 pm. It is not uncommon for that to happen. I ask the Minister to look at that.

Special needs children from the Ballycastle and glens area who get their education in Ballymena because of its special needs schools are being sent to Ballycastle and Coleraine to see paediatricians. That means that their parents have to take them out of school and then go to Coleraine. The whole thing is not coordinated. If the people in the hospitals would coordinate appointments to suit the bus journeys, or see whether appointments do suit before giving them out, it would make things a lot better, especially for those with special needs who have to go all over the country to get to their appointments. My daughter goes to Coleraine and Ballycastle. She hardly ever goes to Antrim Hospital. She goes all around the place to get to her appointments, and you have to go to Ballymena to take her out of school. I ask the Minister to bear that in mind.

I have been in the tourist industry for over 25 years, and, on the north coast, it has never improved. We have had countless documents and reports. We are now on to our second master plan report, and still nothing has been done. My party colleague Daithí McKay mentioned the bus services coming through — the two Goldliners — in the summertime. When they come to the glens, they are full. They are packed in Belfast so cannot pick anybody up along the coast. My party colleague Cara McShane, who was the chair of Moyle Council, wrote to the Minister on the problems that that was causing in Ballycastle and Ballintoy. We have still not sorted that one out yet. Why send out one bus when it is full before it even gets a quarter of the way along the route to pick up people who cannot then get on?

One Member mentioned the Budget and the carve-up between the DUP and Sinn Féin, but the Budget was an Executive thing, so I do not know where the Member was. Arlene Foster's Programme for Government highlights the north coast, the Antrim coast and the glens, to which we must pay more attention. The one good thing that we did get out of it, which would have been a big draw for tourism, is the national park.

I ask you, Minister, to look at bus journeys for people attending hospital and for those young people who are asked to sign on at a job centre and go for interviews. You go to Ballymoney for interviews and end up having to spend the whole day there waiting for a bus to come back again.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McMullan: That is the same when you go to Ballymena.

I support the motion, but I ask the Minister to look at the bus times.

Mr Allister: I welcome and support the motion. I begin by commending the Minister for the fact that, when he came to office, he grasped the issue of the long-neglected A26 improvement, and steps are now afoot to extend somewhat the dual carriageway up to the Ballycastle junction. I suppose that the problem for the Minister is that, when he does something positive like that, he but whets our appetite for more. Rather than him thinking that he has done his bit for north Antrim and east Londonderry, I want to disabuse him of that idea and assure him that, collectively, we are looking for more. We do not want just a quality road to the turn-off at Ballycastle but a quality dual carriageway right through to Coleraine. That spine road is the key to the opening up of the entire north coast area and the exploitation of its full potential. Rather than resting on his laurels — yes, the Minister can collect the accolades for getting something done about the A26 and is entitled to do so — you cause us to want you to finish the job. That should be his ambition and his achievement in that regard.

I also commend the Minister for the manner in which he took an interest in, saw improvements to and is seeing improvements to the railway connection through to Londonderry. I urge him to never forget the fact the Ballymena station still needs considerable improvement and that we need the extension to the park-and-ride facility to really exploit and take full advantage of that. There is much being done, but there is much to be done, and I trust that the Minister will take those remarks in that spirit and continue to aim to please in regard to those matters.

Some useful points have been made in the debate.

Mr McQuillan made the point that, to go by public bus from Belfast to the Giant's Causeway, our prime tourist attraction, it can take as long as three and a half hours. That just should not be. Surely, particularly in the summer season, it is possible to have a better facility than that.

I draw a particular gripe to the Minister's attention. There are many day trips to the north coast by coach tour, but one of the complaints that has been raised with me is that they come and return again on the same day. One of the reasons that has been suggested for that is that there is no adequate de-sludging facility on the north coast to decant the sewage on the tour buses. Surely that can be addressed so that, instead of having to return to Belfast to cope with that problem, the coaches and buses can have a facility in or about the north coast. That could encourage overnight stays and longer coach tours to the north coast.

It is practical issues like that that, as well as the grand gestures like improving the spine structures of the road and the railways, will in fact, bit by bit, make a difference. The Minister has proven himself to be a listening Minister, and I think that he will also be listening on the small details and will continue to press forward with those issues. I am sure that many of us will continue to press him on those issues as well.

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I thank all Members who made a contribution to what

has proved to be an interesting debate on this important motion. On probably the hottest day of the year, there has been a sense of a Santa's wish list. I hope to deal with many, if not all, of the points that Members raised, and I will endeavour to do so.

As Members are aware, investment in the transport infrastructure at and leading to the north coast is very important to me, and I want to stress that. We could have no better day than today, with the wonderful announcement of the return of the Open to Royal Portrush in 2019, to debate this important motion. We have a number of years to plan for the event, which is much longer than the months' notice of the Irish Open being held there in 2012. I believe that having that time will strengthen my hand around the Executive table in securing greater funding for transport in the north coast region, with the support, I hope, of Members who made contributions here today.

I want to remind Members of some of the key messages about the overall importance of transport, specific transport investment on the north coast and future transport plans in the area. Transport is a key component of fully developing our region economically, socially and environmentally. I am taken by the point raised about using the Open as a focus to target increasing the frequency of rail services on the Coleraine-Belfast line. We have plans in place to dual the Dargan bridge when we undertake work on the York Street interchange, which will remove the bottleneck for services entering Belfast. It seems perfectly sensible to me that we move forward with the infrastructure to expand the half-hourly service on this line, and, of course, I will look for support across the House to press the Executive and the Finance Minister in particular to get behind the proposal. As an Ulster Unionist Minister, I am proud to have saved the Londonderry-Coleraine line. It was earmarked for closure when I took office, and it will soon move to an hourly service by 2016, hopefully, on the completion of phase 2.

In April, I underlined my commitment to rail travel with the publication of the 'Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy', which set out how we should take forward and prioritise railway investment up to 2035. We now have 13.2 million rail passengers annually, and I am committed to further enhancing their experience. I am committed to building an integrated, modern, reliable and environmentally efficient transportation network that meets the needs of communities and business.

I think that better transport infrastructure improves capacity, and better connectivity boosts trade and creates balanced growth and prosperity. It is essential, therefore, that we invest properly in the transport network across Northern Ireland, especially in areas that need assistance to achieve their considerable potential. That includes the north coast, which, with its unrivalled beaches and scenery, is one of our prime tourist destinations, and home, of course, to our only UNESCO world heritage site. I was interested in the report by Andy West on behalf of the BBC on how long it took to get to the Giant's Causeway. I understand that, and there are issues and challenges for us, but I believe that we can meet the challenges. I am mindful that the north coast, in addition to its world-famous scenic drives and railway journeys, is more than just a place to visit.

Communities live there, and businesses operate amid that breathtaking scenery. It is vital that we create high-quality

local and regional transport connections to provide access to major towns and gateways. That ensures that goods and markets and workers and jobs can link seamlessly. I want to see local businesses expand their markets across Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and throughout the European Union and beyond.

5.15 pm

I think that I have demonstrated my commitment to regional connectivity through major investment in road and rail projects with a direct and lasting benefit to the north coast. That includes the ongoing construction of the A8 dual carriageway to Larne to act as a gateway to the coast road and the port of Larne, a major upgrade that is under way at the A26 outside Ballymoney and improved access to the airport outside Londonderry at Eglinton. I have further plans to improve the A6 between Londonderry and Dungiven and the A26 all the way to Coleraine, subject to future budget settlements. Those are in addition to numerous investments at local level to improve junctions, roundabouts, footpaths and cycleways along the north coast to provide a better and safer journey for everyone, to help access public services and to reduce traffic delays at peak times such as bank holiday weekends.

Providing better transport infrastructure through ongoing and substantial investment will support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. That means that the people of Northern Ireland will have better access to education, training, employment, healthcare and other key services. All of those topics were raised by Members in one form or another this afternoon. It means that goods and people, including tourists, will be able to travel quickly and efficiently in the north coast area and further afield.

The railway improvements align with the significant investment that my Department is taking forward through Translink and Transport NI to bring forward a number of key transport projects that align with the Londonderry One Plan. I recently announced new plans to bring forward an integrated transport hub on the site of the old Waterside station in Londonderry as part of my commitment to support the One Plan. Consolidating Londonderry's position in Northern Ireland as a crucial economic driver in the region is an essential goal to be achieved. It is important to remember that balanced regional growth must be achieved if we are to eradicate pockets of underinvestment and deprivation, such as those in the north-west.

In addition to improvement in rail, my Department has invested in the purchase of new buses, many of which service the north coast and the surrounding area. Some of them were even built in the area that we are talking about. My Department also provides support to North Coast Community Transport to provide transport options for its members who live in a rural area but cannot readily access public transport services because of reduced mobility. It further provides support to Disability Action to assist people in urban areas who cannot use mainstream public transport because of illness or disability.

Translink regularly engages with stakeholders to develop services to key attractions and to towns and villages and for school services on the north coast. Indeed, access to tourist sites by public transport is a priority, and I am proud to support the Causeway Rambler service, which provides excellent value and frequent services to some of

the north coast's top visitor attractions, such as the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and Dunluce castle. Translink has also negotiated discounted admission at several of those attractions for visitors holding a valid Translink ticket. We are doing much, and, yes, there is much more to do.

In recent years, the north coast has attracted a number of world-class international sporting events, such as the Irish Open in Portrush and, more recently of course, the Giro d'Italia. I am very proud indeed that my Department has been instrumental in giving hundreds of thousands of people the opportunity to participate in these occasions, which showcase the best that our region has to offer while benefiting our economy through supporting local businesses and ensuring minimum disruption to local communities.

The North West 200, of course, remains a highlight of the European motorcycle racing calendar, and good transport infrastructure is essential for events such as these to be successful for competitors and fans. My Department has worked closely and will continue to work closely with race organisers to ensure that the event runs smoothly, and the recent Road Races (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 increases flexibility for organisers to complete their events, even in adverse weather conditions. When we talk about the legacy of such events, we can say that our improved transport infrastructure has been an enabler and that tourism is an opportunity that we can seize and run with to showcase the very best that Northern Ireland has to offer.

While much has been done — I thank those who acknowledged that — I recognise that much more work needs to be done to rebalance and rebuild our economy. My Department is developing a transport delivery plan that sets out proposals for future investment in Northern Ireland's transport infrastructure. It is imperative that the Executive properly invest in transport to allow us to create an integrated, modern, reliable and environmentally efficient transportation network and support efforts to secure European funding for key projects. Hence, I take the opportunity to urge Executive colleagues to acknowledge and support ambitious investment in transportation infrastructure not only on the north coast but across Northern Ireland.

I welcome the views expressed by Members and the opportunity to have this discussion. I fully support the motion. Before briefly referring to some of the contributions, I reiterate the importance of transportation to Northern Ireland. It is a vital component of our economy. The stronger our transportation, the better the rate of growth and the greater the improvement in living standards. I therefore hope that Members see that transportation funding is a win-win for everyone and that it will play an integral role in ensuring that Northern Ireland maximises its potential and enhances its attractiveness and competitiveness as a region to do business in, to visit and to invest in and for our constituents to live in.

Many Members extolled the virtues of the area's scenery and its tourism potential, including Mr George Robinson, who had quite a list of work that he still needs to see progress on, and I took careful note of that. Mr McKay is aware of the baby boom on Rathlin, and that is really good news. I can claim credit for some things, but I do not think that I can claim credit for that. John Dallat was

kind in his references to what we have done to restore and save the Coleraine to Londonderry rail line, and he saw and identified other potential schemes. Robin Swann referred to the Open and today's very good and welcome news. He also spoke about the success that was the Giro d'Italia and, of course, the rural and community transport that we already provide, which is important. Unfortunately, some people have tried to make mischief about that, but we provide it and will continue to do so. Kieran McCarthy spoke of the importance of improving infrastructure. Adrian McQuillan, again, had a list of things to do. He even brought in the red coats in Garvagh.

It was quite a wide-ranging debate. Cathal Ó hOisín has voiced frustration about the Dungiven bypass, and he well documented that again today. Oliver McMullan dealt with a lot of issues that impact on health, and some of those are the responsibility of the Health Minister. However, —

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

Mr Kennedy: — a coordinated response that meant better cooperation between Departments would be helpful. Of course, Jim Allister wants de-sludging of tour buses so that people can leave more than their mark in the north Antrim area.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's time is up.

Mr Kennedy: It is a serious issue, and we will give it consideration.

Mr Campbell: As the Minister said, it was a wide-ranging debate. It is coincidental but entirely fitting that it should take place on the red-letter day that it is: after what we hope will be no more than about 68 years, the Open will return to its rightful place, which is in Royal Portrush.

A number of Members referred to the tourism potential that Northern Ireland and the north coast have. A number of Members indicated that it was a wide-ranging debate. I think both Mr Dallat and Mr Ó hOisín managed to get in the A5. I know there is an ongoing issue about what constitutes the north coast and the north-west, because nobody has clearly defined views, but to go to the A5 is probably stretching it by about 40 miles. Broadly speaking, I think that most people would accept that that is the case.

A number of issues merited inclusion in the debate. Mr Robinson, in proposing, talked about the cost of congestion if we did not get the road and rail infrastructure correct, which is very true. The issue of Rathlin was raised by Daithí McKay and at least two others, I think. The issue of the Open golf, of course, permeated the debate.

The A26 dualling has been referred to not just in this debate but over a number of years. The Minister, quite rightly, has claimed the credit for investing over £8 million of the Budget in what I hope will be the first of a number of schemes that will see the length of the A26 dualled. Any photographic help that we can give will obviously be available and, hopefully, on time, as it was on previous occasions. I am glad that Mr Swann referred to that. I would not have liked that to be ignored or overlooked.

Mr McQuillan talked about some of the tourism hotspots. He also referred, as did the Minister, to the Andy West issue of the travel time between Belfast and the Giant's Causeway. On this, I ask for the Minister's listening ear, because, while today is a red-letter day and an excellent

day, hopefully as we get towards the time to ensure everything is in place for the Open to return to Royal Portrush, the one thing we do not want and must avoid at all costs is further headlines about the time it takes to get from A to B, whether it is in the New York papers or the French newspapers or any international media that could try to put a negative spin on what is a good news story. To avoid that, we have to get the efficiencies in transportation, whether road or rail.

Mr Allister alluded to the Ballymena station, and I am sure that the Minister will have heard that. Mr Ó hOisín talked about the Dungiven dualling, and I am sure the Minister is committed to that. Also, community transport was mentioned and the Magilligan to Greencastle ferry.

All in all, the debate showed what significant and tremendous benefits there are, not just on the north coast, however you define the north coast or north-west, but the jewel that Northern Ireland is in terms of tourism throughout these islands. The reason for tabling the motion is to ensure that people can get to these events. Many events were mentioned — we hope that their number will be expanded — but the key driver, not to use a pun, will be making sure that people are able to get to them. There is not much point in having the best air show in these islands if people are stuck in traffic trying to get there or get away, nor is there much point in having the best youth football tournament if people have difficulty getting to it. With the Open, because of the sheer numbers involved, the same principle applies.

The Minister has responded well. We hope that he will put meat on the bones of his promises, and we will do whatever we can to bring pressure to bear in these austere times as we try to leverage money into an exceptionally worthwhile cause.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly calls upon the Minister for Regional Development to invest in the transport infrastructure at, and leading to, the north coast to assist the commercial, commuter and tourist sectors of the economy.

Adjourned at 5.31 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 17 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion

Motion proposed [16 June 2014]:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges [NIA183/11-15], imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution. — [Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges).]

Mr Speaker: The first item of business today is the postponed vote on the Committee report on the complaints against Mr Gerry Kelly. *[Interruption.]* Order. The vote, of course, will be on a cross-community basis.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 56; Noes 37.

AYES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCreagh, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Other

Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs Overend and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Nationalist

Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne,

Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Ms S Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Lynch and Ms Ruane.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>[60.2%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>[0.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>

Question accordingly negatived (cross-community vote).

Some Members: Shame.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Question is negatived. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let us move on.

Mr Storey: Lawbreakers.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Assembly Business

Public Petition: Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen: Closure

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

Mrs Foster: The petition is signed by those in the community in County Fermanagh who value and want to retain Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen. I welcome members of the Collegiate action group to the Gallery this morning, along with members of the board of governors, friends, supporters, staff and, indeed, some pupils.

The Western Education and Library Board recently published a development proposal, which would mean the closure of Collegiate Grammar and Portora Royal schools by September 2015. That, we are told, is to facilitate the creation of a single co-educational, non-denominational voluntary grammar school on split sites at either end of Enniskillen, which, of course, is an island town.

The reason for that course of action, we are told, is to allow for a sustainable Devenish College, which, of course, was to have a newbuild over 10 years ago. That was first promised when the Duke of Westminster High School was closed, and there have been many false starts since then. Last year, we were told by the Western Board that the new school building would come when Lisnaskea High School was closed, but, of course, it has not. Now the board tells us that to have a sustainable Devenish and, therefore, a newbuild, the two grammar schools must close and one new grammar school must be put in their place.

I, the board of governors, the parents, pupils and staff of the Collegiate and, as the petition shows, the community of Fermanagh reject this bizarre plan by the Western Education and Library Board. I say "bizarre" because Enniskillen Collegiate is the most oversubscribed school in any sector in County Fermanagh, and yet it faces closure. It is placed tenth in all of Northern Ireland for its GCSE results, and yet it faces closure. It is well regarded across Northern Ireland and, indeed, beyond for its excellence, and yet it faces closure. No wonder I call the decision "bizarre".

The supporters of the development proposal say that too many children have access to grammar-school education in Fermanagh. That does not factually stand up to scrutiny, as the lowest Association of Quality Education score accepted by the Collegiate is considerably higher than that accepted by many grammar schools across Northern Ireland. That is particularly true this year, with many girls being turned away. Indeed, there is an argument for increasing the numbers at the Collegiate rather than closing it.

Also, the argument that grammar schools are filling up at the expense of secondary schools does not stand up. Grammar-school intake has remained static due to a cap from the Department of Education. If numbers in Devenish College are going down despite the closure of other schools in the sector, it is because parents are exercising parental choice by opting for other non-selective schools in the area or, indeed, beyond. That is the reality, and closing

the Collegiate will not change that trend. The Collegiate is very proud of its ethos, its results but, most of all, its girls.

In the most recent statistics regarding university access, the school was in the top eight in Northern Ireland, and the girls are certainly reaching their full potential. In that regard, I commend the leadership of the principal of the school, Elizabeth Armstrong, for her vision for the school in the future. I support her in that vision, but, more than that, so do the people of Fermanagh. I present this petition on their behalf.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs Foster moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I thank Mrs Foster for the petition. I will forward it to the Minister of Education, John O'Dowd, and send a copy to the Chairperson of the Committee, Mervyn Storey.

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): In accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I wish to make the following statement on the 22nd summit meeting of the British-Irish Council (BIC), which took place at St Peter Port, Guernsey on 13 June 2014.

The deputy First Minister and I attended the summit on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, and we were accompanied by Danny Kennedy MLA, the Minister for Regional Development. The Government of Guernsey hosted the summit, and the heads of delegations were welcomed by the Chief Minister, Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq. The United Kingdom Government were led by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP. The Irish Government were led by the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD. The Scottish Government were led by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP. The Welsh Government were led by the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Ms Edwina Hart AM. The Government of Jersey were led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst, and the Isle of Man Government delegation was led by the Chief Minister, the honourable Allan Bell MHK.

The summit provided another opportunity for the British-Irish Council to play its unique and important role in furthering, promoting and developing links between its member Administrations through positive, practical relationships and in providing a forum for consultation and exchange of information on matters of mutual interest.

As is now customary at each summit, the Council discussed the current economic situation. Each member Administration outlined their latest economic indicators and the strategies that they are putting in place, and we were pleased to be able to report the latest positive economic news from Northern Ireland.

The Council noted that the previous summit hosted by Guernsey had taken place four years ago in a very difficult and challenging economic environment, and it was encouraged by the positive signs of improvement now being reported by each Administration. The general tenor of the discussion suggested that there were grounds for cautious optimism about future economic prospects, but all Administrations also acknowledged the need to sustain their efforts in the areas of productivity, innovation, inward investment, exports, skills and reducing unemployment.

The Council also discussed the economic importance of transport links. The discussion reflected the island nature of all the Administrations and recognised our interdependence in ensuring and promoting the flow of people, goods and services among each other and further afield. The Council acknowledged that the promotion of effective transport links between member Administrations can be beneficial to their economic development and to the strengthening of positive and practical relationships amongst the people of these islands.

In that context, we and the other devolved administrations once more drew the attention of the United Kingdom Government to the negative effects of air passenger duty on the economic and social development of our regions. The Council also discussed how the member

Administrations' strategic development initiatives should best interrelate in order to promote efficient and effective travel and trade between the jurisdictions.

The Council also received an update on the work that had taken place across each of the twelve British-Irish Council work sectors since the previous summit in November 2013. In particular, the Council welcomed the paper introduced by the Minister for Regional Development on the collaborative spatial planning work sector, setting out the various positions of the member Administrations. It noted the challenges and opportunities set out in the paper and requested officials to continue to work collaboratively via the group to identify opportunities to work more closely with other BIC work sectors.

The Council received the secretariat's end-of-year progress report against its business plan. It also received a copy of the 2013 annual report and welcomed its publication. The Council also noted that the branding for BIC had been refreshed and was being used at the summit for the first time.

Finally, the Council noted that the next BIC summit would be hosted by the Isle of Man Government in November 2014.

Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

I thank the First Minister for his update. I note that there is no explicit reference in the statement to youth unemployment, which, I think, has been a previous focus of the Council. Will the First Minister provide the House with an update on any successful initiatives that have been undertaken by the Council in that area?

Mr P Robinson: The Member is right: we have had two meetings of BIC at which youth unemployment was the key issue. It was referenced only to the extent that there had been a marginal decline in youth unemployment in the various member Administrations. Indeed, bad though youth unemployment is here, Northern Ireland has a lower level than many of the other Administrations present at the BIC summit.

Youth unemployment is being addressed here by a number of initiatives. If it has the opportunity at some stage, DEL will, no doubt, give details of its training initiatives. It is undertaking one initiative, the United Youth project, arising out of T:BUC, on behalf of the deputy First Minister and myself. Through that project, DEL envisages taking 10,000 young people and putting them on a scheme that will train them up in three separate areas for a one-year period. The three areas are steps into work, good citizenship and the cross-community element. We are playing our role in dealing with those figures, but a range of training initiatives is being undertaken by DEL as well.

Mr Spratt: I thank the First Minister for his report to the House. Given the support of the other regions in the UK, does the First Minister believe that more concessions are possible in relation to air passenger duty?

Mr P Robinson: I would not describe it as a gang up, but, certainly, the three devolved Administrations argued the same case on air passenger duty. As Members will be aware, the Northern Ireland Administration was the only part of the United Kingdom to be successful in having the power to decide its own level of air passenger duty for long-haul flights. We, as an Executive, moved that to zero to support the travel industry's long-haul flights. However,

we are a peripheral part of the United Kingdom, so if people want to get to the capital of the United Kingdom, they have to travel by air or sea. That means that we are at a disadvantage to many other parts of the United Kingdom in cost terms. Of course, the same can be said of Scotland, particularly. We are pressing on the issue.

Changes to air passenger duty were announced by the Chancellor, but they were simply to consolidate three of the bands of air passenger duty relating to long-haul flights into one. They do not affect Northern Ireland, because we are already exempt from that. However, we continue to press on the basis of our economic pact with the Government; it is one of the issues being considered. However, I warn the Assembly that if we were to be successful, the European Union would require us to have a reduction in our block grant to take account of that, and that is likely to be somewhere in the region of £60 million to £90 million.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I note that the First Minister referred to the high level of economic discussion that was had, and that is important in the current challenging environment. However, was any focus given to the rising cost of living and what we can do to tackle and alleviate hardships on families and young people?

Mr P Robinson: It was not discussed specifically, although, in general terms, it is always an issue that has to be taken into account. We welcomed the fact that unemployment levels across the Administrations were reducing. Not all Administrations, of course, have suffered an economic downturn; the Isle of Man has had consistent growth and, I think, has about two people unemployed.

In some areas, it is a greater problem than in others.

11.00 am

Members will have seen the latest labour force survey figures, which show that, for the seventeenth consecutive month, we have had a reduction in the claimant count in Northern Ireland. That is a good signal. The best way to get people out of poverty and deprivation is for them to get into employment. That is an important factor. It is a matter that the Executive continue to keep under consideration, and we do whatever we can, given the limited budget we have available to us, to help in that regard.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chéad Aire as ucht a ráitis. Chím ins an ráiteas go bhfuil tagairt do na ranna oibre ach níl mórán mionsonraí ins an ráiteas faoin méid atá gnóthaithe acu agus ba mhaith liom ceist a chur ar an Chéad Aire. An bhfuil sé sásta go bhfuil obair chruthaitheach á déanamh ag na ranna oibre?

I thank the First Minister for his statement. There is a reference to the 12 work sectors, but there is not much detail about what has been achieved by them. Is the First Minister satisfied that there is a tangible outcome from the work of the 12 sectors?

Mr P Robinson: There was not much detail because they are not discussed; you simply take possession of the reports from each of them. Of course, several of those are led by our Ministers. I am not sure which particular work stream the Member has an interest in, but I am sure that the Minister with responsibility for that area will be very

happy to give him further details. None of the Ministers we have on any of the work streams has indicated any impatience about slow progress being made, so I must assume that things are going swimmingly.

Mr Lunn: I thank the First Minister for his statement. He referred to the economic importance of transport links among each other and further afield, so I hope that I am not stretching the limit slightly by asking whether there has been any discussion around links with the important European capitals. It is easy enough to get to Majorca from here, but you cannot get to Dusseldorf, Paris or Brussels. Has there been any discussion around that?

Mr P Robinson: Part of the discussion is about identifying where there may be new routes and where there is a demand. One of the aspects of the work being carried out by our Regional Development Minister, who is leading the work stream on that area, is getting reliable data as to the movements of people and goods. Those are the kinds of factors. There is then a decision to be taken as to whether there is a sufficient clientele to open up an air route or sea passage, and, if that is the case, whether — remember that most of those are commercially driven — there is any role for intervention on the part of government.

Mr G Robinson: In the context of strengthening east-west relations, I particularly welcome the announcement yesterday of the Open coming to my constituency of East Londonderry.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr G Robinson: Will the First Minister give us the potential benefits of the announcement for Northern Ireland?

Mr P Robinson: I hope that the local newspaper is listening closely to what is being said.

Mr G Robinson: It already knows. *[Laughter.]*

Mr P Robinson: The deputy First Minister and I were very pleased to join the Enterprise Minister, Arlene Foster, for the announcement. It must have taken people quite by surprise when we announced it yesterday, given some of the trailers that had been run for the occasion. It is a significant development. I remind people that it is putting Royal Portrush on the rota, which means that we are not necessarily talking about a one-off event; we are talking about the potential for it being part of an ongoing rota of locations throughout the United Kingdom that are used for the Open.

It indicates that we have facilities that can match those you will find anywhere else in the nation. It also indicates the high regard for golf that there is in Northern Ireland. When the European Tour came to Royal Portrush, it had its largest ever attendance, which indicates that we have a population that is keen to visit golf tournaments. That was one of the factors that convinced the R&A that it should look to Royal Portrush as a potential venue.

On the wider front, this will obviously have a significant impact in the constituency represented by the Member. It may have a bit of disruption during the Open itself, but that is a small price to pay for the advertising that the local area will have across the world. About 90 million people will be watching over a long period and will see the scenery of the north Antrim coast. That is the kind of publicity and advertising that you just could not pay for. It is an excellent opportunity for people to see what they can come and see.

Having a championship course is no small thing in itself. The golf tourism industry is sizeable throughout the world, and golfers like to play championship courses. People can go round a championship course and pretend to themselves that they are taking part in the Open. Golf tourism is a very significant part of our tourism investment in Northern Ireland.

There are many reasons to be optimistic, if one represents that constituency, but it is also good for Northern Ireland. It indicates that we have moved on from the dark days of the past. This is the benefit of having a new era in Northern Ireland, where there is a level of peace and stability that we have not had for many generations.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I was tempted to ask the First Minister whether the issue of an Enniskillen bypass was discussed, given the importance of economic transport links between member Administrations and the fact that this is the first anniversary of the G8.

To be serious, may I ask the First Minister whether there was discussion of the issue of free travel between member states for tourists coming from selected countries far away, such as the Far East, given that people who come in through Belfast or Derry can travel around the rest of Ireland freely but those who come in through the South cannot come up North because of visa restrictions? Was that matter discussed, or can the First Minister give us any kind of update on it?

Mr P Robinson: It was not discussed at the summit, but it has been discussed by the deputy First Minister and me in the context of the economic pact that we have with Her Majesty's Government. Indeed, the Prime Minister has had a meeting with the Taoiseach on the issue. I have spoken to the Taoiseach on the issue as well, and I have to say that the response was positive. It is on the agenda and is part of the economic pact. Over the next couple of days, the deputy First Minister and I are due to have conversations with the Prime Minister on the progress being made on the economic pact. I assure the Member that this is one of the issues that we will want to speak about.

Mrs Hale: I thank the First Minister for his statement to the House this morning. He has already touched on our lower rate of youth unemployment. Can he tell the House how our economic recovery compares with the other United Kingdom jurisdictions?

Mr P Robinson: I am glad to say that there seems to be a fairly even spread in the recovery process. The reason I am glad about that is that, on all occasions in the past, Northern Ireland has been last to come out of any economic downturn. It has often taken us a number of years to get back to previous levels while the rest of the United Kingdom has been getting on with life as if nothing had happened. This is a change in the patterns that have developed in the past.

As the labour force statistics show, our unemployment is now down to 6.9%. Given the number of job announcements that we have had and some that, we know, are in the pipeline, there is every indication that we will continue to reduce unemployment further. Indeed, in a survey, 58% of local employers indicated their intention of employing additional personnel during the next 12 months. Those are all indicators that things are moving in the right direction.

That is not an indication that we should in any way be complacent, however. A lot of work is required, and there are considerable pressures, particularly on our Budget, given that the United Kingdom Government have been holding down revenue streams and putting money more towards capital streams. That presents a considerable difficulty to our Administration in the programmes that we develop.

Mr Allister: I note the reference in the statement to the discussion of the economic importance of transport links and the promotion of effective ones. In that context, has there been any discussion about essential improvements to the A75, which is such a key link for our freight industry into the rest of the United Kingdom? I ask because, when one looks at the BIC's 2013 report, the sorts of things that are mentioned when focusing on the transport sector are the coordination of smart card technology and the mutual recognition of blue badges. Those may be important in their own right, but perhaps more strategic issues, such as the A75, are really where better economic prosperity lies. Does the First Minister agree?

Mr P Robinson: I agree that they are very important, but I do not agree that they have not been discussed. I simply do not know whether they have been discussed, because the work goes on within the work streams, and the Minister for Regional Development is our representative there.

I had a discussion in the margins: the A75, I think I am right in saying, is the Scottish road. I had a discussion with Fiona Hyslop during the break in the summit. She referred to our having discussions about the A75, so that must be ongoing. I will get the Minister responsible for the Department for Regional Development to write to the Member on the issue. Of course, it is a strategic route, not just for Northern Ireland but for many of the hauliers in the Republic of Ireland, so there are benefits for a number of the member Administrations in having it improved.

North/South Ministerial Council: Environment

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): With your permission, Mr Speaker, in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I will make a statement on the eighteenth meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in environment sectoral format, which was held in Armagh on Thursday 8 May 2014. The statement has been agreed with Minister Kennedy.

Danny Kennedy MLA, the Minister for Regional Development, and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive at the meeting. The Irish Government were represented by Phil Hogan TD, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. I chaired the meeting.

Ministers had a discussion on various priorities within their remit and noted that those will be contained in a report to be considered at a future NSMC institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review of sectoral priorities. Ministers noted that the contract for the all-island air quality research study into airborne pollution from the combustion of residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal, has been awarded and that the study is expected to be completed by August 2014.

The council welcomed the consideration by the North/South market development steering group of a new programme related to the circular economy. It requires a new way of thinking in all aspects of the value chain and aims to keep the added value in products for as long as possible and to cut residual waste to close to zero. Ministers noted that the Northern Ireland carrier bag levy, currently applied to single-use bags, will be extended to low-cost reusable bags from January 2015. Ministers also welcomed the engagement in discussions on the proposals for a new used tyre scheme in Ireland and the exploration of the potential for a complementary scheme in Northern Ireland.

11.15 am

The Council noted that the proposed programme of work for 2014-15 is in the process of being reviewed and agreed. The Ministers also welcomed the intention of beginning shortly the waste repatriation at the first of those sites scheduled in the programme. Ministers also noted that Dublin City Council has established a framework agreement for the disposal of repatriated waste and continues to progress the public procurement process for the haulage of excavated waste to authorised disposal facilities. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to continue to target resources on joint enforcement action against illegal operators and called on relevant Departments to engage on tackling this issue.

The Council noted that coordination is continuing between both jurisdictions in relation to preparations for the second-cycle river basin management plans under the EU water framework directive. The Council welcomed the publication in Northern Ireland of the consultation on significant water management issues.

Ministers welcomed the provision of funding by both jurisdictions for the cross-border pilot project for the management of invasive flora and fauna on the River Blackwater in Northern Ireland and continued cooperation on beach awards and beach care schemes such as Blue

Flag and the Coca-Cola Coast Care scheme run by An Taisce and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The Council also welcomed the commencement of discussions on common approaches to the implementation of the marine strategy framework directive.

Ministers noted that tenders for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) research project into the environmental impacts of unconventional gas exploration and extraction (UGEE) are being evaluated. The Council noted that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's (NIEA) second state of the environment report was published in December 2013. Ministers welcomed the publication of the EPA's 'Who's Who' of environmental research expertise in Ireland, which will assist collaboration by environmental researchers from the island of Ireland in Europe-wide research projects.

Ministers also noted that the EPA's research strategy for 2014-2020 will be published by the end of June 2014 and that, consequent to the enactment of the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013, Science Foundation Ireland may now fund environmental research on an all-island basis.

The Council agreed to hold the next environment meeting in November 2014.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I thank the Minister for his statement. I am sure the Minister is aware that the Committee carried out an inquiry into used tyre disposal a couple of years ago. One of the recommendations in the report was:

"Northern Ireland should liaise with the Republic of Ireland when considering a suitable mechanism for dealing with used tyres. A strict producer responsibility scheme would be counterproductive unless introduced in both jurisdictions".

Will the Minister elaborate on what sort of used tyre scheme they are developing in Ireland and how it might impact on Northern Ireland? Will we work together to have a complementary scheme?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Chairperson, Ms Lo, for her question. I have held bilateral discussions with Minister Hogan on the subject. His Department is developing detailed proposals to replace the current tyre schemes in the South with a full producer responsibility scheme. Minister Hogan has invited officials from my Department to join a working group established by his Department to develop those proposals. I have only too willingly accepted that invitation and feel pretty sure that that collaboration will help to ensure a joined-up approach on the issue right across the island.

Whatever tyre scheme is eventually implemented in the South, it will be important that it is compatible with existing and future arrangements for the management of used tyres here to avoid negative consequences North or South. With that in mind, my officials and I will consider the detailed proposals emerging from the South, with a view to tabling proposals for a complementary UK-wide scheme for agreement with colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales. It will be necessary to reach that type of agreement if such a scheme is to be introduced effectively in the North.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his statement, not least because, had it been his predecessor, he would only be

about halfway through the statement by now. The subject of the cross-border movement of waste comes up again and again at North/South meetings on environmental issues. That is particularly the case with the sites where waste has been illegally dumped, and there seems to be consistent promises of actions. Will the Minister put some meat on the bones? The statement refers to:

“the intention of beginning shortly the waste repatriation at the first of these sites scheduled in the programme.”

When specifically are we due to see the first removal and repatriation of waste? By what stage do we hope to have the waste removal from those sites completed?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Weir for that question. I am pretty sure that he is aware of the commitment in the road map agreement with our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland to undertake the repatriation of waste. In total, 17 sites were identified, with an estimated total of 273,000 tons of waste to be removed.

I welcome the level of cooperation that has existed between the two Departments and competent authorities since the signing of the framework agreement. A total of nine sites have been completed since repatriation began in 2010, giving a total of 76,000 tons of waste to date. It is extremely important that the remaining sites, some of which contain the larger amounts and quantities of waste, are repatriated in a timely manner to minimise potential environmental harm or damage.

This year's work programme is still being finalised, but I expect that the removal of waste from three — hopefully, four — sites will be done this year. I expect work on the first site to start by the end of this month. It may have already started, and I will come back to the Member on that.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabhail leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra go dtí an pointe seo agus as ucht a ráitis fosta. I want to ask the Minister about the planning aspects of wind energy policy and the possible future focus on that in the North/South Ministerial Council. Does the Minister see any merit in a single island approach to wind energy policy? I think specifically of setback and separation distances of wind infrastructure from residents.

Mr Durkan: Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabhail leis an Uasal McElduff as an cheist. I thank Mr McElduff for that question. The issue of wind energy has become more and more controversial in the North. That is not exclusive to the North; it is being experienced similarly in the Republic of Ireland. We share a land border, and there are often proposals for wind turbines or wind farms along the border that have as much impact on those living in the North as on those living in the South and vice versa. Therefore, I certainly see some merit in Mr McElduff's suggestion. I have had informal discussions about it with my officials, and I have had an informal chat with Minister Hogan. I see merit in it and shall pursue it.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his statement. What is his view of the benefits of working with the Irish Government through the NSMC to tackle the difficulties with climate change?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Eastwood for that question. Whilst Ministers and officials engage bilaterally in mitigation and adaptation with colleagues in the South, a more formal arrangement through the NSMC would ensure wider engagement on relevant interests to everyone's benefit. There are many areas of climate change where increased and enhanced cooperation within the NSMC structure would be beneficial. For example, following the recent extreme weather events right across this island and, indeed, beyond, which resulted in severe flooding, it would be mutually beneficial to learn lessons and cooperate where appropriate on this environmental, economic and social problem. The jurisdictions also have a common goal to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are minimised and to support the development of a low-carbon economy. It has been the practice that Ministers on both sides of the border have met bilaterally to discuss common issues, including climate change, and it is also the case that climate change has been an issue of huge interest within the British-Irish Council structure, and I know that there was a statement on that earlier. Officials have been working on climate change mitigation and adaptation. They keep each other briefed on policy developments and participate jointly in conferences and other events. A lot of cooperation is ongoing that, I believe, could and should be enhanced, and it will be.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for his statement. Obviously, he will be aware of the importance or non-importance attached to fracking in County Fermanagh and other areas of Northern Ireland. The Minister's statement notes that tenders for the Environmental Protection Agency's research project will be initiated. What input will the Department of the Environment or any other Department of the Northern Ireland Executive have into that report and research?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I think that he might have beaten Mr Flanagan to the punch on that one. Fracking is a hugely important and controversial issue in Fermanagh especially but also right across the North and, indeed, the world. Therefore, it is vital that we carry out as much research as possible into the potential dangers and risks associated with it. That is why I have been keen for my Department to work with the EPA on this research programme.

NIEA had initially committed to co-funding the all-Ireland research programme with £50,000 in 2014-15 and the same amount the following year. The earlier answers that I gave in the Assembly were based on these figures. However, given the increased attention that the issue is attracting in the Chamber and throughout Ireland and the UK, the agency wished to ensure that maximum value was realised from the research programme. We, therefore, believed that a more significant contribution was required to put the agency on a more equal footing with the other two funding partners, which have committed €500,000 each. So we are on a more equal footing but still nowhere near an equal footing. My Department will contribute £100,000 in this financial year and £100,000 in the next financial year.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his statement to the House. On the cross-border movement of waste, I particularly welcome the commitment to continue to target resources at joint enforcement action against illegal operators. Why does the Department ignore offences

committed in the Republic when considering waste licence applications from firms in Northern Ireland that have been engaged in illegal dumping activities?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mrs Cameron for her question. Some would say that the Department also ignores offences committed in the North when dealing with applications for licences here. More work needs to be done on identifying who is a fit and proper person to have a waste licence. That will involve increased and enhanced cooperation with our neighbours in the South as we share a land border.

People commit crimes on both sides of the border. It is something that I certainly will want to look at, and I will want to look at the procedures and processes that the Department or the agency use when assessing applications and to have a complete overhaul of that system, which, at times, seems over-cumbersome for good and legitimate operators, yet huge gaps remain in it that can be exploited by opportunistic criminals.

11.30 am

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas. The Minister raised the issue of UGEE. Obviously, some technocrat somewhere has taken issue with the use of the word “fracking”, but I think that we should continue to call it fracking and should not hide behind any smokescreen of whatever UGEE is supposed to be.

Will the Minister indicate to the House why, despite the fact that, as he has acknowledged himself in a written answer to me, a significant number of the 1,356 respondents to the public consultation on the research programme indicated that they wanted to see a health impact assessment carried out, that is not being included as part of the work? Both Governments are now spending nearly €1 million on it. It will be a waste of money if it is not done right. Will the Minister explain to the House why it has not been included and whether there is any chance that he could change his mind and actually put it in?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Flanagan for that question. The research that has been commissioned into fracking and its potential harmful and ill effects is not and will not be exhaustive. In March, I visited the EPA in Washington to have a look at the research that it has carried out over a number of years at a cost of some \$20 million, and that, in itself, is, as yet, far from conclusive. I can tell the Member and those who called for a health assessment to be part of this study that any planning application that comes forward for anything associated with fracking will be subject to a full health assessment.

Mr A Maginness: I note the Minister’s answers to the last two questions about fracking. It seems to me that the debate on fracking has not yet reached the point where people can make full decisions. Will the Minister give a sense of where we are at with that debate, North and South and within the context of the North/South Ministerial Council?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I reiterate to the Member my decision on fracking, which is that, in the absence of sound evidence that fracking is safe, is not harmful to the environment and is not harmful to human health, no application for fracking will be passed. In my opinion and that of the Member, and any Member who has raised the subject of fracking here, that evidence

does not currently exist. Given what I learned from my visit to the EPA in Washington, it is unlikely to exist in the foreseeable future.

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

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for his report. Minister, you refer to the environment, air pollution and smoky coal. It is my experience that there are smoke control zones and, therefore, people there should not be using smoky coals. What are your views on the burning of other hydrocarbons, such as lignite and, indeed, peat?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Cree for that question. Air pollution from residential combustion of solid fuels is of significant concern to both jurisdictions. The Northern Ireland levels of certain carcinogenic air pollutants known to be produced, particularly by burning smoky coal, can reach and sometimes exceed EU target levels. However, as the Member quite rightly pointed out, it is not only smoky coal that causes damage to our environment and our health. Therefore, when the levels for what is “smoky” coal are set, as they have been in the Republic and will potentially be here in the future, they encompass other fuels as well, believe it or not. In the Republic, peat falls under the level, so it is deemed non-smoky. The levels that are proposed or which will be set here for the purposes of this study are much lower than those in the Republic, so, in this jurisdiction, peat would be above the level and would therefore be classified as a smoky fuel.

Lord Morrow: I think that the Minister identified 17 illegal dumping sites, of which nine have been cleansed and eight remain. If my calculations are right, that leaves 197,000 tons to be removed. Will the Minister tell us how many prosecutions are pending for the nine sites that have been cleansed?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. In my answer to Mr Weir, I outlined the extent of work that was still to be done in the repatriation of waste. I do not have at hand the information on the number of prosecutions associated with sites that have been cleansed. However, I will certainly get back to the Member on that in writing.

Mr Wilson: First, I am surprised at the way in which the Minister has ruled out any permission for fracking applications before he has even heard them or his Department has considered them.

To follow up on Lord Morrow’s question about illegal dumping sites where waste from the Republic was dumped in Northern Ireland: this is an issue that was first raised when I was Environment Minister. At that stage, the Irish Republic agreed that it would cover the cost of clearing those sites, since the rubbish had come from the Republic. Given the passage of time and the way in which the costs are likely to have escalated, has his Department any figures on what the cost of clearing the rest of the sites will be? Secondly, if the cost has gone up, has it been discussed with Ministers from the Republic how that additional cost will be dealt with by the Exchequer in the Republic and not fall to the public purse in Northern Ireland?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Wilson for his question. I am not sure whether he heard my earlier answers because I am pretty sure that I did not rule out permission for any applications for fracking. I ruled out any permission for fracking, or anything associated with it, in the absence

of evidence that it is safe and sustainable. As yet, that evidence does not exist.

On Mr Wilson's question about the repatriation of waste and the cost of doing that: the cost will still lie with the Republic of Ireland, which accepts sole responsibility for it. As Mr Wilson quite rightly pointed out, the cost has gone up. Therefore, the programme has undoubtedly slowed down as a consequence. I do not have the exact cost here, although I can get it to the Member later this afternoon. However, conversations are ongoing between the DOE and Minister Hogan's Department on this issue. We are looking at the possible use of sites in the North for this waste, maybe to cut down on fuel costs and so forth.

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Further Consideration Stage

Moved. — [Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel).]

Mr Deputy Speaker: As no amendments have been tabled, there is no opportunity to discuss the Budget (No. 2) Bill today. Members will, of course, be able to have a full debate at Final Stage. The Further Consideration Stage of the Bill is, therefore, concluded. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Committee Business

Work and Families Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 30 November 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Work and Families Bill [NIA Bill 34/11-15].

On Monday 12 May 2014, the Assembly referred the Work and Families Bill to the Committee for Employment and Learning for scrutiny. The intent of the Bill is to allow working parents the ability to manage their parental and work priorities with flexibility.

At its meeting on 26 March 2014, the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed to call for written evidence and submissions from organisations and individuals. In addition, signposting notices were posted in the local press. The Committee believes it is essential that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the Bill, as it will impact on employers and employees.

Although scrutiny of the Bill is likely to be straightforward, it is a substantial piece of legislation with 24 clauses and two schedules, and the Committee wishes to fully examine in detail the impact of each of the clauses and speak to all parties who wish to make representations on the Bill. The Committee believes that it is essential that it is afforded the time to exercise its scrutiny powers to the full and asks the House to support the motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Work and Families Bill to 30 November 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 30 November 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Work and Families Bill [NIA Bill 34/11-15].

Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

Mr Deputy Speaker: As the next three motions relate to amendments to Standing Orders, I propose to conduct the debate as follows. I propose to group motions (a) to (c) as detailed in the Order Paper and conduct a single debate. I will ask the Clerk to read the first motion in the group, and will then call the Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures to move it. Debate will then take place on all three motions in the group.

When all who wish to speak have done so, I will put the Question on motion (a). I will then ask the Chairperson to move formally motions (b) and (c) in turn, and I will put the Question on each motion without further debate. I remind the House that cross-community support will be required. If that is clear, I shall proceed.

Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I beg to move

(a) After Standing Order 37, insert –

“37A. Public Bills: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

(1) If, after the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, and prior to its Final Stage, the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill submits a statement to the Speaker, in writing, asserting—

(a) that, as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill, either a provision of the Bill is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly, or the Bill has a serious technical defect, and

(b) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect,

the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for Exceptional Further Consideration Stage is determined.

(2) A statement submitted to the Speaker under paragraph (1) shall be circulated to all members of the Assembly, as soon as is practicable, and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

(3) An amendment proposed to a Bill at Exceptional Further Consideration Stage shall only be selected if the Speaker is satisfied—

(a) that the amendment is intended either -

(i) to bring the Bill within the legislative competence of the Assembly, or

(ii) to correct any serious technical defect;

(b) that the proposed amendment deals with a matter specified in the statement under paragraph (1)(a) and which has arisen as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill; and

(c) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect.

(4) Subject to paragraphs (1) to (3) above, the provisions of Standing Order 37 and Standing Order

39 shall apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage of a Bill as if in those Standing Orders for ‘Further Consideration Stage’ there were substituted ‘Exceptional Further Consideration Stage’.”

The following motions stood in the Order Paper:

(b) In Standing Order 31, line 1, after “33(1)” insert – “37A.”

(c) After Standing Order 35(19) insert –

“(19A) Paragraphs (17) to (19) apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage as

they do to Further Consideration Stage.”

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee on Procedures, I am pleased to bring these motions to amend Standing Orders to the House today.

Motion (a) inserts a new Standing Order to provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage. Motions (b) and (c) are consequential amendments. Perhaps I could begin by giving the background to the proposed amendments.

During the last mandate, Members may recall that, following Further Consideration Stage of the Justice Bill, the Speaker took the view that, due to an amendment made at that stage, certain provisions of the Bill were outside the legislative competence of the Assembly. Currently, the Assembly has no procedure to enable the correction of such a defect after Further Consideration Stage. Section 10(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is designed to ensure that a Bill shall not be introduced if the presiding officer decides that any provision is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly.

11.45 am

There are also provisions in the Act and in Standing Orders for a mechanism to amend a Bill after Final Stage. Reconsideration Stage is where the Bill comes back to the Assembly after Final Stage. That could happen in a limited number of circumstances, including cases where the Supreme Court decides that any provision is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or where the British Secretary of State decides to not forward the Bill for Royal Assent.

As a result of the lack of provision to correct defects during the passage of a Bill, the Speaker used his discretion in respect of the Justice Bill to hold an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage to enable the House to debate a single amendment to bring the Bill back within legislative competence. That required the House agreeing to suspend Standing Orders 39(1) and 42(1).

The Committee on Procedures was asked to consider whether a mechanism could be established to correct a Bill after Further Consideration Stage and prior to Final Stage rather than passing it, only for it to be returned for reconsideration. Obviously, if that happened toward the end of a mandate, the Assembly might be dissolved before it had an opportunity to reconsider the Bill.

Options were put to the Committee regarding how best it could deal with issues of legislative competence being identified before Final Stage. Those included dealing with them on an ad hoc basis, relying on the Speaker’s discretion and the precedent set by the Justice Bill, and including provisions in Standing Orders. The Committee

concluded that Standing Orders should make provision for a new amending stage rather than issues of legislative competence being dealt with on an ad hoc basis. The new stage would occur in very narrowly defined circumstances after Further Consideration Stage and prior to Final Stage.

The new Standing Order — Standing Order 37A — sets out the procedure for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage. As the name suggests, that stage would be used only in exceptional circumstances and not routinely to correct drafting errors or to propose amendments. Its use would be restricted to circumstances where a legislative competence issue or serious technical defect has arisen due to amendments made during the passage of a Bill. The Speaker will interpret and apply admissibility criteria in respect of amendments tabled at that stage.

Today's motions will ensure that the Assembly has a procedure in place for dealing with those issues. Therefore, on behalf of the Committee, I commend the motions to the House.

Mr Clarke (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I welcome the opportunity to conclude today's debate on the motions to amend Standing Orders, which provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.

I thank the Chairperson for his opening remarks. As he outlined, motion (a) will insert a new Standing Order — Standing Order 37A — to provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage. Motions (b) and (c) are consequential amendments.

The new stage, as described, provides for a corrective mechanism in the event of any amendments to a Bill during its passage taking it outside of the Assembly's legislative competence or a serious technical defect being identified. Only amendments that are likely to rectify those issues will be selected by the Speaker at the Exceptional Further Consideration Stage. I commend the motions to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(a) After Standing Order 37, insert —

"37A. Public Bills: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

(1) If, after the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, and prior to its Final Stage, the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill submits a statement to the Speaker, in writing, asserting—

(a) that, as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill, either a provision of the Bill is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly, or the Bill has a serious technical defect, and

(b) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect,

the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for Exceptional Further Consideration Stage is determined.

(2) A statement submitted to the Speaker under paragraph (1) shall be circulated to all members of the

Assembly, as soon as is practicable, and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

(3) An amendment proposed to a Bill at Exceptional Further Consideration Stage shall only be selected if the Speaker is satisfied—

(a) that the amendment is intended either -

(i) to bring the Bill within the legislative competence of the Assembly, or

(ii) to correct any serious technical defect;

(b) that the proposed amendment deals with a matter specified in the statement under paragraph (1)(a) and which has arisen as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill; and

(c) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect.

(4) Subject to paragraphs (1) to (3) above, the provisions of Standing Order 37 and Standing Order 39 shall apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage of a Bill as if in those Standing Orders for 'Further Consideration Stage' there were substituted 'Exceptional Further Consideration Stage'."

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(b) In Standing Order 31, line 1, after "33(1)" insert – "37A,".

Resolved (with cross-community support):

(c) After Standing Order 35(19) insert –

"(19A) Paragraphs (17) to (19) apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage as

they do to Further Consideration Stage."

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

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

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the school improvement process [NIA 132/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

The inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the school improvement process is the second inquiry that the Education Committee has undertaken in this mandate. Members received written submissions from around 60 stakeholders and undertook around 17 oral evidence sessions. There were two informal events and a school visit, and we spent about half of the present session of the Assembly considering and deliberating on the evidence.

I take the opportunity at the outset to thank the many witnesses to the inquiry, including schools, principals, teachers, academics, district inspectors, associate assessors and representative organisations. I also want to thank the Department, in particular the Education and Training Inspectorate, for its responses and cooperation. As Chairperson of the Committee, I also express my gratitude to the other members of the Education Committee for their enthusiasm and hard work throughout the inquiry. Finally, I pass on, on behalf of the Committee, our thanks to the staff of the Education Committee, particularly our Committee Clerk and his staff, for organising the evidence sessions and for compiling what, I believe, has turned out to be a longer than expected report. Their hard work and diligence on the matter is very much appreciated, and I want to place on record that thanks today.

It is a long report, with a smaller than usual number of findings and recommendations, and I want to take a little time to highlight a few of the issues to the House. First, and for the avoidance of doubt, let me be very clear that the members of the Education Committee, separately and collectively, agree that professional inspection of the effectiveness of our schools is a good idea. The concept sits very well with the values of the teaching profession, which quite rightly sees itself as being reflective, striving for improvement and focusing on delivering the best educational experience for all our children.

Members agreed that inspection, as intended in the Every School a Good School policy, usually provides some useful direction for schools on their improvement journey. So, inspection is clearly a good thing. However, it is equally clear that simply and repeatedly inspecting our schools will not in itself make them any better. Imagine if a teacher had a child who is underachieving in the school. Simply telling that child repeatedly that their attainment is inadequate or unsatisfactory will not, on its own, make the

child any smarter or make their performance any better. The child needs to be helped and properly supported. As it is with children, so it is with schools.

The Committee has heard before about significant reductions in the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) for schools and the adverse impact that it has on school improvement. Members were, however, disturbed by suggestions from witnesses to the inquiry that some sectors were considerably better off than others in that regard. I think that that, if true, is unfair and makes no sense whatsoever. I also think that that was not the intention of the Every School a Good School policy.

The Committee's first recommendation is therefore for proper support for school improvement services. The Committee also recommends a stronger alignment between inspection and support, as is currently the practice in Scotland. This will ensure that there is, as the OECD recommended, a balance between the challenge provided by the inspectors to schools and the support that schools must have if they are to improve.

The Committee, when taking evidence, was greatly struck by the very different perceptions of the Education and Training Inspectorate. To be sure, inspection is an uncomfortable process and will, from time to time, lead to difficult exchanges and even some ill feeling, particularly if inspection results are poorer than a school expects. That ill feeling may explain some of the negative evidence submitted to the Committee. That said, the very great differences in schools' experience and the mass of associated evidence cannot be so easily explained. It is on that point that I want to digress for one moment. I trust that the inspectorate does not see the report as an attack but as a genuine attempt by the Education Committee, and those who collectively make it up, to reflect the genuine concerns and fears of many schools about the process. A simple dismissal, "We do not recognise that fear exists", is not acceptable and does not face up to the realities.

Why does the inspection experience vary so much? That is a question that we need answers to. There are a number of reasons. By way of context, let me briefly explain one of them: area planning and its impact on inspection. I can advise the House that it appears to be widely believed by schools that a bad inspection report can lead to a significant reduction in parental confidence and, therefore, enrolment. That, in turn, it is argued, can make a school unsustainable and even lead to its closure. It appears that the area-planning process, with its focus on the sustainability of schools, has had quite a lot to do with the new context for school inspections. I will not comment on the process itself, but what I will say is that area planning has certainly altered perceptions and raised the stakes for schools during the inspection process.

The question then is what is to be done? The Committee believes that, in the first instance, everyone must recognise that there is a new inspection landscape. That said, inspection reports must, of course, continue to provide parents with a clear understanding of a school's strengths and weaknesses. However, that must be done in such a way that a school is not inadvertently misrepresented and, consequently, its sustainability unfairly undermined.

The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Department do away with the one-word summaries

of school performance. No longer should schools be labelled “unsatisfactory” or “inadequate”, or even “good” or “outstanding”. Those descriptors misrepresent the breadth of educational experience in many schools. They do a disservice to schools and can often inadvertently mislead parents into believing that a school is all good or all bad when that is simply not the case.

The Committee recommends a similar practice to that adopted in some other jurisdictions, where single-word descriptors are replaced by more meaningful text. The Committee also recommends that two reports be produced for every school inspection. There should be an internal formative document designed to help improvement, and it should be accompanied by a more summative publication, in the public domain, which will explain in plain English where a school is strong and where it needs to improve. These reports should be free of coded references and jargon and clear enough for everyone to understand. Therein lies a huge challenge for the current process.

When I say “everyone”, I really mean parents. They are the key group in the school improvement process who, so far, have had limited or no opportunity to take part. The Committee agrees with leading educationalists and the OECD report that the Department has missed a trick by not doing more to include parents.

12.00 noon

Every email press release that the Department sends to the Committee carries a link to the Education Works campaign. The campaign is designed to encourage more parents to get involved with their child’s education. The principle behind the campaign is endorsed by everyone. It is therefore surprising that one arm of the Department promotes that message increasingly and another — the key delivery partner in Every School a Good School; the Education and Training Inspectorate — does not. Indeed, ETI indicated that it has had almost no recent engagement with parents, other than through its inspection questionnaires. As I said before, that does not make sense. It is for that reason that the Committee recommends, in line with the OECD report, that a representative parental consultation platform be established. That will, it is hoped, be the gateway through which many more parents get involved with and contribute to the school improvement process.

During its deliberations, the Committee was also more than a little taken aback by the poor relations, incessant sniping and high levels of misunderstanding and frustration amongst education stakeholders. It seems that relationships generally are in need of repair. A good beginning would be for the inspectorate to have a complaints procedure that commands greater confidence. A reformed procedure should admit the possibility of error or revision by ETI and allow for investigations to be undertaken, in some instances, by outside personnel. That would go some way to improve relations, enhance perceptions and secure more buy-in for school inspection.

A number of changes are proposed in the report, and I have mentioned some of those. My colleagues on the Committee will explore the other changes during the debate, including the treatment of the value added by schools, the important role of the district inspectors, the promotion of self-evaluation and changes to the use of questionnaires. The Committee agrees that all those

changes amount to a new beginning for inspection and school improvement.

A new beginning needs a new name. The Committee for Education has therefore proposed a rebranding of ETI as the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service. The new name and brand would signal a break with the past and an explicit commitment to a two-way collaborative model of school improvement, which will combine inspection with adequate levels of support for schools.

A majority of Members also felt that the linkage between the Department and the new school improvement service needed substantial change. A majority of Members had concerns in respect of the relationship, or perceived relationship, between the Department and ETI. Those Members felt that the Department had recently proved itself to be both immune to criticism and oblivious to good advice. Examples of that are the implementation of the computer-based assessment process, levels of progression and the original proposals for the common funding formula scheme, to name but a few. ETI, on the other hand, was perceived by some as simply being the enforcement arm of the Department. That sometimes widespread view tended to undermine the professional authority of the inspectorate’s findings.

What is required is a statutorily independent, professional organisation that can report, without fear or favour, in respect of all aspects of education policy. A majority of Members want to see that role undertaken by the new Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service. Those Members also want all communications between the new body and the Department to be transparent and understandable.

This is the time of year when schoolchildren get their end-of-term report. I am going to resist the temptation to boil down our 1,300-page report to a single word or simple throwaway catchphrase, like “must do better” or “needs improvement”, however apt that might be in this instance. Instead, I will say that the Committee believes that a reformed, rebranded and independent inspectorate will be more than capable of delivering a much-needed school improvement process. The recommendations will address perception and trust issues and lead to a more collaborative relationship and productive outcomes for all. As Chairman of the Education Committee, I therefore commend the report to the House.

In conclusion, I want to make a few comments as a Member of the House and as the DUP education spokesperson. The report, I trust, will not be yet another that sits on the shelves of the Department or in the Library of the House and ignored.

I believe that the issues in this report are far too important, particularly for the schools that are involved and for the pupils who attend our schools. I have no doubt that, given their professionalism, the district inspectors, associate inspectors and all engaged in the inspection process will, if given the opportunity, be able to respond to this report in a way that is positive and which will lead to improvement.

I give this very simple warning, however: let it not be said that this was just another day at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Let us all, collectively, work together to see the implementation of this report and the introduction of the Northern Ireland improvement service. Then, I believe, collectively with parents, teachers, schools, the

Department and the inspectorate, we will continue to deliver and ensure the best possible outcomes for our pupils.

This week, I have two pupils from Ballycastle High School with me on work experience.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Storey: That school and its pupils want improvements to be made for their benefit.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Committee's report this afternoon. I want to put on record my thanks to the Committee staff for their steadfast and professional support throughout the process and to all those individuals, organisations and interested parties who participated in the witness sessions. I also thank the schools that hosted the Committee as it explored the merits of self-evaluation and the school improvement process.

Looking through the report, we can see the vast number of areas where the Committee has identified issues and recommended some very interesting points of action. Indeed, some of the highlights include increased support for struggling schools; alterations to the format of inspections, including the use of what some, including the Chairperson, have termed "plain English"; and looking at the role of parents in the overall process to give them a platform to become more active and informed. The Chair talked about the renaming of the inspection body to capture the culture of self-improvement in the education system as a whole. There is also the unique dynamic of Irish-medium education in a full immersion setting, which requires a specialised inspection process.

I want to focus on recommendation 16, which is to do with the statutory independence of the inspection body. The Sinn Féin members of the Committee have argued for some time that this recommendation does nothing but put the horse before the cart. How can we seriously stand here today and recommend that the inspectorate be independent but, in an effort to determine whether this status is desirable, we should afterwards carry out research? We think that that is crazy. No Minister would ever give serious consideration to such a predetermined recommendation. Indeed, I regret the fact that our report includes such a recommendation, as I feel that it downplays the significance of some of the others.

We have absolutely no theoretical or ideological opposition to an independent inspectorate; indeed, an independent inspectorate may be preferable moving forward. However, as I have outlined in the report, we suggest that evidence-based research should be undertaken prior to a decision either way on independence. It is important to stress that, during our inquiry, we received no evidence that supported an independent inspectorate. Moreover, the governance of the inspectorate was not included in the terms of reference for the inquiry. Occasionally, the question was put to witnesses regarding their perspectives on independence, where some offered thoughts on the way forward. Many stressed, however, that it was an issue that they had not considered in any great detail before offering some initial thoughts.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: Yes.

Mr Storey: Does the Member not accept that the submission made by the NIPSA representatives — we never got a satisfactory answer from the Department or the inspectorate as to the interference or the changes that were potentially made to reports — clearly indicated that something was going on to which someone has still not put their hands up?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his intervention. There is a line in the report that says that there was absolutely no evidence collected to support any accusations made. Indeed, in the very same week that it was suggested we should replicate the independence of Ofsted, the Education Minister at Westminster, Michael Gove, sacked Sally Morgan, the head of Ofsted, many believed, for no reason other than her political affiliation as a Labour peer. The question remains: how is that independent? Are those who seek an Ofsted model of governance content for the Minister to be able to sack at will the so-called independent head of an inspectorate?

There are at least a dozen fundamental questions that need to be addressed before settling on the preferred governance standing, including who will fund any such independent body; who will appoint members of such a body; and who will hold those members to account. Those are the sorts of questions that need to be answered long before we can seriously agree on the governance status of any future inspectorate body. It is surely more logical to research and evaluate a range of governance options as we move forward, and to defer any consideration in respect of statutory independence until such work has been completed.

For that reason, a Cheann Comhairle, I cannot support the motion, which calls upon the Minister to implement all of the recommendations that are contained in the report. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. A number of factors influenced the Committee's decision to conduct the inquiry. They include the Department's attempt to enhance the ETI's powers, concerns that were expressed about the high stakes of the nature of inspections and the apparent lack of consistency in the measurement of value added. I will address the debate purely from a schools perspective. I suppose that, at the outset, I have to say that my experience of inspections, both as a teacher and as a school leader, was positive, but I have met many for whom it was a different story.

I believe that the Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate need to learn lessons from the report. Lesson one: it is not the inspectors who deliver school improvement, but the leaders and teachers in schools. Again, I pay credit to them for their dedication and hard work. An inspection can, however, assist the school improvement process if, first, the staff and governors have confidence in the process, have ownership of the findings and believe that they are valid. The district inspector plays a vital role in developing that trust. It is a very important but challenging role. I believe that there should be two reports: a short report for public consumption and a more detailed report which could feed into the school's development plan in order to drive further improvement. The majority of schools support the idea that there

should be more practising principals and teachers on inspection teams. There should also be a more transparent complaints procedure.

Secondly, schools must have the resources available to effect improvement, bearing in mind that there are many factors that influence school and student performance, including the home learning environment and the quality of early years and previous education.

Thirdly, staff must be motivated to drive change. The ETI is very quick to say that it is not its responsibility to provide support. Instead, we have to depend on a depleted CASS service. Classroom teaching and leadership are key to school improvement, but we must bear in mind a recent ETI report which suggests that over half of lessons are not very good or better and that, across the sectors, management needs improvement in 22% of primary schools and 39% of post-primary schools. Quite bluntly, there is little high-quality staff development available, even if schools could afford it.

Take something like schools' self-evaluation — a must if we are ever going to develop school inspections into a quality assurance process. It is probably 20 years since I first organised a school's self-evaluating conference, but that process is still not well enough embedded in all of our schools because, I believe, the necessary expertise is not there to deliver it. There is a lot of expertise in our team of inspectors. However, apart from some good examples, they have not got the time to disseminate that good practice. There is some excellent work out there — special education comes to mind.

We need to see school support services and school inspection processes being more closely aligned. The language that is used in inspection reports is extremely important. We need to change language like "inadequate" or "unsatisfactory". Words like that do nothing to motivate people.

The second lesson is that inspections should be data-informed, not data-driven. I was very taken by a principal of a school where up to 80% of the pupils were on free school meals. Its inspection was going very well until it was compared with end of Key Stage assessments. That was devastating for staff. The ETI could walk away after the inspection, but it was the principal and the senior management team who had to pick up the pieces among a totally deflated staff. The ETI does not see the aftermath. Even when an inspection goes well, stress builds up, and heads see an increase in sickness absence after an inspection.

12.15 pm

The ETI tells us that the data is only part of the picture, but it seems to drive everything else. In some cases, when the data is suspect, as is the case with end of key stage assessments, numerical targets simply inhibit improvement. We need a more holistic assessment of a school's performance. How can you use the same measure at the end of Key Stage 4 for students who were getting straight As at 11 and those from another post-primary school who were barely able to read?

Maybe there is just one lesson for us all here, —

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

Mr Rogers: — and that is to listen to our teachers.

A professional, independent, broadly based, balanced inspection of schools is an essential component of school improvement.

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

Mr Rogers: I finish by recording my thanks to the Committee staff and all those who took the time and effort to contribute.

Mrs Dobson: I very much welcome the opportunity to join Members here today as the Committee presents the results of its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate. Since we launched the inquiry back in June last year, we have taken considerable evidence from over 60 varied and distinguished organisations and individuals. That evidence and assistance have been invaluable to the Committee in arriving at what, I believe, is a balanced and sensitive approach to the subject but one which recommends action rather than inertia.

At the very outset, I join other Members in stating my gratitude to the Committee Clerk and staff for the work they conducted throughout the inquiry; work that has been invaluable to Committee members.

During our evidence sessions, I am glad that we were able to clear up that the central reason for inspections in our schools is the pupil, not the bureaucratic process, the teachers, the buildings or the parents. Pupils must remain central.

The measure of any successful inspection should be the action that follows it. If areas for improvement are identified and there is no improvement, there is little point in an inspection taking place in the first place. Therefore, I believe that one of our key recommendations to provide additional support to help struggling schools to undergo a programme of improvement is entirely correct.

The process of communicating the results of inspections is also absolutely key. If parents are not able to fully understand the results of an inspection carried out at their child's school, that needs to be improved upon. Striking a balance is critical for staff and parents alike. It would be wrong to have an over-simplistic portrayal of the school's performance, nor would it be correct to publish an over-complex inspection report.

We must recognise that engagement with parents also has to improve. An answer to a question that I asked during the session in which we took evidence from the ETI officials sticks in my mind. I was told that the process of engaging in evening meetings with parents at a school due to be inspected had been discontinued some years back by the inspectorate because the turnout was so small. The reason given was this:

"it simply was not worth the resource."

The inference was that it was somehow the fault of the parents for not turning up to the evening meetings, rather than a failure on the part of the inspectorate to effectively communicate with parents.

Inspectors must begin the process of greater and more innovative connection with parents. That will strengthen the value of the inspection process overall. Inspections have to become more about the end product and the result rather than the process.

As I bring my remarks to a close, I once again praise the Committee staff for their hard work. I believe that they have come up with a radical report, which suggests reforms that, if implemented, will make a real difference to our schools and our pupils. Teachers and principals must no longer see inspections as threats but, rather, as opportunities for improvement in the education of our children. That will mean a change in mindset, which, I believe, will and must come sooner rather than later.

I urge the Assembly to support the report and the Minister to act on its recommendations for the sake of every single pupil in Northern Ireland.

Mr Lunn: I am glad to contribute to today's discussion. The report has taken a long time to produce. I do not think that we expected to spend six months on it, but it seemed to develop a life of its own. I do not want to be disrespectful, but we seemed to turn over the odd stone and then had to investigate a bit more what was under it. In no particular order, I thank the staff, in particular Peter McCallion, who is with us today, for managing to draw together a mass of evidence into a cohesive report that I encourage everybody to study, particularly the inspectorate.

Most people agreed that an effective school inspection system was a desirable thing. I thought that there would be some doubt about that, but that came through loud and clear. At least, in that respect, we are not going to follow the Finnish model, where they do not appear to have inspections at all.

The nature of inspections came in for some discussion and scrutiny. Should they be based on the present model of two or three days? Should they be announced two or three weeks in advance, or should they be unannounced? A body of opinion and the evidence that we got favoured unannounced inspections, and, frankly, I would, too. At least it has the effect of removing the enormous stress for the principal and staff of preparing for an inspection.

Another thing that came through — others have mentioned it — is the disparity between the experience of the inspectorate and how it views inspections and, dare I say it, the victims — that is, the staff and the principal in the schools — who definitely take a different view. As far as the inspectorate is concerned, the inspections are helpful, cooperative, supportive and non-confrontational. They are kind of an arm-around-the-shoulder, touchy-feely, helpful exercise that everybody will benefit from, and the staff and principals will be kept apprised of what is going on at all stages right through the inspection and receive a helpful report afterwards. I think the staff see it differently. They see them as stressful and critical, with no real recognition given, particularly no recognition of the value that schools have managed to add in the course of their year's work, perhaps in difficult circumstances.

We took evidence from one school principal who came to talk to us. I will not name the school because I do not think that it is named in the report, but it is a primary school in a difficult area of north Belfast. There are paramilitary influences, and there are a lot of problems with truancy, absenteeism and parental failure to encourage their children. Over a number of years, the school had managed to improve gradually the situation of the pupils. When the inspectors came and did their inspection, the principal's comment was that, if he had been given a satisfactory rating, he would have challenged it, because he thought

that the school was better than that. He thought that the improvement that the school had generated deserved better than that. The school got an unsatisfactory result, which was absolutely devastating for the staff, for him and for the pupils. It just floored them. The appeals process does not seem to cater for that. Appeals are not successful. There is a recommendation in the report that we should have a more structured appeals procedure, and I agree absolutely with that. It should be an appeal to a body that has nothing to do with the ETI or the Department.

The independence of the inspectorate kept coming up. I support the recommendation that it should be independent of the Department. I wish that somebody would explain to me — perhaps the Minister will have a go at it — what the rationale is for the inspectorate being part of the Department, to put it around the other way. It cries out to me that it should be an independent body. As far as renaming it is concerned, at least it would put a different emphasis on the thing and perhaps draw a line under the past.

I am running out of time. On the Irish-medium sector and the immersion part of it, the fact that inspectors who cannot really speak Irish go into Irish-medium schools kind of defeats the object, does it not? That needs more resources and a proper recognition of what the Irish-medium sector is trying to do. It is an insult to the sector that the inspectorate cannot —

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

Mr Lunn: — provide an Irish speaker to inspect an Irish-medium school. I will have to stop there.

Mr Craig: I start by declaring an interest as a member of two boards of governors, one of which has had major interaction with the inspectorate for the past couple of years. I am like a lot of Committee members — bar one, I think — in that I am one of the few people who, unfortunately, has had experience of the inspectorate. That experience has been good and bad. When I look at the school that the inspectorate came into, I see the positives and benefits of its coming in. There is definitely an atmosphere of staff being more focused on specific issues, which is one of the big benefits. The inspectorate clearly expanded the school's use of data and pupil tracking, and it greatly raised the focus on pupil profiles as a tool for seeing how a child's ability increases throughout his or her school life, which is of great benefit. The inspectorate has also led the school to review its entire curriculum. Once you understand how children are improving or not improving, you have an indication of what they are best suited to educationally.

All of that is very good stuff, and I cannot complain about the fact that, last year, the inspectorate saw that school as one of the most improved in the Province when it came to academic achievement. Those are all the good things that came out of the inspectorate going in and changing what was happening in schools. Aligned with that, however, are the downsides, the things that I do not believe the inspectorate gets right. First, it comes in and takes a snapshot of what is going on. It does not sit down with the key players in the school and allow them to explain what progress has been made and how the school is attempting to do some of what it will eventually implement anyway. I can give a simple example. The inspectorate criticised the school for not having a head of maths. In fact, the

inspection interfered with and stopped the process of interviewing for that very post. Then, they had the cheek to criticise the school for having no one there. They do not really interact with the staff and senior management of the school on what plans are in place to improve on some of the issues that it ends up criticising it for.

The use of anonymous surveys is highlighted in the report, and I fully support the point made. My experience is that anonymous staff surveys, in particular, give a platform to those who have not achieved or advanced in the school and feel aggrieved. All you get from those individuals is negativity, which you would expect because nobody likes not being the winner in an interview. I like the fact that the report clearly identifies that as a major issue in how the inspectorate should operate.

The language used in the reports is highlighted at, I think, section 7 of the recommendations. I do not think that any member of the Committee had an issue with the main body of inspection reports. The problem is that no one ever reads that. The press definitely do not read it; they look at the end of the report and at the language used in the conclusion. That is what does critical damage to the reputation of any school. I welcome the fact that our recommendations say that more moderate language should be used throughout all reports.

Running centrally through all of this is the fact that everybody agreed that there should be independence for the inspectorate. I find it hard to believe that the Minister would fight against independence for the inspectorate while his party —

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

Mr Craig: — fought for the independent oversight of the police. That is hypocritical.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension today. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.30 pm.

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

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: I advise Members that question 7 has been withdrawn.

Milk: Prices and Quotas

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, following the removal of milk quotas, what action her Department will take to address the volatility of milk prices. (AQO 6368/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The dairy sector makes a very important contribution to the local agrifood industry. To ensure its future sustainability, it is vital that the sector remain competitive and profitable.

When milk quotas end, there will be no constraints on production, and future decisions will be taken by the dairy sector in the context of input costs and market returns. Some turbulence in the market may be expected as other countries ramp up production, and this, in turn, could affect milk prices here. However, I am encouraged by the first report of the economic board of the new EU Milk Market Observatory and the EU's optimism about market prospects and milk prices going forward.

My Department's overall aim is to help the dairy sector to improve its performance and grow its potential in the marketplace in a sustainable way. For example, we provided joint support with Invest NI for an industry-led dairy competitiveness study aimed at helping the sector to plan for the future, post milk quotas. The recommendations of that study are now being taken forward by the dairy industry.

The dairy sector has the potential to grow further and to exploit the opportunities arising from the predicted expansion in world population. My Department will continue to support the dairy sector's growth ambitions, as set out in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's report, 'Going for Growth', through the provision of education, training, technical support and research to help to improve efficiency, competitiveness and innovation. In addition, it is envisaged that the sector will be able to avail of support under the new rural development programme.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Following the much discussion that there has been in the press about illegal movement of milk and milk actually flowing from farmers in the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland, can the Minister enlighten us on what discussions have taken place between her and the Agriculture Minister in the Republic to stop this illegal trading of milk?

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously I condemn illegal trading of milk or any illegal activity. This is something that we have discussed at North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meetings, albeit not any of the specifics. I assume that

the Member is referring to the article in 'The Sunday Times' at the weekend, which indicated that the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) in the South is investigating potential paramilitary links to that activity. I am aware of that report. It is vital that all agencies work together and that we are able to cooperate with each other no matter what your role is. I can assure the Member that my Department, through its enforcement team and my staff, will play its role in making sure that we protect the reputation of our milk industry, which is key to moving forward, and expose and bring to court anyone involved in any illegal activity.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí. Will the Minister please elaborate on the support that her Department has given to the dairy sector?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, absolutely. My Department has provided support in many ways, particularly, a number of years ago, through the industry-led dairy competitiveness study, which is helping the dairy industry to prepare for the ending of milk quotas in 2015. Dairy UK is leading on the implementation of that study's recommendations. The work of the Agri-Food Strategy Board has set very challenging targets for the local agrifood industry up until 2020.

The local dairy industry receives, and will continue to receive, significant assistance from Government through the work that we do around research, training, knowledge transfer, benchmarking and product innovation alongside financial assistance through the regional food programme and the rural development programme. My aim is to ensure that the dairy sector can meet the challenges ahead and continue to make a very important contribution to the local economy and to life in rural areas.

Mr P Ramsey: Minister, following on from Mr Dunne's supplementary question about the discussions that you have had, could you outline to the House any discussions that you have had with Minister Coveney regarding the dairy milk industry in Ireland and the abolition of milk quotas?

Mrs O'Neill: I apologise; I did not quite hear the question. If you want me to elaborate on the conversations —

Mr P Ramsey: It is regarding the Irish Government's position and the milk quotas in the South.

Mrs O'Neill: There will be natural challenges post quotas. We are at an advantage in that, in the past, we have never reached full quota; we have always worked at about 10% below quota. Quotas have not restricted any production here, so that is a plus in a sense.

However, in the future, there are obvious challenges across Europe. Indeed, with the growing world population, there are obviously opportunities that we need to exploit in moving forward. We need not look on quotas as a negative. While there are challenges, I think that our challenge is to make sure that we exploit other markets that may be open to our local industry and that we work across the island, because we can market what we have to offer right across the new markets that we will try to get in to. There are obvious advantages in that, and that is something that I have been discussing with Simon Coveney.

Mr Kinahan: Minister, you have said today that the Department is going to help, and you have given us a lot of generalities but no specifics. Can you please be more

specific as to how we are going to increase our market share and help milk farmers and so on?

Mrs O'Neill: It goes without saying that the work that we have done with the Agri-Food Strategy Board has looked at the challenges and opportunities for the dairy sector, and I want to be able to play my role. I think that some of the key roles for the Executive to play are particularly around exploring new markets and going into countries where we may not have been before, as well as looking at what markets are open that we can be competitive in post-quota. There are many opportunities, and I want to play my role through DARD support for the dairy industry, whether that be through the regional food programme, the rural development programme or the practical supports around innovation and research and development.

There are many levels of support that can come from my Department and others to help the industry to be sustainable in the future. The industry has been very aware of the ending of quotas for quite some time and has been preparing. The piece of work that the industry did alongside my Department and DETI, through Invest NI, has been key in helping plan for the future. As I said, there are many levels of support that we have been involved with, and I am happy to provide any further detail that the Member wants in writing.

Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations

2. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the efforts she has made to obtain agreement on the future allocation of single farm payments. (AQO 6369/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The process of reforming single farm payments has been ongoing for some time at European and local levels. My officials and I have sought to keep stakeholders in the North fully engaged in this process.

In October 2013, I launched an extensive public consultation on the reform of pillar 1 direct payments, which provided considerable analysis and outlined a suggested package of support to help focus the debate and crystallise views. I have personally met a broad range of organisations representing all sections of the farming community. My officials have attended a large number of stakeholder meetings that were attended by well over 3,000 people. It has been hugely valuable to me to hear from all sides in the debate as I work towards delivering a fair and balanced outcome. Everyone has had the opportunity to express their views and preferences in a very open and transparent manner.

The formal consultation drew a huge reaction, with over 850 responses received. I have already announced a substantial number of CAP reform decisions on which there was significant agreement and which have been broadly welcomed. However, a number of key decisions remain to be taken. The allocation of almost €2 billion of taxpayers' money over the remainder of this decade has to be done carefully, wisely and fairly. Given the importance of the remaining decisions, I will take them to the Executive. Political discussions are ongoing, and it is my intention to bring my proposals on these issues to the Executive in coming weeks.

I am, of course, mindful of the 1 August 2014 deadline to notify the European Commission of our implementation

plans, and it is my intention that we will be in a position to have an agreed CAP pillar 1 structure before that date.

Mr Allister: The Minister cannot be ignorant of the dire consequences for the farming community if we move immediately to a one-region, flat-rate distribution; her own departmental figures demonstrate that beyond doubt. Apart from the platitudes about seeking agreement, what actual steps has she taken to seek consensus on this matter? When, for example, did she last meet the key stakeholder on the producer side, the Ulster Farmers' Union? She talks about bringing a paper to the Executive: has she yet tabled that paper?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think that that is two questions so far.

Mr Allister: Is she just running down the clock to get her objective of a single region —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. This is Question Time, when Members have the opportunity to place a question to the Minister.

Mrs O'Neill: We have taken quite a number of decisions to date. However, there are some key decisions still to be taken, and I am actively pursuing our getting to a stage where we have an Executive paper that we can agree on. I do not think that it is ideal that we go to a position where there is a flat rate immediately. As part of the whole consultation exercise, I have listened carefully to the views of everybody concerned, and I am only interested in a fair outcome and a balanced approach to CAP reform. We are talking about serious amounts of taxpayers' money, and they should be distributed fairly.

In terms of taking a decision, a political process is ongoing. I am involved in that process and I hope to be in a position in the next number of weeks to be able to bring a paper to the Executive for agreement.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Can she state, at this stage, if she has been involved in discussions with party leaders and some Executive colleagues to try to reach a consensus paper that could be presented to the Executive to end the uncertainty, given that Scotland has now reached agreement?

Mrs O'Neill: I have not been involved in discussions with party leaders. There is a political process ongoing. I am going to keep repeating that. There is nothing else to add to it. I hope to be able to bring the paper to the Executive for full discussion and, hopefully, agreement, in the next number of weeks.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. I will be a bit more focused than my colleague from North Antrim. Given the fact that a flat rate immediately would be a shock/ trauma to the industry, what can the Minister do today to reassure the farming industry that that will not be the case?

Mrs O'Neill: I think that my track record speaks for itself. Over all the consultation processes, I have listened very carefully to all stakeholders. Nobody has said that they did not have the ear of the Minister, because I made sure that my officials engaged at town hall meetings and at community centres. No matter where they were asked to go, they went. We have clearly listened to the views. Unprecedented numbers of people responded to the consultation, and we have taken our time and made sure that we analysed that properly.

I see the sector as being one of the most fantastic sectors. Look at the economic recession that we have been going through and the economic climate that we are in. This is the industry that has continued to shine. Nobody sitting on the Benches on this side is trying to disadvantage anybody in the industry.

Looking to the future, what we need is a fair and balanced CAP. We are talking about serious amounts of money, and it is only right and proper that it should be distributed fairly and that we have a sustainable industry into the future. I assure anybody from the farming community that all my decisions will be fair and balanced.

Mrs Dobson: Frankly, I think this is a disgrace. There are three weeks left in the Assembly term before the summer and there is still no deal, and the 1 August deadline is looming. The Minister said that she will bring it to the Executive. I hope that she does, but —

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

Mrs Dobson: — if she does not, will she accept that the clouds are gathering and she will have lost the confidence of the sector? If she does not bring it to the Executive —

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

Mrs Dobson: — will she do the honourable thing and stand down?

Mrs O'Neill: I can say it no differently. I am in a political process. I aim to have a decision and to bring something forward to the Executive in the next number of weeks. I can dress it up or change my language if the Member wishes, but that is the situation. I will take my decisions in a fair and balanced manner. I will not be rushed into decisions. We are talking about £2 billion of money. I am not going to be rushed into a decision just to please people. *[Interruption.]* I accept that anybody in the farming community — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs O'Neill: Because of how it affects farmers, I have listened very carefully, and nobody can be in any doubt of that. The track record speaks for itself. I will take my decision to the Executive, hopefully in the next number of weeks. I do not think that it is in anybody's benefit if Europe takes the decision for us, because we are elected here by local people to take decisions, so that is my intention. If that is not the case, it will not be because I have been found wanting.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Stephen Agnew is not in his place.

Fisheries Task Force

4. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on what date the fisheries task force will have its first meeting. (AQO 6371/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: You will be aware that at the end of February I announced that I was planning to appoint a fisheries industry task force to undertake a fundamental examination of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry and to identify options for reform to help to ensure the future sustainability of the local fishing sector. At the same time I announced the provision of further financial assistance to the sector. Since that announcement, my Department's priority was to develop and deliver the assistance scheme whilst seeking to establish the task

force. The inaugural meeting of the fishing task force will take place on Friday 4 July.

Miss M McIlveen: Will the Minister detail what will be on the agenda, whether it will include options for a fishing vessel decommissioning scheme and if it is possible that fishing representatives will have the opportunity to pursue other agenda items through the task force?

Mrs O'Neill: At the first meeting, I want the task force to consider all the options and issues that it may want to scope further and, absolutely, a decommissioning scheme will still be on the table for discussion. The Member will be aware that we tried to progress it in the past but that there was no agreement. I am still keen that we can explore that issue further and I think there will be opportunities under the new funding round for that to happen. That will be on the table alongside all the current issues that are impacting the fishing industry at the moment, of which there are many, particularly around profitability for the industry.

What I want members of the task force to do at the inaugural meeting is to sit down and look at whether they are content with the membership, because we want to make sure that grass-roots fishermen also feel that they are part of the discussions. Everything is up for discussion, and, through the task force, the industry can work with the Department to decide what it wants to prioritise in the time ahead.

2.15 pm

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister tell us what priorities the fishing industry task force should consider?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said, the priorities will include things such as profitability for the sector, particularly for certain fleet segments, and the actions that will be required to address that. The decommissioning scheme will obviously be on the table, as will the challenges with wind farms and the conflict there. I think that there will be quite a range of things. Most important to consider in moving forward will be the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund funding stream, how that can be got on the ground as quickly as possible and the types of schemes that fishermen want to see.

Mr Rogers: Minister, this time last year you announced funding through the European Fisheries Fund to include the establishment of a research and development fund to look specifically at fishing gear with very low catch rates for unwanted fish. Do you have any update on that, please?

Mrs O'Neill: I can provide more detail to the Member in writing, but suffice it to say that a lot of the gear trials have been going forward. If you remember, the history is that Europe wanted to impose a particular type of gear on the industry. I opposed that and brought a proposal to the Commission. We have now trialled quite a number of types of gear through the research project that we took forward. Some fishermen favour certain types of gear over others, and there are obviously competing issues. It is an ongoing piece of work.

Mr McCarthy: Will the Minister agree with me that the time for talking has long since passed and that, unless and until something drastic is done to improve the lot of fishermen, we will have no fishing industry left? Is she listening closely to what the fishermen are telling her Department? In an answer to another Member earlier, she said that we

are local representatives who answer to the people. Can you stand over that statement for the fishing industry?

Mrs O'Neill: Absolutely. That is what we are elected to do. The reason why I am establishing the task force is that, sometimes, fishermen do not always think that their views are being represented, even through groupings or in their communication with the Department. Through this piece of work, my intention is that we will be able to improve communication across the board and look at what we in the Department can do to assist fishermen — all fishermen.

Going for Growth

5. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she last met the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to securing financial support for the agrifood Going for Growth strategy. (AQO 6372/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has played a key role alongside DETI in supporting the Agri-Food Strategy Board, both during the development of Going for Growth and as we move into the implementation phase. That involved ongoing engagement with DFP in preparing the proposed government response to the report.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and I have jointly submitted proposals to the Executive on the way forward for Going for Growth, and I am committed to delivering on its aims and objectives. For example, the report identified significant opportunities for export growth in the USA, Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. I have already visited China to talk to officials about the quality and safety of our produce, and my Department is supporting access to new markets through the efforts of the supply chain development programme and the veterinary service. Most recently, Singapore announced it was opening its markets to beef from the North and Northern beef sourced from Southern cattle, and I am confident that others will follow.

Irrespective of the proposed market, any growth must be sustainable, and I welcome the Agri-Food Strategy Board's view that any growth must be based on sustainability and profitability for the entire supply chain, recognising the importance that each part plays in producing high-quality, traceable food. My officials continue to liaise with their counterparts in other Departments, including DETI and DFP, to progress agreed recommendations, and have submitted bids to DFP to support preparatory work for a farm business improvement scheme.

Mrs Overend: It has been 13 months since the strategy was first announced, and we have seen very little in that time. In fact, the delivery has been pretty pathetic. I do not mind where the blame lies and whether it is with DARD, DETI or DFP, but, in the eyes of most farmers, you are all letting the sector down.

Can the Minister give a commitment that Going for Growth has not been caught up in some futile game of political brinkmanship between the DUP and her party over the issue of welfare reform?

Mrs O'Neill: I can give a guarantee that I am as committed as I ever was to the Agri-Food Strategy Board's report. As I said, I have sent the Executive my response to it.

I do not think that it is fair to say that there has been no progress to date, as there has been progress. Quite a number of areas of work have taken place across Departments, including mine, to progress the asks of the document.

I will run through a very short list of some of the things happening in my Department in relation to the deferral of the export health charges identified as an obstacle to export. I proactively promoted agrifood in China, and OFMDFM promoted it in Japan. We have had the opening of the Singapore market to beef and continued work on developing the new rural development programme, which, as the Member will be aware, I have always said is key to delivering some key asks of the Going for Growth strategy, particularly the farm business improvement scheme. The number of DARD postgraduate courses has increased, which was an ask, and we have created a dedicated contact point at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) for EU funding for research and development. We also reopened the manure efficiency technology scheme.

So it is incorrect to say that nothing has been done to date. Quite a lot of work is ongoing, and that is just in my Department. However, I want the report to be finalised at the Executive sooner rather than later.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far. Given that £250 million was originally envisaged for this scheme, can the Minister outline exactly what Executive funds have been targeted and agreed, and is there a suitable timetable for a Going for Growth implementation plan?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said, my response to the document and that of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment are with the Executive, and we are waiting for a discussion on those any day. The key ask in that document is the £250 million for the business improvement scheme, which is key for the sector. We can look at land management schemes and at fencing and sheds for farmers, which are key needs in the industry. I am very keen to get those signed off so that we can implement the bigger projects sooner rather than later.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim bhuíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. What impact will the 0% transfer have on the delivery of Going for Growth?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that one of the key tools in enabling us to deliver on the Going for Growth strategy is the new rural development programme, so it is absolutely vital that we get sufficient funds. I have said clearly that, as a result of not being able to transfer money, the Executive have to step up to the mark to deliver on the additional financial support needed. As I said, I remain committed to delivering on the aims set out in the strategy and am exploring all options available in order to be able to achieve that.

More than ever before, it is vital that the Executive provide the funding and support to enable the Department to deliver on the objectives set out in the 'Going for Growth' document because all parties, particularly the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and me, signed up to it. It is a fantastic piece of work, and it would be a shame if it sat on a shelf and was not taken forward because of a lack of investment from the Executive.

DARD Headquarters

6. **Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her engagement with departmental staff in Dundonald House in relation to the proposed relocation of her Department's headquarters to Ballykelly. (AQO 6373/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As you will be aware, I remain committed to relocating my departmental headquarters to the former military site at Ballykelly. Since I announced my intention, my officials and I have kept staff fully up to date with developments. Very recently, my permanent secretary wrote to all staff in the Department to inform them that a paper on the business case for relocation is with my Executive colleagues for consideration, and he has committed to providing further regular updates as required.

The consultation with staff and their representatives continues through our agreed industrial relations mechanisms, known as the Whitley arrangements. A subcommittee of departmental and staff representatives meets monthly, specifically to consult NIPSA formally on all relocation issues. More recently, a further subcommittee was established to consider all of the HR issues. Furthermore, my officials have developed a dedicated intranet site, and staff have been provided with an email helpline for any questions that they may have.

As we move forward, my intention is that all staff in DARD will continue to be kept informed of progress and, as appropriate, fully consulted and engaged with throughout the programme. I previously stated my intention to continue with the commitment of the previous Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to engage fully throughout the process with staff and their representatives. To date, the engagement with NIPSA has been extensive and meaningful, and I intend to ensure that that continues.

Mr Copeland: As always, I thank the Minister for her answer. Can she give us some idea of her estimate of the number of staff working in Dundonald House who, for whatever reason, may be unable or unprepared to move to the north-west? What realistic chance is there of all these staff being offered an alternative position in the greater Belfast area?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have the exact figures with me, but the Member will be aware that we did the initial staff survey in phases. First, we surveyed the DARD HQ staff, then the wider DARD staff and, finally, the wider Civil Service staff. I think that it was only natural, given that DARD HQ has been based at Dundonald House for almost 50 years, that the outcome of the DARD HQ survey was that the majority of staff who work there live in the surrounding area and, obviously, want to stay there. That is totally acceptable, and, of course, that is what they want.

We moved on to the next phase, which looked at the wider DARD staff, and that obviously created a bigger pool of people who want to work in the north-west and Ballykelly. Again, that was the case when we came to the staff surveys for the wider Civil Service. I am confident that there will be opportunities for transfer across the Civil Service and that there will be enough staff to staff a new headquarters in Ballykelly.

Mr G Robinson: Given the recent contrary speculation, will the Minister give the definitive timeline for the relocation of her departmental headquarters to Ballykelly?

Mrs O'Neill: The business case has been agreed. As you know, we set it out on a phased basis, and we are hopeful that we will have staff in place in 2017.

Mr Dallat: The last time that I was in Ballykelly, it was for gross insubordination at a checkpoint, but that, in no way, has deterred my endeavours to go back there. Will the Minister outline the progression that will lead to this swanky new headquarters and all the 800 jobs that she has promised? I do not want to be a doubting Thomas, but the Minister really needs to put flesh on the bones and assure us that this is for real.

Mrs O'Neill: I can absolutely assure you that it is for real and that my commitment for decentralisation is for real. I know that the Member has a particular interest in Ballykelly, but he can see that we are also moving very quickly to move fisheries to south Down, Forest Service to Fermanagh and Rivers Agency to Cookstown. That speaks for itself, in that I have a commitment to make sure that we decentralise, and I am absolutely committed to the headquarters move. We have a project management board in place. I am not going to lead staff up the garden path. We are making sure that they are fully consulted throughout the process, and they welcome that. This is about a fair distribution of public sector jobs, fair and balanced growth and us being able to stimulate the economy in the north-west with the construction and the ongoing maintenance of the building. The benefits far outweigh any negatives, and I am absolutely committed to the project.

Ms S Ramsey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. It is not that often that a city slicker gets the chance to ask the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development a question. The Minister has mentioned the benefits of relocation a number of times in her answers: will she take a minute to outline those benefits?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. Thanks for that question. This, for me, is absolutely about a fair distribution of public sector jobs. It is something that the Executive are wedded to, and it is a Programme for Government commitment. I want to see this through. As I said, all the other opportunities that will now be available for people across the wider Civil Service to move into DARD in the north-west and to find employment that is closer to home and creates a far better work/life balance are very welcome.

As I said, the benefits of the stimulation of the local economy through job creation and the construction and ongoing maintenance of the building speak for themselves. We want to see this happen. As I said, I have a programme board in place that is very committed to taking forward the project, and I will continue to work with it over the next number of years until we see this come to fruition.

DARD Direct: Strabane

8. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the proposed DARD Direct office in Strabane. (AQO 6375/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Work on a new purpose-built government building on the site of the current social security office at Urney Road, Strabane, is due to begin in autumn 2014, subject to planning permission and the central procurement division's tender process. It will be the venue for the Strabane DARD Direct office and a modern

jobs and benefits office. I expect the full range of DARD services to farmers in the surrounding area to be available from this office by spring 2016. When delivered, the Strabane DARD Direct office will complete the full roll-out of 12 DARD Direct offices across the north.

Feedback from farmers about DARD Direct has always been very positive, and I believe that co-locating with DSD and DEL is a very cost-effective way for DARD to ensure that our customers in the north-west enjoy the same benefits as others.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for her response. How many jobs are expected to be relocated to Strabane? Go raibh maith agat.

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for her question. Approximately 39 posts will be relocated to the new DARD Direct office. The majority — about 25 jobs — will be from Asylum Road, and the remainder, approximately eight people, will be relocated from Limavady. There will be about six people from our existing office in Strabane.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of the period for listed questions. We move on to topical questions.

2.30 pm

Lough Neagh

1. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to expand on her reasoning behind her decision not to proceed with buying Lough Neagh. (AQT 1281/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have not taken a decision not to buy Lough Neagh. The Member will be aware that we published the report and we now have the Executive response agreed, which basically states that there is a lot more homework to be done. There is a lot more scoping to be done. We must get the management structure right and have that partnership arrangement working, with one Department taking the lead. The Member will be aware of the challenges due to having so many vested interests, if you like, and so many different interests.

The report sets out clearly and the Executive agreed that the first thing that we need to have in place is the new management structure. We are consulting on that with the new council structures. Hopefully, that work will be finished within four to six months. Ownership is definitely not ruled out. It is still on the table and can be explored further, perhaps better, with the structure that will be put in place, as opposed to Departments. They will have a better opportunity to look at scoping the potential rather than just the challenges, which sometimes seems to be the nature of government.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the Minister's answer and the fact that she is looking at a partnership approach for management. Will she confirm which Department will lead? The council side is the responsibility of the Minister of the Environment, and we need a joint approach to make sure of this work. Will she ensure that that happens?

Mrs O'Neill: I totally agree that we need a joint approach, but one Department has to take the lead. I am content that it is this one.

Hydraulic Fracturing: DARD Involvement

2. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline what role her Department will play in any future consideration of any decision for a planning application for fracking or hydraulic fracturing. (AQT 1282/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have previously stated that I will not allow fracking to happen on DARD land, on Forest Service land, and that remains the case. Obviously, any decisions taken in regard to hydraulic fracking will have to go to the Executive, given their cross-cutting nature.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagra. I thank the Minister for her answer. What will she do if a decision on planning permission for fracking is brought before the Executive?

Mrs O'Neill: I have made clear my views on fracking: I am still absolutely convinced that, were we to allow fracking on our land, we would damage the clean, green image that we have across the island of Ireland, which serves us well. Any approach taken when it comes to the Executive would be based on that premise.

Beef Crisis

3. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the discussions she has had about the current beef crisis. (AQT 1283/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have met many groups, particularly NIMEA, to make sure that they were aware of my views. Over the last number of days, I have met the Livestock Auctioneers Association. I have also met numerous farmers and elected representatives to discuss their concerns for the beef sector. We are all quite united about the sector, the challenges that are there for it and whom we need to challenge. Over the next weeks, I intend to meet the Livestock Marketing Commission (LMC), retailers and processors to make my views known, particularly on something that, I feel, was very poorly done — the changes that they brought forward without any communication with farmers. That will not lead to a sustainable industry in the future. Taking decisions without consulting farmers is not a fair way to do business. The agrifood strategy report points clearly to the fact that there needs to be transparent processes and engagement throughout the supply chain, otherwise things will not work as we want.

Mr McMullan: On the engagements that we hope to have with NIMEA and others, what messages should retailers and processors get to ensure that farmers receive fair payment for their produce?

Mrs O'Neill: The challenges that farmers face over the price that they get for their produce have been well highlighted and documented over the last while. The one strategic issue that needs to be tackled is that, despite high prices last year, the beef sector still faced a lack of profitability. That is a key challenge for us all. It is a key challenge for all of us in government, particularly around the need to exploit new markets and find new avenues for our produce. The key message for retailers has to be that, unless there is transparency and fairness in the whole supply chain, we will not have a sustainable industry into the future. That is the key message that I will make sure

that I put strongly when I engage with them over the next weeks.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Stewart Dickson is not in his place. I call Anna Lo.

Rural Development Programme: Match Funding

5. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with her Executive colleagues about match funding for the next rural development programme. (AQT 1285/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: We are working our way through that process. I hope to bring an Executive paper in the next few weeks that will address the issues. The Member will be aware that in the next rural development programme I want to see fairness and balance. I also want to see farmers, the environment and the rural communities supported. I can give her an assurance that, no matter what my budget is, that will be the approach that I take.

Ms Lo: I very much welcome the Minister's assurance that there will be funding for this. How much funding are we talking about? Do you have enough for the programme?

Mrs O'Neill: Not at this moment in time. We know our European allocation, but we are working our way through what DARD's contribution will be and then what we get from the Executive through the Going for Growth strategy, which will help to shore up the rural development programme. I hope to have some positive news on that in the time ahead, because, as I said, I want to see a fair and balanced programme. In order to do that, we need the money to bring it forward.

Forest Service: Decentralisation

7. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for a progress update on the decentralisation of Forest Service to Enniskillen. (AQT 1287/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: We are still on target. The work is ongoing, and we hope, forgive me if I am wrong, that Forest Service headquarters will be in place in Fermanagh in 2015.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that update, although it seems a long time since it was first announced. The delay seems to be quite significant. The number of personnel transferring to Enniskillen will be reduced from the original figure. Will the entire headquarters of Forest Service move or only part of it?

Mrs O'Neill: It is the majority of headquarters staff. I think the number is around 58, but I will confirm that with the Member.

Tree Diseases: Update

8. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the areas that were devastated by the various tree diseases, particularly the vast areas of East Antrim that were affected. (AQT 1288/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Just that work is ongoing. We are going into a period of surveillance, which over the next number of months will be key, and we will have Forest Service staff out on the ground. We have no new confirmed cases, I think, since I last answered a question from the Member. Surveillance work is ongoing. We are still trying to prevent

the spread of the disease and to get our message out as strongly as possible.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for that, but at this stage is there any consideration of a timeline for replacement and planting?

Mrs O'Neill: No. The priority has to be around surveillance work at this moment in time. We are keen to meet our planting targets. We have not always achieved what we wanted in terms of planting, so I am keen that we have some scheme on the ground that allows people to move forward with planting as quickly as possible. However, the priority has to be around surveillance and containing the disease where we can.

Rural Development Programme

9. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, who is no doubt aware that the rural development programme is vital to many rural communities, what reassurance she can give about that programme, given that there has been zero transfer of money from pillar 1 to pillar 2 as a result of a certain court case. (AQT 1289/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It is unfortunate, to say the least, that the court case happened. It robbed rural development and rural communities of adequate funding that would have been used beneficially for the farming community and the wider rural community for fantastic projects that, I am sure, the Member is aware of, but some great projects have been taken forward through the rural development programme.

There is a misconception that people like to peddle that money was being taken off farmers to be distributed elsewhere. That was not the case, because in the past all modulated moneys always went to farmers. Farmers are of the rural community, so they deserve services in rural communities also. Does it create a challenge? Absolutely it creates a challenge for the new programme, but I have said clearly that the Executive need to step up to the plate and give the funding that we would have otherwise been able to transfer, which will allow us to have a well-funded programme going forward that is balanced and fair in its approach.

Dr McDonnell: I thank the Minister for that extensive answer. Extending the question, has the Minister been able to have any discussions with the Minister of Finance with a view to getting Executive funds to begin supporting the limited pillar 2 money that is there for rural development?

Mrs O'Neill: The allocation for Going for Growth is an Executive decision, so I have approached the Executive with a paper. The Finance and Personnel Minister is also involved in that process. That is where we sit. We hope that we will get some movement on that in the time ahead, because I want to hit the ground running with our new rural development programme. We do not want to be left behind because we are waiting for a funding decision. I am keen that we get a decision on that, and, as I said, the Finance and Personnel Minister is part of the Executive process.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Cathal Boylan is not in his place. As the next period of Question Time does not take place until 2.45 pm, I suggest that the House takes its ease for a few minutes.

2.45 pm

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 7 and 14 have been withdrawn.

Training Programmes

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what assurances she can give that future training programmes, including suicide awareness, will be awarded through open competition to ensure equality of opportunity for providers. (AQO 6383/11-15)

Ms Ni Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): I thank the Member for his question, and I can confirm that, in line with procurement rules and best practice in delivering value for money, all potential providers with the necessary skills and experience will have the opportunity to offer their services in managing or running training programmes. That does not apply to the Department's own training needs, which are normally serviced through the Centre for Applied Learning, which is part of DFP.

In the specific case of suicide awareness, an assessment of the results of a pilot study will take place in due course, and I am therefore unable to give a full report at this point on whether and when a training programme will emerge.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Can she give us a clear assurance that further suicide awareness training programmes will be awarded through competition and not given to your next-door neighbour — next door to your constituency office virtually — as was the case in September 2013 when the Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm (PIPS) was awarded £30,000?

Ms Ni Chuilín: It is a pity that the Member has chosen to be particularly petty over suicide prevention training programmes. To be factually correct, my next-door neighbour is not involved in suicide prevention awareness; she is Mrs Kane.

Mr Dunne: It is on the same block.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ni Chuilín: The Níamh Louise Foundation, which is a rural suicide prevention awareness programme, and PIPS were cited because they are working with grass-roots groups on the ground. It is a pilot programme. I have seen some of the work on the ground and heard anecdotally across the country, not just in north Belfast, that this should be a success, and I hope that that will be reflected in our report. Based on that report, and hopefully on the success that it will highlight, future programmes, which I hope to bring forward with the supportive of Executive colleagues, will certainly be put out to tender.

Mr Dunne: With equality, hopefully.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the Minister and her Department's intervention on a lot of key projects and their

impact. Will the Minister and her Department fund further suicide prevention initiatives, specifically in sport?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. It is important that all Executive members do their best to support the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in tackling suicide and preventing it. It is everyone's business, and sport, but not exclusively sport, has proven to be one of the best examples of people working with grass-roots groups on the ground to access much-needed services. If funding is committed to the suicide prevention programme in conjunction with Sport NI and others involved in sport, post-project evaluation will be carried out, and, as a result of that, we will certainly bring forward further bids and further examples of where we need a joined-up approach. As I tried to say in response to the primary question, anecdotal evidence is that groups were doing that type of work anyway. It gives value and status to the work that they are doing collectively to try to tackle the scourge of suicide in our communities.

Mr P Ramsey: Suicide is the most sensitive and emotive subject matter that any community and family can face. Is the Minister mindful of the fact that a lot of excellent and shining work is done by the community and voluntary sector across Northern Ireland in helping to prevent suicide and in educating families? Is she minded to include them in any process and any tendering exercises?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I totally agree with everything that the Member said. Indeed, he will be aware through his Foyle constituency that many of the groups work together and do very good work under very strenuous circumstances. Most of the organisations are made up of members who have been bereaved through suicide or of family members who are working with relatives who are experiencing poor mental health.

So it is imperative that those people are always taken into account in anything that we do. I hope and anticipate that the results of the pilot survey will tell us what we already know: that we need to do more of this work with groups on the ground, have a better joined-up approach across government and, most of all, make sure that the people who are furthest away from good access to services are brought right into the middle.

Mrs Dobson: My question follows from your answer to Mr Ramsey and is also on suicide awareness. The Minister will be aware of the local, often voluntary organisations that play such a pivotal role. I know the case of MindWise in Banbridge and the work that it does for the community. What support will the Minister give to small organisations? What steps will she take to ensure that they will not be disadvantaged in any way in competing for future funding programmes?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I support what the Member said about the work of MindWise, particularly, as the Member will be aware, its work in libraries and in rural communities. That work was undertaken through one project based in an urban area and another in a rural area. The main functions of suicide prevention lie with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. As I have said before and will repeat, it is everyone's business to try to do something to tackle the issue and provide opportunities that help to improve mental health and prevent suicide. I am conscious of the volunteering efforts of the families, in particular, who are involved in those programmes, and of

the fact that the problem does not recognise where people live, their postcode, class, gender or politics. We must all do something to help to prevent suicide in our families and communities.

Musical Instruments for Bands

2. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has any plans to increase the annual funding allocated to the Arts Council's musical instruments for bands funding stream, in order to enable more bands to avail themselves of this finance. (AQO 6384/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. Through the Arts Council, my Department has been able to maintain the level of funding for the musical instruments for bands scheme at £200,000 for the last four years. I believe that this is a welcome achievement, in light of current economic difficulties, and supports the North's long-standing tradition of music-making and the significant interest in bands here across both main cultural traditions. Should an opportunity for additional capital become available, I would fully support a case to continue and develop this high-impact programme. Increased funding would not only extend its reach but enable the purchase of instruments for brass, accordion and traditional bands. Music-making enhances the social and cultural life of all traditions, and, as Minister, I support all aspects of music and a wide variety of musical styles including classical, contemporary, concert music, opera, jazz and pop.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for her response. I think the Minister is aware that the maximum that can be drawn down is £5,000 per band. That can go some way to assist, for example, flute bands. However, for pipe bands, silver bands and accordion bands, that provision is restrictive. Will the Minister look at the upper limit for each application?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The money is awarded to the Arts Council, and it decides what award is made. However, I will take the Member's concerns back to the Arts Council because I have also had representations from groups involved in Irish traditional music. When, for example, they are buying fiddles or uilleann pipes, the cost can be tens of thousands of pounds. Certainly, I am happy to pass on the Member's concerns to the Arts Council, but I can give no guarantee at this stage that the limit will increase.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her extensive answer. Will she confirm whether her Department supports bands in any other way?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The City of Culture included a significant involvement of marching bands, with a number of the events featuring local bands. They added to the Twelfth of July celebrations as part of a cultural programme with partners and stakeholders in the city. Marching bands participated in the Walled City Tattoo, the 400th anniversary of the wall celebration, and the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, amongst other projects. It is my intention to build on the success of 2013, particularly in the city and surrounding areas, and I have made a bid to the Executive in the June monitoring round for additional funding to meet that commitment.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for her answers. The Arts Council is often criticised for most of its funding streams being Belfast-centric. Are there any criteria that she can

ask the Arts Council to include to ensure that rural bands are also able to avail themselves of that funding?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Arts Council is criticised for many things, most times unfairly, in my opinion. The application process is open to everyone, regardless of where they live. It is not the Arts Council's fault that demand seems to come from cities more than rural communities. If there is a demand from bands in his constituency, he should certainly encourage them to apply. There is not a city-centric approach to funding awards from the Arts Council or, indeed, any of DCAL's other arm's-length bodies. Funding is on the basis of need and demand, in this case in rural communities.

Artefacts: Local Storage

3. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what additional storage provision is available for locally excavated artefacts. (AQO 6385/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. The storage of locally excavated artefacts is a matter, in the first instance, for the landowners of the sites where excavations are undertaken in accordance with the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects Order 1995 and the Environment Agency's licensing procedures. No arrangements are in place for my Department to provide additional storage for objects and archives that landowners, developers or commercial archaeologists have not presented to museums for assessment and possible acquisition into their collections.

The Member may be aware that a recent survey commissioned by the Environment Agency, which is responsible for the licensing of all excavations in the North, estimates that over 1,800 archives are held by commercial archaeologists on behalf of developers. Those have a volume of 704 cubic metres, which is the equivalent of 10 40-foot shipping containers, stored at a range of locations across Ireland. I understand that Minister Durkan is being advised on options for taking that forward, which may lead to an Executive paper being presented that will address the post-construction boom backlog and related storage issues.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for her response. I have in front of me the survey findings. However, I should point out that the survey also talks about the limited capacity of the museums sector to accept archives. A letter from the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland — that is North and South — also says that there is a lack of properly qualified archaeological curators in museums at a local and national level. That obviously points to the fact that we need more curators in our museums. What steps will the Minister take to address that deficiency?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. I have not been presented with that concern by the museums body. However, I am happy to forward that on. As the Chair of the Environment Committee, the Member will know that there is a weakness in PPS 6 around who has responsibility for archives of artefacts and ecofacts that have been found. I have no doubt of the curation skills and expertise in museums. I hope that the report, which I have not seen, from the working group will provide a better way forward. We all share a fear, not only about treasures that have been lost but those that could potentially be lost in the future. We can exhibit those and learn from them as

a society and as communities, because they tell us about our ways in the past. That sits very heavily on a lot of us. I hope that the Minister of the Environment brings forward, through the working group, a way forward that we all can respond to positively.

Mr Hilditch: I appreciate the crossover between Departments and what the Minister has informed the House of today. In her opinion, has there been any assessment, by either Department, of the cost of providing additional storage for artefacts?

Ms Ní Chuilín: In fairness to the museums, the costs fluctuate depending on the number of artefacts that people say are being held by private developers and private archaeologists. As I said in answer to Anna Lo's question, at this stage, the estimate averages out at some 1,800 artefacts being held, which is in the region of 704 cubic metres or 10 40-foot lorries. That gives you an idea of what we are talking about.

3.00 pm

When the Minister of the Environment brings forward the paper from the working group, it will put a bit more emphasis on what we need to do. I anticipate very strongly that, on receipt of that paper, the Minister of the Environment will make a bid to the Executive because it will, I have no doubt, entail vast sums of public money to have these archives not only assessed but housed, stored and exhibited. I am looking forward to seeing the results of that as well.

Mr Byrne: Has the Minister had any discussions with her counterpart in the Republic, Minister Deenihan, about having some shared storage facilities for artefacts on a cross-border basis?

Ms Ní Chuilín: We have not had any discussions about artefacts. Minister Deenihan and I have discussed the differences in our legislative approaches, but it is in their legislation that the Minister of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht have to have responsibility, and the legislation guides their respective Departments on what they need to do; it is not the case with ours. As I said in my response to Anna Lo, that is one of the weaknesses of PP6. I anticipate that when Minister Durkan brings forward the paper, he will highlight some of those gaps and weaknesses. There is no resistance across this island to Jimmy Deenihan and me working on this; it is a matter of getting a legislative framework and the resources to do such work in future.

Orangefest

4. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much financial support her Department has given to Orangefest in each of the last three years. (AQO 6386/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. DCAL's funding for events is distributed mainly through its arm's-length bodies. The Ulster-Scots Agency has advised that it provided a total of £9,835.77 in 2011 and £8,009.90 in 2012 to groups using the term "Orangefest" or similar. There were no awards in 2013, although, outside the period in question, the Arts Council provided over £6,000 for Orangefest at the Spectrum centre in 2010 and over

£6,000 to the Shankill Festival of Culture and Celebration in 2009 and 2010. The Member should also note that this information relates only to groups that have used the term "Orangefest" or similar; therefore, this may be an under-representation of the funding position.

My Department also provides funding to community festivals administered by local councils. Councils have advised that the fund provided over £4,400 in 2011-12 and again in 2013-14, which also includes their own match funding. Again, this information relates only to groups that have used the term "Orangefest" or similar.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for her answer, although it is disappointing that so little goes to such a large festival, given that 750,000 people attend Orange festivals annually across Northern Ireland, with 250,000 of those in Belfast alone. In her previous answer, she mentioned need and demand, and given that there is clear evidence of need and demand for more funding for this, unlike funding for the Irish language, which is dying —

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

Mr Clarke: What assurances can the Minister give that more funding will go towards Orange festivals, given the large number of people who become involved in them?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member should be corrected: the Irish language is not dying; it is flourishing. I am sure that the Member and his friends are happy to know that. In ensuring funding for festivals, the demand is there; it is up to the groups to lobby their local councils. My contributions to local councils for festival funding need to be matched by the councils. If the Members are not doing their jobs locally, there is not much that I can do about it.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for her answers up to this point. An dtig leis an Aire a chinntiú má tháinig maoiniú do Fhéile Oraísteach Bhéal Feirste fríd an choiste féilte pobail? Will she confirm whether funding for Belfast Orangefest was awarded through the community festivals fund?

Ms Ní Chuilín: As I said previously, DCAL provides community festival funding which district councils administer and match. Any culture or community group may be eligible to apply. Orange cultural groups can and do receive community festival funding from local councils. Belfast City Council has advised that Belfast Orangefest has not made any application to the community festivals fund, although it is aware of the programme and is included in the relevant circular lists. Belfast City Council did make an award to Orangefest through the development and outreach fund in 2011-12, the final year of the fund. That funding was never claimed.

Mr McNarry: Does the Minister agree that the money has been well spent so far, and that it is deserving of appropriate increases? If she had the ability, would she make a bid for those appropriate increases?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I agree with the Member in that festival funding is very important, particularly in relation to cultural celebration. Regardless of how we feel about each cultural celebration, it is a very important fund. I agree that it needs to be increased so that people who celebrate festivals all over can access it. It is certainly something that I am happy to look at in the future but, certainly for this summer and the immediate period, the level of funding will remain

as it is. I am actively looking at how we can increase it because I believe that, particularly in relation to rural communities and those that face particular difficulties in the summer, festivals are a way in which we can celebrate our culture in a very positive way and hopefully generate economic growth, so that everyone benefits from festivals rather than just those who attend the events.

Culture: Tourism Role

5. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she has had with key stakeholders regarding the role that culture can play in the local tourism product. (AQO 6387/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. My Department plays an important role in promoting cultural tourism by providing the cultural activities and facilities that form a vital element of the local tourism product. My officials work closely with key stakeholders on a range of groups across the DCAL family to help to promote here as a high-quality cultural and tourist destination.

The 2013 year demonstrated our ability to host internationally significant events, such as the City of Culture and the World Police and Fire Games, attracting thousands of visitors here. I am committed to building on the success of the City of Culture with a focus on developing the north-west as a driver for the economy and tourism. Culture has a key role to play in many of those events, as highlighted by the cultural programme, sponsored by my Department, which ran alongside the World Police and Fire Games last summer. It is important that we showcase our cultural offering to the widest possible audience. We will have further opportunities to do that in the future with the return of the Tall Ships and the Irish Open golf to the North.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for her answer. She will be aware that, for almost a full year now, Ligoniel True Blues, Ballysillan LOL and Earl of Erin have wanted to celebrate their culture in a peaceful and respectful manner by returning on their feeder parade from last year's Twelfth of July celebrations. Does she agree that it is very damaging for our tourism product to send out a message that the celebration of culture in Northern Ireland is conditional?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am not really sure that to spend £9 million on policing Twaddell Avenue is the best example of cultural tourism or the promotion of culture. I am sure that you would, and I think that that is an indictment on the people who are nodding in agreement with you. What we need to do is resolve that issue. I am saddened and disappointed that because we, as adults, cannot get our act together, we are condemning young people to a life of going through the criminal justice system. You are belligerent and begrudging. You will not acknowledge and recognise equality across the board. [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I do not think that it has anything at all to do with culture. I only wish that you had asked a question that would actually promote what we have to offer here instead of using an example that sections one side of the community off against another. Shame on you.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom ceist a chur ar an Aire faoin

Chathair Chultúir 2016. Does the Minister support Derry City Council's bid for the Irish City of Culture 2016?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Given the success of 2013, I fully support Derry City Council's bid for the title. I recently met a range of stakeholders from the city to discuss the bid. Indeed, the city has a strong ambition to become European Capital of Culture and also to achieve cultural world heritage site status.

Derry City Council believes that the status associated with becoming an Irish City of Culture will help to achieve those ambitions through the outworking of strategic and collaborative partnerships across the island.

Last week, I met Jimmy Deenihan to discuss the bid further, but I will put in a caveat that, while we are very supportive of Derry and, indeed, the north-west, we certainly cannot give blanket support to providing huge sums of public money without a proper assessment of the needs of people in the surrounding area and, indeed, what we all hope to achieve through economic and cultural regeneration.

Mr Rogers: What joined-up working has the Minister's Department undertaken with DETI to encourage tourism throughout the North, using the legacy of recent large sporting events that have taken place here?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his supplementary. DETI and DCAL, amongst others, are involved in various working groups, looking at what we have done well and what we need to do better.

With the Irish Open announcement and, indeed, the Giro, which we are still basking in the success of, we can show that, last year, the previous year, this year and, certainly, in the years ahead, we have tried and will try to do our very best to make sure that we bring internationally recognised events and activities here, which will help to promote tourism in a very positive way and make sure it leaves a legacy, so that people get involved not only in the Giro and the World Police and Fire Games, for example, but in physical activity and sport.

People living in towns and villages have not really seen the investment that they feel they are entitled to benefit from, so it is vital that we collectively pull our weight to make sure that we get the best opportunities for here.

Broadcasting: Funding

6. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action she has taken to secure funds for broadcasting, including the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Funds. (AQO 6388/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. Although broadcasting powers remain a reserved matter, I am committed to ensuring that the specific characteristics and needs of the North are fully considered in the development of broadcasting policy. I have personally intervened to secure funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Funds for a further year until the end of March 2016.

While this is a welcome move, I will continually and proactively engage with the broadcasting agenda, with a view to securing from DCMS a longer-term funding commitment for these broadcasting funds and at higher levels.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. What would be the implications of a loss to the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Funds? What would be the implications of that for the sector?

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are growing demands for Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund productions. From their inception, both have achieved audiences that have exceeded their targets. So, a loss of funding would have a significant impact on television companies and individuals, including apprenticeships, trainees, and those working in the local production industry. It is estimated that around £5 million in turnover would be lost from the overall independent production sector.

Furthermore, like television production in Ireland — remember that BBC and RTÉ are largely publicly paid for — the Irish language production sector is not sustainable without substantial government investment, nor is the Ulster-Scots production sector. This would mean that government funding for indigenous languages in the North would fall behind that provided by our Scottish and Welsh counterparts.

Mr Humphrey: On the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund, can the Minister assure the House that there will be consultation with the Ulster-Scots Agency, the Ulster-Scots Community Network, the ministerial advisory group for the Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUS) and the wider Ulster-Scots community on programmes and concepts for programming in the future to ensure that programmes reflect the culture, tradition and heritage out there in the Ulster-Scots community?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can certainly give that commitment. I am sure that the Member will agree that programmes have improved in recent times. I think that we all wanted to see that improvement. The communication and, indeed, the relationships between NI Screen, the network, the Ulster-Scots Agency and, indeed, MAGUS have improved, and productions have improved with the help of local production advice, skills and expertise. I think that we can already see the result of that.

For me, securing that extra year's funding was important, but it is a small lifeline for those groups. In the autumn, I intend to visit again Ed Vaizey and DCMS representatives and meet representatives from all the other political parties in the run-up to the Westminster election to get their commitment that the broadcast funds will endure well beyond the next mandate and even beyond that again and to ask for an increase in the money awarded, because I think that our broadcast funds need to have better support and better investment.

3.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends questions for oral answer. We now move on to topical questions.

Sporting Facilities: Regent House School, Newtownards

1. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she will continue to help to provide sporting facilities for the local community on the Comber Road site in Newtownards, which is run by Regent House School. (AQT 1291/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am not familiar with the project, although I am familiar with the Member's representation for his constituency on the Ards peninsula. As I said, I am not familiar with the facilities, but I will say this: in rural areas, where there is very little in some of the communities, and, in fact, some of the sporting facilities are the community, it is important that that support be continued. I expect the Member to make representation through Sport NI not only to have whatever investment that is there continued but to have it strengthened and secured. I am happy to take any details from the Member and pass them on to Sport NI.

Mr McCarthy: I am very grateful to the Minister. I would very much like to see her join me on a tour, where I can show her what is required. I pass on comments from Regent House, which thanks —

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

Mr McCarthy: — Sport NI for the wonderful provision of funding for the hockey pitches that were officially opened this morning.

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

Mr McCarthy: On the back of that, the sites on the Comber Road have been vacant for some time —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. Order. Can we have a question, please?

Mr McCarthy: I am asking the Minister whether she will make sure that there will be no further delay in the provision of facilities at the Comber Road site in Newtownards.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will raise the Member's concern with Sport NI to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays. He will appreciate that I cannot give a commitment from the Dispatch Box that that will not be the case. I do not think that he would expect me to say that, but I will be happy to raise his comments and issues with Sport NI, and I will correspond with him accordingly.

Football Stadia Funding

2. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on funding for the subregional stadia for clubs such as Bangor Football Club and others throughout Northern Ireland that have long awaited such funding. (AQT 1292/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member may or may not be aware that the subregional programme was not due to start until 2015, but I have started the process in the Department and got staff organised, because, hopefully, we will have Casement Park on board soon. We need to have seamless links between the stadia development and the subregional stadia. I am working very closely with the IFA on facilities management. On the basis of that, and, indeed, a confirmation of the budget, I will be happy to take representation from the Member about clubs in his constituency.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer, but can she clarify that she has bid for such funding? I understand that she has made preparations. I said "Bangor Football Club", just for clarity.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware of Bangor Football Club, particularly through the work of Alex Easton, in fairness to him. It is the first time that you have ever raised the issue

of Bangor Football Club, but I am sure that you have got with the programme, as they say.

It is not appropriate for me to make bids at this stage. It will be appropriate for me to make bids in the autumn in preparation for 2015. On the basis of that, I will bring the information forward to the Member, if he wishes to write to me.

City of Culture: North-west Legacy Plan

3. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the City of Culture legacy plan for the north-west. (AQT 1293/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: At the minute, we have a bid in with the June monitoring round, and we are awaiting its outcome. I know that the Member has raised the issue of Strabane and other parts of the north-west. Discussions with city councils, shadow councils and local councils are ongoing, and deal with groups in the area. So, we are just waiting on the outcome of the bid.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her response. Can I ask her whether she can give assurances that the shadow council will be represented when proposals for the north-west legacy are being discussed and brought forward?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can give the Member that assurance. I am happy to meet her and others from the surrounding areas, as I have already done, to ensure that, yes, the bid for Derry is supported but also to ensure that the areas in the north-west are included. It is vital, particularly for Strabane, that they are represented in any future funding or future investment.

Broadcasting: Investment

4. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline how broadcasting in general will be more secure in the North, given her previous answer in which she outlined the importance of securing the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Funds. (AQT 1294/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: It is vital that we have the same government investment in broadcasting in general and the Ulster-Scots and Irish Language Broadcast Funds as that enjoyed in Scotland and Wales. I will make that case to counterparts in DCMS and to other political parties and their representatives around culture, media and sport. Broadcasting here relies very much on local commissioning and local production, and local people I have talked to, far and wide, who are involved in the industry feel that they are not getting their fair share. It is important that we look at investment in broadcasting, particularly in relation to protecting the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Funds.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her response. I urge the Minister to continue her efforts to provide better opportunities for all involved in broadcasting, particularly local students, trainees and, often, local companies, to get greater commissioning opportunities.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I certainly will. As I said to the Member previously, the best way to do that is by making sure that all the representatives of the political parties make a

commitment before the next Westminster election to the continuation and increase of the investment. That is for not only the broadcast funds but broadcasting in general.

Edward the Bruce

5. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the support her Department will give to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the landing of Edward the Bruce in Ulster and his subsequent campaign, given that she will be well aware that next year marks that occasion. (AQT 1295/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to write to the Member. I have no details of any specific celebrations. I am aware that areas, particularly in north Antrim, have mooted, if not cited or dictated, that they intend to apply to arts councils and local councils to get support for it. I am very supportive of that, because, at the end of the day, this is about making sure that people who celebrate anniversaries that do not fall within the decade of centenaries have an opportunity to apply to the community festivals fund, for example. It is also about them having an opportunity to apply and work with libraries, PRONI and other arm's-length bodies in DCAL to ensure that we provide as much of a cultural package as possible to help people in those celebrations.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for her support. Can the Minister make any resource or any of her departmental officials available to the new super-council — the Mid and East Antrim District Council — which will be celebrating and will be the main attraction for the Bruce anniversary?

Ms Ní Chuilín: If the councils and shadow councils have not already spoken to their arts council, any of the DCAL officials or its arm's-length bodies, I anticipate that they will certainly do so after today's Question Time, led by the Member.

Milk Cup: DCAL Contribution

6. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what contribution her Department will make to the Milk Cup. (AQT 1296/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I was annoyed at the way in which the Milk Cup and Foyle Cup were, pardon the pun, kicked back and forward from one Department to another in previous years. I made the decision to give money to the Foyle and Milk cups. I have made a bid to do so again this year. I still await representation from the organisers for meetings, to see how we can take this forward on a longer-term basis. I am aware that the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has also been very supportive. It is important that we do better long-term planning, particularly around the sustainability of the competitions.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for her response. The Minister will no doubt be aware of the success of this annual festival of football, its impact on tourism and the opportunities that it creates for young boys to participate in a world-class event. Will she commit to assisting the organisers in future events?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I support the Member's comments on the status of the Milk Cup competition. Football legends have cited the Milk Cup as an example of an event at which they do what they do and do what they do best. That is certainly the case for people involved in junior soccer. As I said to the Member, I have made a bid. I am keen to try to make

sure that there is investment this year and, indeed, for future years. The ETI Minister has the same appetite to do something more on a longer-term basis. To that end, I am waiting for the outcome of the monitoring rounds. I am also trying to work with organisers through officials, Sport NI or both to get better sustainability and projections for the competitions in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Anna Lo is not in her place.

Sports Facilities: Girdwood

8. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the T:BUC proposals for sports facilities and services at the Girdwood site. (AQT 1298/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. At the minute, the Executive are considering papers on the T:BUC proposals. Girdwood is one of the examples where, working collectively with ministerial colleagues and other bodies such as Belfast City Council, Sport NI and the Sports Institute, we can all pool our efforts and resources to have a better impression of Together: Building a United Community principles and what they look like. It is also very good for children and young people who have not followed the academic route but particularly want to go down the vocational route to acquire skills, opportunities and expertise around sports.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire le haghaidh a freagra go dtí seo. Will the Minister elaborate a wee bit on what the role of Sport NI and other stakeholders might be in the development and delivery of services at the site and other opportunities?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to do that. Sport NI has been practising in sporting programmes for many years, as the Member will be aware. Collectively with the Sports Institute and working with community groups, sports organisations and universities, along with DCAL and, hopefully, the Department for Social Development, it will be able to target particularly vulnerable or hard-to-reach children and young people who have been working with groups on a voluntary basis for many a year and want to have a career and get employment in that field. Hopefully, with that wrap-around support, they will have better qualifications and accreditations to steer them in the future. Apart from anything else, it is a site that has been earmarked for development. There is no better legacy for an example of ongoing regeneration than a site that is used 24/7, particularly if it is floodlit and youngsters are playing sport.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Jim Wells is not in his place.

Committee Business

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the school improvement process [NIA 132/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report. — [Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education).]

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome the opportunity, as a member of the Education Committee, to speak on this important topic. Whilst I am relatively new to the Education Committee, I also acknowledge the role of the Committee staff and the various sectors that gave their time to give evidence on the subject. It is important that the Committee strives to continually look at how we collectively can improve schools and teaching and learning. We would fail in our responsibilities and duty if we did anything less.

It has been identified through the inquiry that there is benefit and importance to inspection and to encouraging a culture of self-evaluation. Inspection and evaluation can and often do take many forms, from arm's-length bodies to those directly run by Governments. In respect of school inspections, the Committee reflected on a more collaborative approach between the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and schools. It reflected that that was preferable. It considered ways in which that could happen, such as the use of third-party questionnaires, revised inspection reports and a consistent lead role for district inspectors.

The Committee debated, as stated in recommendation 16, that the revised inspectorate should be rebranded and should be independent from the Department. However, that view was not held by all members of the Committee. Members felt that that needed closer examination and scrutiny. Decisions to create an independent body may require legislative change and may have financial implications.

The General Teaching Council (GTC), for example, suggested that the role of district inspectors was "a well-received role" and described them as:

"supporting a continuous improvement process in schools".

The inquiry also referred to Scotland and, in particular, its use of a two-way collaborative approach to inspection by the inspectorate and support services. I would welcome hearing the Minister's response on that. The Committee noted that, despite differing commentary on the nature of inspections or even the means by which they are carried out, almost all stakeholders strongly supported inspection as key to the process of school improvement.

3.30 pm

The Committee recommends:

"in line with the OECD findings, measures should be adopted to more effectively promote a self-evaluation culture supported by training and guidance for school staff and governors; advice from District Inspectors; and including greater engagement with parents."

This was a recurring theme. The Committee also recommends:

"in line with OECD recommendations, the Department should establish a parental consultation platform and that this should be used to inform the development of understandable and accessible information on school inspection and school improvement for parents".

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

As I said when beginning my remarks, it is appropriate that we work collectively to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. However, it is equally important that we do not blindly rush into new structures without due diligence and scrutiny.

Mr Newton: I joined the Committee as the report was being prepared, but I want to thank all who contributed to its compilation, including the many who gave generously of their time, particularly our Committee Clerk and support staff. It is an excellent and very detailed report that should be seen as a constructive step towards addressing this concern.

The Committee report states that we support a "professional, independent, broadly-based, balanced" inspection process. The Committee sees inspection as an essential component of school improvement. The Committee, in supporting inspection, did not see inspection as a solution in itself. It feels that inspection should be accompanied by support initiatives; that it should be an encouragement to schools when their results are good; and that that good practice should be shared widely.

Before I moved into politics exclusively, my experience was in the realm of assessment for Investors in People and national vocational qualifications. For Investors in People and NVQs, the process is a holistic one against a national standard, a benchmark and a framework of excellence. For Investors in People, in particular, an improvement process is required. However, that improvement process itself requires self-evaluation and a self-evaluation infrastructure in the organisation, which, in this case, is the school. The Committee is looking at and recommending self-evaluation. For vocational qualifications, assessment is about increasing skills, enhancing knowledge and raising standards, whether at NVQ level 1 or NVQ level 5 up to university level. That falls into line with recommendation 12 of the report, which should be strongly considered.

Features of the NVQ and Investors in People look at the issue in a holistic way, whether it is in commerce, industry or a statutory body. To achieve the standards, bodies are required to have good communication, transparency and consistency, and to offer support and constructive feedback around improvement to meet standards, and that requires support. Again, the ethos of the report indicates that all of those things — good communication, transparency, feedback and support through professional assistance — are positive features that should be part of an assessment of any organisation.

Recommendation number 15 — I will finish with this one, Mr Speaker — looks at that ethos and suggests that the name of the inspectorate should be changed to the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service, which again hones in on the fact that we want to improve the inspection system and that improvement should be its ethos.

As well as a call for improvement, there is also a need for independence of thought.

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

Mr Newton: That is also part of the ethos of the report.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I am not sure how valuable these Committee reports are. One hopes that, with the amount of work that goes in to them, there is some value attached, but one thing that I can say without fear of contradiction is that working on this report was certainly an education for the members of the Committee.

If the Minister accepts none of the recommendations, the members at least learned their way around the system of schools inspections and the different views on them that exist. It was interesting to hear those views. Some principals and teachers welcomed inspections and put great faith in the self-evaluation process, but other principals felt intimidated by the inspectors. The inspection teams have the view that they are there to help schools and to help improve education outcomes and all of that.

We dealt with the issue of how much notice of an inspection a school should get. At the minute, they get two or three weeks' notice; I am not entirely sure what the regulation is. However, one of the most powerful figures who came in to the Committee was Sir Bob Salisbury. He is well known to the Education Committee and to educationalists throughout this island. His view is that a school should be ready for an inspection at the drop of the hat; they should not get any notice. That is the way it should be. They should not get two or three weeks in which to run around in a fluster trying to sort out records, assessments and whatever else has to be prepared for inspectors coming in. Anybody who is in business will tell you that the job is not complete until the paperwork is done. Similarly in schools, there may be a lot of bureaucracy, forms to fill in, paperwork and data to input into computers and so on, but the job is not complete until all of that is done, and it has to be presented to inspectors when they come in.

Of course, the monitoring of teaching staff should be carried out regularly by principals in schools so that they are aware of how their teachers are performing in class.

I was also glad to see a recommendation on the issue of inspectors going into Irish-medium schools. I was already aware that some of the inspectors going in — particularly to immersion situations, where all subjects are taught through Irish — did not understand Irish and were making recommendations that ran counter to the ethos of immersion education. I do not know what the Minister will do with the report in total, but I think he should certainly go through the recommendations and, if he finds some useful, he should certainly adopt them if he can. I suggest that, until such times as inspectors for Irish-medium education can be trained up here in the North, he should look at

seconding inspectors from the Southern education system if that is at all feasible.

We agreed for the most part with the report. One issue that we did find contentious was that of independence for the inspection teams. To be quite honest, I am agnostic on the issue of whether the inspectorate should be independent of the Department or not. The issue that I brought forward was that there should be some evidence-based research on whether it is a good thing or a bad thing.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I thank the Member for giving way. Here is where the issue sometimes rests on those things. The Member has very eloquently described the virtues of Sir Bob Salisbury, eminent educationalist. Read Sir Bob Salisbury in relation to an independent inspectorate:

“an independent inspection service would be my way of going forward.”

It seems as though some of your colleagues, the Minister, the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department, we assume, do not agree with Sir Bob on that issue and, lo and behold, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) says that there needs to be an inspectorate that has sufficient autonomy to get on with its work. Are we going to ignore one eminent educationalist and another body that represents a considerable educational sector?

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added on to his time.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Absolutely not. I would not at all ignore what they have to say. There were many who came to the Committee and gave their opinion on the issue of independence, but I contend that no one actually produced evidence-based research. That is the simple issue on which I depart from the report. As I said, I am agnostic on the issue. If I see good evidence-based research that says that an independent inspectorate is the best for our schools —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Sheehan: — then I am happy to go along with that. Until such a time, I will depart from that particular recommendation.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an phlé a bhí againn tráthnóna inniu — mar a chuirim fáilte roimh aon phlé ar an dóigh lenár gcóras oideachais a fheabhsú agus, dá thoradh sin, tacú lenár ndaoine óga a lánacmhainneacht a bhaint amach.

I welcome the discussion that has taken place this afternoon, as I welcome any discussion on how we can improve our education system and, in doing so, support our young people to achieve their full potential. I also want to acknowledge the work of the Education Committee in conducting its inquiry and in the production of the report that we are debating today. I too express my appreciation to the many individuals and groups who gave evidence during the inquiry, including, of course, my own civil servants.

Today's motion asks the Assembly to call on me to implement the recommendations contained in the report. I have to say that I am not quite ready to give that commitment and I am not sure that the Assembly should either, as I suspect that many Assembly Members

have only had the opportunity to read the report over the weekend and today. The course of action they are setting themselves upon involves a legislative process and some quite significant changes to our administration here. I think that Members should rightly take careful consideration of that before voting.

3.45 pm

The report and its recommendations require careful consideration, and it would not be right for me to stand here today and commit to accepting, or even indicate that I was not prepared to accept, every one of the 16 recommendations. Indeed, as I said, some of the recommendations would require legislative change, and I think that the Assembly should be given much longer to debate the relative merits or otherwise of such proposals before being asked to endorse them. Some Members have commented that the Committee has taken several months to prepare the report, and I do not think that Members should make a decision on the best way forward after a two-hour debate. Members of the Education Committee should not take that as a form of criticism; rather they should be pleased that I attach sufficient importance to the report that I want to give it careful consideration.

Before I turn to address some of the points made in the debate, let me say something about the topic we are here to discuss: school improvement. All good education systems continually look at how they might improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, and all good schools want to improve further.

A key strength of our system, which was identified not by me but by the OECD, was the coherence of our school improvement policies and the appropriateness of their focus on promoting school self-evaluation. However, that review also recognised the benefit and importance of inspection in supporting and encouraging self-evaluation, and commented on the positive approach taken to inspection. Rather than calling on us to change our processes, the OECD recommended — it is an internationally recognised body — that we:

“Keep the focus on improvement and go further in linking school inspection with self-evaluation capacity”.

I do not intend to take any actions that would set us back. Rather, I want to move forward, do more of what we already do well and improve what could be better. I also think that my readiness to involve the OECD demonstrates openness to learning from others.

I now want to turn to a number of points that were raised during the debate. I think that there is one flaw that runs throughout the report: its authors have concentrated on the adult in the classroom rather than the child. Throughout the report, there are references, understandably, to concerns that have been raised by principals, teachers and their representatives about how inspections are carried out and the impact that inspections have on the morale of staff, particularly those that register schools as not performing as well as they should, or less than satisfactorily. Indeed, paragraph 246 of the report states:

“The Committee noted commentary from witnesses highlighting considerable concerns in respect of the impact of ‘bad’ reports on staff morale and parental confidence”.

Nowhere in the report is the impact of bad education on the pupil in the classroom commented on or registered. That is who we are all here to serve. It may be convenient for some Members to play to the audience in the sense teacher representatives or teaching organisations and say that all inspectors are bad people, or that it is wrong to bring forward inspection reports that

highlight that the quality of education in schools is not up to the standard it should be, but think about who you are letting down. You are letting down the pupils in the classroom, and nowhere does the report mention the impact of poor-quality education or a poor standard of education in a school on a pupil. Indeed, the delivery of poor-quality education in a school not only has an impact on that pupil but may well have an impact for at least two generations in that family. If an individual child suffers poor education and that is not corrected as early as possible, when that child becomes a parent, he or she will be less likely to motivate and encourage their child to achieve in education.

I think that the authors of the report need to have an honest review of the document and ask themselves what the purpose of the Committee's report was in the first place.

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: Was it about adults, or was it about the quality of education that we deliver to our children? As I read it, the primary focus has been on adults.

I will go through a number of other points, and I am happy to give way in a moment or two.

On the role of parents in education, I note the Committee's press release, which states:

“Most importantly of all, we are very keen to ensure that there is a new role for parents in the school improvement process. Parental engagement strengthens the effectiveness of education generally and is essential for the school improvement process.”

I totally agree with that. I preface all my remarks by saying that I have not made final decisions on any of the recommendations. I will give the report the careful consideration it deserves, and I will then report in detail to the Education Committee on it.

One query jumps to mind in relation to the recommendation that a more detailed inspection report should be given to the school confidentially and a less detailed report should be given to the media and the community. How is that involving parents in education? How is that respecting the role of a parent in education or even the right of a parent to challenge a school over the quality of education that is being delivered to their children? In the era of openness and transparency in government and in the era of the freedom of information request, is it right and proper that we provide one report to the school and a different report to the public? My inclination is that it is not. I will give it further consideration if there are benefits to it, but I believe wholeheartedly that, if we are to have parents at the centre of education, they must know the information that I, as Minister, have around the school, that the Education Committee has around the school and, indeed, that the inspectorate has around the school. I think that the Committee —

Mr Kinahan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I will give way later in my discussion on this.

There is another area where I think that parental role is important, and I note the comments from the Committee about discussions between the inspectorate and parents' groups. That is a very good idea. It makes sense that the inspectorate should engage with parents' groups and get feedback from parents. However, it is also worth noting that, in the first draft of the ESA Bill — many years ago, for all those who have been around long enough to remember it — an education forum was proposed. That forum would have brought together parents and interested parties to discuss education with educationalists, Ministers, the Education Committee and, lo and behold, the Education and Training Inspectorate. That clause was removed from the Bill, not at my behest or that of my predecessor but at the behest of the current Chair of the Education Committee. If there has been a change of mind on that, that is good, and I believe that, if we can set up —

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I will give way later on in the debate.

If we can set up a forum that engages with all the stakeholders in education, including the pupils, the young people, the children, whom this is all about and whom we are here to serve, it will be an excellent way forward.

On inspection reports and the sharing of draft reports in the Department, it has been clarified in the report by my officials and by ETI inspectors that this does not happen. When inspection reports are prepared and finalised with the Education and Training Inspectorate, their content is not shared with other parts of the Department in advance of the inspection outcome being finalised. Other parts of the Department are not given any opportunity to influence or comment on draft inspection reports. This position, as I have said, has already been made clear on several occasions to the Committee, and it was repeated, inaccurately, today during the debate. As I have said, this is a valuable discussion and debate. Mr Sheehan has said that, if nothing else comes of this report — I assure you that something else will come of the report — it has allowed members of the Committee to go through the role of the inspectorate in detail, but we should have accurate information in front of us in doing that.

On the inspection process, a concern for me would be if we were to come out of this debate with only snapshots of it shown in the media, if any of it is shown. This is perhaps nobody's intention, but inspections may be seen as always being a negative experience and a negative intervention in the life of a school. That is certainly not the case, and the statistics back that up. Indeed, at the start of the month, I was at my third presentation of school leaders and boards of governors, at which we were handing out certificates to the schools that were outstanding and better. On the last occasion, there were about 100 schools, as proud as punch, in the Long Gallery, up receiving their commendations. The Chair of the Education Committee was there, and I believe that Mr Kinahan was there as well. Unfortunately, the media did not cover that. I accept that perhaps bad news sells.

Inspections are valuable because the lessons learned from inspections in which schools are found to be good and better are shared. Their experience is shared in our

education system. Indeed, I note from the report that the Committee welcomes the fact that the Education and Training Inspectorate is involved with 20 schools in sharing knowledge on numeracy and literacy. That knowledge has been accumulated from inspections.

Just for the record, since the introduction of Every School a Good School until the end of the last academic year — 2012-13 — three quarters of schools inspected were reported by the ETI to be providing a good, very good or outstanding quality of education for their pupils. Just 5% of schools were found to be less than satisfactory. My concern is that the 5% have influenced the report rather than the 95%. In moving forward, we have to get the balance right. I can accept to a certain degree a school's disappointment when it is presented with a less than satisfactory report, but my job is to defend the educational well-being of the children in the school and to ensure that they receive a proper education. It is also worth noting that, for the schools that have required it, intervention is having a positive impact for learners, with 80% of schools that required it improving by at least one grade by the time of their follow-up inspection. That has meant that there has been a significant improvement in the life chances of pupils in those schools. The follow-up work after schools have been placed in formal intervention has a positive impact in the vast majority of schools.

There is some contradiction on inspections in the Irish-medium sector in the report and in some of the evidence given in the Chamber today. I will follow up on that, as I have been requested to do. Evidence from the ETI states at paragraph 281:

"ETI rejected any suggestions of a bias against the immersion methodology and advised that the number of Irish language qualified inspectors was disproportionately large given the size of the sector and that it undertook work with its counterpart in the Republic of Ireland so as to enhance its knowledge and appreciation of the IME sector. ETI advised that inspectors will always be provided who are proficient in Irish when required: 'We will always have an Irish-speaking inspector on the team — at least one, if not more'."

I have attended North/South Ministerial Council meetings at which there have been joint presentations from the inspectorates, North and South, and they have reported on their very close working relationship across wide areas of our education system, but particularly they have reported on the Irish-medium sector. It is also fair to say that there are not enough properly qualified Irish-medium inspectors with the proficiency in Irish that we require across the island of Ireland. It is a challenge for us all to keep rolling that forward.

On the structure and the independence — or otherwise — of the inspectorate, I am not wedded ideologically to one or the other. I want a system that works, a system that ensures that a professional inspection is carried out and is married to educational improvement. I want to ensure that the benefits of that are for our young people and our education system. However, an element of research has to be carried out — it has to be detailed research — before we move ahead and say that independence is the way forward because that is what is done in jurisdiction a or jurisdiction b.

4.00 pm

I accept that more research has to be carried out on this, but, during the break, I took the opportunity to get some information on the Scottish model, which has been quoted here today. It is worth noting that, on its website, Education Scotland states of its role:

“Education Scotland was established on 1 July 2011 by the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning as a new public body, charged with supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences and outcomes for Scottish learners of all ages.

Our status as an executive agency means that we operate independently and impartially, whilst”,

this is the important bit:

“remaining directly accountable to Scottish Government ministers for the standards of our work.

This status safeguards the independence of inspection, review and reporting within the overall context of the National Performance Framework.”

So, how independent is “independent”?

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for giving way. One example of how independent it could be is that the current chief executive of ETI would no longer be a senior member of the management team of the Department that is responsible for taking other policy decisions. I also refer the Minister to the GTCNI survey. I think that any teacher listening to the Minister’s comments would feel absolutely ashamed that the Minister is still in his post, given his dismissive attitude to the survey that was carried out. It was not 5%. I ask him to go back and look at the figures in the GTC survey. One other point: the Committee is not —

Mr Speaker: Order. I am very conscious that the Member is eating into the Minister’s time. If he can be very quick —

Mr Storey: Yes. Let me clarify this point, Mr Speaker, and that is that the Education Committee is not about trying to cover up any issue in any school through misinformation. I want that to be very clear, because I think —

Mr Speaker: I must say, let the Minister —

Mr O’Dowd: Thank you for the intervention. I deeply appreciate the fact that you brought up the issue of questionnaires, because I nearly missed it.

The Committee damns the inspectorate for what it alleges are anonymous questionnaires during the inspection process. It comes out quite strongly against them. It states very boldly that those things should not be used. The GTC survey was an anonymous survey and was called into question by a number of bodies that would involve themselves in — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O’Dowd: — properly constituted and evaluated surveys. So, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. If it is not appropriate for the ETI to carry out anonymous questionnaires — the ETI says that it does not because you can identify yourself in any questionnaire that is sent out — it is not good enough for anyone else to carry

out surveys in relation to inspections that are not properly constituted or set at the highest standard of surveys.

The GTC is quoted quite deliberately throughout the report, and I welcome that fact. I welcome the fact that the Education Committee and its Chair have now started to recognise the value of the GTC, because when I bring forward legislation to the House to give the GTC the legislative role that is required to carry out its duties, I hope that it will progress quite speedily. However, you cannot have it one way and the other in relation to surveys etc.

In finishing off, as I said, I will study the report closely and report back to the Education Committee in due course.

Mr Kinahan (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I apologise for not being here for all of the Chair’s speech at the beginning. Before I summarise the contributions to the debate, I will take a few moments to refer to some of the report’s recommendations that were not covered by the Chairperson. I also personally thank for all their work the staff, Committee and all those who came to give evidence or sent it in. I think that it has been an extremely useful exercise.

The Committee’s inquiry was triggered by the Education Bill and, in particular, proposals for more powers for ETI and new responsibilities for school governors. The Committee felt that the latter should not simply be based on the level of academic attainment by pupils but should also recognise the value added through a positive education experience.

The measurement of value added is a complex question, and it solicits strong opinions. The main bone of contention is the context in which a school operates. ETI uses a number of measures to establish context but focuses largely on the free school meal entitlement. ETI categorises schools into one of five bands and compares performance largely on that basis. Many witnesses argued that that practice fails to recognise context and gives a distorted measure of the effectiveness of schools. The Committee is undertaking further research on this issue and will no doubt come to the House on this subject in the future. In the meantime, the Committee agrees that a standardised baseline of attainment at key junctures is a good way to begin to unpick this difficult problem. The Committee also endorses the OECD view that the Department has a lot of work to do to win the trust of teachers and schools in the development of a useful measure of the value added by schools.

During our deliberations, members were very impressed by the associate assessors and district inspectors. It was clear that those groups had a great deal to offer the school improvement process through formal inspection and, crucially, through more informal pastoral contacts. It seemed, however, that the district inspectors have been redirected to the former and away from the latter. Some suggested that this was yet another consequence of the area planning policy. The Committee believes that the balance needs to be restored between those two parts of the school improvement process and has made recommendations accordingly.

Another key part of the inquiry was the role and promotion of self-evaluation in schools. To be clear: we are not at the point where self-evaluation can completely or even largely replace formal school inspection. That said, the Committee believes that any modern learning

organisation, particularly a school, should be evaluating its own effectiveness. In support of that process, schools should be polling parents, staff, pupils and governors on the school's strength and weaknesses. This process of questioning and reflection, as the Chairperson said, sits extremely well with the modern teaching ethos. The Committee agrees with the OECD that the Department needs to do much more to support the embedding of self-evaluation. Here again, district inspectors can play a key role not just with school staff and governors but by engaging with parents.

I would like to make a few comments, if I may, as a member of the Ulster Unionist Party on the Education Committee. I will refer to two points that I touched on just now. Before that, I say that my initial feeling from what we have heard from the Minister is extreme disappointment. This was an inquiry done genuinely to try to improve the inspection process and how we help teaching in schools. Therefore, it focused on adults because it is the adults who do the teaching. Yes, there might be a little bit in there that we should have spoken more to pupils, but it was done genuinely, and I hope that the Minister really will take it away and listen to it.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for giving way. If the Minister is so concerned about always keeping the child at the centre of all the processes and policies of the Department, it is a pity he did not keep that in mind when we had the issue around computer-based assessment, which has been an abysmal failure. It is a pity he does not keep children at the centre when the ETI has given us a report on key stage assessment that says it is educationally useless. I do not think that is keeping children at the centre of any process.

Mr Kinahan: I hope to see all of us taking this forward as a constructive document because that is why it was done.

When we met the associate assessors and district inspectors, I found that almost all the evidence given was especially enlightening and extremely helpful. At an informal moment, almost as an aside, one of the visiting assessors said to me that the whole system was a disaster, needed review and — this was the key point — needed resources so that they could really do their jobs.

I raise that as part of this debate because, when we invite stakeholders to come, we, as Members of this institution, need to be aware that they need to be emboldened and to feel that they can speak out. That is the only way that we are going to learn ourselves. I suggest that all other Committees take that on board. Our procedures and processes, which we get used to, may be quite alien and off-putting to many of those coming to our Committees.

I also referred to the need for schools to self-evaluate. When we explored that, we did so in a large school and in quite a wealthy school. That led me to think that we should be looking at how we put resources into all schools so that they all have the same means and the same way of being able to self-evaluate. We should even, if necessary, look at grouping smaller schools' resources so that they can help each other. The teachers need more resources so that they have the time and the flexibility to do that self-evaluation.

I feel that the ETI should adopt its own policy and self-evaluating itself. Their presentation to the Committee seemed to be all about how good they were. The attitude

was almost, "How dare you question us?" They gave many good illustrations of how good they were, but all were from their side. I am afraid that I found that rather shocking. We all need to be part of a process whereby we self-evaluate, have some humility and find a way forward.

We all believe that our pupils need to be provided with the most excellent education possible. Today's inspection is about giving pupils and teachers the tools to ensure that they can receive and give that level of education. We need to ensure that the standard of education improves and that that improvement is encouraged by the inspection process.

We all want a system that faces less pressure, less stress and less of a threat, especially that posed by the ever-present looming cloud of area planning. Indeed, this morning, I was talking to one principal who had been listening to the early part of the debate. He said, "I hope that the system will change so that some of the principals who are away with stress-related illnesses can come back into the education system." That is why we focus on the 5% and not the 95%.

We want the process to change and become more positive, and we want that to be done in a pastoral way. We want parents to be included, and, when it comes to language, I was going to say to the Minister that we need to put the whole thing into plain English or a form of English that everyone can understand. If that were the case, we might not need two reports. However, we need to find some system that allows the schools to get the detail and the parents, the press and others outside the system to understand what is going on. I ask the Minister to rethink what he said and find a way of improving schools through a good inspection process without damaging them unnecessarily. I am not against inspection — it is the absolute core of what we do — but we have to find a way to do it better.

The Chair encouraged the Assembly to think about the report and exhorted the Minister to implement its recommendations. I have already touched on that, and I hope that the Minister will, in time, look at them all and, whether through legislation or more debates, find a way forward.

Mr Hazzard highlighted his support for most of the recommendations but signalled his, and his party's, opposition to the recommendation relating to the independence of the ETI. I am sure that he said that it was like putting, "the horse before the cart", rather than saying, "the cart before the horse". I hope that, in most cases, he puts the horse at the front rather than behind, although technology may allow change. We need the ETI to be independent and know that it is independent.

Mr Hazzard drew unfavourable comparisons with Ofsted and suggested that the terms of reference for the inquiry did not cover independence. He further argued that the evidence from witnesses did not support recommendation 16.

I should point out that the terms of reference did indeed refer to the governance of the ETI and that the majority of members felt that the mass of evidence to the Committee identified obvious transparency concerns. Those members also noted the OECD's assertions on trust issues with departmental policy. The logical conclusion of all of that is that a new governance arrangement for the inspectorate is required. Most members felt that that could be achieved only through statutory independence.

4.15 pm

Mr Rogers highlighted the need for support for staff and school leadership improvement. He emphasised the important role of data in informing, not driving, the inspection process and stressed the unsuitability of the end of Key Stage assessments. I expect that we will hear much more about that next week in that debate.

Mrs Dobson referred to the central importance of pupils in the school improvement process and called for more and better engagement by the inspectorate with parents.

Mr Lunn indicated the importance of inspection to school improvement and set out his support for unannounced inspections. He also highlighted a key and perplexing finding of the inquiry in respect of the very different perceptions of the inspectorate. He felt that a more independent complaints procedure was required, along with statutory independence for the new improvement service. He also referred to recommendation 10, which covers the inspection of Irish-medium schools, and the current reported unusual inspection practices.

Mr Craig referred to his experience of school inspection as a school governor, and he felt that the inspectorate does not currently take into account a school's context or its plans to improve. He also strongly supported the Committee's recommendations in respect of the use of anonymous questionnaires and the pejorative descriptors in inspection reports.

Maeve McLaughlin highlighted concerns in respect of financial implications and legislative changes associated with independence. She indicated her support for inspection generally and for self-evaluation.

Robin Newton highlighted the importance of transport consideration and of performance against standards.

Pat Sheehan referred to the inspector of Irish language schools and called for secondments from the Republic of Ireland. The Minister said that there was always someone who spoke Irish, but the evidence that we took in Committee showed us that there have been cases where, in inspections of Irish language schools — I think it was the immersion type — there were people who could not speak the language or understand what was going on. So, the point could still be well made. Pat Sheehan also supported no-notice inspection and recognised the importance of supporting data for school inspection. Personally, I was concerned by his comment at the beginning, when he said that he thought that we had all learned something on the Committee; that was about the only use you put across for the whole report. It is a phenomenally important report and, I hope, a way forward.

The Minister urged caution and highlighted the OECD report and its recommendations. He also highlighted the absence of pupil feedback in the report and emphasised the importance of pupil progress and the significant impact of poor educational provision. There is certainly a way of getting pupil feedback, but, in my experience and in my time, some of the anonymous questionnaires that went out to schools were used for matters other than inspection and just as a way of griping and getting at the principal.

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: I am happy to give way.

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member therefore agree that, if it is not acceptable to have anonymous questionnaires as part of an inspection process, it is then not proper to have anonymous questionnaires as part of an evaluation of inspections, as was done by the GTC?

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his question.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Kinahan: Thank you. I do not think that it is quite as simple as that. We need a way to find out views from people, and, from a whistle-blowing point of view, we need some way for people to be unknown. We have to find a way forward. We recommend the report, and I really hope that the Minister takes all the points on board and that we see some action.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 56; Noes 27.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr I McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Newton and Mr Rogers.

NOES

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, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Ms S Ramsey, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the school improvement process [NIA 132/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. The motion is carried.

4.30 pm

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: Order. The next item on the Order Paper is the motion on integrated education. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Ms Lo: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to apologise to you for not being in the Chamber during questions to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I thank the Member for coming to the Chamber and apologising to the House. I hope you have set an example to other Members. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr P Ramsey: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Would you be minded to relax the regulations on the wearing of jackets, as the Chamber is very warm?

Mr Speaker: Members are feeling the heat of the moment, so I am extremely happy to allow Members to remove their jackets. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Like my colleague, Ms Lo, I wish to apologise to the House for not being in the Chamber during questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Once again, I appreciate Members coming to the Chamber and apologising. Let us try to move on.

Private Members' Business

Integrated Education: Article 64

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. All other contributors will have five minutes.

Mr Lunn: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the High Court ruling on the judicial review taken by Drumragh Integrated College; welcomes the reaffirmation of the statutory duty under article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 "to encourage and facilitate integrated education"; further welcomes the court's confirmation that integrated education, as referred to in article 64, means a stand-alone concept envisaging the education of children together at the same school rather than in a school which has a predominantly Catholic or Protestant ethos; and calls on the Minister of Education to place article 64 at the heart of educational planning and to publish guidance within his own Department and beyond to ensure that this is the case in departmental decisions when planning for education.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thanks for the dispensation on the jacket. It is very warm in here.

This is not the first time that we have debated integrated education. However, recent events, culminating in Mr Justice Treacy's comments on the judicial review application by Drumragh Integrated College, have altered the landscape, hence today's motion.

The Department has since 1989 had a duty to facilitate and encourage integrated education. Three or four years ago, we had a debate here in which the House accepted the use of the word "promote". Of course, the resolution was not binding, but it was still a useful indication of the way in which the House thought. It is also useful to look at the definition and meaning of the two words that are in the legislation. "Facilitate" means "to make easier and to help bring about". "Encourage" has a lot of meanings: to support, to motivate, to give hope or spirit, to recommend strongly, to spur on, to foster and to give help or patronage. I wonder which of those definitions would apply to the Department's attitude to the integrated education movement over the past 40 years. I suggest that none of them is really appropriate. Those definitions indicate to me a proactive approach, not the passive, slightly begrudging approach that seems to characterise the Department's attitude over the years since I arrived here.

Mr Justice Treacy has confirmed the situation as to what constitutes an integrated education. He has made it clear that integrated education is a stand-alone concept:

"the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils."

He further confirms that integrated schooling as defined cannot be delivered by schools with a predominantly Catholic or Protestant ethos. The article 64 duty therefore relates to integrated schools only — schools that are properly constituted to achieve an equal balance in worship, celebration and exposure to all faiths, with a

board that is charged to strive in its ethos to achieve those aims. Our motion therefore calls on the Minister to accept and act on the duty under article 64 to facilitate and encourage, not just to pay lip service, and to accept that integrated education in the meaning of the 1989 Order has now been legally defined as a concept envisaging the education of pupils together in the same school, rather than in a school with a predominantly Catholic or Protestant ethos.

The final part of the motion calls on the Minister to place article 64 at the heart of education planning. Here, of course, we get into area planning, the needs model and the lack of any requirement up until now to factor into forward planning any allowance for the growth of the integrated sector. The court held that the needs model and the inflexibility of the projections used make it difficult for the Department to accommodate its article 64 duty. It also held that the Department needs to be alive to that duty at all levels. Put simply, the area planning approach used by the Department and its article 64 duty are often incompatible. That is what the court is saying. Mr Justice Treacy has done us all a great service by pointing that out. We therefore ask the Minister to publish the guidance from his officials to ensure that article 64 is formally taken into account at the heart of education planning in all planning decisions.

I note the Minister's answers to my recent questions about that guidance and his assertion that it was available to the parties involved in the judicial review and nobody objected to it. That is true as far as it goes, but the guidance that was produced at the judicial review was a confidential draft. What we need is a full document. Nobody could really object to a confidential draft or make it public, so nobody else has seen it yet. We need a full document. That is apparently due by agreement between the barristers and the court by 19 June, which is two weeks from the closure of proceedings on 5 June, so we wait with interest to see whether the Department will produce something meaningful by that date.

I will be interested to hear the contributions from other parties over the next hour, because all the parties have at some time expressed support for the principle of parental choice in the schooling of our children. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are on record as supporting integration. Indeed, over the years, the First Minister has been quite fond of telling us that the first speech that he ever made at a DUP gathering was in support of integrated education, so I take heart from that.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Briefly.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. I note his comments on the First Minister's support for integrated education. Does the Member, therefore, share my concern that the most recent draft of the OFMDFM good relations indicators proposes to remove any reference to integrated education? Does he agree that it is vital that we include indicators that consider the percentage of young people in integrated education and the percentage of young people who have been turned away from integrated education, given that those are clear good relations indicators?

Mr Lunn: My party colleague has the advantage of me there, but I will take his word for it and agree with his comments.

The current Minister of Education has often said, in answer to questions and in the House, that he is quite prepared to meet his responsibility in this area. The Ulster Unionists and the SDLP have their own policies, but both have, likewise, supported the concept. Many polls, particularly those published by the 'Belfast Telegraph', indicate massive public support. A large majority of people polled over the last number of years have said that, if there was an integrated school available in their area or sufficient capacity in an integrated school that is already there, they would like to use it. Seventy per cent of parents have said that.

The current proposals for sharing and shared campuses are being promoted as beneficial in bringing pupils together, although the main benefit must surely be in the delivery of the full curriculum. If there is a social benefit from sharing, why not actively encourage full integration, where it is appropriate? Is putting children together full time not the ultimate form of sharing? I do not understand how anybody can disagree with that. So, why is it then that 90% of our children are still educated exclusively with their co-religionists? What does Together: Building a United Community mean if we continue to segregate our children from age five through to university age?

Justice Treacy has given the Department a considerable push in the right direction. What I want to hear from the Minister is that, subject to the legal advice that he seeks — he is perfectly entitled to do that — he will accept the judicial review rulings and clarifications and act accordingly. I want him to confirm that integrated education will now receive the priority, facilitation and encouragement to which it is entitled and that the movement will be allowed to expand according to parental demand.

The increase in total pupil numbers in integrated schools last year was a pitiful 250. Tellingly, numbers in the Irish-medium sector went up by 400. At the same time, roughly 700 children were refused a place in an integrated setting of their choice due to a lack of accommodation.

The old excuses for restricting the growth of integrated education are being dismantled by the High Court ruling, and the ramifications of that ruling will be felt in years to come. I hope that the Minister and his Department will step up to the plate, that, in future, article 64 will be front and centre in all decision-making and that no child whose parents want a cross-community setting for their education will be denied.

We do not advocate some sort of wholesale move towards the integration of all our schools, welcome as that would be. Realistically, the establishment of new integrated schools in situations where that is clearly the ideal solution and active encouragement for schools whose parents and governors want to transform would be a good start.

I should make it clear that the parental choice of a faith school does not need to be compromised by this approach. Indeed, current results confirm the excellent performance of Catholic maintained secondary schools. We are not seeking to deny anyone their right to choose; rather, we want to emphasise it and to persuade the House of the rightness and benefits of giving integrated education its place, with the assistance from the Department to which, as Justice Treacy has confirmed, it is entitled.

I hope that the House will accept our motion. I look forward to hearing from other Members, particularly from the Minister.

4.45 pm

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I will make a few comments at the commencement as Chair of the Education Committee to inform the House that the Committee received further legal advice and clarification in relation to the Drumragh judgement. As the House will know, protocol will not allow me to disclose that legal advice. However, I can say that it clearly defined what integrated education is and what it is not, and it is an issue that we will return to in the Committee.

I will turn now as a Member of the Assembly and as the DUP education spokesperson and say a few comments. The attempts by parties in the Assembly to understand and resolve the complexities of education structures in Northern Ireland are interesting and, sometimes, frustrating. During this and previous mandates, I have listened to individuals and parties that have promoted solutions that would deal with the issue of streamlining our structures, reduce costs, tackle social injustice and raise standards and then witnessed those same individuals and parties' growing sense of frustration that, rather than resolving the issue, they merely create a new set of problems to deal with. The motion tabled by the Alliance Party today as a result of the Drumragh judgement is another of those solutions, which, rather than resolving a problem, is in danger of creating a new set of problems for us.

At the outset, I acknowledge that there are many parents in Northern Ireland who wish to see their children educated in an integrated school. The integrated sector has been created over the past 30 years and has developed from small beginnings at Lagan College in the 1980s to a situation in which there are 62 schools in the sector educating some 21,000 pupils. However, it has to be said that there is an issue about what is a defined integrated school. Almost 50% of schools today that claim to be integrated do not meet the legal criteria and the definition of an integrated school. It would be interesting to hear what Judge Treacy had to say on that issue, given the composition of the system. We have to ask ourselves, "What is an integrated school?". I have schools in my constituency that, while they do not have above the door the title of being an integrated school, have a greater percentage of pupils from other sectors and from across the religious divide than we find in many schools that have the title "integrated". We need to set that marker down when we come to debate the issue.

There has been a considerable achievement from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) in the way in which they, as organisations, can feel rightly proud about how they have promoted and developed their sector. I also know that the sector is ambitious at times and feels that the Department of Education does little to promote its cause, and thus we have the situation that has arisen, which has now resulted in the current legal challenge.

The reality of what we are dealing with is somewhat different when we look at the complexities of our education system. The integrated sector represents only 7% of the school population. There are many others in the system who promote a different view of education and other solutions to the future that do not necessarily concur with the concept promoted in the motion. During my time as Chair of the Education Committee, representatives of the

Catholic bishops have attended and resolutely defended their rights in promoting their ethos and identity. I have heard similar views from other sectors such as the Irish-medium sector, and, in more recent times, the controlled sector has found its voice and is much more strident in promoting its brand of state education. Indeed, some have argued that, as all schools are now state-funded, all should become controlled or state schools, and many of the problems that we now face, especially in the light of the recent judgement, would be irrelevant. I think that that would be a very simple, straightforward situation for us all to be in.

Let me make our position very clear. We have always opposed the 1989 Order because it does not give a level playing field to the other sectors in our education system. Here we have a situation where we find ourselves today debating a judgement that has been ruled on in the court, which is to the advantage of one element of our sector in education, but I have to say that there are other elements —

Mr Lunn: Thank you for giving way. Does the Member agree that the 1989 Order was clearly meant to provide positive discrimination towards the integrated sector because that is what it needed? It certainly is not the first example of positive discrimination across various fields.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Storey: The Member knows that we would not accept that. The discrimination relating to numbers in the RUC or the PSNI was wrong and should never have happened. We should not find ourselves in a situation in which we have to have positive discrimination and the Minister and his party opposite justify the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, which clearly discriminates against the ability of Protestant teachers to educate in Catholic schools. The deputy First Minister said that the Order should not be dismantled, so there is no fairness in the system when it comes to treating schools equitably. Here we have a classic example of legislation —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Storey: — that is in place but should not be in place because it gives preferential treatment. Therefore, despite the judgement on Drumragh, we, unfortunately, will not support the motion.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Justice Treacy's ruling in the judicial review sought by Drumragh college is very clear. It reaffirms the Minister's statutory obligation under article 64 of the Education Reform Order 1989, in so far as he has a duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education. Justice Treacy also helpfully defined what is meant in law by the term "integrated education". He said that it entails:

"integration between Protestant and Catholic pupils as opposed to integration within school of any other distinct set of pupils".

An integrated school should represent both faiths equally in all things and reflect that in its constitution. Moreover, it must provide education that is integrated throughout and not:

"education that is delivered by a partisan Board".

In my view, under the law, the Minister, in his decision-making process on integrated education, must ensure that

he and his officials take account of article 64. Of course, it has already been established by the same judge that the Minister and his Department have an identical obligation under article 89 in respect of Irish-medium education.

My difficulty in all of this is with the definition of integrated education. I have no quarrel with Justice Treacy's definition, which is very clear. However, although I support, in principle, the concept of integration in our schools, it is clear that the existing model of integration is a different beast from the one that I support. I favour an all-singing, all-dancing model of integration. The idea that children from whatever background should be educated together and exposed to one another's cultural differences seems such a sensible suggestion that one wonders why it has never happened. What is wrong with Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Jews and atheist children being educated with unionists, nationalists and others, with boys and girls —

Mr Lunn: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: I will give way in a second. What is wrong with them being educated with children from affluent backgrounds or children from poor backgrounds — academically gifted or not? The integrated sector, as it stands, is a very poor second cousin of what a proper integrated system would look like.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for giving way. I was going to ask him what his ideal integrated school would look like. He seems to be adopting an Alliance Party view that proper integration would allow for the 30% from the minority community to include the minority religion and others. Is that what he means?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. My idea of integration is not about religion on its own; it is about other issues as well. I will expand on that as I go on.

Let me be clear: I have no issue with parents who want to send their children to a school with a mixed Catholic and Protestant ethos or even any other type of faith. I have an issue with those who promote that form of integration as a panacea for some, many or all the ills of the society in which we live. In fact, those who promote integrated education in that way act from a position of ignorance, because it feeds into the falsehood that the conflict and divisions were sectarian in nature when, in fact, they were about differences in national allegiance and national identity.

The recent decision by Omagh Integrated Primary School not to have the O'Neills logo on its PE kit because O'Neills is associated in some way with the GAA reinforces the view among many nationalists that the integrated sector is, in many ways, a Trojan Horse aimed at eroding anything associated with Irishness. What hope is there of having a Gaelic football or hurling team in Omagh Integrated Primary School?

It seems that, while we have a view of integrated education, we also want parental choice. It seems that the shared education strategy is a much more sensible way forward, where schools can share resources and experience without compromising on the ethos or identity of the schools involved.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for giving way. What on earth makes the Member think that two shared schools would share sports and that the controlled school in the sharing situation would suddenly start to play Gaelic or hurling, or vice versa? Integrated schools provide all sports.

Mr Sheehan: I would be interested to hear how many integrated schools have hurling teams. My son picked the post-primary school he goes to because of the sports it caters for. It was not the school I wanted him to go to, but it was where he wanted to go. The difficulty in all this is a bit like when we were in prison. We were not allowed to play Gaelic football; we were told that we had to play a sport common to all the prisoners. So, we went to the lowest common denominator: everybody could play soccer. I see a similar type of ethos in the integrated sector. That is the difficulty.

Mr Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Sheehan: It is not integrated in the full sense. Schools on shared education campuses can play whatever sport they want in their own school. If they want to share, they can do that as well. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr Rogers: We acknowledge the recent judgement of Justice Treacy in the High Court following the judicial review proceedings brought by Drumragh Integrated College. The judgement endorsed and reaffirmed article 64 of the Education Reform Order 1989, which placed a statutory duty on the Department to "encourage and facilitate" the development of integrated education. That duty has practical consequences and legislative significance, including taking positive steps or removing obstacles that inhibit the statutory objective. That is correct and proper.

We in the SDLP were disappointed that our amendment was not accepted. We felt that it would have added to the motion, because it acknowledged the contribution that faith-based schools make to not only education but shared education across the North. The need to encourage and facilitate integrated education is already recognised in the area planning process. The terms of reference for the area planning work state that it should take account of the Good Friday Agreement and article 64. They also include the explicit objective to identify realistic, innovative and creative solutions to address need, including opportunities for shared schooling on a cross-sectoral basis.

The integrated education sector has seen considerable growth. Since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, the number of pupils availing themselves of integrated education has increased from over 11,000 to over 20,000, according to the latest school census figures. The SDLP recognises the valuable contribution the integrated sector, together with all the other sectors, makes to helping to build a peaceful and stable future for all our children.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he, along with me, also be very clear in acknowledging and commending the contribution made, during very difficult times, by faith-based primary, post-primary and third-level institutions in Northern Ireland?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Member for that intervention. I fully and wholeheartedly agree.

This House has frequently debated integrated education. We can all agree on the fact that there are many excellent integrated schools. However, we must be careful to give support to not just integrated education but a broad spectrum of schools that parents elect to send their children to. Our priority must be to ensure that all our children have access to good schools that help them to become well-rounded and happy members of our community.

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

5.00 pm

There is already a wide range of schools that adopt a shared system for learning. These, along with some very high-quality integrated schools, are a real asset to our education system. The SDLP firmly believes that parental choice is a cornerstone of our education system. The real future for that system is to build on opportunities for the variety of school types, including shared faith schools. Building a truly shared future must include a sense of respect for the rights and choices of parents and young people.

Our real priority is to ensure that our schools are of high standard and help our young people to achieve their full potential. The SDLP envisages an education system that is focused not just on exams but on a rounded, holistic education for all our children, and one that provides parental choice of integrated, Irish-medium, state- or faith-based education through the provision of appropriate access for all our pupils.

The current curriculum presents many opportunities for pupils of different schools to share subjects, projects and other activities. It is extremely heartening to see so many pupils from a variety of schools coming together to study. The area learning communities are testament to this.

In a modern society that is becoming more confident and comfortable with itself, there is no reason why parents and pupils should not be able to exercise their own choice when it comes to the kind of school that they wish to be educated in. The Minister should continue to encourage and facilitate integrated education while acknowledging the contribution of faith-based schools to ensure that our young people have an excellent education experience.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the chance to speak on the motion as it highlights one of the major flaws in our education system. However, the Ulster Unionist Party feels that, sadly, this motion will only perpetuate that very flaw. As we have already heard, the motion wants to place article 64 at the heart of educational planning. I want to support integrated education with every breath in my body, but this motion is poorly crafted. We feel that it will cause only division, especially between our education sectors. It will not help us to improve education or society.

I am most concerned by the assumption that seems to be in it that a state-controlled school has a Protestant ethos. That is just plain wrong. A board of governors may include a Presbyterian or Church of Ireland minister, but that does not make it a Protestant school. We cannot support the motion.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: I am happy to give way.

Mr Storey: Would you also recognise that, since the inception of the transformation process, the only sector that has gone down the integrated route is the controlled sector? It is obvious that only those in the state system are really interested in integrated education. Other sectors have a long, long, long way to go to catch up.

Mr Kinahan: You are partially right. When you move to other sectors, it is different for each patch regarding the degree of integration.

The Ulster Unionist Party fully supports integrated education. As we have said many times, we see shared education, with integrated education at its very heart, as the way forward. The Treacy judgement, if misused —

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: No. I want to carry on, but thank you. I will come to you if I get a chance at the end.

The Treacy judgement, if misused, will only send us backwards as it pits sector against sector rather than pulling or coaxing our education system towards working together. Our education system is a mess, especially as the two main parties refuse to work together on it. At the last debate on shared education, the Chair attacked me for wishing always to have people sitting round a table. I will continue to push for that, but it is sitting down round a table, discussing and actually coming to a joint solution. That is consensus, and that is where we should be going.

To go back to the debate, I had a call from a primary school on Friday that is thriving and which has a good number of applications; it is in an area where there is no pressure on school places. The school has been judged very good by inspectors in its achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. It has an exemplary ethos and demonstrates all the very best values that there can be among pupils. It works incredibly hard and successfully with, and as part of, the local community. Despite its being in the controlled sector, one-third of its pupils are listed as non-Protestant. It has a very broad spread from the ethnic community and all socio-economic groups. All in all, this school sets the very best of examples as being as non-sectarian as possible. In fact, this really is an integrated school in every way. That is what shared education should be about and should be achieving, and here we have a school that achieves it already.

Why am I using that school as an example? Because since the Treacy judgement, the nearby integrated school has embarked on expansion, on a development plan, leafleting its pupils' parents and pushing to show that it can expand, presumably because it feels that it now has the legal support of the Treacy judgement. If it succeeds, it will damage the school that rang me, stealing its pupils and teachers, and, in time, putting its very existence at risk. This, I am sure, is just one of many examples, and it will not be long before Members have their own, similar examples.

Shared education is really the only way forward. Last year, the 'Advancing Shared Education' report gave us, in its first 15 recommendations, a very sensible and considered way forward, with a statutory body and a suite of other well-considered proposals, other than the last three, that were all designed to help us achieve more sharing in our

education system and, as such, to help us drive towards a shared society.

I hope that today's debate is not seen as a way of misusing Treacy. I end with a plea to the integrated sector to build on the excellent work that it has done and is doing and not to misuse the Treacy judgement. I ask that it builds up a shared and integrated education system by working with other schools and not against them.

Sadly, the Ulster Unionist Party cannot and does not support the motion.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the motion today and the wider context of Justice Treacy's verdict regarding integrated education, although I am somewhat confused as to why the Ulster Unionist Party and perhaps the DUP will be voting against the motion. I did not hear anything in what Mr Kinahan had to say that was against what the motion said, but —

Mr Kinahan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: I will give way. Go ahead.

Mr Kinahan: I have just given a five-minute speech in which I gave a clear example of how the Treacy judgement can be used to benefit one school against all others. I do not think that you need any more to understand why we cannot support the motion.

Mr Hazzard: Thanks for the intervention, although Mr Kinahan does not seem to be so confused with the stealing of pupils when it is selective grammar schools doing exactly the same thing as he has outlined today, so, again, I think that it is for show more than anything else.

A LeasCheann Comhairle, we need to start by recognising the valuable contribution to our schools and society that those activists and long-time educationalists in the integrated sector, and indeed the Irish-medium sector, has made over the decades. While I disagree with those who have sought to present the judgement as some sort of watershed for the integrated education movement against the Department, I agree that it helps to provide clarity about article 64 of the 1989 Order and the subsequent statutory requirements.

It is important to bear in mind that Justice Treacy ruled against the applicant's assertion that the area planning process was unlawful and that he concluded that the Minister's decision-making process remained unfettered. I have no doubt that the Minister is well aware of the statutory duties presented on his Department by article 64, but this court judgement, on the back of the Colm McKee judicial review in 2011, helps to illustrate the complexities in the outworkings of such legislative provisions. In light of that, I welcome the fact that the Minister subsequently announced that he would review guidance protocols around article 64 and how such guidance is disseminated throughout his Department.

It has been suggested in some quarters that the judgement calls into question the viability of the current needs model. Again, I have to disagree with that. Perhaps the Minister will outline his thoughts on the issue when he speaks to the debate later. I also think that it is important not to fall for the myth that there is an agenda against the development of integrated education across the North. Development proposals of all hues are regularly agreed or rejected. As

many integrated development proposals are passed or failed as in any other sector. In my constituency lately, we have had an integrated school receive quite a considerable extension to its enrolment numbers. Over the last number of years, there have been capital build announcements where integrated schools have featured prominently.

However, the existence of article 64 and, indeed, article 89 help to outline where some of the difficulties lie and why there is a need to put the needs of those two sectors at the heart of the process. It is a recognition that there are difficulties.

The Chair mentioned earlier that somehow the 1989 Order creates an uneven playing field. I think that is nonsense, because it helps to create equality through a recognition that not all is equal as it stands.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Hazzard: No, I want to get through this last point. Are we suggesting, for example, that we should remove disabled access car parking because it gives preferential treatment to those in need? Absolutely not. I welcome the clarity as a result of the Treacy verdict and the Minister's announcement that he would ensure that the relevant guidance is disseminated property throughout his Department. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Agnew: I should declare at the outset that I am a director of NICIE and declare an interest in that regard. What the Justice Treacy ruling does, for me, is to say that where there is demand for integrated education it should be met. Parties across the House have said they want to move to — whether they call it greater sharing or greater integration — essentially more children being educated together, but at the same time we are being told that you cannot grow the integrated sector at the expense of the established segregated sectors.

If we genuinely believe in growing the integrated sector and, indeed, promoting and facilitating it, then unless people have more children, there is no other way to do that than by taking the demand that is there and facilitating the places in integrated schools, which will, of course, inevitably be at the expense of other schools in the area. I think that this is a policy question for the Assembly. It is a legislative requirement as things now stand, and the Treacy ruling clearly outlines that, but we have to decide on a policy.

I hear a lot of things in the Assembly about wanting to see greater sharing, greater integration etc, but I do not actually see the commitment to it; whether it is a question of votes within the constituencies or a genuine fear of taking on the established way of doing things. The fact is that we have all said at different times that, if we were to start anywhere, we would not have started from here. The question is how we move away from where we are to where we would like to be. Promoting and facilitating integrated education has to be part of that.

The 1989 Order has been described as promoting positive discrimination, and I have no problem with that at all.

Mr Sheehan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Yes.

Mr Sheehan: I go back to the issue that I raised about Omagh Integrated Primary School and its refusal to have not the GAA crest but a company's crest on its PE kit

because the same company supplies the GAA. County Tyrone is a hotbed of GAA activity. It is one of the primary sources of leisure for the nationalist community in Tyrone. Do you think that the decision by that headmaster in that integrated school has not alienated that whole population?

Mr Agnew: I am glad the Member raised it, because I wrote in my notes that I should come back to him on that point. The school did not exclude the logo. The logo was never going to be on the kit. It was not a case of exclusion. It was a school PE kit. It is still being made by O'Neill. It will still be on the label. It is not on the kit, but it was never an active decision not to have it. There was an issue raised by a parent who did not want to see the logo on it, but it was never the intention.

I think the media created an issue that was never there. I believe that the Member is genuine in his concern, and many others will have been equally concerned, but it was one of those cases of the headline in the media belying, to some extent, the reality of the situation.

I mentioned positive discrimination before I took the intervention. As I said, if we genuinely want to move away from where we are to a new place, we have to take positive actions. The PSNI was mentioned. I know that Members across the way opposed positive discrimination, but look where we are now. We have got to where we have got to, where it is absolutely normal for Catholics to join the police. We want it to be absolutely normal for Protestant and Catholic children and others to be educated together.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Sure.

Mr Storey: What made the situation of Roman Catholics joining the police normal was that the IRA stopped murdering Roman Catholics who proposed to join the RUC.

5.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Storey: I have to say —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Take your seat. I was concerned that the debate was moving off the subject, and it mostly certainly is now well off it.

Mr Storey: Will the Member accept that positive discrimination in that case did not work because it was done for all the wrong reasons?

Mr Agnew: No, I do not accept that. I believe that it worked. I will take the Speaker's ruling.

Mr McElduff: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think that Standing Orders prohibit Members from making long and tedious speeches. Does that extend to tedious interventions from Mr Storey?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr McElduff, I am getting seriously concerned that you are challenging my job. Continue.

Mr Agnew: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will quickly make the point about the difference between an integrated school and one that has a good mix of Protestants and Catholics. I agree with what Mr Sheehan said integrated education should be, but I want to give my view of what integrated education is. It is integrated in ability, as integrated schools are non-selective. It is also integrated in social background, and I certainly see that in my

constituency. My son attends an integrated school, and there is a great diversity of religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. I am absolutely passionate about that and would not support integrated education if I did not believe that it had a mixed socio-economic background.

Mr Sheehan should perhaps have objected to what I feel the integrated sector fails to do, which is to be fully inclusive, something that I push from within to change. Integrated schools are still overtly Christian assemblies and are Christian in their ethos. I speak as an MLA for the Green Party, but, as a director, I have to uphold the Christian ethos, and the assemblies are not as inclusive as they should be. That is a challenge for the integrated sector and where we need to move to, but I believe that they are the best vehicle for getting a single —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Agnew: — and inclusive education system for Northern Ireland.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh gach deis díospóireacht a dhéanamh faoi cheisteanna a bhaineann le pleanáil le haghaidh feabhsúcháin inár gcóras oideachais, agus níl aon deacracht agam glacadh le spiorad agus le prionsabal an rúin seo.

I welcome every opportunity to debate issues related to planning for improvement in our education system and have no difficulty accepting the spirit and principle of the motion.

It calls on me to place article 64 at the heart of our education planning and to publish guidance within my Department and beyond to ensure that that is the case in departmental decisions when planning for education. Of course, I already take very seriously my Department's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education. I particularly welcomed the clarity and precision that the High Court ruling brought to the duty that is set out in article 64 on the definition of integrated education.

I endorse the vital and valuable contribution that the integrated sector can make to building a peaceful and stable future for our children and young people. Therefore, I fund the Council for Integrated Education, which encourages and promotes integrated education. I have also assisted the IEF with the capital costs of new schools and continue to provide funding to assist schools that have transformed to integrated status. The funding available this year alone is in the region of £200,000.

I have been disappointed, however, by the number of schools that avail themselves of that funding. Therefore, I have made it clear that I am willing to consider further innovative approaches that will facilitate the development of integrated education and have had ongoing discussions with NICIE on ways in which that might be achieved.

In re-emphasising my commitment to encourage and facilitate integrated education, I issued guidance to my officials in December 2013 and asked them to keep reviewing and refreshing their work. However, I do not expect that that constructive approach will equate to automatic approval of every proposal, and the Department's positive approach to our duties to integrated and Irish-medium education is set within a wider statutory framework.

There are a number of key parts in the decision-making framework, and I need to be assured that the Department balances all its obligations. For instance, under article 44 of the Education and Libraries Order 1986, I am required to avoid unreasonable expenditure when responding to parents' wishes about the education of their children. You will appreciate, therefore, that I cannot give article 64 precedence over any other statutory duties that are placed on my Department.

Members hold various views on the value of integrated education, as they are perfectly entitled to do. I only want to respond to one point made by Mr Lunn in his interpretation of my Department's use of the needs model. You will hardly be surprised that I do not agree with him. Indeed, when the Drumragh legislative counsel came before the judge on 5 May, they wanted the judge to declare the needs model illegal. The judge refused to do so and accepted that the needs model is a part of the planning process, though it has to be flexible enough to take into account the growing demand from sectors, including, in this case, the integrated sector. Also on that occasion, Drumragh legal representatives wanted the judge to declare illegal my area planning process built on the needs model, and the judge rejected that. However, the judge did make a very clear ruling:

"The court declares that Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 applies only to integrated education as a standalone concept within the confines of part VI of the 1989 Order."

I welcome that clarification.

In speaking about the judicial review, I want to stress that this was not a landmark judgement against my Department, as has been portrayed by some in the media. What it does do is provide welcome clarification in respect of the scope of the article 64 duty. As I have said, I am pleased that the court rejected the argument that the area planning process was unlawful. I also highlight the fact that the judge declared that my decision-making, in this case, had not been fettered, as has been claimed. In light of this clarification, I will as a matter of course review the internal guidance to my officials to ensure that it is consistent with the recent judgement.

I remain confident that, while supporting all sectors to achieve excellence, my Department fully recognises its discrete responsibilities in relation to integrated and Irish-medium education. My officials are well aware that I expect any guidance, internal or external, to permeate every layer of the education system. It is no different in the case of article 64, however, none of us can ignore the fact that this is a complex and emotive issue for many stakeholders. Indeed, we have heard that in the Chamber this evening. I expect my officials to be unstinting in encouraging and facilitating the development of integrated and Irish-medium education. I can ask them to do so in as seamless a manner as possible, bringing stakeholders with us rather being restrictive.

In conclusion, I will continue to have regard to all relevant statutory obligations, including article 64, ensuring that at the heart of our educational provision remains the needs of each and every individual child. I will do whatever it takes to plan education first and foremost for their benefit. Provision is and will be planned and in a strategic way so that every pupil, without exception, benefits from access to high-quality education.

Mr Lunn: I thank all the Members for their contributions. I will deal with what the Minister said first. I am pleased that he said, in his own words, that he accepted the spirit of the motion. I said in my initial contribution that he has often said in the past that he accepts his statutory duty. It is just that that statutory duty has been severely reinforced in the last couple of weeks. He also said that the integrated sector makes a valuable contribution to a stable future in this country, which, frankly, is at the heart of this. This is what it is about. If we cannot bring our children together at school until they are 17 or 18, where is this society going? So, I am glad to hear the Minister's comments on that.

He also said that he is willing to consider innovative ideas to try to promote the integrated sector, and he mentioned the IEF initiatives. That is good as well. As he and I know, a proposal is on the table from NICIE to try to ease the transformation process, and I hope that he will be looking hard at that. He said that he disagrees with me about the interpretation of the needs model. I am not quite sure that we do disagree. The judge said to the court that the needs model can provide an obstruction and a resistance to fair play for the integrated sector because it only assesses the needs of the controlled and the maintained sectors.

That is fairly obvious, and that has been the position up to now. Hopefully, that is one of the things that can perhaps be rectified.

The Minister also mentioned the internal guidance to his officials. Is there not a bit of a contradiction here? If this is internal guidance, are the rest of us not going to be allowed to see it? If it is internal guidance, how can you relate that to the fact that you have also said in answer to questions that the guidance was provided to the Drumragh hearing and that nobody objected to it? You cannot have it both ways; it has got to be either internal or published. We have asked for it to be published. I understand that there is an agreement that, two weeks after the end of the case — which was on 5 June, so that would be 19 June — that guidance should be published. I hope that that is the case.

I will refer to a few other things that Members said. Straight away, I go to Pat Sheehan's comments about sport in integrated schools, because I have been passed a note. I want to ask him whether he knows who the Ulster under-14s school Gaelic champions are. Well, I will tell him that it is Drumragh College, and Lagan College provides Gaelic football and camogie. I am sure that I could cite plenty of other examples of where integrated schools try to fulfil the needs and the demands of their pupils on the sports field as well as in the classroom.

Others have commented on faith schools. I hope that I made it clear, particularly to Mr Rogers and Mr Bradley, that I support faith schools. There is no contradiction in supporting faith schools and supporting integrated schools. It is about parental choice. I could relate that to Mr Storey's comments that it is only the controlled sector that shows any interest in integration. That may well be so. I can understand the Catholic bishops being resistant and wanting to protect their own sector, but there is not the evidence from Catholic parents, because, when they are polled, they are just as keen on integrated education as other faiths. Of course they are. The problem is that there are not enough schools. Who mentioned a figure of 62 right across the country out of — what is it? — 1,200 schools? There is not sufficient parental choice.

I am not sure about the term “landmark judgement”, and I think that the Minister used it again. It is an important judgement. It may lead to the potential for other judgements down the road, but it really depends on how the Minister or the Department and the Assembly deal with the present situation. Frankly, the integrated movement has been operating with one arm twisted up its back for 40 years. I will say this about the present Minister: he has relaxed that situation at times during his tenure, and particularly — I am not making a cynical point here — in the last number of months. I am thinking of Millennium and Braid schools and various others where he has treated the integrated sector with at least equality. I am sure that it had nothing to do with the pending Treacy judgement — not at all. Perish the thought.

Mr O’Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: I think that he wants to first.

Mr Storey: Here is the difficulty: the Member said that the integrated sector has been working with one arm behind its back. How can that be the case when, in my constituency, local pupils cannot get into Slemish College, which is oversubscribed? It is an outstanding school that has done an exceptionally good job. However, because of the discriminatory nature of the transport preference that is given to integrated schools, somebody from Larne can get into a school in Ballymena more easily than a child who lives in the local area. I do not see that as being very fair.

Mr Lunn: That is partly because Larne schools are oversubscribed. I think that you will find that Judge Treacy made an important judgement — I think that it was around the Irish-medium sector, rather than the integrated sector — on transport to school. He said that it was reasonable that children should be brought from a greater distance to an Irish-medium school because of the particular needs of that sector.

I will give way to the Minister.

5.30 pm

Mr O’Dowd: I thank the Member for giving way. I just want to clarify my recent position on the integrated sector. I do not believe that the court case was necessary. However, in preparation for the case, I accepted a number of arguments that had been prepared by the integrated sector, and we learnt from those arguments. The judge gave clarity on article 64, which I welcomed, but, in fairness to my two ministerial predecessors, I have to say that we have a consistent approach to the integrated sector and will live up to our statutory duties on it.

Mr Lunn: We will hardly agree about whether the court case was necessary, Minister. I wonder whether you think, in retrospect, that the Department’s offer to “retake” the decision on Drumragh was wise. It looked to all and sundry as though the Department was saying, “If you withdraw this judicial review application, we will have another look at that decision”.

I note that the judge said that your decision was not fettered. Then, you come out and say that Lisanelly is the only show in town and that there will be no more capital development anywhere else in Omagh until it is settled. I do not want to prejudge your decision — actually, I do — and I am unsure what “to retake” a decision means, but Drumragh’s case is unanswerable. It needs the extra accommodation to function properly. The college will not

be allowed to move to Lisanelly, so the situation is one in which the ultimate in sharing is not being allowed to enter a shared campus, but that is by the way. The school will stay where it is, but it really needs the extra accommodation. I hope that you will work on that in the days to come.

I do not have time to cover everybody’s comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will probably be glad to know. I picked up on Chris Hazzard saying that he could not understand the Ulster Unionist attitude. I mean no disrespect to Mr Kinahan, but I struggle with somebody saying that they want to support integrated education with every fibre of their being or every bone in their body — I forget which term he used — and then saying that they cannot support the motion because it is divisive.

Mr Kinahan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: You have had one go at explaining it to Mr Hazzard, so I will not give you another. I really struggle with that. I would have thought that the Ulster Unionist Party, in its present form and even while trying to outdo the DUP in all things, would probably be generally supportive of what we are trying to achieve. I see you nodding, and that is good enough for me. I hope that that means that you will vote in the right direction. I fancy that we are coming to a vote.

I have to finish. I am glad that we had the debate, and I think that it has been useful. I heard some views that surprised me slightly and others that, frankly, did not. If we have to vote on it, so be it. Judge Treacy has, as I said, given the Department a shove in the right direction. I did not say that it was a landmark moment, but it is a major push, and I am glad that the Minister seems to have accepted that. I offer the motion to the House.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 29; Noes 40.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr O’Dowd, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Dickson and Mr McCarthy.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Newton and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Bangor Health and Well-being Centre

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes, and all other Members will have approximately six minutes.

Mr Dunne: I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to speak on the need for the provision of a new health and well-being centre in Bangor. I am glad that the Health Minister has seen fit to come along this afternoon to listen to the debate. I would like to put on record our thanks for his interest in this very important subject and our thanks for his visit to the Bangor health centre last month, when he took time to visit the staff and see, at first hand, the real needs in that health centre.

5.45 pm

There is a real need, as I have said, for a purpose-built health and well-being facility in Bangor. Bangor is a huge, growing town with an ever-rising population of over 60,000. The current Bangor health centre serves over 25,000 patients, well over one third of the population of Bangor. It operates in a building that was originally built in 1975 to accommodate five GPs. Today, the same building accommodates 18 GPs. Each practice in the building employs its own practice manager, reception staff and admin staff. In addition to that, the GP practices in the health centre house many additional services, including health visiting services, dental services, paediatrics, community addictions, community treatment facilities, leg ulcer facilities and a community baby clinic. As you can appreciate, there is a severe lack of accommodation for all those services.

There are real overcrowding issues, and the quality of accommodation is very limited. Staff admit that the facilities can have an impact on the quality of care that they can provide. There are issues around the size of consulting rooms, reception areas and waiting rooms. Car parking is also a major issue, given the location of the health centre, and there is limited wheelchair access to a limited number of the rooms.

Transforming Your Care, which we are all very much engaged in and committed to, allows us an opportunity to really plan for the future and ensure that the healthcare system and its buildings are fit for the 21st century. Under Transforming Your Care, GPs are increasingly expected to be on the front line of our health service. With that in mind, it is vital that the right infrastructure is put in place for them to perform that role.

We continue to hear regularly from our constituents about the challenges that they face in making appointments with their GP. By bringing forward a multipurpose, all-in-one health centre and well-being building in Bangor, we would have an opportunity to create a modern primary and community care infrastructure that would enable greater integration and a shift of services from secondary to primary care, right at the heart of the community, which

would promote patient-centred care. A central hub facility would act as a real centre for promoting health and well-being and bring real benefits to patients and staff alike. Any new facility would need to take in a range of factors, and we would need to look at a range of locations to ensure that the new centre had adequate car parking and easy-access facilities to meet the demands in the area.

I welcome the ongoing investment in the health centre which, over the last number of years, has paid for essential maintenance and minor works programmes. However, I am sure that everyone recognises that a long-term solution is required, rather than going through a patch-up job.

I thank the Minister for his ongoing work to date in improving the health service for everyone across Northern Ireland, and I have no doubt that he will continue to ensure that the patient comes first. I look forward to hearing from him directly later on, and I trust there will be a real commitment towards investment in a new well-being centre in North Down.

Mr Cree: I am pleased to support the concept that has been put before us this evening, and I welcome the Minister's presence.

I have no expertise in health matters, but I have learned a lot, like all of us do, over the years. One of the things I have learned is that good healthcare is everyone's right and should be free at the point of use, but there are many difficulties. Resources, both revenue and capital, are in short supply. We need more doctors and medical support staff. Many GP practices are old, and the buildings are not fit for purpose. In its report published last year on access to public services, the Patient and Client Council provided several recommendations to assist and improve GP services. Again, that presupposes that the facilities themselves are up to task. Most of us recognise that more capital is required to upgrade the services that are there. However, is it more beneficial to attempt to upgrade poor infrastructure or to invest in modern health and care premises that will be fit for purpose for many years to come?

We need more GPs and medical support staff and a 21st-century approach to the problem. State-of-the-art health and care hubs make sense as anchors for large areas of population such as Bangor. Of course, it is vital to integrate the other practices, so that it all works in harmony. That would most certainly need investment in all GP surgeries and a new approach for improving customer care.

There are delays in getting prompt appointments and treatment, which runs the risk of complications and could put increased financial pressure on the health and social care system because of late diagnoses. We all want things to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The Minister has a vision for the new centres. I believe that it is the right one and deserves to be supported. The resources will have to be found — I know it is easy to say that — and I urge him to do all he can to expedite the new health and care centre in Bangor.

Dr Farry: I congratulate my colleague Gordon Dunne on securing the debate. I want to follow his comments and those of Leslie Cree in supporting further intervention, through primary care in particular, at Bangor health centre. I should declare an interest, to an extent, in that I am a patient of that centre, albeit on an infrequent basis for now and, touch wood, that will remain the case.

My colleagues have set out very well the context of the local demographics, the size of Bangor and the catchment area that the current centre serves. Further to that, it is worth stressing that, perhaps more than any other constituency in Northern Ireland, North Down has an older population. Thankfully, people live much longer, but they have a set of diverse needs that need to be addressed. Obviously, we will look to our GPs to play a central role in that regard. The issue of population becomes even more acute when viewed through that lens.

We also have to take into account the evolving nature of health policy and the broad thrust of Transforming Your Care. It rightly identifies GPs as playing a central role, through the integrated care partnerships, in delivering a wide range of services and, in some ways, as the linchpin of a much wider range of services that have a much greater footprint in the community than has been the case to date. However, that future role needs to be matched by further investment at capital level through modern facilities. While making the case today for further capital money, I think it would be churlish not to accept that there has been some capital investment in that location in the recent past. That is very welcome.

We are also looking for increased revenue. The Minister is well aware of the campaign that is being run by the Royal College of General Practitioners, which looks to increase the share of our overall health budget that goes in through GP services to reflect the increased responsibility that may well be coming in the direction of GPs. On the one hand, GPs have major reservations about the implementation of Transforming Your Care, but, equally, they would be the first to recognise that, in many ways, they are the key to unlocking the full potential of that major strategic reform of the health service. So, it is important that we follow that with investment.

It is also worth stressing the important integrated aspect of future services and that more and more types of activity can be delivered through GP practices. It is important that whatever capital investment we make is sufficiently flexible to maximise the range of services that can be provided on particular sites.

Location will also be an important issue, particularly in Bangor where land can be scarce. There are difficulties, especially in the town centre, with new investments and minimising disruption. People in Abbey Street are already aware of the implications of certain water service-driven investment, and great care needs to be taken to ensure that we have a good site for the future.

This is something that should be in line with the future direction of investment wanted by the Minister and the Department, and it is important that we put forward the best case possible for Bangor and the wider North Down area.

Mr Easton: I declare an interest as the Assembly Private Secretary to the Health Minister.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in the Adjournment debate. One of the most effective ways in which to meet health and care needs is through multidisciplinary teams located in the same place where possible, such as in the centre of Bangor. The Department's primary care infrastructure development (PCID) programme is designed to put in place a care infrastructure that is fit for purpose and provides integrated, modern services. The programme's key aim is to support an increasing

number of people to live independently, preferably in their own home. To facilitate that, the HSC needs to develop effective alternatives to hospital care, designed to meet people's needs for high-quality, accessible services that will reduce inappropriate hospital admissions and length of stay. Health and care centres will be located in larger towns and cities and will be of different sizes and configurations, taking into account how local needs can be best met.

Developing Better Services (DBS) signalled the need for enhanced primary and community care services, which was reinforced in the regional strategy, A Healthier Future, and the primary care strategy framework, Caring for People Beyond Tomorrow. At that time, the Department started to invest in the first health and care centre, with Holywood Arches opening in 2005. The proposed service model for the PCID programme is based on a hub and spoke approach, with hubs providing core services for its range of spokes. Each spoke would have a defined level of services, depending on economies of scale, and draw on the services of the hub as required.

The hubs will essentially encompass the services that do not require a hospital but are too complex or specialised to be provided in a local GP surgery. The main hub will include a capacity to deliver GP and trust-led primary care services and the services that will shift left from secondary care under Transforming Your Care. The spokes will be local GP surgeries and healthcare centres that will include practitioners such as GPs, practice nurses and trust services where there is localised demand. Such centres are core to enabling the development and implementation of the new model of service necessary to deliver on the many opportunities for improvement that have been identified in Transforming Your Care.

I first called for a health and care centre for Bangor well over a year ago. I have been privileged to visit Bangor health centre twice, more recently with my colleague and the Health Minister. There appears to be an overwhelming demand for such a centre. I have also written to the Health Minister on the subject. It is important that we look at the seven other GP practices in separate buildings across Bangor. Will they want to be included in such a centre? I have also set up a meeting with the chief executive of the South Eastern Trust to discuss what proposals it has for a future health and care centre.

It is high time that Bangor was considered for a health and care centre, given the ever-increasing size of the population, particularly, as was mentioned, the elderly population. Bangor is the third largest town in Northern Ireland, so it is vital that we provide the best range of services for health that we can provide.

A health and care centre will be determined by local need and would include a range of services coming together under one roof, such as diagnostics; imaging; district and specialist nursing; health visiting; social care for the elderly; a children's centre; dentistry; allied health professionals, including physiotherapy, podiatry, occupational therapists (OTs) and speech and language therapists (SLTs); cancer health and well-being centres; one-stop assessment; and voluntary groups. I hope that that can become a possibility in the future, as I believe that a health and care centre would take some of the pressure from our accident and emergency departments and allow people to be treated more quickly and effectively in their own town and

community. Any such proposal must have the input of local GPs if it is to be right and have the support of the local community. I support the Adjournment topic.

6.00 pm

Mr Weir: I suppose that, sometimes, when you deal with local issues, it is probably fairly commonplace to declare an interest, like the last two Members who spoke did. Like others, I declare an interest: the GP practice that I go to is one of the five that are based in the health centre. Not only do I make use of it, but my family does. Like the Minister for Employment and Learning, fortunately, the number of times that I have had to use it personally has been relatively limited. I pay tribute to all those who are involved and provide an excellent service in the health centre.

I agree with everything that has been said so far about the demand that is out there. However, I will take one slight exception. Strictly speaking, since the promotion or elevation of Lisburn and Newry, I think that Bangor is the largest town in Northern Ireland. I suppose that that depends whether you count Lisburn as a city or a town. I am sure that the Minister has particular views on that subject.

The Minister is looking at me to give way on that.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): It would not be for me to argue with Her Majesty.

Mr Weir: No, indeed. It is good to see a city with so many fields in it. Obviously, we welcome the elevation of Lisburn — or Lisburn-Newry as it is properly known.

As has been indicated, the service has a register of around 25,000 people. Roughly speaking, that is around 40% of the population of Bangor. As my colleague Alex Easton indicated, five out of the 12 GP practices in Bangor, with 18 GPs, are based in the centre. We are dealing with a very large establishment.

It is fair and important to place on the record that, while there is a clear need for new facilities — indeed for the new hub — and the new centre to be put in place, the Minister and the Department have not simply stood still. Sometimes, in terms of capital development, there would be the temptation to say that clearly something new is needed, but we would be throwing good money after bad by doing the work. However, that is not the attitude that the Department has taken. Over the last two years, the Health Department has put in place about £1 million worth of improvements. That is to be welcomed, but, as other Members who spoke said, that is not the long-term solution.

As has been indicated, it is undoubtedly the case that we are looking for four hubs for the South Eastern Trust area through the primary care investment development as part of the forward-thinking proposals under Transforming Your Care (TYC). We have seen the development of the pathfinder projects in Newry and Lisburn. As I understand it, the second tranche is due to be in Bangor. Again, we would very much welcome that.

Staff put in tremendous effort, but there is no doubt that they work under very difficult circumstances. Anybody who visits or has an appointment there is hit by the cramped conditions and the heat, which is due to a major problem with ventilation and temperature control in the building.

With the best will in the world, there is a slightly worn feel to a lot of the carpets and furniture. There are quite cramped conditions even for some of the consultations that need to take place. Excellent work is being done there, but it is clear, and I think that it would be accepted by the Department, that the centre is not fit for purpose. In moving forward, commitment to the development of a new centre for Bangor, as one of the key hubs, is vital.

It has been mentioned that another issue that needs to be tackled in any new site is parking. Even at present, with the sheer volume of people who use it, it is difficult to get parked at times. If I am visiting by myself, I have the advantage of my office being around three or four minutes' walk away. However, for many people, including me, when, for instance, taking an elderly relative there, that is not really an option. The only option is to try to get parked in the facilities. There is considerable constraint on parking. That will need to be taken ahead.

There are two barriers to overcome with regard to what is needed. First, we have the pathfinder projects at present. There will be a timescale within which to ensure that those are, if you like, the right way to go forward. That means that those pathfinder projects will effectively need to be completed before we can move on to tranche 2.

I hope that that happens soon and that the Minister can give some level of assurance on it.

There is no doubt that we cannot avoid the other elephant in the room, which is the tremendous revenue and capital pressures that health is under. If we have a situation in which further money is drained away from health because of the fines, effectively, that we have to pay because of a failure to implement welfare reform, very important projects such as this will be delayed further. That is not acceptable.

Bangor — indeed North Down — deserves and needs, particularly given the nature of the population profile in Bangor, the commitment of a new centre, which will replace something that is massively out of date and will be deeply welcomed by all people in Bangor. So, I think that there is a very positive way forward if the Minister is given the freedom to deliver that. We need to see that for the people of Bangor.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call the Minister. Sorry, I call Mr Steven Agnew.

Mr Agnew: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As much as I enjoy coming to listen to these debates, I glad that I am able to contribute as well.

I welcome the Adjournment debate, and I congratulate Mr Dunne on securing it. I welcome the principle of having a Bangor health and well-being centre and the principle of greater integration of services on a single site. I also welcome the efforts being made to direct people to the correct services at the correct location, so that we do not see A&Es crammed with people who could be seen by their GP, and the overall ethos of bringing services closer to the community. I suppose that I am looking for a guarantee from the Minister that that is what we will see with the proposals for health and well-being centres in Bangor and elsewhere.

A number of Members declared an interest as attendees of the current Bangor health centre. I am at Bloomfield Surgery, and I do not want to see one centralised service

somehow impinge on the other services that we already have. As a Ballybeen boy who met a Ballyree girl, I am committed to Bloomfield Surgery for the long term, so I certainly want to give it a plug and to make sure that it is sustainable and continues.

The Minister will only be too well aware that health operates at different levels, and it is about getting an integrated approach across the different services. In that regard, I would like to mention Bangor Community Hospital. We have seen, for example, the operation of the minor injuries unit being reduced to five days a week and, in the past, issues with the ability to staff the diabetes clinic.

We have also seen services held in the community at the community hospital move to the Ulster Hospital either temporarily or permanently. I would like to hear the Minister's assurances on the integration of services and on services being provided in the community where possible. Yes, we absolutely need the health centre, but what I do not want to see is the community hospital being torn because of a new enhanced health and well-being centre and because services have to move most likely to the Ulster Hospital or other larger hospitals. So, I certainly support, in principle, the idea of a health and well-being centre. If that is additional to what we have, it certainly is to be welcomed.

Mr Farry highlighted the difficulty of finding a town-centre location, but finding such a location should be the Minister's first priority, because that will ensure accessibility and provide for the wider strategic interests of supporting and sustaining our town centre.

The principles of a health and well-being centre are ones that I am quite happy to support. I want more integrated services and more clarity for potential patients and clients on where they should receive which services. That can only benefit all of us. I welcome the Adjournment debate and look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for securing the debate and providing us with an opportunity to discuss the issues relating to Bangor health and well-being centre. As you can imagine, in my role as Health Minister, I have visited a number of health and care facilities across Northern Ireland. I had the benefit of visiting Bangor Health Centre only last month and had the opportunity to see at first hand the current facilities and meet the staff and GPs working in the centre. During the visit, I had an open and frank discussion with the GPs on the issues that they believe are key in delivering the primary medical services of the future, specifically the development of a new health centre facility for Bangor aimed at providing enhanced accessibility and responsiveness, and a wider range of services for the local community.

I have often referred to my vision of seeking to ensure that the services provided by health and social care providers are fit for purpose to meet the needs of patients, clients and local communities. That means more care provided outside hospitals and in the community closer to people's homes. I want health and social care to be designed around patients and clients, with patient need and choice at the centre of decision-making.

My aim is to continue to support the development of high-quality, integrated and responsive primary and community care services that will benefit all in Northern Ireland,

including those living in Bangor. The current facilities at Bangor accommodate 18 GPs across five practices. All practice staff, along with a range of trust staff, are involved in the delivery of primary and community services. It is recognised that the facility is no longer suitable to meet the demands being placed on it and that its position is similar to that of a number of other health facilities across Northern Ireland.

I was going to announce that we will develop a new centre — until Peter Weir spoke. Unfortunately, it is now at the end of the list. In case anybody reading Hansard takes that seriously, it was said in jest.

Between 2012 and March 2014, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust invested approximately £1 million in the current facilities in Bangor Health Centre. The investment covered a range of work including an ambulance pick-up zone; roof and security works; and the refurbishment of speech and language offices, health visitors' rooms and the GP staff area.

Recognising the need to modernise the existing estate, and taking account of the necessity to reform service delivery under Transforming Your Care, I directed in early 2012 that an infrastructure investment programme be developed to focus on the accelerated delivery of a range of primary care centres. Given the constraints on the availability of capital funding, I instructed that an alternative to public capital funding should be considered. As a result, two pathfinder projects were selected for tranche 1 of the programme. The cities of Newry and Lisburn, and a third-party development procurement route, were chosen. The purpose of the two pathfinder projects is to test the viability of utilising a third-party procurement route.

Work on three other health and care centre projects, in Ballymena, Banbridge and Omagh, is under way and will continue through to 2016. They are being funded through the traditional capital funding route. It is estimated that the total capital cost of the primary care investment programme will range from £300 million to £500 million

As Members are well aware, my Department faces significant financial pressures in the continued delivery of health and social care services, restricting the level of capital projects that I can undertake. Therefore, the Health and Social Care Board has been working closely with the trusts and local commissioning groups on developing a primary care investment development programme in which developments are prioritised on the basis of need.

The South Eastern Trust's next priority, following the Lisburn pathfinder project, is to replace Bangor Health Centre. Bangor has been identified as the top priority in tranche 2 of the primary care investment development programme. It is envisaged that it will be one of four hubs across the trust locality, the others being Ards, Downpatrick and Lisburn. Unfortunately, until the budgetary position for 2015-16 and beyond becomes clearer, I am not in a position to advise when Bangor will receive the necessary funding or when the centre will be open to patients. The timescale for further projects cannot be determined.

Whilst the development of new premises is always positive, it must be emphasised that it is the people who work in health and social care services — the doctors, nurses, therapists, administrators, ancillary staff and managers —

who are the true determinant of high quality services. It is they who deliver the high quality for patients and clients.

A key issue raised by the GPs in Bangor when I met them last month centred on the workforce planning for GPs. My Department has established a regional workforce planning group. The role of that group is to take forward the TYC recommendations relating to workforce issues. A medical workforce planning subgroup has also been established to develop a suite of medical workforce plans for primary and secondary care.

My Department has also appointed an external consultant to review the medical workforce, including undergraduate intake levels and GPs. That appointment will provide contextual information and an overarching picture of how the medical workforce is evolving. It will provide information on what the big issues are for the profession and the general direction of travel. The output will be high level and will identify emerging patterns and how the service may need to look in the future. It is anticipated that an initial report will be available later this year.

I think that it was Mr Cree who raised the issue of funding. Additional funding has already been made to the general medical services contract in 2013-14 and 2014-15. That is something that we have been seeking to respond to, recognising the issues.

I am also strongly committed to the principle that health and social care services should be driven by, and responsive to, the needs of patients, clients and their carers. My vision for the future of Health and Social Care is one in which we will drive up the quality of services for patients, improve outcomes and enhance the patient experience. I want to ensure that service users are at the heart of everything that we do. Patients are entitled to receive the right care in the right place at the right time. They are at the centre of our policy developments and planning assumptions. The design and delivery of services that meet their needs and expectations is what really matters to patients.

One of my key objectives, which I have frequently highlighted, is to develop an enhanced role for primary care, working hand in hand with healthcare providers and patients in designing and delivering consistently high quality, safe and needs-based care in community settings. It is therefore important that our primary care facilities are to the standard required for the delivery of 21st century health and social care, and that includes facilities in Bangor.

Adjourned at 6.17 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 23 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr D McIlveen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to raise an issue that arose at Question Time with the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure last Tuesday. I asked a question that is of considerable import to all communities, but particularly the Protestant unionist community. The question was asked in a respectful way, whilst I fully accept that the content might have been uncomfortable for the Minister. I was given an answer that ended with this tirade:

"You are belligerent and begrudging. You will not acknowledge and recognise equality across the board." — [Official Report, This Bound Volume, p193, col 2].

Mr Speaker, I would appreciate your ruling as to whether that language is parliamentary. It is also entirely untrue. Anybody who knows me knows that I am none of the three things that I was accused of being. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, you would be so good as to rule on that and suggest appropriate actions.

Mr Speaker: As the Member will know, it is a longstanding ruling that it is not up to the Speaker or Deputy Speakers to make a judgement about how a Minister might answer a question. That has been a longstanding convention in the Chamber, because it would be difficult for the Chair to sit in judgement on how Ministers answer questions.

I know that, from time to time, Members are not happy with the way that Ministers answer questions. I know that even from looking at Members, and their body language, in the Chamber. In saying that, I also know that the original question was about tourism, and it ended up as a political question. I suppose that the Minister felt that she needed to give a political answer to a political question. Sometimes Ministers are put in a very awkward position because they are asked political questions that are not part of their official ministerial responsibilities and are left with no choice but to answer those in a very political way. However, I agree with what the Member has said. I know that, on many occasions, Members, especially Back-Benchers, are not happy with how Ministers answer questions. That is for all Members of the Chamber, but let us leave it there and move on.

Mr McNarry: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the summary that you have given in response to Member McIlveen. I will introduce what I need to say, but, on the same issue, as a Member, I was astounded and shocked to hear the manner in which the Minister addressed the Member. I think that many Members will have shared that view.

The point that I wish to raise — and I understand the convention and the manner in which you have addressed the question, but is there a time when the Chair or the person in the Chair would have the capability of addressing the issue when it arises? Should the Minister perhaps have been reminded of her status, her conscience and her role as part of this Assembly, albeit not as part of a role in which you would have to have any demonstrable access to her? Is there a role that you might consider with your Deputy Speakers so that issues such as this could be dealt with at the time so that the matter is dealt with there and then, and perhaps the Minister would understand that such language was quite intolerable and was certainly shocking for me to hear?

Mr Speaker: The Member will know that, from time to time, I have had to check not only Ministers but Members. Encouraging good temper and moderation of language is very important, not only for Ministers but for Members, so I take the Member's point. On occasions, I have done it, because I believe that, although a Minister or Member can make a point, it does not have to be offensive. I have to say to the Member that I try to avoid interrupting Ministers if possible, and I would only intervene in extreme circumstances. I say that to the whole House.

Ministerial Statement

Zero-hours Contracts

Mr Speaker: The Minister of Enterprise — the Minister of Employment and Learning wishes to make a statement to the House this afternoon. Minister, I apologise.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Not at all. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement to the Assembly on my Department's planned consultation on zero-hours contracts, which will be launched today in conjunction with this statement.

The use of zero-hours contracts has generated significant public, political and media interest in recent months, both in Great Britain and here in Northern Ireland. Indeed, a number of MLAs have raised the matter in this House and elsewhere. As Members will know, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK to which employment law is devolved. Given the general concerns that have been raised, and my own commitment to ensuring the operation of a fair and equitable employment relations environment in Northern Ireland, I have decided to review the use of these types of contracts, initially through a public consultation. The purpose of today's statement is to give the House an understanding of the current extent of the use of zero-hours contracts and their legal status, and how we intend to examine that further; and to outline the key issues that will be explored through the public consultation.

Zero-hours contracts have been used responsibly, in many cases, for years. They can support business flexibility, making it easier to hire new staff and provide pathways to employment for young people and other jobseekers. These contracts and other flexible arrangements can also give individuals more choice in managing work and other non-work commitments. However, for others, zero-hours contracts, in particular when restrictions are applied, are associated with problems such as the ability to negotiate credit and eligibility for benefits payments, because of the uncertainty about working patterns and income. Also, some people on these contracts feel that they are penalised by their employer if they are not available for work when required. Furthermore, zero-hours contracts can be disruptive to family life and create challenges in childcare planning.

Accordingly, I recognise that there have been significant concerns expressed with regard to their potential misuse, and I therefore want to ensure that zero-hours contracts, in their many guises, do not compromise the integrity of the employment relationship. This consultation will help to determine the extent of their use in Northern Ireland and to provide a clearer picture of their benefit to our economy. It will also seek views on key elements such as exclusivity clauses and whether there is sufficient transparency for employees around the detailed conditions that apply to these contracts.

As with any contractual arrangement, people on zero-hours contracts must understand the basis of their relationship with an employer. It is important to bear in mind that the labour market continues to evolve. As a consequence, zero-hours contracts are an increasingly common aspect of the modern approach to work. Given that reality, if people are to have confidence in the use of zero-hours contracts, then we need to consider how

best to regulate them in ways that promote the interests of employers and employees.

During the summer of 2013, the UK Government conducted an informal information-gathering exercise on the use of zero-hours contracts. That was followed in December 2013 with a full public consultation, which closed in March this year. The response to the consultation is not yet in the public domain but we know that the intention is to use the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill to address exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts.

I want to assure the House that our own Northern Ireland review will be conducted in line with better regulation principles in seeking to establish arrangements that provide businesses with the necessary flexibility to compete effectively whilst ensuring that the rights of individual employees are protected.

There is no legal definition of a zero-hours contract in Northern Ireland or Great Britain employment law. It is a legitimate form of employment contract drawn up between the employer and individual, providing both parties freely agree to it. In general terms, a zero-hours contract is an employment contract in which the employer does not guarantee the individual any work and the individual is not obliged to accept any work offered. Such contracts may also be described as non-guaranteed-hours contracts.

In its November 2013 guide, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development described a zero-hours contract as:

"an agreement between two parties that one may be asked to perform work for another but there is no minimum set contracted hours. The contract will provide what pay the individual will get if he or she does work and will deal with circumstances in which work may be offered and possibly turned down".

There are concerns that individuals who work under zero-hours contracts have no protection under domestic employment law or that they cannot be an employee. This is not a correct assumption. As in any employment relationship, the employment rights that an individual is entitled to will depend on their employment status. Most people on those types of contracts will have certain core employment rights, for example: national minimum wage; protection from unlawful deduction of wages; paid annual leave; entitlement to rest breaks, and protection from discrimination.

There has been a lot of anecdotal commentary about the use of zero-hours contracts, but only limited analysis about the extent of their use in the labour market. The existing research and evidence base on the use of zero-hours contracts clearly demonstrates that there is no precise understanding about the numbers of workers on zero-hours contracts across the United Kingdom.

The Office for National Statistics UK-wide labour force survey for the period October to December 2013 found that 583,000 people categorised themselves as being on a zero-hours contract. That was an increase on the 250,000 reported for the same period in 2012. Most recently, the Office for National Statistics published the results of its survey of 5,000 employers, which indicated that employers in Great Britain are using around 1.4 million employee contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of

hours. We can make some extrapolations from these figures to give a general estimate of the prevalence of zero-hours contracts in Northern Ireland.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development also completed earlier research, which suggested that there could be around one million employee contracts of this nature. The preliminary information-gathering exercise conducted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills indicated that zero-hours contracts can be useful and valuable for employers and individuals in specific circumstances, providing flexibility for both parties. Some regarded zero-hours contracts as a vital element of a modern, flexible and responsive labour market and an important reason why unemployment has been lower and the levels of employment higher than might have been expected during the recent economic downturn.

However, the analysis also identified certain concerns around the use of exclusivity clauses as well as a lack of awareness amongst workers about the consequences of being on such contracts. An analysis of that research and a further literature review conducted by my officials leads to a number of observations.

There is a need for further research to gain a better understanding of the exact number of zero-hours contracts and where they are most prevalent.

Zero-hours contracts are more prevalent in the private sector than in the public sector. Larger companies are more likely to use zero-hours contracts, while workplaces in the hotel and restaurant sector and the health and care sector are more likely to employ staff on zero-hours contracts. Those employed on zero-hours contracts tend to work fewer hours — on average, 21 hours a week — than those who are not, who work 31 hours a week. Those who are employed on zero-hours contracts tend to receive lower gross weekly pay on average, of £236 a week, than those who are not, who receive £482 a week.

12.15 pm

I am conscious that most of the current research does not provide a separate analysis for Northern Ireland and, in particular, of how zero-hours contracts may impact on our local economy. I have therefore decided to initiate Northern Ireland-specific research on the use of zero-hours contracts. That further qualitative and quantitative research will be taken forward in parallel with the public consultation.

A survey of 500 Northern Ireland employers is under way using a suite of questions that are based on the employer survey by the Office for National Statistics that I referenced earlier. That will give a better sense of the number of zero-hours contracts in Northern Ireland, and figures should be available later in the summer. My Department is also arranging a number of engagements with expert research organisations that have published papers on the use of zero-hours contracts. As part of the public consultation process, a series of stakeholder events will be held to gather more intelligence on the current use of zero-hours contracts and to identify those elements that may require remedial action for the mutual benefit of employers and employees.

The public consultation will seek views on the following options: banning exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts or prohibiting the exclusivity clauses in zero-

hours contracts that guarantee less than a given weekly level of gross pay or hours; introducing a right to request guaranteed hours or fixed-term working on the part of a worker on a zero-hours contract following a period of continuous employment; introducing minimum payment in lieu of work, where no work is provided but where there existed an expectation that there would be work; the provision of annualised hours instead of zero-hours contracts in some circumstances; encouraging the production of an employer-led code of practice on the fair use of exclusivity clauses; and continuing to rely on existing common law redress that enables individuals to challenge exclusivity clauses.

To improve the transparency of zero-hours contracts, I am also seeking views on improving the content and accessibility of information, advice and guidance; encouraging a broader, employer-led code of practice that covers the fair use of zero-hours contracts generally; and the value of producing model clauses for zero-hours contracts.

The consultation also includes a number of questions that are aimed specifically at employers and employees. I thought it important not just to target the key stakeholder organisations but to offer individual employees and employers the opportunity to offer their personal perspective on how zero-hours contracts are being used and whether any change is required.

I want to thank the Employment and Learning Committee for its thoughtful consideration of the issues relating to zero-hours contracts to date. My officials recently briefed the Committee on the areas to be covered by the public consultation. The Committee raised important points about the equality and regulatory impact of the proposals, and those have been reflected in the consultation document.

The findings from the research and the public consultation will provide a more informed basis on which to determine whether there is a need to bring legislative proposals to the Assembly or whether the development of user-friendly guidance for employees and employers is a more proportionate response. Following the close of the consultation, I will publish a summary of the responses and seek Executive and Assembly approval of any changes that require legislation.

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I thank the Minister for his statement and for the inclusion of the recommendations and some comments made by the Committee in the consultation. I also thank his officials for their engagement with the Committee.

Minister, I want to ask you about a couple of points in your statement. You said that zero-hours contracts are used more in the private sector than in the public sector. It has been documented in Committee that 19,600 zero-hours contracts are used in the Northern Ireland health service. Has the Minister had any negotiations or contact with his ministerial colleagues on that issue?

He also referred to the:

“provision of annualised hours instead of zero-hours contracts in some circumstances”.

He is doing a piece of work that will look at the problems associated with zero-hours contracts, but will he also

look at the associated problems that come into play with annualised-hours contracts?

The Minister mentioned exclusivity clauses a number of times. Does he feel that exclusivity clauses are compatible with zero-hours contracts?

Dr Farry: I thank the Chair of the Committee for his questions and for his comments on the nature of the engagement with my officials. I reassure him that we very much want to continue that work with the Committee over the coming months. I stress that, as this may well involve legislation, the views, first, of the Executive and, in due course, of the Assembly will be vital in ensuring that we find the right level and the right balance of any regulation, if, indeed, regulation is appropriate for the particular circumstances in Northern Ireland.

On the health service, we know that zero-hours contracts will be used in different aspects of the public sector in Northern Ireland. I am somewhat loath to go into any particular sectors at this stage and make comments because any comments would be largely speculative, but I will be seeking to have engagement with ministerial colleagues around all this. We are very mindful of unintended consequences. There clearly is concern around the use of these contracts, but, equally, they may well provide benefits to a number of different sectors, whether that is in the public or private sector. In seeking to provide a better footing in regulation, we need to be careful that we avoid unintended consequences that disrupt how particular sectors operate, provided that those behaviours are indeed reasonable. So, there will be debates that we will have to have in that regard.

The point about unintended consequences also applies to any move in the direction of annualised hours. There may well be some superficial attractions in that regard; equally, there may well be consequences that we need to factor in. Again, the consultation is so important for us to try to bottom out those issues. In particular, I recognise that the Committee was very keen to have that point included in the consultation.

I regard exclusivity clauses as perhaps being the crux of the issue. Our consultation is somewhat broader than that in Great Britain, but that was the central issue of the discussions in Great Britain, where they are planning to legislate at this stage. It is one that we will need to give proper consideration to. There may well be, in some limited circumstances, due cause as to why an exclusivity clause is merited, but, at face value, that seems to be the area where most concern may well be justified in terms of the comment to date.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his statement. Minister, if you choose to go down the road of introducing a code of practice for employers rather than a statutory duty, what teeth would this have and how would it be policed? Also, in your statement, you talked about initiating Northern Ireland-specific research. Will that be done in-house?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments, and I will respond to the two issues that he raised. A code of practice is one option of many that potentially are available to us. Of course, we have the option of putting that on a statutory basis or seeing it evolve on a voluntary basis. Obviously, there is a trade-off to be had in terms of the level of teeth for the enforcement of any code, and that is subject to the basis on which any code is introduced and

copper-fastened into our employment relations system. That will be a discussion where the Committee and the Assembly will very much have a role to play in shaping the future direction of travel.

In terms of the research, we have some figures emerging from Great Britain, and Members will note from the comments that I made that the estimates on the numbers of contracts vary significantly. We have two different estimates: one of 1.4 million and another of almost 600,000. So, there is a huge variance between those two figures. That reflects probably two things. One is a lack of understanding of exactly what a zero-hours contract is. There is also the fact that, because there has been so much more publicity around the issue in recent months, people are now more aware of the situation and are speaking up and saying that they believe that they are on such a contract. We can extrapolate those figures to Northern Ireland, and that tends to give us a figure of between about 20,000 and 30,000 zero-hours contracts locally.

In parallel with this consultation and as well seeking views from individual employers and employees, we are conducting our own survey to try to get an estimate for Northern Ireland, subject to the health warnings that I mentioned. I think that there is sufficient public concern to justify us moving ahead with scoping out the policy, but it is important that, before we take any decisions, we have a clear understanding of their prevalence in Northern Ireland. We will have that by the end of the summer.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome the statement. Minister, will you accept that zero-hours contracts create a hierarchy of workers within which you have secure and insecure contracts and workers with rights and entitlements and other workers with none?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question and for welcoming the statement. It is important to recognise that there is a spectrum of opinion on zero-hours contracts. There is evidence that some people welcome zero-hours contracts, given the flexibility that it provides to them. Equally, others expressed concern around their application and the implications that may arise. Indeed, I have received a lot of correspondence over the past number of months from people in Northern Ireland who have expressed concern around that situation and have given me testimonials of their experiences so far.

It is also worth stressing that people on zero-hours contracts benefit from a large number of employment rights already, so, in that sense, there is not a hierarchy of the protections available, but there is a difference in the nature of the contractual relationship with the employer. As I have highlighted, a number of consequences flow from that, including the ability to plan for the week, the uncertainty over earnings and the implications that that has for access to credit, and the interface with the benefits system. A whole host of consequences flow, particularly for those in low-earning situations around zero-hours contracts. Again, it is worth stressing that, while we do overly associate zero-hours contracts with people who tend to be on the lower income end of the spectrum, they are used in a whole range of different walks of life, and people on quite high earnings can be in that situation for some particular reason. Obviously, we want to focus our attention to ensure that we do all that we can, where appropriate, to protect those workers who find themselves in a vulnerable situation.

Mr P Ramsey: I welcome very strongly the statement to the House and the Department's intention going forward. In his response to Bronwyn, the Minister referred to those on the very low end accessing benefits. Will the Minister assure the House that, if it is shown to be the case during the consultation — I suspect that it will be — that there is huge difficulty with people at the very low end of zero-hours contracts, he will have discussions with the Minister for Social Development to bring through a variety of issues that will resolve those complications for those on low benefits?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments and his welcome for this. I am happy to speak with the Minister for Social Development. Obviously, the evolving situation with universal credit will have an impact. It is perhaps one of the more desirable aspects, or the only desirable aspect, of welfare reform. As we speak, there is uncertainty on the fate of that, given developments in Great Britain and the knock-on consequences for us, notwithstanding our own local difficulties around agreeing welfare reform.

The Member is right to highlight the fact that, in many respects, the core issue where people are feeling vulnerable on zero-hours contracts is around uncertainty of income and the difficulty of how that interacts with the benefits system. To turn that on its head: the Member knows that we want to encourage people to move on from being unemployed or economically inactive. Although, in some ways, a zero-hours contract can offer people a pathway into employment and, hopefully, a progression route into more secure and sustained employment, equally, for some, what is on offer may not be sufficient to encourage them to make the leap from benefits. This may be an opportunity to take people off benefits, but equally it may act as a benefits trap. So, we need to be mindful of both those dynamics, and those need to be bottomed out as part of the consultation.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for bringing the statement to the House. I welcome the Northern Ireland-specific consultation and research that will be carried out. I hope that that shows devolution in action. Does the Minister agree that public confidence in the use of zero-hours contracts will require regulation that balances flexibility with workers' rights? Is there any timescale for potential legislation to achieve that?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. He is right to stress that this is all about finding a balance that is appropriate to the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. While the issue of banning can be considered as part of the consultation, in practical terms we are talking about regulation.

12.30 pm

It is important that we note that the world of work is evolving here in Northern Ireland, elsewhere in these islands and around the world, as is the nature of the employer/employee relationship. Different forms of employment contracts are emerging. It is important that we have confidence in those types of contracts if they are to become an established part of our employment landscape over years to come.

I agree that finding the appropriate balance is very much in the interests of the employer and employee because, if we have confidence in the robustness of the systems

that we have in place and are satisfied that vulnerable people are protected and that the risk of abuse or misuse is checked, we can move forward with that flexibility with great confidence. That is the objective that we have to hold out for.

On the timescale for legislation, the Member will be aware that Great Britain has, in principle, decided to legislate. Indeed, a Bill announced in the recent Queen's speech may well be through before Parliament rises for the general election, presumably next March or early April. However, that timing may be tight, and that Bill could fall. We in Northern Ireland have the opportunity to legislate, notwithstanding what happens in Great Britain. Early in September, I intend to bring a paper to the Executive on the wider review of employment law. We will look for an employment law Bill, and it is my intention that any particular aspects of this that require legislation will be added to that.

Mr Ross: Of course, the Minister's statement acknowledges the fact that we do not have a lot of information about the situation in Northern Ireland — whether there is huge usage of zero-hours contracts and whether there is, indeed, a problem. So it is, perhaps, premature to be talking about policy options until we have that picture. I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that, for small businesses, which make up the majority of companies in Northern Ireland, zero-hours contracts are hugely important, particularly for those in the catering industry who, perhaps, cannot judge how much their workload will be from week to week. Any move to ban the use of zero-hours contracts, particularly for those small companies, —

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to come to his question.

Mr Ross: — could put them out of business. I am sure that the Minister will want to make sure that we do not do that.

Dr Farry: I am grateful to the Member for his comments. My personal view, at this stage, is that we are unlikely to move to a situation in which we seek to ban this type of contract. That is for several reasons, the first of which is that we have to recognise that it provides flexibility for some employers and employees.

Secondly, if we go down the road of a ban, people will probably invent something different to get round our efforts to ban it. So there are two practical factors that we have to take into account. That said, that is my personal view at this stage. If the consultation and the Assembly as a whole take a contrary view on the matter, we can have that discussion, and a decision to the contrary can be made.

I also say to the Member that the limited evidence that we have, to date, suggests that larger companies probably use these contracts slightly more than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), although they feature in a range of businesses. The research to date shows that they tend to be more prevalent in certain sectors than in others.

The key point to stress is that they may well provide SMEs with a lot of business flexibility and may, indeed, be essential in that regard. The key reform that we may need to focus on is the issue of exclusivity. A business may, in reflecting the uncertain nature of business, have the ability to call on staff, but, in turn, those staff would not be penalised by being restricted, if that is the case at present, in seeking other employment to ensure that they have a balanced income going forward.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement. It contains quite a lot of good stuff and made good reading, but I have become fairly cynical about consultations and people abiding by the contents of their outcome. Can the Minister assure us that, if the vast majority of people consulted come back and ask for zero-hours contracts to be banned, he will move to ensure that that is legislated for?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. I do not share his cynicism about consultations. Certainly, I have found them hugely valuable. During my term of office, I can reflect on having made changes to initial policy assumptions on the basis of feedback that we received from formal public consultations and wider stakeholder engagement. I have no doubt that that will be the case with this as well.

I have given my personal view on an outright ban, and I am sceptical about it. However, given that any ban would be a matter of legislation in the House, I am very much a servant of the Assembly in that regard, and any Member could put forward that view. I suspect that we will receive a range of views in the consultation, and I have no doubt that a considerable number of people will suggest that we go for an outright ban. However, I seek to caution against that for the reasons that I gave to Mr Ross, namely that there is a danger that we could have unintended consequences. We could disrupt fairly benign practices among many responsible businesses that employ a zero-hours contract approach, which some employees argue that they benefit from. It is important that we take a balanced approach, but all options are very much on the table.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his statement. Minister, you mentioned that an employer-led code of conduct will be encouraged. Why will it be employer-led? The consultation should be about equality, so is that a good message for other stakeholders?

Dr Farry: It is important to give a good voice to employers in how we address the issue. That proposal has to be seen as part of a spectrum of interventions. We can go for light-touch intervention, whereby employers seek to regulate zero-hours contracts, through to the Assembly seeking to put legislation in place to regulate them or, as Mr McCann suggested, go for an outright ban. There is a spectrum of activities, and the approach you mentioned may be towards the more flexible end of the spectrum. It is for the public consultation and the Assembly to determine if and how we intervene in the matter.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his statement, which I welcome. His officials have been very helpful at our Committee.

Minister, your statement refers to Northern Ireland being the only part of the United Kingdom to which employment law is devolved. You also mentioned research. Will you outline some of the key findings of that research, not just those relating to the United Kingdom but to Europe. Will you detail the contribution from the employers' representatives and the trade unions that represent the workers?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. The Member is right to identify that Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK to which employment law is devolved. That may change, depending on whether there is a yes or a no vote in the referendum on Scottish independence in the autumn. That gives us an opportunity to shape things

so that they fit our local circumstances. It also challenges us to ensure that what we have in Northern Ireland reads across well compared with what happens elsewhere in these islands, particularly for employers who work across jurisdictions. It is an ongoing challenge for us to find the right balance between those two objectives.

The consultation document will outline the conclusions that are clear. They are based largely on research across the UK. We had the option of going into that to give a Northern Ireland perspective, but, given the sample sizes that were being talked about, we would not have got any reliable relevant data for Northern Ireland, so there was no point in us being part of that research.

We can, however, extrapolate from what was done in Great Britain and get some understanding about the situation in Northern Ireland. Until we do our own research, however, that will be largely speculative, and there may be factors locally that cause us to diverge from a straight extrapolation from the situation in Great Britain. That said, I have no doubt that zero-hours contracts are commonly used in Northern Ireland, and I received feedback from individuals who expressed concerns about the implications of them being used in their own circumstances.

Again, in the wider European context, there are references in the consultation document to our understanding of what applies elsewhere in the European Union. They tend to be used much more frequently in these islands than they are in other parts of the European Union.

Mr Allister: Given that it is unlikely to be in the interests of the Northern Ireland economy for us to have radically different employment laws, and given that in GB there has just been a consultation on zero-hours contracts, although the outcome is not yet published, why does the Minister think it necessary, in advance of that outcome, to proceed himself to a consultation? Would it not be better to wait and see what is suggested in the rest of the United Kingdom? That may well be the sensible path to tread, particularly if the essential mischief addressed is that of exclusive terms in those contracts. That apart, do zero-hours contracts not have a part to play in a flexible economy?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. The statement recognised a case for them being made by employers and some employees. That has to be factored in to taking a balanced approach to what is appropriate on the way forward.

People often accuse this Assembly and devolution of being something that simply replicates what happens in Great Britain, albeit with a delay. Also bearing in mind the considerable public concern that has been voiced in relation to these, we have a duty to act now rather than be seen to be sitting on our hands for a couple of years to see what happens in Great Britain before we act.

There are people in Northern Ireland suffering from the consequences of the misuse of a zero-hours contract. People have corresponded with me to express that in a testimonial of their own situation, so there is an imperative for action. That said, it is an option for my Department and the Assembly, for our own reasons, to take a decision to mirror what happens in Great Britain in terms of the legislation that is about to work its way through Westminster. It is very much our right to do so, but it has to be a decision we take locally that that is the best way forward, but it is certainly one of the options open to us.

Mr Agnew: The Minister referred to the employment rights of those on zero-hours contracts and stated that they have the same rights as other workers. How can someone on zero-hours contracts get the right to paid annual leave and, indeed, sick pay? How can we ensure that that is calculated fairly, given that there are no contracted hours on which to base it?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the question. The point we are making in relation to this is that employment rights go with an employee and different rights go with the worker. They are slightly different concepts. A person on a zero-hours contract is still an employee or worker, depending on the nature of the contractual relationship. Attendant rights go with that status.

That said, due to the situation that someone finds themselves in due to a zero-hours contract, there are then consequences of flow in terms of their ability to access the benefits that go from being an employee. Those are things I indicated in my comments today. Those are issues that we want to hear feedback on from employees as part of the consultation exercise so that we have a full and rounded picture on which to take any decisions.

Mr Wilson: The Minister acknowledged the importance of the flexibility that zero-hours contracts afford the economy and to many employees who may not wish to have fixed hours. Given the fact that all the issues that were raised in his paper are also issues that were raised in other parts of the United Kingdom by all parties, would he give an assurance that, before he comes to any final conclusion, he will take into consideration the views and decisions that will be made in other parts of the United Kingdom, so that we do not find ourselves in a situation where employment law is radically different in Northern Ireland from that elsewhere? Given that it will take about two years for legislation to come through here, there should be a body of evidence available to him.

Dr Farry: I am happy to give the Member reassurance on two points. This will be an evidence-driven process and that is what we are seeking to do, through the constitution and the Northern Ireland-specific research that we are undertaking.

12.45 pm

I can also give him an assurance that we will certainly take into account what is happening in other jurisdictions. Because the powers are devolved, we are not beholden to decisions that are taken elsewhere, but the only responsible thing for us to do is to pay attention to what is happening in other jurisdictions and fully factor that in to any decisions that we take in our situation. He is right to highlight that there is an issue about finding the balance and, indeed, that it may well be in the interests of some employers and employees.

I will also stress that, while our consultation does, to an extent, touch on the same issues that were raised in the consultation in Great Britain, our consultation goes somewhat further in exploring other types of remedies that we may wish to consider. So, we are adopting a somewhat more comprehensive approach than has been the case in Great Britain, and that may give us more flexibility in determining a way forward that suits our circumstances while taking into account the fact that businesses operate across jurisdictional boundaries.

Executive Committee Business

Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

The aim of the draft regulations is to increase public protection against the risk of sexual offending. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 sets out the legislative framework that requires sex offenders in the community to notify personal details to the police. That information is provided to the police to assist in the prevention and investigation of crime and for the protection of the public. Notification requirements are commonly known as “the sex offender register”. The draft regulations will introduce a requirement for convicted sex offenders to provide the police with additional personal information.

The 2003 Act imposes notification requirements on offenders convicted of certain sexual offences. Specifically, it requires those offenders to notify certain personal information to the police, such as their name, date of birth, national insurance number and home address. That information must be updated periodically and when any changes have been made to the information originally provided. Failure to comply with the notification requirements is a criminal offence punishable by a maximum penalty of five years’ imprisonment. The 2003 Act also provides the power to make regulations prescribing additional information to be notified by the offender. The draft regulations that I am proposing today are being made under that power.

The notification requirements of the 2003 Act also extend to the other two UK jurisdictions. Scotland made changes in 2007 and England and Wales made changes in 2012, and our regulations largely flow from those. As a consequence, the draft regulations before the House today will remove a number of differences between our law and arrangements in the rest of the United Kingdom, and I believe that that is important to enhance the overall effectiveness of the risk-management process.

The draft regulations will require any sex offender who has no fixed abode or regular address to make a notification to the police every week to confirm a place where he can be found. That will vastly improve the current requirement, where such an offender has to notify only on an annual basis or if any change has occurred. The regulations will require an offender to notify the police if he has resided or stayed for 12 hours or more at an address where there is a child under the age of 18. That information will help to ensure that there is a focus on child protection. Offenders will also have to give information to the police in relation to any bank accounts and credit and debit cards held by them, either alone or with another person, for private and business purposes. Passport details and other forms of identity document will also be required.

Finally, the regulations will amend the existing provision in the 2003 Act that requires notification of travel outside the United Kingdom of more than three days. Under the new requirements, offenders will instead have to notify all

travel outside the United Kingdom, regardless of length, except for cross-border movement, which will remain as it is with notification for periods of three days or more. That is necessary to allow for those who routinely cross the border — for example, to visit a relative — or those who commute to work there.

The draft regulations are proposed to the Assembly as a further step towards the Department's continuing commitment to increase public protection and to enhance confidence in the justice system's ability to deliver on that aim. The police and probation services support the measures to enable them to manage risk and to reduce offending. I am confident that their efforts to do that will be enhanced when, I trust, the provisions come into force tomorrow, along with measures passed by the House last year in the Criminal Justice Act 2013 that also reinforce notification requirements and improve risk management.

I wish to thank the members of the Justice Committee for their consideration of these proposals. It is with their support that I bring these draft regulations before the House. I also add my thanks to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for his input into the detail of the regulations. I commend the draft regulations to the House.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): Let me apologise to the House for being slightly late for the Minister's opening statement. I will speak briefly on behalf of the Committee for Justice on this particular issue. The Minister has outlined the proposed rule which will introduce new information requirements which offenders subject to notification requirements under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 must provide to police.

As the Members and the Speaker know, the Committee is well aware of the importance of the notification requirements in the management of the risk posed by sex offenders, having received a briefing on the public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland last year. In December 2012, the Committee agreed that it was content with the policy intent of the proposals to strengthen existing notification requirements. Following a delay while the Department waited on the outcome of a judicial review in England and Wales of the requirement to notify banking details to police — the outcome of which was to uphold the requirement — the Department provided the draft rule for consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 28 May this year.

The Committee welcomed the draft rule — noting that it will enhance the ability of the police to keep track of the whereabouts of sex offenders, prevent perceived exploitation of the system and ensure a greater level of consistency in approach across Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland — and agreed to recommend to the Assembly that the rule be approved. The Committee, therefore, is content to support the motion brought forward by the Minister.

I will speak briefly as a Member of the House. Obviously, we welcome any steps that are taken to strengthen the notification that sex offenders must provide to the police. The public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland have been praised by different inspectorates as being very robust, and it is critically important that the public has confidence that those arrangements are protecting our children and young people from sex offenders in Northern Ireland. In England, Members will be more commonly aware of Sarah's law, and there is always a debate about

the public's right to know where a sex offender lives within the community and, obviously, the inherent risks that that means for the sex offender by way of their own public protection. However, we believe that the rights of the community, parents and families to know that their children are being protected, and that they know where sex offenders are residing in Northern Ireland, are the paramount critical test that should be met.

Therefore, it is vital that these further enhanced notification requirements are put into proper effect and the public protection arrangements are always assessed as being the most robust possible, because failure to do that will tip the balance towards the offender, if it is not already there. The community should have the right to know where sex offenders are living.

Having said that, I commend these notification requirements, but I make that point to the Minister especially. We must ensure that the system is robust, and I ask him to give proper consideration to the community being empowered with the information, so that they know that their children are safe.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the new draft regulations announced by the Minister. The new draft additional regulations on offenders convicted of sexual offences are intended to assist the police in the management of the risk of harm to the public posed by those offenders. They are also to ensure that this purpose continues to be achieved as effectively as possible. Public protection must be at the heart of society, and these requirements will form an extra tool for the authorities and will enhance the management of offenders.

To conclude, these new notification requirements will add to the powers of the police to tackle serious sexual crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice. They will also prevent relevant offenders from seeking to exploit gaps in the system.

Mr A Maginness: I support the motion and the draft statutory rule on the notification requirements for sex offenders. I reiterate what the Chair said: it is important that the public, in particular children and vulnerable adults, have confidence that they are being protected by way of the public protection arrangements that exist in Northern Ireland. The statutory rule will enhance the public protection arrangements that we already have, in so far as new information will be required to be given by sex offenders to the police. It is important that, if we are to manage the risk posed by sex offenders, we strengthen these arrangements. As the Chair pointed out, the Committee was briefed last year on public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland. We were impressed by the extent of those arrangements. It is important that that is noted by everyone.

It has been noted that, under the new requirements, bank details will need to be given to the police. That, of course, was delayed by the fact that there was a judicial review in Britain in relation to the matter. That has now been cleared, and the court is supportive of details being given to the police.

It is important that there are regulations for cross-border travelling. The three-day notification is, I think, an important one, given the porous nature of the border between here and the Republic. The requirements are consistent with what is happening in the rest of the UK. It is important that there is consistency, so that people

cannot exploit any legal loopholes in public protection arrangements. I conclude by reiterating our party's support for this important enhancement of public protection measures through the notification requirements to the police by sex offenders.

Mr Ford: I thank Members, plural, for their contributions to the debate. Normally, on occasions such as this, I seem to thank only the Chair, but I welcome the support for the robust public protection arrangements that we have in Northern Ireland that has come from across the Chamber.

The legislative framework that we have forms the basis for the way in which the criminal justice agencies work together to deliver public protection and enhance confidence in the system. There is no doubt that, as was said most recently by Mr Maginness, the public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland work extremely well. For that, we owe a considerable debt of thanks to the police officers and probation officers who have primary responsibility for dealing with that. However, it is important that the Department keeps the arrangements in the legislative framework under review and reacts to appropriate developments to ensure that we enhance that protection where necessary.

We should not forget that the requirements are designed for a purpose: to help stop serious harm happening. That is the key issue in stopping offenders from inflicting misery onto other people. I believe that the regulations will strengthen our hand in the justice system in doing that, in managing risk and in enhancing the protection of people in Northern Ireland. I commend the regulations to the House and trust that Members will support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

1.00 pm

Committee Business

Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014: Prayer of Annulment

Mr Speaker: The Committee for Social Development has agreed that the motion to annul the statutory rule will not now be moved. However, the motion stands as an item of business in today's Order Paper and will need to be disposed of formally.

The following motion stood in the Order Paper:

That the Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (SR 2014/150) be annulled. — [Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development).]

Motion not moved.

Private Members' Business

Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam

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 in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr McElduff: I beg to move

That this Assembly acknowledges the scandal that occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' institution in Tuam, County Galway, where almost 800 children died whilst in the care of a religious order and were placed in a mass unmarked grave over a period of five decades; notes the intention of the Dublin Government to take steps to establish the best course of action to investigate the deaths of these children and the appalling manner of their interment; recognises that the abusive practices that occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' mother and baby care home were not unique and were replicated in similar institutions across the island of Ireland; and calls for all government Departments and their agencies, as well as religious orders, to proactively cooperate with any investigation that takes place to establish the truth behind this scandal.

Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. My reason for having such a strong interest in this matter is probably because I have been in regular contact with a number of women and girls, in my constituency of West Tyrone and in other constituencies in the North, who have had terrible experiences in mother-and-baby homes, including in Belfast and Newry. I dedicate my remarks today to the women with whom I am in contact regularly, providing a listening ear to them and trying to offer as much support as I can, as well as calling for appropriate action to be taken to support them in their quest for the truth.

One of the women with whom I am in regular contact was, at the age of 17, admitted to the Marian Vale home in Newry and subsequently gave birth to a son. It took a long time before she was reconnected to her son, because her baby boy was taken from her at birth and adopted without her consent. The lady in question is crying to the world, asking what is to be done about this. It is a very harrowing story: her son was taken away, and she was then reunited with him. Her harrowing story includes references to being made to scrub floors while heavily pregnant.

Another lady with whom I am in regular contact is an adoptee who was given away as a baby. She spent decades trying to trace her birth mother. I have in my possession an adoption consent form that was allegedly signed by the baby's mother. That is very much contested, because it is believed that the form was not signed at all by the baby's mother but that her signature was forged. The mother of the adoptee in this case also gave birth to two other children, but the siblings were kept apart, and the mother was forced to keep her secret for 50 years.

She lost her three children to adoption in the 1960s.

I know those women. They are constituents of mine, and I am in regular contact with them. Sometimes, as someone who is not an expert on the subject, one can get

overwhelmed by the harrowing nature of the story that one is told. However, this is not just the film 'Philomena'; this is real life. It happened in the recent past. The first lady whom I referred to was admitted to the Marian Vale home in Newry in January 1980. That young woman from my constituency gave birth to a baby boy and that baby boy was taken from her. Again, her signature was forged on the consent-to-adoption form, just like in the other case that I mentioned.

I attended the Dáil debate on Wednesday 11 June. I did so because I was challenged by one of the women in question to sit beside her during the hearing. It was a very powerful evening. There was a vigil outside, which was attended by many people, including my close colleague Michelle Gildernew MP. Michelle and I travelled to Dublin that evening to be of as much support as we could to the mothers and adoptees in question.

The scandal of Tuam has been described as perhaps too graphic and too horrendous to believe, with children and babies being denied a proper, decent and humane burial. It is a reminder of a darker past. It is known that 796 children were buried between 1925 and 1961 there. That was discovered by the research of historian Catherine Corless. Thankfully, in the recent past, the Irish Government have moved to establish a commission of investigation into all of that. The commission of investigation will obviously need to address the shocking infant mortality rates in the mother and baby homes due to a diet of malnutrition, neglect, starvation, TB and other diseases. Mothers were forced to live secretive and sad lives, disowned by their families, shunned by their communities and all of that. They were screened from people should they go to Mass or a place of worship. The issue is cross-denominational; the story of the Bethany home in Dublin makes that clear.

The commission needs to look at all of those things. It needs to be wide in scope because essentially we are looking at the imprisonment of pregnant women, the taking of babies from mothers against their will resulting in a reservoir of great hurt, the burial of children and babies without individual markers or identification and mothers not knowing where their children's final resting place is. There is the whole business of illegal adoption and trafficking to the USA and other countries of an unknown number of children. Perhaps most shocking of all is the subjecting of children to vaccine trials and, on occasions, when a child died, the child's body being dissected for medical research. I have lots of anecdotal evidence from the women I know about how harrowing it was in those homes.

The commission of investigation that Minister Flanagan and others will preside over cannot be limited. It must not be too narrow. It should include any institution that incarcerated mainly unmarried mothers and their children. I emphasise that, in the South of Ireland, it was not a uniquely Catholic phenomenon. It applied to state homes, state-regulated homes and some Protestant homes. It happened in the North as well, as everybody knows. More and more light is being thrown upon it. The reason why I know a wee bit about it is because of the regular contact that I have on the matter with mothers and adoptees from west Tyrone.

Mr D Bradley: I thank the Member for giving way. I totally agree with everything that he has said, but it struck me that there is a strong parallel here between the issue that he outlines and that of the disappeared.

For example, I am thinking of the late Mrs McVeigh whose son Columba was taken away, murdered and buried; his remains never to be returned. Does the Member think that it would be helpful to have a commission of inquiry into the issue of the disappeared as well?

Mr Speaker: I just want to say to Members that this is a specific motion on a specific subject, so I do not want them to stray into another issue that is totally separate; that is even for Members who take interventions. I think that we need to be careful.

Mr McElduff: I do not think that that matter specifically is the business of today, but it is relevant. My party leader, Gerry Adams, has pledged on the part of Irish republicans all cooperation on the matter. Certainly, if anybody has any information, they should come forward.

I would like as much bipartisanship and as much consensus here today as possible, in the spirit of the motion, because this happened in the North, in the South and all over Ireland. In the North, it was not a uniquely Catholic phenomenon either. I have in my possession now a list of homes; for example, the Mayflower hostel in Belfast, where the voluntary organisation was the Salvation Army, and Marian Vale in Newry. In the period of the 1970s, it is clear that the state was paying for mothers and babies to be maintained in many of these homes. Pre-1948, they might have been known as workhouses, but this is a matter for state homes, Catholic religious order homes and Protestant religious order homes.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr McElduff: Do I have an additional minute?

Mr Speaker: No.

Mr McElduff: OK. I thank Members for listening. They know what I am saying essentially: let us do everything in our power to establish truth and justice for these mothers and babies and ensure that any investigation, North or South, is not too narrow and covers all types of institutions.

Mr Dallat: I ask myself these questions: what can this debate achieve; how can the outcomes influence what we do and how people are treated in the future; what contribution can I make to break down prejudices, eliminate social inequality, stop moral judgements and achieve a level of healthcare and protection to end, for all time, the inequalities that still exist and affect children here in Ireland and across the world, especially in developing countries in Africa and South America?

The Bon Secours Sisters' institution did not, I suggest, set out to attract the kind of notoriety that is now presented in the media. Indeed, Catherine Corless, the local historian who did the research, has made it clear that she never claimed that there were 800 bodies in a septic tank. However, her research does indicate that, over a 36-year period, 796 children died from disease, tuberculosis, convulsions, measles, whooping cough, influenza, bronchitis and meningitis.

The reality is that it happened and the world was either helpless or stood by, and no one talked or wanted to talk, or they were afraid to talk. Today, the prejudices have gone away, or have they? Do those prejudices and inequalities still exist but are applied to different groups, such as the elderly in some nursing homes, or perhaps to the Travelling community, or indeed to children abused in

human trafficking? Is the world still looking on, still afraid to speak out and still not wanting to rock the boat? Indeed, are there still deep-seated prejudices against those who have no voice and no influence? The question is this: what can we learn from the past, from the Bon Secours Sisters' institution in Tuam or, indeed, from other institutions much closer to home?

Do we fully understand or want to speak out about other injustices in the past? I will mention very briefly the great famine, for example, which happened 70 years earlier. I do not think that we have, and — dare I say it? — we still have to find a way to commemorate and to pay our respects to the millions of children who died on this island over the years down through history. Was the great famine not Tuam earlier, when those who could have prevented it stood by idly while stepping up the export of food to record levels and ignored the diseased and destitute dying in the ditch while writing letters to London about their impending peerages? Of course it was, but it was worse; much worse.

1.15 pm

You will be relieved to know that I am returning to the motion, which calls for:

“all government Departments and their agencies, as well as religious orders, to proactively cooperate with any investigation that takes place to establish the truth”

behind the Tuam scandal. I believe that we must go much further than that and set aside time to discuss and decide how we commemorate the children, whether they were the victims of the Bon Secours Sisters' institution in Tuam or the other institutions that I mentioned earlier.

Commemorations focused on political and religious events have been very much in our mind in recent years, but, in doing so, we have overlooked the sacrifices and tragedies that have impacted on thousands, and, indeed, millions of people. The Tuam institution, which we are debating today, is but one.

My party and I want two things to emerge from the debate. Yes, I want an investigation or inquiry — call it what you may — but not just for the sake of it. These children were angels who did not even merit the description “legitimate” on their official birth and baptism records. This nation has much to address from our history, including, dare I say it, the recent and tragic deaths of children in what we euphemistically call the Troubles. May God forgive those who were involved. May we all remember them and make amends for those who failed them or were in any way associated with their deaths.

Let this debate be the emergence of a new horizon from which we can look back with contrition on what happened to our children in Tuam and elsewhere. Above all, let us remember them and let us commemorate them because, as was pointed out, they were our ancestors from across the community. It was not exclusively one community or the other.

Mr Nesbitt: I am delighted to say a few words in support of the motion and thank the Members who tabled it. We acknowledge that, simply by debating the matter, we raise expectations, not for a few people but for numbers measured in six figures. As far as I can understand it, well over 100,000 people are affected by the issue that we

debate today, and they have expectations, which have, heretofore, often been dashed.

Whether dealing with victims as a journalist with BBC Radio and Ulster Television, as a member of the Victims' Commission or as a politician, too often, I have met a victim who feels doubly victimised, first, by the incident, and, secondly, and, to some extent, more shockingly, by what happened after that. Their expectation was that when something went wrong, the state and the agencies of the state would form the wagons into a circle around them, and whatever they needed they would get, whether it was to do with health, social services, education or finances. Often, the exact opposite happens, and it is the case with the people whom we discuss this afternoon.

They also feel that, while there have been a number of inquiries on both sides of the border into these issues, they have been limited and imperfect, including the current historical institutional abuse inquiry, the scope of which denies access to people whose clerical abuse did not take place in institutions.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for giving way. In light of what he has just said, I wonder what confidence there is that any further investigations will get to the root of the problem, find where the real problem was and try to bring some comfort to those who are still alive.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for that very salient point. It is a question of will, and not just political will. Other very powerful institutions have to open up their books and be transparent about what happened. Mr Elliott's point is well made.

There is a suspicion amongst the victims that inquiries are limited and extended in the hope that time will drag on, the people quite simply will die, and the issue will go away. It will not go away. This morning, Danny Kennedy and I had the pleasure of meeting some survivors and others who had been in homes, including the Bethany Home. Mr Speaker, I will briefly quote some experiences from one survivor of a home who had the courage to tell his story. His name is John Hill. He says:

“I was born in the Church of Ireland Magdalen Home in Leeson Street Dublin ... in 1946 ...

I was fostered out as free labour to farmers from a very young age ...

I was found to be badly malnourished with rickets. I could not walk. I was then sent to a family in Carlow until I was aged 10. I was required to do manual labour from about the age of five or six. I worked before I walked five miles to school each morning ...

We milked cows, collected sheep, fed poultry and generally worked as free child labour on the farm. We were slave labour I suppose. At the same time the family received money for us from public funds. We were isolated from other members of the family. At house parties we were sent off to bed. When the gentry called we were fed separately ...

I was a slave all my young life ...

The Irish state and the church of Ireland were my parents. They let me down, badly. I think they should admit to their sins ...

I want my files that are now held by PACT (formerly the Protestant Adoption Society), and the Rotunda, taken over by the government ... I want to know why my files were transferred to the Nurses Rescue Society and then to PACT. I want answers. I can handle the truth."

If he can handle the truth, we owe it to him to give him access to the truth. That means admissions books for homes; adoption and transfer files; death certificates; burial records for private cemeteries; the minute books from the homes; the records of anatomy schools, including the school of medicine at Queen's; and details of the obligations on those homes to notify the deaths and to whom they were to be notified.

If unionism has questions to answer, it is time for unionism to step up to the plate. If the Ulster Unionist Party has questions to answer, we are at the plate. Tell us what we have to do to put this to rights. We stand ready to do what is right. We are not a religious organisation; we are a political party, and it is our determination today to do what we can to ensure that people like John Hill, who has had the courage to put his personal experience into the public domain, gets access to the truth. He says that he can handle it. The question is not whether victims and survivors can handle it but whether organisations, including political parties and these political institutions, can handle giving access to the truth and admitting when we got it so horribly and horrendously wrong.

Mr Lunn: Mr Speaker, I apologise to you and Mr McElduff for not being here for the start of the debate. Unfortunately, the change of timings caught me out. I support the motion and, frankly, do not know how anybody could do otherwise. I looked up the meaning of "bon secours". It means "good help, assistance or succour". I imagine that "secours" means "succour". The message seems to have been, "Come to us if you need help". That is the image of a caring institution, a place run by a female religious order in tandem with the state, where mothers and babies would be treated with respect and compassion. The truth is clearly different. It was a place where mothers and babies were incarcerated and treated as social outcasts, criminals or sinners, and where the mortality rate amongst the children was far beyond the expected average, or what was found to be the case when compared with the mortality rate amongst children born within marriage. There was a tremendous difference.

The deaths were blamed on disease: measles, meningitis, influenza and malnutrition. Whose fault was the malnutrition? The place was run by the sisters and the poor law authorities. Could they not even feed the children? To compound that, as the children died, mostly before they reached their first birthday, they were put into a mass grave. In the words of Minister Flanagan in the Dáil the other day, they were discarded over several decades. I think that he chose the right word. There does not appear to have been a Christian burial. If it is true that the grave was a disused septic tank — I do not know whether that is true — the horror is complete. It beggars belief that any kind of a society of nuns or a religious institution could behave like that towards innocent children, regardless of the view that society in those days may have taken of their mothers.

This approach appears to have been common across Ireland. I read in 'The Irish Times' at the weekend about Pelletstown, Bessborough, Sean Ross Abbey in Tipperary and Castlepollard, all of which were run by religious orders and all of which had similar experiences. The attitude of the state authorities and those who ran the institutions was deplorable, but it is obvious that the general population either chose or was influenced to turn a blind eye to what happened to these — what they would call — fallen women and, particularly, their offspring.

Every country has its dark secrets. Ireland, North and South, is not unique. From reading the words of Minister Flanagan and the Taoiseach in the recent Dáil discussion, it is clear that there is a recognition that the truth must be established. Likewise, in the North, Sir Anthony Hart's inquiry is under way. I hope that, if there are limitations to that inquiry, those will be removed in the interest of bringing all the truth forward. That is the only way to go with something like this. I hope that all necessary resources and time will be given to bring out the truth of what happened here. We are not immune from all this. Some of these homes did not close until the 1980s, so we are not necessarily dealing with ancient history here. We need to establish the truth for the living and the dead.

This is a sound motion, and I hope that the House will support it. I congratulate Mr McElduff for bringing it.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. I thank the sponsors for bringing it forward. I want to clearly indicate my support for this motion.

It is very fair to say that the treatment of mothers and children in homes and institutions throughout Ireland, both North and South, has been nothing short of disgraceful and almost medieval in its cruelty. The stories of children and families affected have gone to the very core and touched the nerve of the entire society. The human feelings, reactions and emotions aroused have clearly impacted on people the length and breadth of this island. The recent story emerging from Tuam has served at least to further highlight what was done either in the name of the state or in the name of religion, which is potentially even more distressing.

I have attempted to give support to the families of the Bethany Home victims and survivors. I had the privilege to attend a memorial service and the unveiling of a new memorial at Mount Jerome cemetery in Dublin in early April. I have sought to raise issues on behalf of the Bethany group with both Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Alan Shatter, laterally Minister of Justice in the Republic.

Following the Tuam exposure, the Government of the Republic of Ireland have indicated their intention to establish an independent commission of inquiry. I welcome that and see it as progress. I hope very much that they will take the opportunity to investigate fully all the issues. There are positive indications that the Bethany Home and others will be included in this inquiry. I hope very much that that will be the case. I believe that we, as an Administration — the Northern Ireland Executive and the Assembly — have a responsibility to fully cooperate with any investigations launched. I go further to say that church records from all churches of all denominations should be made fully available for any such inquiry.

I come from an evangelical Protestant background. It is inescapable to me that there were very clear failures on

the part of mainstream and smaller denominations in the Protestant community in respect of these issues.

I believe that it is the Christian duty of all those Churches and denominations that hold records and accounts and which can give insight and shed important light on any matter of the inquiry to give that insight, however difficult and challenging it will be. I believe that, at a Government level, at an institutional level and at a Church level, we must ensure that this issue is fully and comprehensively dealt with. There is a whiff of cover-up. The mark of any decent and civilised society is to ensure that no such cover-up is allowed or continued. If we want to call ourselves a truly civilised society, we must deal with this issue.

1.30 pm

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I, too, apologise for being late to the Chamber; I was also caught out by the timings.

I support the motion. This is a real tragedy for those who have lived in and, in some cases, died in mother-and-baby homes. There is no doubt that coverage in the past few weeks will have evoked very painful memories for people. I know, like a lot of Members in this House and members of the wider public, that I was totally appalled by the reports emerging from Tuam. There is no justification for what happened. No one can abdicate their responsibility; the institutions and agencies of the state need to face up to this shameful period.

This discovery in Tuam, Galway, provides a horrific account of absolute neglect and maltreatment by those in charge. These institutions were effectively places of imprisonment for pregnant women. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case, and our hearts have been much moved by this situation. It is a very difficult subject for many of us to comprehend, never mind stomach. It is clear that the women and babies had no rights. It is useful to look at what the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

“Children shall not be discriminated against and shall have equal access to protection”.

“All decisions taken which affect children’s lives should be taken in the child’s best interest”.

“Children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters concerning them”.

It is important that the Government search for a means to help those who have suffered so much for so long. I welcome the fact that the Government have agreed to set up a commission of investigation into all mother and baby homes. This is a hugely sensitive and difficult issue, and it is vital that any inquiry or investigation provide confidence to those communities, particularly for the victims and their families.

I commend the researcher Catherine Corless, who spent weeks going through records in libraries, churches and council offices. She uncovered the fact that, between 1925 and 1961, almost 800 children had died in the St Mary’s mother and baby homes run by nuns from those particular orders; but she was unable to find records of where they were buried until last September when she suggested that many of the bodies may have been put in a disused septic

tank in a corner of the home’s garden, a spot where boys had discovered a pile of children’s skeletons in the 1970s.

When speaking about the awful situation in Tuam, I am also mindful of our own inquiry into historical institutional abuse. During consultations, victims and survivors told our junior Ministers that they wanted an opportunity to recount their experiences of the institutions and for those to be heard, believed and acknowledged. The inquiry includes a confidential acknowledgement forum that addresses the issue, which gives an opportunity for victims and survivors to talk about their childhoods in the institutions, how they were treated and what they endured. Victims and survivors have never talked about their experiences. For some, the opportunity to talk, be heard and acknowledged is vital.

Our inquiry is intended to investigate systemic failings in the provision of care in institutions, and it is important to emphasise that all children are vulnerable. Our legislation is rightly focused on those who were in institutions. Those children did not have access to others to speak on their behalf outside the institutions that they were in, so the state must address their needs.

In conclusion, again, it is a real tragedy. I welcome the Government inquiry and urge all Departments, agencies and religious orders to cooperate with any investigation that takes place.

Mr Eastwood: I too apologise for missing the beginning of the debate; the timings caught me out as well. This is a very difficult debate to take part in. It is a period of our history that has been hidden away, kept secret and largely ignored for far too long. I commend Mr McElduff and the other proposers for bringing the subject to the House today, because one of the real shames in all of this is the fact that people did not feel that they could confront some of the difficult issues that people face every day in modern society. They could not talk about it; people had to hide away, get sent away and get taken away. I think that is as much a shame for all of us as anything else.

There are very few communities — in fact, I would say they are probably none — in the North, never mind across the island, that have not been touched in one way or another by those kinds of issues, but nobody talked about it. Nobody felt that they could talk about it. There was a shame brought upon you if you were unmarried and ended up pregnant. Largely, that shame was on young women. There was not very much discussion about young men who may have played their part in it as well. That is the biggest shame — that people did not feel that they could talk about it or deal with it.

Families did horrendous things to their own — things that I am sure many people regret today. Unfortunately, the state, both in the North and in the South, played its part in all of that as well. Many people look to the Irish proclamation of 1916 for inspiration. It is in most Government buildings in Dublin. That talks about cherishing all of the children of our nation equally. I think we massively failed that standard. Given a lot of the revelations that have come out in the last number of years around how communities, institutions and organisations of the state or otherwise treated children and young people, I think we have a lot of making up to do.

Unfortunately, today we still have a lot of children in this city who are living in poverty. We still have people leaving school with very low educational attainment. I think our

job is to ensure that we have the proper investigations into all of the things that happened — I welcome the Irish Government's approach to that — to get the truth out in the open and find some level of justice for the people who were put through some of those things. Our job is also to ensure that we leave a different legacy for people coming forward. We need to ensure that we treat all of the children of the nation — or whatever you want to call it — equally, that people get all of their opportunities, that they do not have to live in poverty and that they get the opportunity to reach their full potential.

I also commend OFMDFM for bringing forward Justice Hart's inquiry that is ongoing at the moment. I reiterate our call and that of other people to ensure that that is not the end of it and ask again that we do not have to wait until that inquiry — which will take another year more than was originally envisaged — completes its work to look at all of the other issues around Magdalene laundries, clerical abuse and other things. For far too long, those things have not been talked about. They have been kept under the carpet, and —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Eastwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Ms J McCann: I want to start by thanking my colleagues for bringing this very important motion to the Assembly. As some other Members said, I hope that we will have cross-party support for it.

As some Members pointed out in the debate, there is probably nothing that measures a society more than the way it treats its most vulnerable people. Who could be more vulnerable than babies and young children or mothers who were forced to give up their babies or who were imprisoned in places like mother and baby homes and other institutions? They were treated as outcasts from the rest of society. In fact, they were treated as if they did not mean anything to anybody. The scandal and the shameful way that those women were treated must affect anyone who is tuned into what we hear on the news. The whole of the island of Ireland is engulfed by the shameful way that those people were treated.

As people have said, for over five decades that treatment was meted out by religious orders of all denominations, the state, and wider society, because a lot of people must have known what was going on and simply did not do anything about it. There is an onus on all of us who are part of that society today, whether we are in the Government, the religious orders, the churches or wider society to expose the level of horror and to try, in some way, to make redress to those who are victims and survivors.

Over a period of time, we have witnessed almost a drip-feed of information coming to light through reports such as the Ryan report and the recent exposure of the Tuam scandal. In the North, we have heard some reports coming from the historical institutional abuse inquiry. While that information is coming out and is putting some parts of the jigsaw together for people, it in no way gets to the scale of the problem and the questions that need to be answered: questions such as why so many young infants and children died in those places; why so many were forcibly separated from their mothers and adopted, and how many that happened to. Those children were also trafficked or sold, many to go off and work as cheap labour in other countries. We still do not have an overall picture of just

how many children were affected by this or, indeed, how many mothers were affected. We need to talk about that, because, as some Members said, sometimes it is brushed under the carpet. Some of those children were actually used for medical purposes and in experiments.

All the information needs to be gathered, and we need to look over five decades across the island of Ireland, North and South, to get it. We also need answers about how many of the children were sexually abused and the level of state involvement and knowledge when those shameful and horrific practices were going on in those institutions across the island of Ireland. That is the type of information we need to get.

I have spoken to some survivors over a period of years and have met some of them as recently as last week. They told me that they do not have a clear picture or access to the records. We need to do all in our power to ensure that the state records and those of the religious orders or churches are given to these people so that they can try to get some sort of sense about what happened to them when they left the homes, what happened to their mothers and everything else. It is very important that all the information is given.

It is imperative that we have that thorough examination. Some Members mentioned that it was not just mother and baby homes; it was also workhouses and, as I said, other institutions. We need to have the information to hand first so that we can see the level of this.

1.45 pm

I know that we already have a sense of the dehumanising practices that mothers were forced to endure in institutions such as the Magdalene laundries, which Members mentioned. Some Members mentioned the ongoing historical institutional abuse inquiry and said that some of the people in the laundries who were over 18 when they were forced to have their baby there are not covered by the inquiry. I am speaking not as a junior Minister but as an MLA, and, hopefully, something can be done to ensure that those women who were over 18 are included in some way so that what happened to them can also be looked at.

Mr McElduff: I thank the Member for giving way. Will she further consider a North/South, all-island character to any investigation? The historical institutional abuse inquiry in the North and the proposed commission of investigation in the South should cooperate specifically on the subject of cross-border movements, over many decades, of children, pregnant girls and women and on the forced illegal and international adoption or boarding-out arrangements of the majority of children? That is to ensure that any investigation, North or South or both, be as wide as possible.

Ms J McCann: I totally agree with the Member. I think that that has to happen. In some of the cases that I have been discussing with some of the victims and survivors, we cannot call it anything else than this: the children were trafficked from North to South and South to North. We need to have an all-island approach to get the detail of what happened.

I have to say that —

Mr Eastwood: Will the Member give way?

Ms J McCann: I will finish this and give way if I have time.

When I was speaking to some of the people who came to see me about the Magdalene laundries, one thing stuck in my head as probably being one of the most cruel parts about them that I remember. They told me that there was an older lady working alongside a younger person in one of the laundries. They were working day by day together in that laundry, and the younger person and the older woman built up a relationship over several years. When the older woman died, one of the nuns called the young girl aside and said, "By the way, that was your mother".

For me, that shows the level of cruelty and viciousness that those people had to experience. We all have talked to survivors and victims, and I think that we probably all have our own sense of it. I am a mother myself, and I just cannot imagine what it would have been like for a mother to be forced to give over her baby just after the baby is born and to be treated in such a way. We need to help uncover this horror and this barbaric treatment, and we need to help people get the information that they need.

In conclusion, I want to go through some of the main points made by Members. Barry McElduff, the proposer of the motion, outlined, as I said, the human cost of some of the harrowing stories. He also gave a list of all the homes that we have now discovered were in practice in the North. That is by no means a definitive list, so we need to investigate how many more there were.

John Dallat also illustrated this treatment received by people. Mike Nesbitt read out a personal testimony on how people want the records to be made available. Trevor Lunn pointed out that some of the homes did not close until the 1980s. That is a very relevant point, because sometimes we think that this happened back then, but it was happening right up until the recent past.

Danny Kennedy mentioned the records from all Churches and denominations and said that those should be given over to families and people who want them made available. Bronwyn McGahan mentioned the women being imprisoned and their human rights being discarded, and she said that the children in those homes had no voices.

We really need to be their voices and speak for them if we can.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms J McCann: Colum Eastwood finished very aptly when he talked about the proclamation and the cherishing of all our children equally. Hopefully, today's debate will get cross-party support. We need to ensure that those records are opened up and that the information is there for people. We need to help the people —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Ms J McCann: — in their campaign who do not have the voice to do that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly acknowledges the scandal that occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' institution in Tuam, County Galway, where almost 800 children died whilst in the care of a religious order and were placed in a mass unmarked grave over a period of five decades; notes the intention of the Dublin Government to take steps to establish the best course of action to investigate the deaths of these children and the appalling manner of their interment; recognises that the abusive practices that occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' mother and baby care home were not unique and were replicated in similar institutions across the island of Ireland; and calls for all government Departments and their agencies, as well as religious orders, to proactively cooperate with any investigation that takes place to establish the truth behind this scandal.

Mr Speaker: The next item of business in the Order Paper is Question Time. I therefore propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm.

The sitting was suspended at 1.50 pm.

2.00 pm

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

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We will start with listed questions. Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Racial Equality Strategy

1. **Ms McGahan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what impact the revised indicators for good relations will have on the racial equality strategy. (AQO 6398/11-15)

4. **Mr McAleer** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the racial equality strategy will complement Together: Building a United Community. (AQO 6401/11-15)

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 1 and 4 together. I am pleased that our consultation document for the racial equality strategy is now available on the OFMDFM website. The consultation will last until 10 October 2014, and details of consultation events will be listed soon. As our strategy document, 'Together: Building a United Community', states, the racial equality strategy:

"is not intended to replace or subsume our work on racial equality and

good race relations. Rather it will complement and provide the co-ordinated

framework for aspects of its delivery."

We consider it very important to retain a specific focus on racial equality and good relations. Therefore, we propose to retain the existing racial equality panel to implement the strategy. Where appropriate, the work of the panel will feed into Together: Building a United Community's community tensions subgroup and the ministerial panel or into the structures of Delivering Social Change.

Our review of the good relations indicators highlighted four that were specifically relevant to outcomes for minority ethnic people. It was clear that they would not capture the breadth of information needed for the new racial equality strategy. As a result, a separate set of racial equality indicators has been developed by the good relations advisory group. Those will be consulted on alongside the strategy.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Minister, do you agree that racial intimidation needs to be acknowledged and addressed urgently?

Mr P Robinson: All instances of racial tension need to be addressed, particularly when they involve intimidation or hate crime or, worse still, attacks on those who can be profiled because of their race.

It is a matter that has caused considerable concern to the PSNI, which has reported an increased number of racial incidents and racial crimes over the last year. I trust that the work arising from the strategy will be acted on, because a strategy without action points attached to it, and funding for those action points, will not help. It is necessary that we start taking action on the work that arises from the strategy.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I understand that the strategy was signed off at the beginning of June. What was the reason for that delay?

Mr P Robinson: My understanding is that about eight changes to the strategy were required by the deputy First Minister (DFM) side. None at all were required by us, and we were quite content with the changes required by DFM. One of those changes was that included in the strategy would be a foreword from the deputy First Minister and me. That became available to us on Friday and was signed off immediately.

Mr G Robinson: What steps can the First Minister take to alleviate race relations issues while the development of the racial equality strategy continues?

Mr P Robinson: As I said earlier, a strategy is an important part of that. My understanding is that, while I have heard a number of people talking about waiting for years, it came into OFMDFM only at the beginning of June. The real requirement is to change people's mindset to ensure that we have a welcoming environment in Northern Ireland for people from all racial backgrounds. That becomes more difficult when people feel that they are not getting jobs and services, and others are. For those of us who speak to employers, the truth of it is that many of them could not operate their businesses without those from ethnic minorities coming in. They provide colour to our community as a whole. They should be welcomed by everybody in Northern Ireland. I hope that the racial equality strategy will help to get that message out and that we can have the action points attached to it, which will encourage people to get involved with their neighbours no matter what background they come from.

Mr A Maginness: Does the First Minister accept that it is a duty incumbent on all who hold high office, including his own office and those of other Ministers, to condemn forthrightly and unambiguously, without ifs or buts, any form of racism? I refer in particular to the incident in east Belfast, where a house was allocated to a Nigerian, and the First Minister, in that situation, tended to defend or explain away the reasons for the obstruction by local residents.

Mr P Robinson: I did no such thing. Indeed, if one was to listen to the interview in full, one would see that 90% of it condemned any type of racial activity or intimidation. Given that I have two minutes rather than 15 seconds to answer, let me break the issue down.

From a social housing point of view, people can argue for the idea of local houses for local people. I do not believe that that can ever be the only determining factor as to why somebody should get a house. It has been in the past, and points could be allocated for that, but if you have a difficulty with housing allocations or the allocation scheme, the answer is to go to the Housing Executive or your local elected representatives, whether on the council, in the Assembly or at Westminster, and deal with those matters through them. The answer is not to stand outside

a house that has been allocated to someone because, no matter what their background might be, that will be seen as intimidation, in my view. If people with a different racial profile are involved, it will certainly be seen by them as being racially motivated.

Local people said that it was never their intention to do it. Some indicated that they never knew whom the house had been allocated to, but, whether or not it had been allocated to someone from a different racial profile, it was still intimidation. Any of us would know how we would feel if we turned up to a house that had been allocated to us, and there were protesters outside saying, "Local houses for local people".

Those are the issues involved. I condemn any form of racial attack. I oppose any form of racial intimidation. It is essential that our communities are open and welcoming to all, no matter what religious, political or ethnic background they may have.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far and particularly welcome the fact that the racial equality strategy is now out and is to be consulted on. Will the First Minister put on some dates or timings as to when he expects legislation to come through on the back of it and will that include refugees and asylum seekers?

Mr P Robinson: It seems that, although we were criticised for taking our time in bringing the strategy out, the deputy First Minister and I have, in fact, moved faster than the Civil Service. While the document is on the website, the pages that allow people to answer the questions in the document are not yet up. The consultation process lasts until October, which takes us over the summer holidays, and that is why a longer period is being allowed.

As soon as we have that and evaluate the responses, I not only trust that will there be legislation but trust that we will be able to move forward to real action points. That is not to say that we are not taking action at present on a number of issues — we spend over £1 million every year with one particular fund — but are going ahead with other projects as well. Funding is available for projects, and as for fitting it into the strategy, I hope that that will happen after October.

Ms Lo: The Macpherson report, which is referenced in the racial equality strategy, states that a racist incident means any incident with a race dimension and covers crimes and non-crimes. Will the Minister now accept that he was wrong to say, when he was interviewed, that the racist intimidation against Michael Abiona was not racist?

Mr P Robinson: It seems that, even when I go into detail, the Member does not understand the difference between a racial incident and a racial crime. A racial incident is a racial incident because an individual feels that they have been attacked because of their racial background. That makes it a racial incident, no matter what the intention of the individuals concerned was. It becomes a racial crime if there was an intention on the part of the individuals and they did carry out an attack or intimidation.

Gender Equality Strategy

2. **Mr F McCann** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the gender equality strategy. (AQO 6399/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Mr Speaker, with —. Mr Principal Deputy Speaker — maybe a few months too early — with your permission, I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer the question.

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): In January this year, we took a decision to develop a new gender equality strategy based on the review that was carried out in 2013. Since then, meetings have taken place with a range of key stakeholders and the gender advisory panel to update and include it in the development of a new gender equality strategy. A meeting of the gender advisory panel has been scheduled for early July. The current strategy will remain in place until the new strategy is developed and becomes operational. A new strategy will require full public consultation and Executive approval.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat. I thank the junior Minister for his answer thus far. Can he give me an update as to how transgender issues will be taken forward under any new gender equality strategy, given that that was identified as a gap in the current strategy document?

Mr Bell: Transgender is recognised by OFMDFM as a gender issue. Transgender people, whose gender identity conflicts with their biological sex, face lifelong challenges such as victimisation, including physical and psychological abuse and increased risk of suicide. Transgender issues were identified as a gap, as the Member correctly points out, in the current strategy document, and representatives of the transgender organisation joined the panel following the review of the gender equality strategy in 2013.

Mr Campbell: Will the junior Minister outline the extent of the Department's engagement with stakeholders while outlining the gender strategy?

Mr Bell: Junior Minister McCann, the office and our staff have had a number of meetings, and we continue to meet groups, organisations and individuals who have an interest in and a view to share on gender equality. So far, junior Minister McCann and I, alongside our colleagues, have met a number of organisations, the most recent being the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. We have held joint meetings with Man Matters, YouthAction, the Men's Action Network and the Men's Health Forum. We have also met the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities in addition to the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform.

Mrs D Kelly: The Minister outlined the necessity for a public consultation exercise but omitted to give us a definitive timescale for the strategy to be published. Perhaps he could give us some further indication as to that timescale and highlight any other stumbling blocks to the release of the strategy.

Mr Bell: Work on the development of a new strategy has started. It is based on the work that has been undertaken to date and indeed on the current review. As all policies have, the new strategy will require full public consultation and Executive approval. We will keep the gender advisory panel fully engaged on the progress as we make it.

2.15 pm

It is envisaged that a new gender equality strategy, allowing time for the key stages required to develop a new strategy, including the 12-week public consultation

process, could be published and launched in 2014. The current gender equality strategy will remain in place until that new strategy has been developed and is operational.

Mr Beggs: The progress of the review seems to be rather slow. The review happened in 2013, and there have been meetings for six months. Will the Minister advise us whether there are any underlying difficulties or differences of opinion that contribute to that slowness?

Mr Bell: There are no differences of opinion that I can think of at all. The strategy, its aims and objectives, remain relevant and valid. The action plan through which the strategy is to be delivered needs, I think, to link more directly to the strategy's aims and objectives. Actions should be linked to measurable or numerical targets against which the action plan and progress can be established. The targets that we have taken the time to look at should look at where the results and achievements can be made, not just the outputs, that is, the actions that are taken. The monitoring and reporting of performance need to be regular and formalised. The role and membership of the gender advisory panel continues and should be reviewed. Among the issues outlined in answer to an earlier question, the transgender issue was identified as a gap in the current strategy document, and that has been addressed.

Delivering Social Change

3. **Mr G Kelly** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how Delivering Social Change signature projects will be evaluated. (AQO 6400/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: In October 2012, we announced a £26 million funding package to allow for the development and delivery of six key cross-cutting Delivering Social Change signature programmes, aimed at issues such as improving literacy and numeracy, family support and pathways to employment for young people. Responsibility for the delivery of each of the six programmes lies with the appropriate lead Department. Departments have already established, in common with the other signature programmes, how they and their delivery partners will evaluate the programmes to satisfy their own requirements.

OFMDFM has worked collaboratively with Departments in the development of the programmes, including developing new approaches to their evaluation. Departments have agreed to include an outcomes-based approach model into their evaluations. That approach differentiates between what we wish to achieve at a strategic level and what each individual project does achieve towards its overarching goal. In addition, we are looking at a number of common metrics that can be applied across all programmes that are being delivered. Those include the well-established international comparators around well-being and also, given local concern around resilience and assertiveness, a pilot of two alternative metrics: locus of control and self-efficacy.

We are using those signature programmes as test beds, not only as new ways of addressing societal challenges but as new and more pragmatic ways of evaluating programme-level impacts. Draft evaluation plans have been received, and our officials are working with their counterparts in the lead Departments to ensure a robust

evaluation of the Delivering Social Change signature programmes.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer up to now, and I congratulate him for getting through that mouthful. I suppose that the question that people are asking is, "When will we see the impact of Delivering Social Change on the ground?" I know that you talked about draft plans that have now been received.

Mr P Robinson: The answer is that it is already being felt on the ground. If we are not to use any of the more scientific approaches that I have outlined — keeping my tongue firmly embedded between my teeth while I say some of it — the truth is that most of us evaluate it by asking the people who are carrying out the programme, "How is it going?"; and, on that basis, all the programmes are going very well. With regard to the teachers whom we have put in place, we are already hearing from the schools that, in the mid-term testing, those pupils are doing better than their comparators from previous years. Again, when it comes to the hubs and other elements, we are getting very positive messages back.

We will wait for the full evaluation to be carried out by the mechanisms that officials have set in place. It will be those evaluations that will determine whether the programmes should be mainstreamed in the future.

Mrs Hale: I thank the First Minister for his very detailed answers, and I welcome the news that the food banks are good. What plans are there for mainstreaming?

Mr P Robinson: If the reports coming back continue in the same positive vein as those that we have received thus far from each of the signature projects — although one is operating a little slower than we would like, and slower than the others — it is very likely that each of the Departments will want to continue with those projects. There will obviously be a bidding war when it comes to setting the budget to ensure that they have resources to meet that requirement. However, I am very hopeful that the steps that we have taken — steps that were, it has to be said, initially resisted by some Departments, because officials like to have good ideas themselves rather than them coming from the centre — will mean that those will be successful programmes. I hope that many, if not all of them, will be mainstreamed.

Mr Dallat: I thank the First Minister for his answers. He specifically made reference to literacy and numeracy issues among children. The First Minister will be aware that illiteracy and innumeracy are still running at over 20%. Is he satisfied that sufficient funding is available to address that as one of the signature projects? If it continues to be a problem, what is the long-term plan to address the terrible injustice of children leaving school not able to read or write?

Mr P Robinson: I agree entirely with the Member about the scale and impact of the issue. When the deputy First Minister and I brought forward proposals for the signature projects, it was very much on a pilot basis, so that we could test whether improvements come from this kind of project. Early indicators are good. However, if improvements do come, it will be the full flow of the programme that will make the big difference. I do not see us making massive changes in the number of people just

through this one programme, but it will certainly signal that this is a way to do it that brings a beneficial outcome.

Sexual Orientation Strategy

5. **Mr McElduff** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the sexual orientation strategy. (AQO 6402/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer the question.

Mr Bell: We have regularly stated our commitment to producing a sexual orientation strategy — in the Assembly, in the text of the good relations strategy and in Together: Building a United Community. To achieve that commitment, we asked officials to commence a public consultation process. The first phase of that process ended on 6 June. Responses received during the 12-week consultation period are being analysed, and the results will be used to inform the content of a draft sexual orientation strategy. The strategy will then be referred to the Executive for final agreement and publication in draft format. A second phase of public consultation will then take place.

Mr McElduff: I thank the junior Minister for his answer. Will he outline the timeline for taking forward the various stages of consultation that he mentioned?

Mr Bell: I thank the Member for his question. The process is being held over two phases. Phase 1 commenced with the establishment of a project group. The project group held its first meeting in February 2014. The results of phase 1 will help to inform the development of the sexual orientation strategy. Phase 2 will involve the development of the draft strategy, including full public consultation on the final agreed draft. Within that, we have membership of the project group, including our own officials, stakeholders, academia, trade union representatives and our research branch officials from OFMDFM. They are all participating in the project group. It is chaired within our equality and human rights directorate and the group has held a number of meetings. The next one will take place following the analysis of the phase 1 consultation exercise. The consultation was launched by a press advertisement on 14 March 2014 and closed after the 12-week consultation process on 6 June. The consultation document has been made available in hard copy and online, and our research branch has developed an online survey questionnaire to accompany the document. This was used as the primary basis for consultation.

The public were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in a number of ways, including on the website. The questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the Department's research branch and the project group. It was also available to be completed in hard copy or by telephone link through a dedicated telephone line for that subject. Members of the public were also able to submit responses in writing via post or email. When we go to phase 2, we will look at the results of phase 1, the analysis of which will inform the development of the strategy.

Mr Copeland: I thank the junior Minister. To the best of my recollection, he told the House that this would be published in 2012. Does he accept my cynicism that this could be indicative of a difficulty in agreeing the strategy?

Mr Bell: It is always interesting to comment on another Member's cynicism. Any answer that I give is the best one that I can give at any particular time. We have worked very hard on the strategy; phase 1 has shown the work that we have done. I commend our officials and the groups that have met us and discussed matters and cooperated with us. We have gone through some very complex matters. Phase 1 is now through; you will see phase 2 with the analysis and the development of the strategy. The project group that has been put in place to manage and oversee the consultation process will continue to have oversight of the development of the strategy and its action plan. The draft strategy has to be agreed and, when it is developed, it will be referred to the Executive for final agreement and publication in draft format with a view to implementing a further public consultation process.

Mr Allister: Why were so many of the questions lacking in objectivity and presented in a wholly loaded fashion?

Mr Bell: It is an area of sensitivity and complexity. The questions were developed in conjunction with the sectors and groups that were talking to us, informing us and consulting us, and they reflected their needs. The questions that were asked give us a basis to move towards phase 2, see where we can have agreement and bring it forward to the Executive for agreement following full public consultation.

Bright Start

6. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Bright Start childcare scheme. (AQO 6403/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister Bell to answer this question.

Mr Bell: I thank the Member for her question. The Bright Start school-age childcare grant scheme was developed to take forward three of the Bright Start key first actions. The scheme was launched on 27 March 2014 and it has, to date, attracted 76 full applications and 60 expressions of interest. The childcare partnerships are assessing applications and assessment will finish on 25 June. The first letters of offer should be issued before September. The Bright Start school-age childcare grant scheme aims to create or sustain up to 7,000 school-age childcare places by assisting current and prospective childcare providers. These envisaged childcare places will begin to address the need for additional school-age childcare services. The grant scheme will assist childcare settings serving disadvantaged and rural communities and settings that are based on the school estate.

Mrs McKeivitt: Will the Minister confirm whether the Bright Start scheme will be made available to private childcare minders?

Mr Bell: From the very beginning, we said that the scheme was never intended to displace existing provision. We have published what we are doing. We sought to find gaps where they exist. We had to follow where the evidence was leading us. Although I would not say that it was overly well provided for, we knew that the nought-to-three age group in particular was better provided for than the school-age group, where research indicates that, in some cases, there could be up to a one-in-19 chance of getting a place.

2.30 pm

We never sought to displace private sector provision. I have visited and taken part in a number of private sector projects and standards awards. The reason why we targeted Bright Start was this: families, and young mothers in particular, were telling us that there was a gap in school-age provision and a need for flexibility and affordability. We took the social-enterprise model because we could target it to meet particular needs where they were identified. I am quite happy to meet, as I have been doing, private sector providers and share with them the project, what we are doing and the reasons why we are doing it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for listed questions. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions. Question 1 has been withdrawn.

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

2. **Mr D Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the possibility of an interim report from the historical institutional abuse inquiry has been raised with the chair of the inquiry, given the call for such a report as a compassionate response to victims and survivors, and, further to that, whether OFMDFM has any firm views about an inquiry for victims of non-institutional clerical abuse. (AQT 1302/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: We, of course, gave a remit to a learned judge, who is completely independent in the inquiry that he is carrying out. He has spoken with my colleagues. I think that he spoke to the junior Ministers fairly recently. He does not feel that it would be helpful to have an interim report. I think that one can understand that all his motivation is to get to the finish line in the quickest possible time without prejudicing in any way the depth of the inquiry that he carries out. We have to take his advice on that, considering that he is carrying it out independently.

The clerical abuse issue is to be considered after we receive a report from the judge on this inquiry. Of course, there are always areas, not only those that relate to clerical abuse but others such as the Magdalene laundries, in which there is clearly, if you like, unfinished business and a level of trauma for those involved. We are very sensitive and sympathetic to all those involved. However, we need to carry out our own research to determine whether government intervention on those issues is appropriate. We will consider them more fully after the historical institutional abuse report is received.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the First Minister for his answer. Does he not agree that the needs of the victims of non-institutional clerical abuse also need to be recognised and that they, too, deserve the matter to be looked into fully?

Mr P Robinson: Of course they need support. There is support available through the various government agencies for those who were involved in the horrendous activities of which the Member, the House and I are aware. As to whether there should be an inquiry into them, I must say that there is a slightly higher threshold to be met regarding the number of instances that there were and whether an inquiry of the size that would be necessary is merited or whether there should simply be individual

investigations in the various institutions involved. We will look at those kinds of issues when we see the depth of the historical institutional abuse report.

Haass Proposals: DUP Intentions

4. **Mr Boylan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to confirm whether the First Minister and his party are up for serious and intense negotiations to implement the Haass proposals in the coming days. (AQT 1304/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I am sure that the Member did not intend to indicate that his party is not up for negotiations on the outstanding issues, but, by saying that it is simply about the implementation of the Haass proposals, that is precisely what he is saying.

I can assure you that this party is serious about dealing with the three outstanding issues of parades, flags and identity and, of course, the past. Those are important issues that have to be resolved, whether we resolve them this month, next month or in a year's time, but they will not be resolved on the basis of people digging in their heels on one set of outcomes that suits them. It has to be a set of outcomes that suits all the parties in the House, otherwise it is simply not going to happen. So, I hope that all the parties that engage in these discussions will do so on the basis of getting outcomes that can get widespread support across the parties and the community.

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. Does he agree that these issues need to be dealt with and resolved urgently?

Mr P Robinson: I agree totally that there is an urgency with these matters. It would have been great if the five parties involved in the discussions last year had been able to reach agreement. That was not possible. I am not sure that raking over the embers gets us very much further. There has been progress, in my view, since then.

The party leaders' meetings have disaggregated the Haass proposals and started to look at the sets of proposals — I think that there were literally hundreds of individual agreements contained in the overall Haass document — and the elements of the document on which there was not overall agreement. I think that we have reduced the number on which there was not agreement at the end of last year. However, some issues still have not been resolved.

We have attempted to change our method of operating somewhat, in that we are bringing in a secretariat so that, rather than us sitting around the table and trying to take minutes and resolve issues at the same time, we can have suggestions put to us by officials. I hope that all the parties, when they meet later on this week, will agree that that is the right way forward. We produced a paper, which was circulated to all the party leaders. I have not heard anybody indicating that they are unhappy with that way forward. Hopefully, all the parties will sit down seriously and expeditiously to deal with those matters.

Welfare Reform

5. **Mr Weir** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the present position of welfare

reform in Northern Ireland and whether there have been any further discussions with the UK Government on the subject. (AQT 1305/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The Executive last considered the matter on the basis of two proposals. The first was that the Executive would meet to deal with the issue on their own, so that they would not lose their focus on other Executive business. The second was that, rather than us bandying about figures and the potential problems that may arise either by accepting welfare reform on the revised basis put forward by the Minister for Social Development or otherwise — there are at least two sets of figures out there on what the likely cost is, as well as all sorts of questions about whether we could undertake the payments through computerisation, what the delay might be and what the cost of that would be — we task some consultant to look at those specific issues so that we have a common reference point, so nobody can argue, “No, it’s not £400 million. It’s something else”.

I think that it is essential that we get to that stage. When we have that, everybody in the Executive will have all the information that they need to take the decision, knowing what the outcome will be if they go for the revised package on welfare reform, and, equally, they will be aware of what the consequences will be if they do not.

Mr Weir: I thank the First Minister for his answer. The First Minister spoke of consequences. Will he outline whether he has any expectations of any shift in position on the issue of the Westminster Government, and, if not, what the financial consequences for areas such as health and education would be?

Mr P Robinson: I apologise to the Member. He had a second leg to his first question about the United Kingdom Government’s position. I have spoken on a number of occasions to the Secretary of State on the issue. She has made it absolutely clear to me that, as far as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is concerned, it has finished its negotiations on the issue. There will be no further concession from Her Majesty’s Government on the matter. That was stressed again when the deputy First Minister and I met Nick Clegg in the fringes of the Guernsey British-Irish summit meeting, making it very clear that anything else that we do on welfare reform, we need to do ourselves. So, if the package is to improve, it will improve because we decide to do something in addition to what is in the proposal set by Nelson McCausland.

We are happy to talk about those issues and how the programme can be put out in a form that makes it more acceptable, because, do not forget, within the package that Nelson McCausland brought forward, there was a multi-million pound contingency fund being set up to deal with the hardship cases. So, we can work on that to be more specific about how it would be used. I was at the report stage of the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre last Friday. It has indicated the vast increase in its work because of debt and welfare issues. There may well be a requirement for us, as part of that package, to do something to resource advice centres better to deal with those issues. I know from my advice centre that the number of people coming in with heavy envelopes and bin bags full of bills, some of them unopened, indicates that there are very real difficulties with debt and welfare that we need to get addressed.

Parading Season

6. **Mr Humphrey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, building on the very dignified Apprentice Boys’ parade down Donegall Street at Easter, whether the First Minister agrees that Friday night’s Tour of the North parade in Mr Humphrey’s North Belfast constituency was dignified and disciplined, wishes to congratulate the Orange Institution for that, and further agrees that it has set the tone for a very peaceful parading season this year. (AQT 1306/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I join the Member in congratulating all those who have been involved in expressing their culture in a way that is not offensive to anyone else and which has gone off lawfully and peacefully, and that is the process that I want to see continue. I hope that it is a harbinger of things to come. This Province is set back when there is violence and disorder on the streets. The central issue has to be about tolerance and respect — tolerance of the parades and respect by those on parades. Those have to be the central features of a good summer for us.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the First Minister for his answer. The First Minister, like me, has been at meetings recently with the Parades Commission. Given that the former Parades Commission rewarded violence with its determination last year for the 12 July evening at Ardoyne for the Ligoniel lodges returning, does the First Minister agree with me that the current and new commission is in danger of being seen by the public in Northern Ireland as being intimidated by the threat of violence from dissident republicans?

Mr P Robinson: The issue is not new. There is a feeling in the loyalist and unionist community that those who wag the largest stick are the ones who get heard. That is not the way for us to go in the Government or in any institutions of Government. As soon as you start rewarding people for violence or the threat of violence, you encourage more violence and more threats and maybe not just from those who have issued them in the first place. If you teach people the message that violence works, they will say, “Well, the only way that we are going to get our parade down the road is to have greater violence.”

That is not a message that any politician wants to endorse.

Let us be very clear: the Parades Commission should be taking decisions, and there should always be a presumption in favour of a parade. In my view, attempts must always be made to resolve outstanding issues, but, if they are to be resolved, they must be resolved on the basis that nobody thinks that the default position is automatically going to be that there is going to be no parade.

2.45 pm

A5: Executive Commitment

7. **Ms Boyle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an assurance of the Executive’s ongoing commitment to the A5 dual carriageway project. (AQT 1307/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: This is an Executive decision, and the Executive agreed to the project. We have had several setbacks, the first of which was when the Government of the Republic of Ireland decided that, because of their economic difficulties, they could not keep the

commitment that they had given and, instead, reduced that commitment. We went forward with the reduced commitment, but the courts knocked us back on the basis that some environmental work was required. None of that reduces our commitment to the scheme. Obviously, we await from the Minister for Regional Development information that leads us to expect another application. I hope that it will be submitted in a form that can withstand any challenge in the courts. The next small task will be for the Finance Ministers to find us the appropriate amount to carry out the scheme.

Education

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Questions 2 and 12 have been withdrawn.

Home Education: NEELB

1. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education why the North Eastern Education and Library Board sought the legal advice, which led to the consultation on the draft policy on elective home education. (AQO 6412/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I understand that in light of legal advice received by the North Eastern Education and Library Board, following litigation in which a home education issue arose, the education and library board reviewed its arrangements for ensuring that the parents of children and young people who are electively home educated provide an efficient and suitable full-time education for their children.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Minister for his answer, but he cannot be oblivious to the very real concern among home educators. Therefore, does he agree that proposing massive changes based on an interpretation of the law, which is not shared by the educational authorities in England, Wales or Scotland, is potentially damaging? Will he confirm to the House whether he has sought legal advice on the issue?

Mr O'Dowd: This is not England, Wales or Scotland. We have our own education legislation, including on home education. A consultation is going on. While I will keep an open mind on the consultation and the guidance that will be issued by the education and library boards, I have a concern that the majority of Members who have spoken on the matter have spoken about the needs of the adult and not of the child.

Can everyone in the Chamber reassure themselves? In what way do you reassure yourself that a child who is being home educated is being properly home educated? How do you reassure yourself of that? I ask that because it appears to me that everyone who has spoken on the matter thus far is completely reassured — they have no hesitation whatsoever in endorsing the current guidance and saying, “Yes, children are being properly home educated. We can reassure ourselves, 100%, that, in every case, the children are being properly home educated.” However, as I said in my initial answer, it has already gone as far as litigation against one of the boards because that was not the case. Therefore, we have a legal duty to make sure that we are doing it properly. I think that we also have a moral duty to make sure that we are doing it properly.

Mr Storey: It is disappointing that the Education Minister has cast a slur on parents who make the choice to educate their children at home. I think that he should seriously reflect on what he has said in the House today. Will the Minister confirm that representatives from his Department attended meetings of the strategic regional group on this issue?

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Storey continues to have selective hearing as well as selective education policies. I have not cast a slur on parents who are involved in home education.

Mr Storey: You did.

Mr O'Dowd: What I am saying is — *[Interruption.]* What I am saying is — *[Interruption.]* What I am saying is —

Mr Campbell: It sounded like it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Deputy Speaker, if people who wish to be a Minister but cannot make it to the role of Minister continue to interrupt me, it is very hard to do Question Time. The Member appears desperately to require a Dispatch Box in front of him. Perhaps the First Minister, who has just left, will treat him to a Dispatch Box some day.

What I said was that we have a duty of care to the children involved, and we do have a duty of care to those children. In my original answer, I pointed out that this has reached litigation stage and entered the realms of law. The law has said that the guidance requires to be reviewed. The education and library boards have taken it on board and reviewed it. I do not have in front of me a diary of every meeting that my officials have ever attended, nor do I wish to have such a diary, but I regret the fact that the boards did not present me with the consultation documents before issuing. However, I believe that the consultation should continue. I have committed to the House and to others that, at the end of it, I will sign off the guidance if I am satisfied that it is in compliance with the legislation.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí. Will the Minister tell us what arrangements are in place to monitor the education provided to children at home?

Mr O'Dowd: The arrangements are broadly as follows. The boards have advised that they do not undertake inspections of home education. While the Education and Training Inspectorate provides inspection services for a number of organisations, it does not undertake inspections of home education provision. The boards have various arrangements in place to monitor the education provided to children who are educated at home. This includes annual visits to a child's home, reviewing samples of a child's work and providing advice to parents on how to support their child's education.

I understand that the boards' draft home education guidance document does not include any reference to the inspection process but proposes that each board will undertake monitoring that will focus on a child's welfare; ensure that a child has access to education suited to his or her age, ability and aptitude; and provide advice to parents on educational resources. It would be very difficult for anybody in the House to disagree with those three points: the boards will monitor a child's welfare; it will be ensured that a child has access to education suitable to his or her age; and advice will be provided to parents on educational resources. Are Members opposite and to my left —

physically rather than politically — suggesting that that should not be the case? I do not see any difficulties in any of those three matters. However, I have said, and I repeat, that we will assure that whatever guidance is issued is in compliance with the law.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his answers thus far. Given that there has been no public advertising of the consultation process for elective home education, how would parents who are considering such education for their children know about the consultation?

Mr O'Dowd: I do not have the full details of how the programme was advertised, but it is fair to say that the consultation process has garnered sufficient publicity. I have answered questions on it in the House on several occasions. I have quite a healthy-sized mailbag relating to home education, and Members are asking questions about it, so it is out there. People are aware of it, and responses are being made to the consultation. If there are ways to improve knowledge of the consultation, I will advise the boards of those. However, I emphasise that this is a board consultation. The education and library boards have taken on the consultation, and, at this stage, my only role will be to ensure that I am satisfied that the final guidance is in compliance with the legislation.

Anti-bullying Forum

3. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the work of the Anti-bullying Forum. (AQO 6414/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Anti-bullying Forum comprises departmental and education and library board officials along with representatives of around 20 voluntary sector organisations. Each has a particular interest or expertise in the issue, and the Anti-bullying Forum collectively aims to tackle bullying in our schools and communities.

Over the last year, the Anti-bullying Forum worked with 7,000 pupils in 37 schools to raise awareness and provide anti-bullying training. It has engaged with over 1,000 young people in 26 non-school settings, providing workshops and presentations to youth groups, after-school clubs and community organisations. The forum has held 10 seminars aimed at enhancing anti-bullying policies and practices in schools, attracting 283 school leaders from across all education and library boards and school types. Six hundred and forty schools and 77 organisations took part in the Anti-Bullying Forum's anti-bullying week 2013, and over 1,700 children submitted entries for the art and creative writing competition held as part of that.

At my request, the forum also undertook a review of current anti-bullying legislation, existing guidance to schools, current policies and practices in schools and specialist support services available. I intend to consider all the priority work areas identified by the review, and my officials are in discussion with the forum to agree a joint work programme for 2014 and beyond. However, it is my intention to bring anti-bullying legislation to the House during this mandate.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for his response. Will he further clarify what issues the forum reviewed and identified as priorities to be taken forward? Is there a timeline for that work? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr O'Dowd: The review identified these four priority issues: wide variations in the quality of current school anti-bullying policies; inconsistent recording of incidents

of bullying; a need for additional resources to address particularly complex issues such as cyberbullying; and the need for research to identify the true scale and nature of the problem. As I said, I intend to consider all these areas to see what actions can be taken forward in the short and long term. My officials are in discussion with the forum to agree a joint work programme for the 2014-15 year and beyond, which will include bringing legislation to the House to tighten up our anti-bullying legislation.

Mr Wilson: The Minister indicated that he intends to introduce some legislation in future. Can he give us an assurance that the legislation will be framed in such a way as to ensure that the maintained sector is held equally as accountable as the controlled sector would be, given that there seems to be an ability for schools in the maintained sector to take an much looser attitude towards bullying than would be tolerated in some of the controlled sector schools.

Mr O'Dowd: There is absolutely no evidence to support that statement whatsoever. Regardless of which sector or school bad practice takes place in, it should not be taking place. The current legislation stipulates that every school has to have an anti-bullying policy. It is the quality and rigour of those anti-bullying policies that have been called into question, by research carried out by the Anti-Bullying Forum and by anecdotal evidence that has come to hand, which is one reason why I believe we have to move towards bringing tighter legislation to the House to protect young people from the impacts of bullying.

There is no evidence to support Mr Wilson's statement, and I can assure him that any legislation that I bring forward will cover all sectors in education, as would be the case under equality legislation for any legislation that is brought to this House.

Mr Eastwood: Research tells us that tackling bullying effectively must be done in a cross-departmental way. Can the Minister tell the House what kind of work he has done with other Departments and Ministers around cyberbullying in particular?

Mr O'Dowd: I have worked with the Health Minister in the suicide prevention group, and one of the areas covered in that is cyberbullying. It has addressed a wide spectrum of areas, including how we tackle the ever-growing and ever-changing phenomenon of cyberbullying. I am involved in that, as are a significant number of other Ministers, and we will continue to engage at that level.

Bullying takes many forms and shapes. It can be brought about by individuals for many different reasons. We often find that those carrying out the bullying are also facing significant challenges, either in their home life, their family life or in other aspects of their life. We have to ensure that schools have proper policies in place to help prevent and tackle bullying when it occurs.

I have to say that there are also many fine examples of schools being proactive in challenging the perception of bullying, challenging bullying behaviour and helping to eradicate bullying from the school. So, while in recent days there have perhaps been examples of poor practice, there are certainly many examples of good practice as well.

3.00 pm

Mr Copeland: Thank you for your answers so far, Minister. Minister, the party to which you belong introduced an anti-

bullying private Member's Bill in Dáil Éireann, although, strangely, you have not yet sought to bring in similar standards here. Do you accept that failure to act on the issue, for whatever reason, is having particularly negative consequences for tackling homophobic bullying across Northern Ireland?

Mr O'Dowd: I welcome the Member's interest in Dáil Éireann and my party's all-Ireland policies. One of the reasons why I am introducing legislation, as I have already indicated to my colleague Michaela Boyle, is that part of the remit of the review that the anti-bullying forum carried out was to look at the possibility of introducing legislation, and it appears to me that that is the way forward. I have taken steps to work towards the introduction of legislation. However, I want to make sure that we have the proper legislation in place — legislation that is effective against all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. We do not need legislation now: homophobic bullying is wrong and should be tackled by schools, and they have the powers to do so *[Interruption.]* Principal Deputy Speaker, you have competition for your job: Mr Campbell is now yearning to be behind that desk as well as behind the Dispatch Box *[Interruption.]* It is really a pity for him.

Crumlin Integrated College

4. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the current position of Crumlin Integrated College. (AQO 6415/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Crumlin Integrated College entered the formal intervention process on 1 February 2010. The most recent follow-up inspection at the school was in March 2014, and the inspectorate reported that the quality of education provided by the school is now good. I welcome the fact that the school has continued to show steady improvement since the original inspection in January 2010. The Department is now considering whether the school should exit the formal intervention process. It is imperative that the decision taken is fully considered and is in the best interests of the young people attending the school.

Future post-primary education in Crumlin is the responsibility in the first instance of the North Eastern Board, working closely with other stakeholders. On 11 June the board announced that it supported the concept of shared post-primary education in the town. A business case for shared education will be prepared by the board and other potential stakeholders. It will establish whether such provision can be viable and sustainable and meet the educational needs of pupils into the future. I understand that a development proposal or proposals will be presented to the board before the end of October this year. The date for a possible change would be September 2016. Should a new management model be proposed, it would represent a significant change to the character of the school. The board as a managing authority would therefore have to publish a development proposal that would come to me for consideration.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer. I congratulate the school on how well it has done and thank the North Eastern Education and Library Board and the working party for all the work that they are doing. We have a very positive future for the school, but there is still one thing that I need the Minister to work on: how do we get positive statements from the boards and the Department

to stop parents bleeding away to other schools? We have a very positive future, but it still leaves doubt in people's minds. We have to get rid of the doubt and make people believe that the school will exist. Will he and his Department take that on board and find a way to be positive about the future?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not on record as saying anything negative about the school. There have been inspection reports, and they have published their findings. The latest inspection report said that the education at the school was good. My Department has to make some decisions about whether it should exit the formal intervention process. My officials will make that decision as quickly as possible. There are positive developments, and I very much welcome the fact that, through the North Eastern Education and Library Board and other stakeholders, there is advanced planning on schooling in the Crumlin area. However, I am limited in what I can say about any possible development proposals that are published as, after all, I will be the final decision-maker on them.

Preschool Places: Criteria

5. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to review the criteria used to determine preschool nursery places. (AQO 6416/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All preschool providers are responsible for setting their admissions criteria in accordance with guidance supplied by the Department of Education. However, the Pre-School Education in Schools (Admissions Criteria) Regulations 1999 require providers to give priority to children from socially disadvantaged circumstances. Research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children, so they are given priority in the preschool admissions process as part of my wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement. Social disadvantage is currently defined as parents in receipt of certain benefits. Approximately 24% of children in preschool settings across the North meet those criteria. However, in many settings that percentage is much lower.

The review of preschool admissions recommended that the definition of socially disadvantaged circumstances be examined with a view to mirroring the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals entitlement. That area will be reviewed, and I will want to ensure that there remains a process that is fair and transparent, to ensure that the children who are most at risk of educational underachievement are encouraged and supported from the outset.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that the current criteria, which, as he said, give preference to those who are socially disadvantaged, discriminates against many working families who are themselves socially disadvantaged and are on the breadline? Can you give some justification for that?

Mr O'Dowd: The current criteria for social disadvantage are limited to income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or an award of income support that has been converted into employment and support allowance and the level of benefit has remained the same. I would like to broaden that to low-income families who are working, but the issue of welfare reform and where and how it will

be settled has caused a delay in broadening it. I certainly want to ensure that children who face educational barriers such as social disadvantage are included in the criteria, whether their parents are low-income workers or low-income on benefits. There is work to be done there, and we await the outcome of the discussions on welfare reform and how that matter is settled.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Given that a large number of Members in the House seem willfully blind to the legacy of poverty and, indeed, social deprivation, will the Minister reiterate why it is important that preschool admission places acknowledge the effect of same?

Mr O'Dowd: The research tells us that that is the case. Indeed, the Member is a member of the Public Accounts Committee, which recently published a report that indicated a need to target and tackle social disadvantage as it has a detrimental impact on young children from those backgrounds. That is one of the reasons why I made the changes to the common funding formula.

It is an internationally recognised concept, as well. A number of times, I have reflected in the House on my educational visits to Canada and how they are identifying the matter and targeting need where it exists. It is a reality within education and something that we have to take on board. If we are serious about ensuring that every young person has an opportunity in life, we have to make those interventions as early as possible.

Mrs D Kelly: In the first part of his answer, the Minister referred to free school meals. I think that he brought forward an initiative to increase the opportunity for people to apply, on the basis of an income eligibility of some £16,000. Do you not believe that that would be a better measure for preschool play? That would recognise the fact that many people are on incomes that are much less than £16,000 and that working families are particularly under pressure with affordable childcare.

Mr O'Dowd: I would not argue against the Member on the point, and the fact that we brought in that criterion for free school meals entitlement is a recognition that many families who are working are on low incomes and are facing the challenges that come with that. We have hesitated to review the social disadvantage entry criteria in preschool settings, because welfare reform has always been looming. That has delayed our implementation of any review in that regard. However, if there is continued delay in the implementation of welfare reform — I have to say that I am not arguing against that — I may well move forward and introduce different criteria for preschool settings as well.

Integrated Education: Demand

6. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Education what assessment has been made of the demand for integrated education in areas where no integrated schools currently exist. (AQO 6417/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department funds the Council for Integrated Education to encourage and promote integrated education. The council received £646,000 of public money last year to fulfil this role. The funding available to it this year is £665,000. NICIE's mission is to lead, promote

and facilitate the development and growth of integrated education through a range of approaches, including innovation, influence and working with others.

The council has appointed a panel of associates to assist in fulfilling its role, particularly in relation to area planning. I have commissioned the education and library boards, working in conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and engaging with other sectors, to coordinate strategic planning in each board area to shape the future provision of education in that area. Given the respective roles of the organisations involved, it is clear that planning for new integrated education provision is dependent on collaboration between NICIE, the boards and the CCMS. It is the responsibility of the proposer of new integrated education provision to make the case for change on the basis of robust evidence that demonstrates demand and is based on the creation of viable and sustainable provision in line with the sustainable schools policy.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his answer and declare an interest as a director of NICIE. In this process, what work is being done in recognising the lack of Catholic maintained schools that have transferred in the past and on how we can meet the demand for integrated education in areas where the Catholic sector is dominant?

Mr O'Dowd: In my tenure, I have never been responsible for bringing development proposals for schools in the controlled sector or any other sector to convert to the integrated sector, and I do not believe that previous Education Ministers have been responsible for that either. This is a matter for local communities, and it is a matter for the parents whose children attend the schools in those local communities to make the decisions that the Member has outlined. It is not within my legislative remit to demand that any individual school or any sector makes development proposals to convert their school to the integrated sector. This has to be community led, parent led and school led. We fund the integrated sector with a not insignificant amount of money, it has to be said, to facilitate and assist in that process.

Mr I McCrea: The Minister told us what is not within his remit, but it is within his remit to ensure that all integrated schools are compliant with the legislation that establishes integrated schools. Can he outline what he is doing to deal with that problem?

Mr O'Dowd: There has been an interesting shift in positions on integrated education over the last number of weeks, particularly from the Member's party. Last week, we had them voting against a motion in the Assembly that promoted and supported integrated education and called on me as Minister to live up to my statutory duties. Members voted against that, and now we have a Member calling on me to carry out an audit of all of the integrated schools to see whether they are fully living up to the legislation. My role would be much better served by me living up to my statutory obligation and the comments made by others in the Chamber in relation to integrated education, rather than what the Member seeks me to do, which is to go around and start going through the books of every integrated school.

Mr Cree: Has the Minister discussed the implications of the Treacy judgement with the integrated sector, and when will he make a statement to the House on this?

Mr O'Dowd: On the implications of the Treacy judgement I still await a final briefing from the Department's legal advisers, so I would much prefer to wait for a full legal briefing from them on the matter. The House has had an opportunity to discuss the matter: only last week, there was a motion before the Assembly that had been tabled by the Alliance Party. That is the debate that I referred to, when some Members who had previously been quite vocal in support of integrated education voted against the facilitation and promotion of integrated education. I am more than happy to make a statement to the House if need be, and I still have a question mark in my head on whether there is a need for me to make a statement to the House on the most recent Treacy judgement. I will take that into consideration after I have had discussions with the legal advisers.

Mr Lyttle: Is the Minister aware that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is proposing to remove reference to integrated education as an indicator in the good relations indicators held by OFMDFM? Has he considered the alternative suggestions put forward on the inclusion of integrated education?

If so, will he support its inclusion in good relations indicators, given his statutory duty to facilitate and promote integrated education?

3.15 pm

Mr O'Dowd: I have been aware of it through a number of interventions from the Member, possibly in the House but certainly in the media. If he wishes to provide me with more details, I will certainly take a more careful and considered examination of the matter and respond in due course.

Schools: East Antrim

7. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Education when he will authorise commencement of the new capital school build projects in East Antrim. (AQO 6418/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My capital announcement to the Assembly on 22 January 2013 included two new primary school projects for east Antrim to be advanced in planning; namely, Corran Integrated Primary School in Larne and a new school to meet the needs of children in Islandmagee and the surrounding area. An economic appraisal for the Corran Integrated Primary School project is currently being prepared. The allocation of capital budget to progress design and construction will not be made until the economic appraisal has been approved. The Islandmagee project has been withdrawn pending a development proposal and consultation process by the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I regret that the time is up for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Academic Selection

1. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Education to comment on the recent Institute of Education report, which concluded that selective schooling systems increase inequality. (AQT 1311/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is yet another useful piece of research, carried out beyond these shores it has to be said, that perhaps gives an opportunity for political parties and

educators in this society to tackle the question of academic selection and its negative impact on both education and our society.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he also agree that the report provides further evidence, if further evidence were needed, that academic selection prevents the creation of a broad social mix in schools, which international experience shows benefits all learners?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an cheist. The report does exactly what the Member said: it provides further information in that regard. However, much of that information has been available from the early 1970s and into the 1980s. Whatever the motivations were for introducing academic selection six decades ago, those motivations no longer stack up. If people were serious that academic selection was a tool to increase social mobility, all the recent evidence from here, from Britain and internationally tells us that it does not promote social mobility. In fact, it restricts it.

Ofsted said recently — I know that some Members held Ofsted in high regard during a debate in the Chamber last week on inspection — that academic selection stuffs grammar schools full of middle-class kids. Some may argue that that should be the case, but international evidence shows that, where you have a social mix and an ability mix in a school, the outcomes for all the children are better. So, if we are serious about social mobility, if we are serious about the educational well-being of all our young people, and if we are serious about having an economy that has the skills to move forward, and to continue to move forward, through the 21st century, there is only one answer: you have to end academic selection.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Tom Buchanan is not in his place.

Schools: Capital Build Projects

3. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister of Education for an indication of the total value of the projects he will announce tomorrow in his statement on his capital plans. (AQT 1313/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an cheist. I hope to be in a position tomorrow to announce projects somewhere in the region of £180 million moving forward. I could be in a position to read out a lengthy list of schools that require being built, and there are many, many schools in our society that require rebuilding. However, on coming into office, I made the conscious decision that I would announce a number of schools on each occasion. I am confident that those schools can be moved forward reasonably quickly. Even with that, as I have reported to the House before, there can be delays.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answer. Regarding previous capital announcements, can the Minister give any indication of how many projects are now on-site? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr O'Dowd: In my statement to the House in June 2012, I announced 18 newbuild school projects. One of those is complete, seven are on-site, and a further eight are expected to move on-site before the end of the current financial year. The remaining two schemes are at an

earlier stage of development and are not expected to be on-site until the 2015-16 financial year.

In January 2013, I announced a further programme of 22 newbuilds. At the time, I announced that these projects were in a very early stage of planning. They continue to move through the economic appraisal stage and the various design stages that are set forth.

SEELB: Membership

4. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Education whether he will bring forward proposals and recommendations to make the South Eastern Education and Library Board membership accountable and democratic, as opposed to continuing with the current appointees. (AQT 1314/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While I accept the principle of the board being accountable and democratic, the reason why the delay has been so lengthy in appointing elected representatives to the South Eastern Education and Library Board has been the elusive topic of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). At least two Programmes for Government had commitments to putting ESA in place during the time frame for those mandates of the Executive.

It is now clear to everyone that ESA is not going to happen. I intend to bring forward a paper to the Executive, hopefully in the next number of weeks, that will set out the pathway ahead, which will see the South Eastern Education and Library Board, along with other boards, being collapsed into one board, with elected representatives in place.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for that answer. Does he agree that the fact that he is now into a judicial review situation with parents whose children go to Newtownbreda High School is an indication that he has been poorly served by this board, given its lack of connection and understanding of the views of the local community?

Mr O'Dowd: Given the fact that that judicial review is sitting today and tomorrow, the least said is easiest mended.

Ballee Community High School

5. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils who currently attend Ballee Community High School have been placed in other schools for September, when the school will have closed, and how many have yet to be placed. (AQT 1315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As of today, of the 94 pupils at Ballee Community High School, 85 have been placed in other schools. Two pupils have left the jurisdiction. The remaining seven pupils can be classified as follows: four applications are being considered by schools; two pupils with behavioural issues are being assisted to find placements, and one of them has done so but there are further details to be worked out; and one pupil's family are on holidays until next week and will be contacted on their return.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the fact that I had asked that same question last Monday as a priority for today and it was not answered, does that just demonstrate, Minister, that, as with the question not being answered, the North Eastern Education and Library Board had no real plan to assist these children and the schools that would accommodate them in future?

Mr O'Dowd: I apologise if the Member's priority question was not responded to within the timescale that it should have been, but the figures that I read out to the Member show clearly that considerable work has been carried out here. Of the 94 pupils, 85 have been placed, four other applications are being considered, and one pupil's family are away on holidays. I think that the work has been carried out in relation to this matter and that children are being placed, following the closure of the school in question.

Schools: Disadvantaged Communities

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Fra McCann.

Mr F McCann: You nearly forgot my name there, Mitchel.

6. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister of Education to comment on the recent Westminster Education Committee's finding that schools serving disadvantaged communities should be given additional government support. (AQT 1316/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: This, again, reflects Mr Milne's question and others during this session. It is evident that, where the greatest need is, government is required to intervene to ensure that young people are given an advantage over the disadvantage that they have been placed in through no fault of their own. The reports from the Westminster Committee and the evidence presented to it reflect other such reports that have been published locally and elsewhere. Social disadvantage has a detrimental impact on educational outworkings. It has to be tackled, and I believe that government has a responsibility to do so.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat. Can the Minister elaborate on the reasons behind the link between disadvantage and poor educational attainment?

Mr O'Dowd: Some of it may be tied to the educational experiences of a child's parent or parents. If a child's parents have had a good education and are in employment and have the resources to assist a child with extra-curricular activities and an enhanced home life, it can assist that child's educational journey. There is a significant link between the educational experience of the mother and that of her children. Parents with a good educational background are most likely to be employed, have access to extra-curricular activities, go on family holidays and be involved in weekend activities and sporting activities, such as those offered by the swimming club and the local football club. All those things cost £3 or £4 a go. Parents in the room will know what it costs to send a child away on extra-curricular or sporting activities. All of those assist a child in its overall development and its educational development. Where a child suffers from social disadvantage, those extra-curricular activities are not there, the educational experience of the parents is most likely not there and none of that is fed into the child's experiences. If we want to break that cycle, we, as a Government, have to step in and do something.

Education and Library Boards: Budgets

7. **Mr I McCreagh** asked the Minister of Education to confirm whether the budgets for the education and library boards have been signed off for this year. (AQT 1317/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The budgets have not been confirmed. There are still issues to be resolved, one of which is the June monitoring round.

Mr I McCrea: That is disappointing news. Given that there are people in boards who are being given notice of redundancy, does the Minister not accept that this is an important issue and must be dealt with as a matter of urgency?

Mr O'Dowd: I totally agree with the Member and assure him that I am not dealing with it in a complacent manner, but the fact of the matter is that the budgets do not add up in terms of what is required by our education and library boards and what I, as a Minister, have to give to them.

There is a series of issues at play here. I made bids in the June monitoring round for £10 million for special educational needs (SEN) and £10 million for redundancies, and I have made other significant bids for money for maintenance etc for the boards. Until June monitoring is resolved, it is difficult for me to predict what my departmental budget will be at the end, never mind what the education and library boards' budgets will be. I will continue to attempt to resolve the matter, and I accept that this is a situation that none of us wants to be in.

Education Budget

8. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Education how much of his Budget allocation that was not spent he has failed to return to DFP in this monitoring round. (AQT 1318/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am not in a position to hold moneys back from DFP that have not been spent. I am proud and glad to say that my Department is one of the very few that has not returned significant amounts of money to DFP during monitoring rounds, whether it was this monitoring round or previous monitoring rounds. I always ask why Departments have argued for such budgets when they are able to hand back tens of millions of pounds during the monitoring rounds. Under the financial regulations that I operate to, I cannot hold moneys back during the monitoring rounds if I believe that they will not be spent. I have no moneys available or not targeted at this stage in my budgetary planning. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the Minister for his reply. Are you happy enough with your budget? Is it sufficient to support all the educational needs?

Mr O'Dowd: No. I have said since coming into office that the education budget is not sufficient. All Departments faced significant cuts to their budget when the coalition Government came into office. The block grant was cut by billions, as was the capital budget, which is one of the reasons why I cannot announce more schools tomorrow. The education budget is far from healthy — far from healthy. Our schools and our boards are all working under pressure, and we need to continue to identify ways of ensuring that education receives greater allocations, whether that is before the end of this CSR period or as part of the next round of negotiations on budgets. Education must be properly funded if we want to build the stable society that everyone wishes for.

3.30 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Michael Copeland is not in his place.

Schools: Diversity Programmes

10. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to introduce programmes in schools to encourage children to think about the differences around them. (AQT 1320/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: We have programmes in schools for children to do exactly that. Part of the community relations, equality and diversity (CRED) policy is to ensure that young children start interacting and engaging with others from different communities or backgrounds, whether racial, social or whatever. Many of our schools already participate in programmes such as that, and the shared education programme is moving forward. I hope to be in a position in a number of weeks' time, along with Executive colleagues, to announce funding for a continued shared education programme. Schools have access to courses and are carrying out such work, but we want to promote and increase it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: While we change the top Table, I invite Members to take their ease before the next item of business.

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

Private Members' Business

Key Stage Assessments

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and 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 Storey: I beg to move

That this Assembly expresses concern that principals and teachers in schools no longer have any confidence in end of Key Stage assessments; notes with concern that the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's approach to end of Key Stage assessments is not fit for purpose; and calls on the Minister of Education to halt the present process, review other assessment for learning tools that schools currently use and introduce a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning.

I am proud to move the motion at the end of term. If we can do anything for our schools and our education system, we can give them good news at the end of the term. We can give them something of value rather than what they have had to date, which has caused them grave and ongoing concern. We live in an age when change seems to be the only constant. In every facet of life, we hear, almost daily, of changes that will impact on our lives. For all of us, the global village is an increasing reality, so it is nice to know that, in the midst of all these changes, one thing never changes: for the past 16 years that Sinn Féin has held the education portfolio, assessment has continued to be an absolute, total shambles.

Mr Sheehan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Storey: I am not giving way to you, no. It seems as though the Minister is in a bad mood today. I hope that before this ends, he will be in a worse mood.

We have heard all about change. It seems to be the only word that the Shinners know these days: "We're going to change. We're going to change". They have changed absolutely nothing in our school system in a way that has helped our teachers on this issue. What they have done is ignored the teachers, blamed the teachers and decided, "Oh, that's somebody else's fault; it's not ours". It is time that this Education Minister realised the feeling that there is on the issue.

On 11 March this year, the Minister came to the House with his latest statement on a way forward for evaluation and assessment. He told us what the OECD had said:

"The practice of having this sort of universal, formative assessment in primary schools, mapped to our curriculum and delivered at the start of the academic year, is noted with approval by the OECD, so the policy is sound. However, it follows that a sound policy is

no good if its implementation is not up to scratch." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 93, p43, col 2].

Basically, what was the OECD saying? I think that it was saying that the policy was reasonably good but the implementation was absolutely and totally abysmal. Whose fault is that? That is not the fault of teachers or Members of the Assembly. You cannot blame selection. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the Minister and his Department.

Around the same time that the Minister was making that pronouncement in the House, I had meetings with the Ballymena primary principals' group. I also had, as other Members did, representations from the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) primary principals' group, which had looked at the issue. At that meeting — listen, Minister — not 5% or 4%, but 70% of principals in the area, including those from maintained schools, Irish-medium schools, controlled schools, integrated schools and whatever name of any school you want to put on it, said that the process is — these are not my words — beyond repair. Let us hear that loudly and clearly in the House today. With Her gracious Majesty The Queen visiting Northern Ireland today and over the next few days, that is in as plain English as I can put it to the Member opposite and to the Minister: it is beyond repair. It is time that he listened. The problems that have arisen as a result of the evaluation and assessment are summed up in that comment.

I believe that everyone in the Assembly still accepts that we need assessment and evaluation, and a policy that maps out the curriculum in a particular way, but it is clear that this process has not worked. The process has been compounded by a number of problems, which I want to deal with, time permitting.

The first problem is the setting up of consultation processes for the committed. That is what the Department and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) have been guilty of over the years: listen only to the things you want to hear. That was the problem with computer-based assessment. Independent reviews have made it abundantly clear, and all the warning signs were there throughout the procurement process of the Northern Ireland numeracy assessment (NINA) and the Northern Ireland literacy assessment (NILA). Indeed, they had been there for lessons to be learned from the interactive computerised assessment system (InCAS). Did anyone listen? No. We just ignore teachers and, when necessary, blame them because that is convenient.

When the Education Committee raised the problem at the start of the process, the departmental officials clung doggedly to the view that there was not a problem and got to the stage of blaming everybody else. So it is with the end of Key Stage assessments. Teachers are saying that it is broken beyond repair. They have no faith in the tests or the process, yet we hear, "The policy is OK so we will just keep on going": hear only what you want to hear. The Minister keeps telling us that lessons are being learned, but perhaps he does not understand that the practical outworking of those lessons being learned is that he and his Department listen to the issues that are causing real concern in our schools.

The second problem is that we cannot make up our mind on the purpose of assessment. Again, the OECD report has been enlightening, and it makes the point that, if

you have a system of evaluation and assessment, it is important to clarify its purpose. It stated that diagnostic and formative tests should not be used to summarise the accountability processes; the more purposes a test is used for, the more compromised it becomes; and it is possible to have a test that serves a number of purposes, but clarity is needed in its design and use. Levels of progression and Key Stage assessments were meant to be used by teachers for diagnostic and formative purposes, yet one of the key problems is that they are used for summative and accountability purposes. So, the Department looked at the number of pupils who achieved level 4 at Key Stage 2 in English and maths and started to hold everyone to account on that basis. What happens? An assessment-for-learning tool becomes a high-stake test for schools, and this comes from the Department that believes that you dare not have high-stake tests and test children in that environment because that is educationally unsound and morally unjust.

It seems as though, when it suits the Department, it can do what it likes and cover it up and call it what it will.

Here is the challenge to the Minister. The end of term comes at the end of this week. Does he believe that he can continue to ignore teachers? He can ignore me; that is an irrelevance. He can be angry and put on his angry head as he did earlier when asked questions, but he cannot continue to ignore teachers. From the smallest school in Northern Ireland to the largest, I have not yet met one teacher who has told me, the Education Committee or any member of it that the assessment process is working.

I call on the Minister to do what we have set out in the motion: stop the tinkering. That is why we are not accepting, as he will be glad to know, the amendment. What does the amendment tell us? The amendment says that it is really not a problem, and what we will do is we will talk about it; we will have more talks about talks, and then we will come up with an idea and, hopefully, move the process forward. The message is as clear as I can make it: Minister, this process needs to come to an end now. Bring it to an end and give teachers something worthwhile over the summer break so that, when they come back in September, they are not facing a process which, one teacher told me, is not fit to be given to parents. They will tell parents that. Even the OECD has told us that there is a problem with the implementation. The Minister comes to the House and tells us about the virtues of this international organisation coming from other lands into Northern Ireland to look at our system. It has told him that there is an issue; so it is now time, Minister, for you to act.

Schools use assessment tools, and they use the tools Progress in English and Progress in Maths in a way that is useful, educational and verifiable. I know, of course, what the Minister will tell me, as CCEA has told me: "It is not based on a Northern Ireland cohort". Then, we get into all the technicalities and the bureaucracy of it.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Storey: Minister, I would prefer to depend on the professionalism of the teachers in our classrooms than the bureaucrats in your Department and you, as the leader of that Department, because you and the Department have failed teachers and ultimately children on this issue. You should bring it to an end.

Mr Hazzard: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "expresses" and insert:

"support for end of Key Stage assessment; notes the endorsement of the principles of the current assessment system as outlined in the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report; recognises the concern of principals and teachers about some elements of Key Stage assessments; notes the progress made in recent discussions between the Department of Education and teachers' representatives in dealing with those concerns; and calls on both parties to redouble their efforts and finalise a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils."

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I oppose the motion tabled by the DUP and call on Members to support the Sinn Féin amendment. Indeed, the DUP's motion and the Chair of the Education Committee seem somewhat confused. They call on the Minister to "stop tinkering" — I believe that was the preferred phrase of the day. However, they call on him to stop a process and to do something different. That, in itself, is tinkering, and it is the complete opposite of letting the process of change bed down. It is something that we certainly disagree with.

Only a few months ago, as outlined by the Member who spoke previously, following the publication of the OECD's report on evaluation and assessment in our system, the Minister came to the House and laid out publicly his vision for moving forward. I can only presume, given what we have just heard from the Benches opposite, that those Members must have been otherwise engaged on that day in March. For their benefit and that of those who will speak after me, let me outline exactly what the Minister said in regard to the issue of key stage assessment. He first welcomed the OECD's support for a locally developed assessment at the start of the academic year in primary school and agreed the following extensive engagement with teaching representatives that any computer-based assessment would continue to operate on a voluntary basis. Crucially, the Minister affirmed:

"The practice of having this sort of universal, formative assessment in primary schools, mapped to our curriculum and delivered at the start of the academic year, is noted with approval by the OECD"

as a sound policy. However, the Minister was at pains to stress:

"a sound policy is no good if its implementation is not up to scratch." [Official Report, Bound Volume 93, p43, col 2].

He further added that he was not up for walking away from any challenges but moving forward by addressing outstanding issues head on. With that in mind, the Minister said that he was committed to dialogue with all involved and that he wanted:

"officials to continue their engagement with teachers and their representatives to discuss and develop the practice of pupil assessment"

within the sound policy of:

"levels of progression." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 93, p44, col 1].

In his concluding remarks, the Minister said that he wanted his officials to undertake further work to continually

improve performance measures, both for schools and the system overall. Most importantly, perhaps, the Minister stressed, once again, that the involvement of teachers and school leaders was vital to the process of developing increasingly sophisticated conclusions about the quality of our system.

3.45 pm

Our amendment chimes wholeheartedly with the themes and spirit of the Minister's words that I have outlined today. Sinn Féin agrees with the OECD that a universal, formative assessment in primary school, one that is truly reflective of our curriculum, is entirely desirable. As such, we too believe that the current policy is sound. Moreover, we welcome the Minister's commitment to continually review the implementation of the policy, as we are all only too aware of some of the difficulties being experienced. Indeed, I welcome entirely the ongoing engagement between the Department and our teaching representatives. If we are to realise the potential in our system, such productive dialogue is vital. That is why our amendment calls upon the Minister not to halt or abandon the essential process of change but to ensure that efforts are redoubled so that we can deliver a system of assessment that helps to inform teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils.

Despite regular calls from those opposite to reverse or cease every type of educational reform, it is essential that we continue to see educational progress if we are to equip our young people with the necessary skills and empower our parents, teachers and schools to have confidence in the quality of evaluation and assessment.

I welcome the steadfast commitment from the Minister to ensure that our teachers remain central to the assessment process; that their role will not be cast aside to be replaced by anonymous standardised testing. It is only through the nuanced assessment provided by our teachers that parents can be assured of the educational progression of their child in relation to the curriculum.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No, I will not be giving way to the Member.

Our local teachers are, and should always remain, central to the process. So, as I outlined earlier, it is critical that the Minister and his officials continue to engage to embed arrangements in which all the key components have confidence in the system. It is only through continued dialogue and review that we will achieve such confidence, not by abandoning the process. That will achieve nothing but the creation of a dangerous vacuum; a vacuum that may ultimately suit the political interest of particular political parties but which will destroy the interests of our young people.

That is why, last year, the Committee agreed to support the levels of progression and the process of change. We outlined our concerns around workload pressures and the use of accountable data. The Department provided the necessary commitments to engage with teachers and to modify the current process. Hopefully the ongoing negotiations between the Department and teaching representatives can be intensified so that we can help to empower teachers to do what they do best.

In conclusion, I remind Members that we need to embrace educational reform. For too long we have peddled the

myth that our local education system was world-class and brimmed with success. It simply did not. Too many young people were abandoned to the fortunes of their socio-economic background; too many young people with special educational needs were sold short; and too many young people were not given the tools to succeed in life, where the interests of educational institutions and sectors trumped the needs of the pupil. Those are just some of the reasons why educational reform is necessary and why, despite difficulties regarding implementation, we must pursue effective and agreed reform.

We recognise that there are difficulties with the implementation of Key Stage assessments. However, such difficulties are not unsurmountable. The dialogue between all sides is testament to the desire to reach an agreed position. There can be no halting or abandoning the process of change. It is simply too important. I call on all Members to support the motion as amended.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next Member to speak, I ask all Members to set a good example to any school children who may be watching us this afternoon. I call Seán Rogers.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to put on record the concerns of the SDLP about the end of Key Stage assessments. Assessment is only ever a worthwhile tool if it informs teaching and learning and benefits teachers and students alike. Teachers are expressing serious concerns that the current system of assessment is not fit for purpose. Teachers must have confidence in the system of assessment that they are overseeing if it is to succeed. The Sinn Féin amendment says that teachers have concerns about "some" elements of Key Stage assessments. All I can say is that it is time to start listening.

On 5 March, more than 60 principals from the Southern Education and Library Board area met, and the message that came out was, "enough is enough". Since then, I have been listening very intently and have got the same message across the Province. The aim of assessment should be to inform parents and schools about children's progress, measure their attainment and achievement, and identify those who are underachieving or having difficulties or overachieving. Most importantly, it should inform future planning so that teaching and learning can take place at an appropriate level. End of Key Stage assessments are simply not ticking the boxes.

The Northern Ireland average data is skewed, as some schools failed to apply the process of awarding levels consistently.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Will the Member give way?

Mr Rogers: No, I will not give way. That resulted in those schools who applied the levels fairly falling below the Northern Ireland average. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Rogers: CCEA has no checks in place to verify these levels. The skewed data is used by the Department to report to boards of governors about school performances and by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) as part of the school inspection process which, as we have heard in previous debates, puts unfair pressures on schools.

I have here the sort of data that schools get. This is an example of Key Stage 2 communication at level 4. When you look at some of this data, you will discover that some of our schools, which have significant levels of deprivation, have 100% of their children getting level 4 at Key Stage 2. It is generally accepted that Key Stage 1 is levels 1 and 2.

A recent freedom of information (FOI) request discovered that 90% of pupils in one school achieved a level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1. It is quite possible for a child with a standardised score of 95 or 125 to be awarded a level 4 in communication. One child has major communication difficulties, while another is a competent communicator. Minister, how does this level 4 inform future practice? It cannot. It is too broad and meaningless and of no benefit to the child, the parents or the school.

We need a root-and-branch reform of end of Key Stage assessment. Raising standards in our classrooms must be our primary consideration when doing so. The Minister must recognise the legitimate concerns of teachers and consider alternative methods of assessment that are conducive to teaching and learning.

The OECD report highlighted the potential benefits of having a locally developed assessment at the start of an academic year in primary schools, and the Minister has endorsed that. However, the Minister has also decided that these should continue on a voluntary basis in the short term. I can imagine that, in his response, the Minister will refer to the OECD report, but in my view he gives it more credence than he does the views of our teachers.

Minister, you are always asking for solutions. First, end the present system of Key Stage assessments. Secondly, devise an alternative assessment model that takes on board all the good practice, including the Progress in Maths (PiM) and Progress in English (PiE) tests and other standardised tests to measure attainment, using intelligence tests to measure IQ along with professional judgement to ensure that assessments inform teaching and learning.

I agree with the last contributor; education reform is necessary, but we must ensure that we take on board the professional judgement of all our teachers.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Rogers: I will, yes.

Mr Storey: Of course, it will be dismissed by the Members opposite, but in the General Teaching Council's (GTC) own survey, two thirds of teachers said that these were not fit for purpose. They will probably dismiss that today in the House as one of those secretive surveys that is not trustworthy. Surely it is an indication that teachers, as you have outlined today, are simply saying that they have had enough and it is time for this current process to end.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Rogers: Thanks for the contribution. The GTC survey comes from teachers; they are the people who are delivering in our classrooms, and we need to take their views on board.

Assessments should not be for school comparisons, systems and statistics. Assessments should benefit the child, parents and schools, and should be separated from school evaluation and not seen as a stick to beat the school with. The future of qualifications and assessments

must garner the confidence of teachers and pupils. Teachers should be empowered to tailor their teaching to the individual needs of the child and ensure that pupils, parents, employers and further and higher education institutions across these islands can have confidence in our qualifications. The method of assessment must be one that helps our young people to reach their potential.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the debate. It is certainly long overdue. In my two years on the Education Committee, I have met groups of principals, vice-principals and others a number of times. One of their greatest concerns has been the assessment system and the lack of time.

I had hoped that, today, we would find a way forward on which we could agree. I was disappointed in last week's debate on the inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate because it seemed as though there were just closed doors and that it was destined for the shelf. I am looking forward to the day when the House can discuss and listen and feel as though it is being listened to, so that we do find a way forward. I think that everyone here wants the issue to be resolved, to find a good assessment system and to find a way forward for us all.

Mr Hazzard: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: I am happy to give way.

Mr Hazzard: Has the Member therefore changed his position of a number of months ago, when he called on the Chairperson of the Committee for Education to block everything that the Minister brings forward?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much. I do not remember saying "block everything that comes forward". If I did so, it related to something else.

I am keen that we find a way forward and that we keep looking for the avenues that take us forward. I do not disagree with the words and sentiments of the motion. It is sad that we need to call for a halt, but that is what the teachers and vice-principals want us to do. We need to find a way forward. We need to review what we are doing.

As other have said, and as the motion highlights, the approach of the Department and CCEA is not fit for purpose, and principals and teachers have no confidence in the present policies on assessment. The whole system needs to be thought through properly. We have already heard that two thirds of teachers in the GTCNI believe that levels of progression are not useful. That is how everyone is feeling.

We can all agree that we have a truly excellent and thoroughly professional set of principals, teachers and everyone. We all know that they are overworked, under-resourced and so often taken for granted. They feel ignored and abused by the system. Let us hope that that changes today. A recent survey by vice-principals showed that over 80% of them were working long hours in the day. They, too, are overworked. That is why we have got to find a way forward.

One of the systems proposed was ill-fitted to the pupils' year, was inconsistently applied and understood and, as such, was incomprehensible to parents and pupils. The NILA and NINA approach was also totally flawed. The pilots and lessons learnt were ill-prepared and ill-practiced. They, too, became incomprehensible. We welcomed the

fact that both were delayed. I thank the Department and the Minister for agreeing to do that. However, they were put on hold. They are still there. They still linger like evil spirits in a haunted house. No one can rest easy —

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member opposite tried to assert that somehow the Education Committee had been proactive on the issue. We were; we had an agreed set of changes that could be implemented. We implemented them and the process is still not working. Clearly, despite our best efforts to try to work with the system, the system was not working.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome those comments because the Committee has been trying, has been welcoming and has tried to find a way forward. However, I am concerned that they still sit there, they are still lingering and we need to find a new way forward.

We need assessment. Good assessment is going on all the time. However, due to the way in which the assessment is used, it is not trusted and is used inconsistently. Schools use it to compete with one another, in some cases manipulating it in an effort to outshine other schools.

Mr O'Dowd: I thank the Member for giving way. I will also cover Mr Rogers's point in this. The Member is actually standing in the Chamber saying that schools in the system are cheating. If he is saying that, there is a duty on him as a member of the Education Committee and as an Assembly Member to name them.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you. I will do my best to get the Minister that information. I had rather hoped that it had got to his Department because I have certainly heard it from two or three different avenues. If the onus falls on us, we will do that.

The Minister refers to the OECD and chooses from its report those matters which suit him. In fact, the Sinn Féin amendment states that it:

“notes the endorsement of the principles of the current Assessment system”.

The report does endorse those principles, but that is choosing the bit that you like. It goes on to say that we need to listen more to schools and to everyone else. There is a whole lot that we need to do.

4.00 pm

If you look at the Sinn Féin amendment, you can see why I cannot support it. There are too many inaccuracies in it. It states that the Assembly:

“recognises the concern of principals and teachers”.

There is more than concern. Virtually everyone whom we talked to said that the system that we have does not work. However, I like the fact that the amendment does at least state that we need to redouble our efforts and finalise a system that works. So, there is a way forward for all of us working together.

I call on everyone — as usual, I go back to my point on consensus — to find a way of working together and to find something that works for schools, teachers and especially pupils.

Mr Lunn: I support the motion but not the amendment. The Minister can certainly claim in his defence that he has

already responded to teachers' concerns and is continuing to do so by reviewing the system, but it really is hard to argue that end of Key Stage assessments work or can reasonably be made to work. We support the motion on the grounds that we need to replace the current target-led approach with one that, as the motion states, “helps inform teaching and learning”.

We seem to have considerable support for that. In September 2013, the General Teaching Council stated that it had lost confidence in the assessments. More specifically, 90% of teachers said that results were of no or little use to parents. Teachers also saw them as unmanageable and unreliable. The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) even went as far taking as industrial action over Key Stage 3 assessments. The SDLP has challenged the Minister on the subject again today, after saying, in March 2014, that the assessments were going down like a lead balloon, to use its terminology. Both unionist parties have obviously, once again, stated their opposition to assessments.

We have heard much about the OECD report of December 2013 on evaluation and assessment. I think that we should be clear that it is by no means a glowing endorsement of what is happening. It records an “urgent need” to build teachers' trust in a new moderation system. It also talked about the “many implementation problems” in computer-based assessments in primary schools and noted considerable challenges presented to schools by the:

“lack of continuity in central tests”.

It is far from clear that that advice has been taken on board. It is evidence, along with that published by the teaching unions, that teachers have no confidence whatsoever in the assessments. So, the motion is clearly correct on that point. It may be a little strong for it to state that the Department and CCEA's approach “is not fit for purpose”, although I certainly know of teachers who have said that, including one distinguished ex-teacher in the House, Mr Rogers, who is not in his place.

The reviews demonstrate that all is not well. There is significant variability, the inspection system does not tie in with the assessment process, teachers' professional development is not properly taken into account, and so on. Even the Minister has noted a lack of confidence among some in the assessment process.

As is mentioned in the motion, the present process has encountered many problems. Some of those have been technical, but there is also the aforementioned lack of confidence in the system. I wonder whether parents have any confidence in it. The Department has already accepted that parents may have no interest in reporting levels or suchlike. Balanced against that is the point that education cannot just pause while we sort out what to do, which is fair enough.

Ultimately, surely the biggest issue is manageability. We cannot dismiss the simple fact that 91% of teachers view the tests as unmanageable, while almost the same number regard them as useless. The Minister's party appears to be slightly in denial about that, because when asked about discussions with teaching unions on the matter earlier this year, the Minister could not provide any detail, and, when

asked about how poorly teachers viewed the assessments, he bizarrely claimed that a response rate of 75% was positive. Somebody is wrong here, Minister.

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Sure.

Mr O'Dowd: This morning, I was on the verge of publishing a very detailed document on those ongoing discussions, because I believe that the House deserves to know exactly what is on the table. I was asked not to do so, because it might hinder potential progress in those talks. I will keep that under review, however. I believe that it may be necessary to publish that document.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Lunn: Minister, by all means, publish the document. We would all be glad to see it.

It is also far from clear whether continually testing pupils is the best way to give them a rounded education. If they are constantly preparing for assessments of whatever kind, are they really preparing for life? It seems to me that it would be preferable, as the Association of School and College Leaders seems to have suggested, to view key stages as benchmarks rather than testing. While I may not necessarily agree with everything that it says, I think that "benchmarks" is a helpful term, as it emphasises what continuous assessment is supposed to be about — informing teaching and learning. That is what the motion states.

Whatever is decided, I think that the consensus is that the system does not work primarily because teachers have not had a significant enough say. It is in that specific area that the Minister needs to address the problem most urgently. It is not often that we find common cause around this Chamber between the SDLP, us, the Ulster Unionists and the DUP. In fact, it is fairly unique, but I hope that the Minister and his party will get the message today that it is time to stop, reconsider and come back with something that is fit for purpose and workable.

Mr Newton: I support the motion. I do so having listened to the passion of Mr Storey, the professionalism of Mr Rogers, the pleading of Mr Kinahan to be listened to and the lack of confidence that Mr Lunn has in the system.

There are a number of important aspects included in the motion that contribute to the overall aspirations of this Assembly for the education of its children. The motion notes:

"principals and teachers in schools no longer have any confidence in the end of Key Stage Assessments".

It further notes with concern:

"the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's approach to end of Key Stage Assessments is not fit for purpose; and calls on the Minister of Education to halt the present process".

On the positive aspect of the motion, it calls for:

"assessment for learning tools that schools currently use and introduce a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning."

What are we trying to create in our education system? I suppose that it can be encapsulated in a number of

phrases. We want highly motivated children with an appetite for learning, which we can encourage through the education system; children who have a desire to achieve at their highest level of ability; approaches to curriculum development and assessment that will have a strong emphasis on high expectations, success and bringing about the best possible achievement for pupils; ensuring holistic partnerships with and between the schools, parents, pupils and the local community to improve, enhance and progress children's knowledge and their skills; the professional leadership of head teachers, with a continuous impact on helping children enjoy their educational experiences and the overall ethos of work within whichever school that they attend; and to prepare the pupil for second-level education, whatever that choice may be.

The Minister stated in his letter on the subject to schools dated 4 October:

"I am aware that many teachers not only see the associated assessment moderation arrangements as burdensome, they are also not confident that the levels themselves are useful. I am determined that the focus of the current and coming academic years will be on working with you to build that confidence."

Minister, given your words in that letter, how can it also be that you support the amendment, which recognises the concern? As has been pointed out, "concern" is a very low level word that does not encapsulate all the feelings of the unions, teachers and principals around this matter, but you recognise the concern of school principals and teachers about some elements of Key Stage assessments. It is not some elements, Minister; it is more than some elements.

You call on both parties; you call on the Department of Education representatives and teachers' representatives to redouble their efforts and to finalise a system of assessment that helps to inform. Minister, the responsibility for that is yours. It is not for the teachers to redouble their efforts; it is for you and your Department to redouble your efforts and progress the matter.

You also recognise that Key Stage data creates pressure on schools and individual teachers and that the pressure creates a negative effect of the use of the levels for the learning of pupils. You also recognise that the levels have not evolved to meet changing circumstances.

Minister, I do not think that anything else can be said about it. The process is not working. As Mr Kinahan, Mr Rogers, Mr Storey and Mr Lunn said — as every side of the House has said — principals and teachers must be listened to.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Newton: I am happy to give way.

Mr Storey: Here, I think, is where we will hear another comment from the Minister and his colleagues about abandoning the process, as though there is nothing taking place in our schools currently that assists and aids that educational benefit to our pupils. A number of other tools, such as PiE, PiM and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), are being used by our teachers. They are objective tools, and they can be used. So, it is not a case of abandoning this and leaving the schools to their own whim. There is something there that

is of value in the classroom, but the Department and the Minister dismiss that.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Newton: I thank the Member for his intervention. The Member is, of course, quite right. The teaching profession and the support mechanisms around the teaching profession are crying out for that. There is a system; there are tools in place that can be used to the benefit of our pupils.

Minister, not just in political interests but in the interests of the pupils —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Newton: — parents, society and the economy, accept the motion as it is put forward.

Mr Moutray: I rise in support of the motion. The motion states:

“That this Assembly expresses concern that principals and teachers in schools no longer have any confidence in end of Key Stage assessments”.

That lack of confidence contained within the education sector was displayed very starkly and can be seen when we look at the survey results published by the General Teaching Council in September 2013. It was revealed that, out of 500 schools in the Province, between 82% and 89% felt that results of end of Key Stage assessments were of limited or of no use. Furthermore, 91% considered the process to be burdensome or very burdensome.

Ultimately, we have a situation in which schools and teachers are being placed under a significant degree of pressure to carry out these Key Stage assessments, even though they seriously doubt the usefulness of the current process. The fear is that teachers are so burdened with trying to deliver on the Key Stage assessments that the educational experience of our young people becomes disrupted in a detrimental manner. Teachers feel that the assessment procedures are purely bureaucratic and that they have no proven educational benefits.

At the end of the day, the purpose of end of Key Stage assessments should be to assist teaching and learning. However, with the situation we are in, that does not appear to be the case. Since September 2013, the Minister has recognised the fact that many teachers see the end of Key Stage assessment arrangements as burdensome. He has also noted that many teachers are not confident that the levels are useful.

The Minister thus moved to make changes to the end of Key Stage model. The reporting date for the end of Key Stage level data to CCEA, for instance, was moved from mid-March to mid-May. That was in line with schools' stated preference for reporting data. However, although some changes have been made to the end of Key Stage assessments, we are ultimately still in a situation in which teachers view the process and workings of end of Key Stage assessments in a negative light.

The opinion amongst many in the teaching profession is that teachers are still facing pressures that are inevitably diverting them away from the key role of leading, teaching and learning. Teachers are making clear to us that the current assessment procedures act as a distraction and,

importantly, they feel that the procedures do not enhance our young people's educational experience.

4.15 pm

It is clear that time now needs to be taken to think about how future assessment arrangements can be better aligned with the revised Northern Ireland curriculum. Assessment is a very important part of teaching and learning. Quality and timely teacher feedback from appropriate and clear assessment activities is one of the most useful tools to improve pupils' learning. A process must be developed in which principals and teachers have confidence in assessment methods and are able to truly buy into the process to enhance our young people's education.

I, for one, want the Northern Ireland education sector to thrive and to deliver to the best of its ability, not only for the teachers and pupils but for Northern Ireland as a whole. Although the Minister consulted teachers and principals on their concerns about the end of Key Stage assessment and moved to make changes to alleviate some of those concerns, we are still in a position in which teachers feel that the current process is not fit for purpose. Today, I urge the Minister to bring the current process to a stop. It is time to review other assessment for learning tools that schools are using and introduce a system that helps to inform teaching and learning and make it the best that it can be.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat. Thanks for the opportunity to speak on end of Key Stage assessments. Good practice indicates that assessment should be both summative and formative and that outcomes of assessment should have comparability between pupils and schools; inform future teaching and learning; and give parents a clear indication of the progress being made by their children. Assessment should, as far as possible, be carried out as part of classroom activities and should not place an undue burden on teachers.

Unfortunately, the current system of end of Key Stage assessment does not meet the requirements of good practice. In fact, if anything, the opposite is the case. There is very little summative or formative relevance to the current assessment. The comparability between schools is totally unreliable. It provides little that is useful in future teaching and learning, and, unfortunately, it places a burden of administration on teachers that is largely wasted because of the unreliability of the assessments themselves.

The process of applying and awarding a level is inconsistent and skews the Northern Ireland average data. The result is that schools that have, in fact, applied the levels properly suffer and fall below the Northern Ireland average. The skewed data is then used by DENI to inform boards of governors. The simple irony is that, once a school submits levels to CCEA, there are no checks and balances in place to allow these levels to be verified and no external moderation or cross-moderation between schools. The levels themselves are far too broad and meaningless and are not used by schools to report a child's progress to their parents. The simple fact is that a child who is reported at level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 could, in fact, have a standardised score of between 92 and 125 — the abilities of two children at either end of the scale are worlds apart, yet they have both been awarded the same level at the Key Stage end.

As was stated, school principals believe that the current system is beyond repair and that changes made over the past two or three years have failed to give schools an assessment tool that we can all have faith in. It is beyond time that the Minister stopped defending a flawed and failed system and took steps to replace it with a system that will serve pupils, teachers and parents in an effective and efficient manner, and not place any undue burden of administration on teachers.

A Leas-Cheann Comhairle, is léir nach bhfuil an córas faoi mar atá sé faoi láthair ag obair. Caithfear deireadh a chur leis agus caithfidh an tAire éisteacht leis na príomhoidí, leis na múinteoirí. Is iadsan is fearr eolas ar an cheist seo. Go raibh míle maith agat as an deis cainte, ní aontaím leis an leasú ar an rún, beidh mé ag tabhairt tacaíochta don rún.

As I said, it is quite clear that the system is not working. It needs to be replaced. The Minister should listen to the voices of principals and practising teachers and make the necessary changes. I do not support the amendment, but I do support the motion.

Mrs Dobson: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion today.

"Ill-conceived, ill-thought-out, symbolic, distracting, of no value to people, parents and schools".

Those are not my words, but they sum up one of the main points raised about the end of Key Stage assessments by principals. These and other comments were included in the minutes of the SELB principals' assessment meeting in March this year, which was attended by no fewer than 67 school principals from across the board's catchment area. At the meeting, the principals agreed what we already know: the current system is beyond repair, and changes over the last three to four years have totally failed to give schools an assessment model that they can have any faith in whatsoever.

Too many people in the education system — I include the employing authorities, CCEA, ETI and the Department — have recognised the flaws but sadly have chosen not to speak out and address the issues. Indeed, many principals fear that the current system is merely a cosmetic exercise and have no faith whatsoever in the final benchmarking data and its reliability. Why, for example, is the process so inconsistent that there is no scrutiny of it at schools level?

I will give a snapshot. Through a freedom of information request, it has been shown that, in 2013, one school had as many as 90% of its children attaining a level 3 at Key Stage 1 while almost 70% attained level 5 at Key Stage 2. This is inconsistent nonsense when it is generally accepted that a child will be at level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 and at level 3 at the end of Key Stage 2. It is, therefore, widely recognised that the levels are meaningless and are not used by schools to report a child's progress to its parents. Indeed, the secondary schools do not use end of Key Stage levels for any purpose whatsoever, so we have to ask the question: what is the point?

It is clear to all that these assessments do not improve or develop a child's potential in any way. We all know that reaching potential is important, but comparing schools based on false data certainly is not. On numerous occasions in Committee, we raised the topic of the disastrous NILA and NINA computer-based assessments.

This issue cuts to the very heart of what is wrong with our education system today, and pupils are ultimately left to suffer. Principals and teachers rightly raise their concerns, but pupils should be central to the assessment process, and they are totally being totally let down.

The failure to test the computer systems properly has been roundly and rightly criticised by all sides here today. The Minister wishes to take more and more powers away from schools, directing them to the centre, but the problem is created by the centre and is essentially being resolved by the expertise at schools level. If ever there was an argument for greater powers to be devolved to schools rather than clutched by the central administration, this is the issue.

I will close by quoting a further comment from the SELB principals' report:

"If the GP's surgery were knowingly diagnosing and medicating inaccurately, they would be struck off; yet, we have been knowingly administering a detrimental process for 20 years."

That just about sums it up. It is time for the Minister and the Department to remove their heads from the sand and put in place a fit-for-purpose assessment system.

Mr Allister: I am very happy to add to the consensus against Sinn Féin on this motion. I hope that I do not disturb the consensus in any way. It is quite clear from listening to Mr Bradley that that consensus in terms of the denunciation of the present arrangements comes in both English and Irish. I welcome the motion. I particularly welcome the fact that, right at the beginning, it goes to a key issue, namely, articulating the fact that principals and teachers in our schools no longer have any confidence in the key stage assessments.

I must say that I do not find teachers to be ready-made rebels. Perhaps by the nature of their profession, in that in their day job they seek to inculcate respect for authority, living within rules and conforming, they are, above all, in many cases, conformists. However, teachers are at the end of their tether when it comes to the pointless, inane process that has evolved into the key stage assessments.

I chair a board of governors, as I have referred to before, and when it comes to the annual discussion about the key stage assessments, no teacher representative, no matter how mild-mannered or conformist in nature, can possibly conceal the frustration, verging on anger, that they feel for the waste of their time, parents' time and the time of all involved in carrying out those assessments. They are assessments that point, in the main, to nothing. They are not relied on, for example, when a kid transfers to post-secondary school. They are assessments that just seem to be there for the purpose of ticking some box that the Department has decided needs to be ticked, but which tells you very little.

Indeed, for a Department that is so besotted with being non-assessment and non-selective based, it really is amazing that, on this issue, it is so wedded to that assessment, which delivers nothing. As for assessment that might just help you evaluate where a kid's future educational needs could best be catered for, that is anathema, but for assessment that is inane and tells you nothing, let us have it; that is wonderful. That seems to be

the flip-flop attitude of the Minister and his Department to issues of assessment.

Of course, he then rolls in behind anything he can find, so he clutches for the OECD report, enthused, of course, that it also has some adverse things to say about selection, so whatever that particular report might say is music to the Minister's ears. I suggest, Minister, that it is not the OECD and some foreign input that you should be listening to but what the teachers in the classrooms are saying. It is those who have to shape, mould and teach our future generations and prepare them for the world of work that you should be working with, not against. That is what it comes down to — working against teachers.

Mr Hazzard: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Hazzard: The Member mentions the message coming from teachers, but he does not seem to be as concerned when that message is around selection.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allister: I am always concerned about the key message in education: parental choice. Would any parents choose those inane, pointless assessments that tell them nothing? Very few would. Would parents choose a system that gives their kids, particularly those from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds, the opportunity to get on the rung of a ladder that might take them to a good educational outcome? Of course they would. Parental choice is the key component that needs to be kept to the forefront of our minds in discussing issues pertaining to education.

4.30 pm

I support the motion and reject the amendment, which seeks to water down, plead for time and do all sorts of things when the matter is staring the House in the face. It needs to face up to it now and recognise that the assessments have served their purpose. They are over, and it is time to bin them like so much else that the Minister has brought upon us.

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The motion refers to the arrangements not being "fit for purpose", but, listening to many of the contributions, I am not sure that everyone is clear what the purpose is. It is not a test, as some Members said; it is an assessment of work carried out under the curriculum.

Three assessments take place over a child's school life between the ages of eight and 14. Under the arrangements, teachers assess and report on children's education at three key points: Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. They assess the critically important skills of communication, using maths and, in due course, ICT. Levels of progression set out the knowledge and skills that we expect a pupil to have acquired by those points. In communication, for example, we expect most pupils to be able to move from being able to spell and write common and familiar words legibly by the end of year 4, to explaining opinions about what they read by year 7 and to being able to differentiate between fact and opinion — which some Members would maybe have to take a wee test in — by the end of year 10. Similarly, under using mathematics, pupils are expected to go from knowing about the coins that make up £1 in year 4, to being able to calculate savings using simple percentages in year 7 and

calculating and making informed choices about personal budgeting by the end of year 10.

These are the things that our curriculum spells out need to be taught in school, and the levels of progression show how much has been learnt. Parents expect those skills to be developed by the time their children move to the next stage of their education, and they are entitled to have assurances that their child has acquired those skills. Parents and the wider public also quite reasonably expect us to know whether children are actually acquiring those skills across the whole system and that no child is being left behind.

Some Members in their deliberations argued for much more stringent reporting mechanisms. Some Members — I will name them as I go through my speech — said that some schools were cheating and that their scores could not be relied on. If the scores cannot be relied on, we have to put in more stringent accountability measures, not take them away. Mr Bradley's commentary was much more strident in that regard than Mr Rogers's, so there is a difference of opinion even there. A number of Members have told me today that principals have told them that they are doing the job right but that the school down the road is cheating. As I said to Mr Kinahan, if that is the case you have to name them. You have a duty to name them.

There has been much talk of the levels being too broad. They are deliberately broad to match the high-level assurance that we need that the range of skills has been acquired by pupils. However, schools and the OECD, which were described by Mr Allister, who is morphing into Enoch Powell as each week passes, as foreigners — by the way, the foreigner who headed the OECD report was a Claire Shewbridge from England — have asked us to look at how more detail could be added to demonstrate progress within a level, for example. I am happy to commit my Department and CCEA to look at that, not because we need that detail at a system level but because it could assist day-to-day teaching and learning.

Assessment is what every good schoolteacher does every day. The teacher makes an assessment by reviewing a child's work over the period leading up to the end of the Key Stage. It is not a judgement made solely on the result of a one-off test. These do not involve one-off tests. CCEA makes sure that schools have a good understanding of what work at a particular level should be like, and, if a school struggles to get that right, CCEA will follow up to check that individual children's work reflects the level that their teacher gave them.

CCEA has a role in checking the validity of reports. A number of Members are arguing today that CCEA or another body should have a much more stringent role in assessing these. Even if we go for the other commercially available assessments out there, as the motion suggests, how do Members reassure themselves, as some Members have suggested, that every school is performing honourably and reflecting the results honourably?

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not giving way, no.

Members are arguing here today, and some Members like to see themselves as, "We will do away with the inspectorate. We will do away with levels of progressions. We will do away with assessing. We will do away with

accountability", when we all know that it is all nonsense and that they have no intentions of doing that. They like to reflect this across. If Members back the motion as it is currently worded, then, even if you do introduce commercially available assessments, who moderates them? Nobody gave that suggestion during their contribution. Who —

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No, thank you. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: Who moderates? As I have said — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: As I have said, several Members have already reported to the Assembly that school principals have told them that the school down the road is cheating. So, who moderates? Then there are some Members in the House who tell us, "We will do away with the ETI. We will do away with assessment. We will do away with levels of progressions. We will do away with accountability."

Mr Storey: Who said that?

Mr O'Dowd: Last week. In the Chamber last week. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, Members. I ask that Members desist from making comments from a sedentary position.

Mr Storey: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the Minister is going to make assertions, at least let him have the bottle to name who it was. There was no call in this House last week for no inspection system. He needs to get his facts right.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am not aware that that is a point of order.

Mr Storey: Well, it is on the record.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has put his point on the record.

Mr O'Dowd: It appears that Mr Storey's mood is not the best today either.

Standing here as the Minister of Education, I affirm the professionalism of our teachers. The professionalism of our teachers' judgements is at the very heart of the arrangements that I am looking to put in place. Parents and pupils also need to have confidence that their teachers' judgement is sound, and that is why we have moderation. We have to always come back to this. We always have to come back to this point about moderation because, in this fairytale world that some Members of this House live in, even though they have been told that the school down the road is cheating and even though they are looking to bring in assessment processes that are not even aligned to our curriculum, they have to be moderated. So, you have to be the bad boy some day or the bad girl some day, because you have to turn round to the teaching profession and say, "By the way, do you see those commercially related assessments? I am going to moderate them, because I want to be assured that the information that I am getting is absolutely correct".

I also want to be assured, as the Minister of Education who is responsible for the £2 billion budget that is being

invested in education and who is responsible for our young people, that the educational performance of those young people is up to standard. How do you do that without moderation and without assessment? How do you do it? Moderation is a necessary part of the process.

As I said, Mr Bradley, Mr Newton, Mrs Dobson and Mr Rogers have all made the comment that school principals have advised them that they do not trust the school down the road. They need to back that up with information because, if schools are returning false information, they have a duty to report it. However, teachers recognise that they must be able to stand over the consistency of their application. I have been accused by some here of not listening to teachers or their representatives, and I cannot allow this to go unchallenged.

As I said to Mr Lunn during his contribution, I was about to publish a very detailed document on what proposals I have put on the table in front of the teachers' unions in the last three to four weeks. It is a very detailed response to the teachers' unions. I am awaiting a response from them, but as I came towards this debate, I said to myself, "I am going to listen to a half-informed debate today." That is not unusual for the Assembly Chamber, in fairness. Perhaps it would be only right and proper if the Assembly had all of the information in front of it.

I was asked to not publish it because it might harm ongoing negotiations, and I have taken that decision.

My objective is to reach agreement with the teachers' representatives and move forward. The attitudes of teachers in the discussions in which my officials and I are involved are not reflected in what has been said in here today. Those discussions are much more productive and much more engaged. We are down into the detail, and we are down into how we make levels of progression work for the pupil, the teacher, the school and our education system.

Mr Storey: You are bluffing.

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Storey says that I am bluffing. Being the champion of the teacher and the champion of the principal, Mr Storey has brought a number of motions to the House over the last couple of weeks. However, it is worth noting where Mr Storey and his party's allegiances lie: they are courting the Tory party in England. They are in allegiance to a party in England whose education policies are somewhat called into question by the teachers' unions.

Mr Storey: You are glad of their money anyway.

Mr O'Dowd: Fifty thousand marched in London on Saturday against the Tory party's austerity policy. Indeed, so aligned are they now to the Tory party that Mr Storey's constituency colleague Ian Paisley Jnr has invited Minister Michael Gove to tour our schools. *[Interruption.]* He is perfectly entitled to invite Mr Gove across to tour our schools —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we are having enough comments from a sedentary position. I ask Members to desist from making such comments and allow the Minister to make his contribution.

Mr O'Dowd: I raised the point only because I think that the motions over the last number of weeks have to be put into context. Anybody who believes that a Minister Storey is not going to be more like a Mervyn Gove than a Michael Gove really needs to be assessed.

Moving forward, I have been engaged in detailed negotiations with teacher representatives. I believe that there is a way to make levels of progression work, and I believe that there is a way to deal with the genuine concerns expressed by teachers. There is a duty on us to ensure that we have an assessment mechanism for our children's learning at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Those who, quite rightly, clamour for better education outcomes for our society need to have a mechanism to measure them. Whether you like it or not, whether you are in government, in opposition, a member of the Education Committee or whatever it may be, you cannot produce a wish list of things that should not really happen: "No, no, we shouldn't have inspection. No, no, we shouldn't have assessment. No, no, we shouldn't have accountability". In fact, Mrs Dobson ended her speech by saying that we should give more powers to schools. Throughout her speech, she talked about how school principals were telling her that schools were cheating. How do you square that circle? How do you square the circle of concentrating your speech on saying, "School principals are telling me the school down the road is cheating, but I will tell you what we have to do, Minister: we have to devolve more powers to schools"? Being in government, whether in opposition, in government or on the Education Committee, puts an onus and a responsibility on you to come forward with proposals that are workable, accountable and meet the needs of all our young people moving forward.

The element who is worst informed about levels of progression and most kept out of the loop about the debate on levels of progression is the parent. Under current legislation, parents need to be given the information on levels of progression. Current legislation also dictates that that information should be forwarded to my Department. It is vital that the debate moving forward involves parents and that they are given the information on why levels of progression are on the table, what mechanisms are in place and what accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that the scenario that Mr Newton, Mrs Dobson, Mr Kinahan and Mr Bradley referred to does not happen and that, when a board of governors receives the information about how its school is performing, they can have confidence in it, local parents can have confidence in it and, yes, the principal can have confidence in it as well.

4.45 pm

However, there is no fairy-tale ending to the story for anyone. There is no fairy tale here. No one can stand up and promise the earth, moon and stars to teachers and principals on this one. That is because, when each of you examine your speeches and contributions, at their heart was the need for accountability. At times, accountability can be a difficult quest. It can be very difficult for those who are being held to account, who in this case are the teachers, the principal and, ultimately, boards of governors. It can be a very uncomfortable journey, but if any Member is serious about moving our education system forward, and if any Member is serious about ensuring how we do that, you need to have measurements in place.

I commissioned the OECD report, and the amendment supports the principles of our current levels of progression assessments. That is stated in the amendment. Yes, there were criticisms in the report, and I have taken on board those criticisms. I am working to overcome them in a progressive and productive way but, Members, those

who think that, if they were ever in a position of authority with a £2 billion budget, they would not have any levels of accountability are living in cloud cuckoo land.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé iontach sásta bheith ag labhairt sa díospóireacht seo, agus beidh mé ag tacú leis an leasú. I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I, of course, will be supporting the amendment.

I listened to your comments earlier, a LeasCheann Comhairle, about schoolchildren who may be watching or listening to the debate, and I am very conscious of that. I want to raise an issue around that. At the outset of his remarks, the Chair of the Committee talked about Sinn Féin having had the education portfolio for the past 16 years. Although that may be true, the impression was given that nobody else has had the opportunity to take it on. Of course, the DUP could have taken it at any time, yet it chose not to. Why did it choose not to? It was because it might have had to make decisions in and around the education system. It is not the world-class system that the DUP portrays it to be; rather, it needs root-and-branch change. Thankfully, we have a Minister in Sinn Féin, as we had previous Ministers, who is prepared to do that.

I would love to know what the DUP's strategic vision for education is, because I do not know what it is. I can imagine, in my mind's eye, a meeting of the DUP, and some new boy at the back saying, "Mervyn, what is our strategic vision for education?", to which Mervyn replies, "Listen, son, our strategic vision is clear: whatever the Shinners are for, we are against".

Mr Storey: That is a pretty good vision, I think.

Mr Allister: It is a good start.

Mr Sheehan: That is the sum total of the DUP's vision for education. Of course, my learned friend, who is chattering away down there in the corner, let the cat out of the bag in this debate when he said that this a political consensus against Sinn Féin rather than a consensus for improved educational outcomes for children. That is what he thinks.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: Are the two of you having a laugh here?

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: You set the tone for interventions. No, I am not giving way.

Mr Storey: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Sheehan: So, calm yourself down there. We have had a lot of comments today about teachers and what they think of assessments — their views on them and the percentage of them who are against Key Stage assessments. I do not know of any teacher who is against assessment. However, my colleague Chris Hazzard raised the issue of when it comes to teachers' views on academic selection, the common funding formula, and so on and so forth, are those views taken into account by the DUP and my learned friend? No, they are not.

Mr Storey: Yes.

Mr Sheehan: No, they are not. The Minister also mentioned the OECD report, which, of course, endorsed

the principles of the assessment process. As the Minister said, it was also critical, and he is working against it. As I said before, this is a Minister who listens and takes action. When the criticisms came about the computer-based assessments, the Minister acted on them. Did he or did he not act on them? Of course he acted on them.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: I will give way. I am not going to be as churlish as you are or as petty.

Mr Storey: The Minister came to this House and blamed the teachers who would not do it. He said that I was misleading the House. He was then dragged to this House six months later. Check the record, because the Minister knows that it was an abysmal failure.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Sheehan: Am I right or wrong when I say that schools that do not want to do the computer-based assessments do not have to do them? Is that right or wrong? I will give way again. Go ahead.

Mr Storey: That is right, but —

Mr Sheehan: Oh, it is right.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Storey: Yes, it had to be dragged out of him.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I ask that all comments are made through the Chair, please. One person has the Floor at a time.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle.

I am glad to hear the Chair of the Education Committee saying that I am right. Go raibh maith agat. Thanks very much for that.

There are positive and productive talks ongoing with representatives of teachers. I hope that there will be a positive outcome to those.

My learned friend up in the corner described these assessments as, “inane, pointless assessments”. On the contrary, these assessments are set out so that we can see how far children have progressed in the areas of communication and mathematics and, in the future, ICT.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Would the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Sheehan: That is what assessments are for. Are we saying we should not have them? No. I support the amendment.

Mr Craig: I take great pleasure in making the winding-up speech on the motion.

I listened with great interest to the debate, and one thing that has become apparent to me is that Sinn Féin's paranoia runs incredibly deep. In fact, it runs so deep that the Minister described every Member, other than Sinn Féin Members, as living in a fairy tale world. That leads me to wonder who the Cinderellas are and who the fairies are. I will leave it to Members to make up their own minds.

Paranoia always runs extremely deep when the only person who thinks you are right is yourself. That is unfortunately where the Minister and his party find

themselves today. They are the only ones defending the existing system, broke and all as that system is, as the Minister even admitted at one stage.

There is no evidence out there from any principal or teacher that the system is working. There is no evidence out there to say that teachers and principals have confidence in the system. In fact, there has been report after report from teachers and principals to the Committee telling us that they have no confidence in the outcomes. If they have no confidence in the outcomes, they are certainly not going to pass that information on to parents.

The Minister got one thing right: parents are the key to all of this. Are we going to know how our children are progressing or not progressing in a primary school through the existing system? The answer to that is a very clear no. The paranoia must run deep when every other Member says no to that and only one group is saying yes. Why is that? I am going to give only one bit of advice: do not stick to a broken system. That is my plea to the Minister.

Sometimes, the best thing you can do in life is scrap what you have been at and have a rethink. To me, this is a stage where we need a major rethink on how we progress and track the progress of our children within primary schools.

If this system is so good, why are secondary schools not using it, Minister? Why is it that secondary schools spend their first quarter testing children to find out what their actual achievement levels are? That should be the biggest clue of all that something is fundamentally wrong with the system in primary schools. That should tell you something. Why do they waste their time and resources doing that? They do not waste their time and resources doing that to figure out who the brightest and weakest children are. They do that so that they can educate to the best of their skills and efforts the children who come in from primary schools.

Are the levels consistent across primary schools? I sit as the chair of a board of governors, so I have seen these; I have looked at them. I can tell you now, Minister, that there is little consistency across primary schools. When you look at what they are saying the achievement levels of children are and what the secondary schools conclude that they are, you see that there is an inconsistency. I am not saying that anyone is cheating. I am just saying that somebody somewhere is getting it wrong. That is something I would like the Minister to take on board.

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Mr Craig: The Member will give way, yes.

Mr O'Dowd: How does the Member expect me to take that on board whenever his party is against moderation and against these levels being reported back to CCEA or the Department of Education? Who, then, comes to take those matters on board?

Mr Craig: Yet again, the Minister is putting words into the mouth of this party because we never said that we were against moderation. We never said that we were against accountability. In fact, as a party, we are always one step ahead when it comes to accountability. Of course there should be accountability built into this. There needs to be a consistency right across the board. The fact that there is no consistency at present leads everyone to have no faith whatsoever in the present system.

That is why we are saying, "Let's throw out this system and come up with something that is much more centred on what teachers and principals want — but, above all, what parents want." We want to have the ability to know where our child is on the learning curve. It helps you to make decisions with regard to their future, not only in their secondary education but, ultimately, for whatever career they are going to take in their life.

I listened with great interest to what Members said. Mr Hazzard said that there should be a teacher-centred approach to testing. There is no disagreement from the rest of the House on that. In fact, right across the board, every party has agreed on that issue: make it teacher centred. Get it approval.

That does not necessarily mean that it is teacher-union centred. I think that there is a difference here, and maybe the Minister needs to take that on board. How representative are unions of the teachers they purport to represent?

Mr Storey: How many are there? Five of them; six of them.

Mr Craig: Yes.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Craig: There needs to be confidence in the system. I found it interesting that Mr Hazzard also let the cat out of the bag: we do not have a first-class system in Northern Ireland. It is not world-beating. If you have held that portfolio for 16 years, why is that the case? Have you ever asked yourself that?

Seán was clear on this point: devise a new system using PiMs and PiEs and other methods. You do not have to reinvent the wheel, Minister. There are other systems that could be looked at and modified to suit the Department and the teachers, and they could be used. You do not necessarily need to reinvent the wheel, and I felt from day one that that was the problem with the Department's approach to this. It had to make its own system even though there were other systems out there.

5.00 pm

Danny said that it was inconsistently applied, and I think that there is clear evidence that that is the case.

Trevor Lunn pointed out that 90% of teachers say that the assessments are of no use to parents. I would say that there is a high level of agreement on that. They were never used to tell me about the level of attainment of my children while they were going through primary school. There is consistency across the board in that approach.

Dominic Bradley said that there were no external checks on achievement. Again, we are back to this issue, Minister. Nobody around the table is saying that there should not be external checks on the system. We agree that we should reinvent the system, but there has to be some sort of accountability and checking. There is universal agreement that we need something that is consistent across the board and is of use to secondary schools so that they do not spend the first three months of children's secondary education reassessing them and figuring out their achievement levels. There is no confidence in the present system. I recommend the motion to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 25; Noes 60.

AYES

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Ms S Ramsey, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robison, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Moutray and Mr G Robison.

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly expresses concern that principals and teachers in schools no longer have any confidence in end of Key Stage assessments; notes with concern that the Department of Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's approach to end of Key Stage assessments is not fit for purpose; and calls on the Minister of Education to halt the present process, review other assessment for learning tools that schools currently use and introduce a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning.

Adjourned at 5.15 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 24 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to raise a matter with the purpose of seeking your assistance. It is the issue — the vexed issue on occasion — of excessive delay in answering questions for written answer. I want to draw attention in particular to a question for priority written answer — AQW 28360/11-15 — that was tabled in mid-November 2013 to the Department of Finance and Personnel. Seven months later, despite several reminder questions, it has not been answered. The same goes for a companion question — AQW 28359/11-15. Again, seven months have passed.

Particularly in the context of questions for priority written answer, I find it impossible to believe that the Minister has not been supplied with a draft reply by his civil servants. Yet, all the time frames that exist for answering questions, particularly questions for priority written answer, are being flouted. What can the House do to address this issue?

Mr Speaker: First, I am sorry that Members have to raise points of order on this issue, which has been raised on several occasions by a number of Members. Although the Speaker has no power to take action, especially under Standing Order 20C, I have always allowed Members to raise these issues on the Floor of the Assembly. It is sad that Members have to come to the House to raise points of order, especially on questions for priority written answer. The Member will know that I do not have any power, as I said. I have continually raised the issue with the Executive and, on occasions, I have written to them. Once again, I feel very disappointed that Members, especially Back-Benchers, are not being treated as they should. That needs to go on the record; it is wrong.

Ministerial Statements

Apprenticeships/Youth Training

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

Today, I am announcing the culmination of our review of apprenticeships and the final policy position through the publication of 'Securing our Success: the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships'. I am also providing an update of progress on the ongoing and complementary review of youth training.

I believe that the policy commitments for apprenticeships that I will outline and the steps that we will take to implement the new strategy for apprenticeships will contribute to a fundamental transformation of the skills landscape in Northern Ireland. Skills are the key driver of positive economic change and are also a powerful tool to promote individual opportunity and achieve greater social inclusion.

Apprenticeships provide an excellent means by which employers can obtain the technical and employability skills that they require, as well as being assured that there is a strong skills base across the economy. Apprentices, in turn, know that they have the skills that are wanted by employers and are relevant to the local economy. As such, they will have enhanced prospects of good earnings and sustained employment.

I would like to begin by reminding the Assembly of how we have reached this stage. Last year, I launched major reviews of apprenticeships and youth training. In January, my Department published the interim report of the review of apprenticeships for consultation, outlining 32 proposals for change. Those proposals drew from international best practice in professional and technical education and training systems. Across the developed world, well-established apprenticeship systems have been proven to be an effective mechanism to match skills supply and demand.

The review benefited from input from a range of stakeholders through a series of stakeholder forums and a call for submissions. The expert panel, which I established last year, has also been particularly helpful in providing advice on the emerging proposals. I am very grateful for its key contribution. I would also like to thank the Committee for Employment and Learning for its positive contribution to the review process through the development and consultation stages. The Committee and other Assembly Members will remain critical partners during the implementation phase.

Building on a broad research base and the input of key stakeholders, the interim report articulated a blueprint for Northern Ireland's future apprenticeship programme

— a model that is driven by strategic partnership, puts employers at its very heart, matches better supply with demand, affords opportunities in a wider range of occupations and offers a flexible progression pathway across professional education and training. Those interim proposals have now been consolidated into 20 key policy commitments under the following four themes: the components of an apprenticeship, increasing participation, the role of key players, and ensuring quality.

The first theme is the components of an apprenticeship. Through exploring that theme, I sought to establish apprenticeships as a system of employment and learning that would be adaptive to the particular needs of employers across a wide range of sectors. Under the new model, apprenticeships in Northern Ireland will be defined as a system of learning, irrespective of branding, that will be recognised by government if it contains the following five key components.

First, an apprenticeship will be for a new employee or, in the case of an existing employee, a new job role that requires a substantial amount of learning and skills development. Focusing the concept of apprenticeships in that way will ensure maximum value for public investment.

Secondly, an apprenticeship will commence at professional and technical level 3 and will be available in parallel to further and higher education at levels 4 to 6, sub-degree and degree levels. For certain occupations, there will be opportunities to undertake an apprenticeship at levels 7 and 8 — master's and doctorate. It will be crucial to have in place supporting measures to help young people to access apprenticeships at level 3. As I will highlight shortly, my Department's current review of youth training will seek to address precisely that need.

The third key component of an apprenticeship concerns duration. An apprenticeship will be designed to take at least two years to complete, reflecting the breadth and depth of learning that is required.

The fourth key component will be that apprenticeships will include a breadth of on- and off-the-job training beyond the specific needs of a given job role. That will support the mobility of the apprentice across that sector and also the wider economy.

Apprentices should also be able to progress from their initial apprenticeship into higher-level education and training. That is recognised in the fifth and final core component of our new model, which will guarantee that available progression routes are factored into the design process.

Beyond the core components, awards and qualifications are the key underpinning elements that will define the new apprenticeship model. To ensure clarity and to facilitate portability and progression, apprenticeships will have a single award or qualification for each occupation at each level. The design of the new awards and qualifications will be led by new sectoral partnerships, which I will address in further detail shortly.

To support the Government's overall commitment to lifelong learning, and in recognition of our working-age demographic in Northern Ireland, apprenticeships will be open to everyone, irrespective of age. We will, however, pay particular attention to the key role that apprenticeships

can play in supporting a young person's transition from education to the world of work.

Connected to that will be a further commitment to ensuring that we support individuals to make the transition into apprenticeships from other forms of training. That will be achieved through my Department's new youth training offer and more widely through a range of other initiatives, including the Skills Solutions service and customised training, which will afford opportunities to upskill and reskill adults in work.

I also see our new apprenticeship model drawing from the key elements of international best practice. It is only right, therefore, that our apprenticeships be valued in Northern Ireland and further afield. That will require mapping of awards and qualifications to international frameworks, such as the European qualifications framework. Furthermore, we will put in place measures to fully utilise opportunities for international placement and exchanges by establishing links with partner countries across Europe and beyond. As part of those efforts, my Department will explore the use of EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and consider incentives for participating employers.

All the efforts that my Department has made, and will make, to define our new apprenticeship offer will need to be supported by the appropriate structures to engage key stakeholders in delivery. Key to that is ensuring that the two main beneficiaries of apprenticeships — employers and apprentices — are encouraged to engage. That is central to the second theme of our approach: increasing participation.

The key commitment that I will make in that respect is to establish a central service for employers and potential apprentices. The service will include an online portal to facilitate the advertising of apprenticeship opportunities and the application process. For apprentices, the service will administer subsidies and relevant support, use a UCAS-style portal to advertise vacancies and source independent careers advice and guidance to inform their choices, particularly at key transition points. For employers, the service will advertise their apprenticeship vacancies, provide a matching service for apprentices and off-the-job training providers and administer support and services to make their engagement as beneficial and user-friendly as possible.

The service will also include bespoke measures to assist small businesses and microbusinesses, which are a key part of our local economy. While the service will be crucial to securing increased participation, there are further key commitments that I will make in that area.

First, apprenticeships will be offered in a wide range of professional and technical occupations. In parallel with the development of the new apprenticeship model, the Department has actively engaged in the promotion of apprenticeships across a range of new sectors and occupations. I am encouraged by the results so far but want to do more. I have already initiated high-level apprenticeship pilots in professional services, ICT and engineering. Significant interest has also been expressed in extending the pilot work to include the finance and accounting sector and the industrial chemical and life science sector.

We will also continue our engagement with the public sector and non-departmental public bodies to develop

new apprenticeships in relevant professional and technical roles. I am very pleased with the broad support that I have received so far. It represents a good platform from which to work.

As I highlighted, a further key area of our local economy is the role of small enterprises and microenterprises. Those businesses, however, often have limited capacity to engage with education and training programmes and therefore require tailored support. In implementing our new model, we will test a range of measures to support those businesses, including financial incentives, subsidies for larger businesses to train apprentices based on sectoral need to feed into their supply chain; group training approaches; and public-private partnerships.

We will also need to ensure that our young people are guided to provision that is right for them to help sustain their engagement and support achievement and progression. In countries with the strongest apprenticeship provision, apprenticeships are embedded in the delivery of the relevant careers service. Therefore, my Department's Careers Service will provide impartial advice and guidance for young people considering the apprenticeship pathway.

That key role will be factored into my Department's ongoing review of careers, which is being carried out in partnership with the Department of Education and will report in the autumn of this year.

10.45 am

Another key element in increasing participation will be addressing imbalances in gender participation. Although the proportion of female starts is increasing, males still represent the majority of participants in sectors that have been designated as economically important. To address that, my Department will take a twin-track approach, addressing the gender imbalances that exist within traditional sectors while also working to ensure that a gender balance is instilled in new apprenticeship areas as they are developed. Mechanisms will also be put in place to widen access to apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities or with additional support needs.

The sustained engagement of stakeholders, especially employers, at every level is a core feature in successful apprenticeship systems. I will put in place a new set of structures to secure the input of employers and other key stakeholders in the design and delivery of the new apprenticeship model. Those new bodies will ensure that apprenticeships will remain relevant to the needs of employers and the wider economy, are demand-led and informed by up-to-date labour market information, are portable at national and international level and are assessed according to the highest standards of quality.

First, I will establish a new strategic advisory forum comprised of employers, government, trade unions and off-the-job training providers. The forum will play a key role in providing oversight of the new model and will advise on issues concerning legislation, supply and demand factors, support measures and lessons from international best practice.

To ensure different sectors' needs are met, I will also establish new sectoral partnerships. Those partnerships will be key aspects of the new system, defining the new awards and qualifications that will be delivered, informing the approach for ongoing assessment and end testing

for apprentices. They will have responsibility for striking an appropriate balance between the needs of particular employers and those of the wider sector and will play a lead role in developing interventions within sectors to increase participation.

The strategic advisory forum and the sectoral partnerships will be informed by a new skills barometer mechanism. The barometer will identify the current and future skills needs of the local economy. It will identify where further skills development will be required. Work on the barometer will be commissioned by August this year and will publish annually from 2015 onwards. These structures are all firsts for Northern Ireland and will ensure that apprenticeships are reflective and responsive to the needs of the economy.

The fourth theme in the apprenticeship strategy is quality. Quality and achievement of the full apprenticeship standard will be measurements of success. As such, the content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship will be subject to rigorous quality assurance. Inspectors will have up-to-date experience in the professional and technical areas. They will be supported by experts from industry who will advise on how well the curriculum aligns with the specifications set by the sectoral partnerships. To support the quality of teaching and learning, criteria will be set for all teaching staff. The criteria will establish minimum qualification requirements in the subject area and related pedagogy. Staff will also be required to have up-to-date experience in industry. There will be a requirement for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field.

Quality will be at the heart of the financial model for delivering apprenticeships. Only those providers who meet the standards as determined by the Department will be funded to deliver apprenticeship training. To ensure an open and transparent approach, data on performance and enrolments, and retention and achievements will be published regularly.

I want to ensure that all young people are provided with the opportunity to compete for apprenticeship places. In tandem with the review of apprenticeships, I have been progressing a review of our broader youth training offer. The aim of the review is to ensure that youth training reflects the changing needs of the Northern Ireland economy and offers a progression pathway for young people onto an apprenticeship at level 3, a further education programme or a sustainable job.

The review team has completed extensive research and stakeholder engagement events, including meetings of an expert panel, stakeholder events for young people, employers and training providers, an online call for submissions and study visits to the Netherlands, Denmark and Scotland. Throughout the process, stakeholders have highlighted the need for training provision to be simplified, streamlined and flexible, with clear progression routes to higher level options, including apprenticeships. The desired offer must also be accessible to those on programmes at entry level and level 1 to ensure a seamless system of vocational, professional and technical learning across all levels. Furthermore, the offer should be supported by effective mentoring, pastoral care and independent careers advice and guidance.

Training and qualifications must reflect the needs of employers and the local labour market, with enterprise and

employability skills and the essential skills of literacy and numeracy being key elements to developing young people for the world of work. Stakeholders also highlighted that the branding for any new offer will be vital in reinforcing the image of high-quality, highly relevant, professional education and training.

In addition, the review will seek to simplify and clarify the present offer to enable young people to make informed choices, creating seamless progression pathways across the skills landscape. Current thinking is that the new youth training programme will provide the bridge for learners to move from entry level and level 1 provision to level 3 provision and beyond. To achieve that, the new programme will provide an employed pathway and a non-employed pathway. Underpinning those routes will be additional support for those young people with barriers to engagement, including those with disabilities.

Over the coming months, my Department will carry out additional research and stakeholder engagement activities to further develop our thinking on this crucial element of the skills landscape. That work will include an employer survey and additional focus group consultation with young people and employers.

It is my ambition that Northern Ireland's system of apprenticeships will be of a gold standard and form a key part of a new skills landscape. The system will offer a spectrum of support from entry level up to level 8 — equivalent to a doctorate — facilitate lifelong learning and allow participants to move in and out of professional education and training at their own pace. As I have highlighted, a further key element of the new skills landscape will be ensuring that support is in place for those young people who are not yet ready to take on an apprenticeship.

Now that I have set out the policy direction, the focus will be on implementation. Therefore I have tasked my Department with the delivery of a time-bound implementation plan. That implementation plan, which is also published today, will ensure that the new model of apprenticeships is in place by 2016. However, the landscape will not remain unchanged until then. My Department will take forward a series of key early actions. Stakeholders will see positive and incremental change over the coming months.

I will continue to pilot higher-level apprenticeships in engineering and ICT, with further pilots being taken forward in the public and private sectors. I will establish the strategic advisory forum and the sectoral partnerships to lead on the development of the new apprenticeship awards and qualifications. Through those structures, my Department will continue to work with key stakeholders to determine how apprenticeships can best meet employers' higher-level skill needs, support business growth, meet the career aspirations of individuals and enhance opportunities for social mobility. The strategic forum and sectoral partnerships will be informed by the development of the skills barometer mechanism, which will publish its findings annually from 2015 onwards. In tandem with that approach, my Department will establish a new central service, initially in pilot form, to test how best the service will work with key partners, such as the Careers Service, in guiding participants towards apprenticeship provision. That pilot service will be further developed and scaled up in time to deliver the new model in 2016. Supporting that will

be ongoing work with small and microbusinesses to ensure that we have in place the correct mechanisms to facilitate their participation.

Running concurrently to that work, my Department will develop the wider financial and quality assurance models that will underpin the new apprenticeship system. The financial model will build on the current success of the ApprenticeshipsNI model in utilising the European social fund, and it will explore different approaches and develop incentives for testing before full implementation in 2016. My Department will explore methods to further underpin the core components of apprenticeships that I have outlined today, through guidelines and potential legislation, to further enshrine the concept of apprenticeships going forward.

The strategy now provides a huge opportunity to facilitate economic and social progress. These reforms will constitute a major, ongoing priority for my Department. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I thank the Minister for his statement, and I thank him and his officials for their contribution to and engagement with the Committee through the entire process. It has been a two-way street at all times, and that has brought us to where we are today.

Minister, what specific targets have you set to measure the success of the programme? How will the change in apprenticeships tackle the high number of young people in Northern Ireland who are not in education, employment or learning? Finally, can you give us some tangible examples of interactive engagement with and support from your ministerial colleagues?

Dr Farry: First, I thank the Chair and all the members of the Committee for their engagement in the process to date. We have certainly valued that very positive engagement, and the comments from the Committee have further helped to shape the thinking not just on the review of apprenticeships but on the parallel review of youth training.

I am somewhat cautious about setting arbitrary targets for this, but, in some ways, I think that we have to be really ambitious about what we want to achieve. The system that we are putting in place will be a demand-driven process of young people, in particular, coming forward and employers offering apprenticeship opportunities. I am slightly concerned about the notion of setting an arbitrary target because Great Britain did that and, as a consequence, ended up trying to badge things as apprenticeships that perhaps did not really meet the full rigour and standards of what we want to create in Northern Ireland. That almost creates an artificial race to meet an artificial target.

Going forward, the most important thing that we can put in place in Northern Ireland is to ensure that we have quality and rigour behind our apprenticeship standards. If we are to achieve proper parity of esteem with other routes of training and education, it is important that apprenticeships are viewed as a gold standard. That is the first thing that we have to do. However, in that context, it is important to recognise that both the number of young people participating in apprenticeships and the number of companies in Northern Ireland engaging in apprenticeships are in the mid to low single figures. Despite Northern Ireland's long and deep industrial heritage and the fact that the apprenticeship brand has been very much part of our consciousness, as we look at

that brand today, it is not part of our day-to-day activities in education and training, apart from a very small few. We need to radically improve the number of apprenticeship starts and the number of companies engaging in the process. Through the various mechanisms that we have put in place as of today, I believe, we will ensure much greater participation without compromising quality. That is what we are trying to achieve.

The issue that the Chair raises about those who are not in education, employment and training touches largely on our revised youth training offer. We have set out some initial thoughts today on where that is going. Our view is that we will come back to the Committee in early September to give a more detailed report on our thinking ahead of the publication of a formal consultation document that, in turn, will lead to a fresh youth training strategy. However, once again, we need a radical step change in the quality of our youth training offer. We need to build on our successes, but there is significant room for improvement in our ability to reach the young people who need additional support in moving from school into the world of work.

Finally, the Chair raises the issue of engagement with ministerial colleagues. We have had some positive results. I wrote to my colleagues earlier this year. The majority of Ministers responded positively, indicating that they wished to consider how apprenticeships could be expanded into the public sector and particular areas under their remit. We have positive leads in that regard, and, hopefully, announcements will be made in the very near future to begin some pilots for public sector apprenticeships.

Mr Buchanan: I thank and commend the Minister for bringing his statement to the House today. We all acknowledge that there still is a huge amount of work to do in this area, such as testing models and pilots, tailoring programmes and the design of awards. Does the Minister feel that 2016 is a realistic time frame, or has a target been set that will not be achieved? It is important that we get that clear. How will funding work? Will employers fund apprenticeships from level 3 through the entire programme?

11.00 am

Dr Farry: I thank the Deputy Chair of the Committee for his comments and his welcome for the strategy. Much as it is worth reflecting on the fact that a lot of hard work has gone into the process to get to the stage at which we are announcing what is, in essence, the high-level policy, the real hard work now begins to turn it into reality.

A lot of the work has commenced in a number of key areas, and we will roll out the changes over the next two years. The reason for 2016 being the backstop date for having the full system in place is that it dovetails with the expiration of the current ApprenticeshipsNI contracts, at which point we will have the opportunity to switch over to the new system. I am confident that we can make the changes over the next two years. As I stressed, it will be a major priority for me, as Minister, and for my officials. We believe that the changes are of fundamental importance to improving the skills landscape in Northern Ireland. As we look to our wider goals in the Programme for Government and the economic strategy, it is important that we do all that we can to invest in the skills most relevant to the economy. The type of demand-led process that we are putting in place, with employers in the driving seat, is

probably the most efficient way to ensure that we provide the right higher-level skills to meet the needs of the economy moving forward.

Funding will be a partnership with employers. Obviously, they will employ apprentices and pay their wage or salary, and government will support the off-the-job training. We have access at present to the European social fund, and, subject to approvals being given elsewhere, the next phase of the fund will be available to us. Hopefully, we will have an enhanced package that will enable us to expand our apprenticeship provision. Resources are available from our block grant provision budget, which also supports the development of apprenticeships. UK-wide discussions are being led by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in conjunction with HMRC on a tax incentive or some other type of financial model. We will see whether that can be applied to Northern Ireland and whether it may be a more efficient way to support employers than our current default system. There is work to be done on finance locally and in conjunction with our partners elsewhere in the UK.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Minister, I welcome your detailed and comprehensive statement. My constituency of south Tyrone is an engineering hub. There are very positive signs that the economy is growing, with over 140 businesses starting up in the past two years, including many in the field of engineering. Minister, will you tell me in a detailed and understandable way what is meant by high-level apprenticeship pilots in engineering?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her comments and her welcome for this. She referred to the economy in County Tyrone, and I am pleased that things are improving. South West College is one of the best colleges not just in Northern Ireland but in the UK and Ireland. It is an outstanding college and has been recognised as such. It is known for being very proactive in what it seeks to do.

The current higher-level apprenticeship pilots in ICT and engineering are at level 4. Those are our first interventions for apprenticeships at level 4. It is worth bearing it in mind that well over half our current apprenticeships are at level 2 and less than half are at level 3. We are seeking to change our level 2 offer to a youth training offer. That will include a detailed in-work pathway that will in turn be a pathway to an apprenticeship. Our new system will start at level 3. We want to do a lot more higher-level apprenticeships at level 4 and beyond. The initial higher-level apprenticeships include one in ICT that is being driven through South West College and one in engineering that is being driven through the Northern Regional College. I am optimistic that, with the success of the initial pilots, South West College could in turn offer a higher-level apprenticeship in engineering. Given the real concentration of small engineering firms in County Tyrone, there is no doubt that there is sufficient demand to make that a real success.

Mr P Ramsey: The Minister's statement is most welcome, and it has a lot of quality information. However, I wanted a more disabled-friendly statement. In the eight-page statement, there are two lines that reference people with disabilities. That is not right, given the Committee's level of engagement with your Department's staff.

Given that DEL's statistics indicate that approximately 60% of participants in Skills for Life and Skills for Work do not succeed to the next stage, the unanswered question has

always been "What will happen to entry level and level 1?" Will there be a review of those levels?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. I am very aware of the point he makes on disability. We are committed to ensuring that we have proper equality of participation across all the different dimensions. The Member will appreciate that we are working on a disability employment strategy that we hope to issue for consultation in the autumn of this year. That strategy will contain a specific item that relates to facilitating progression into apprenticeships and support for people who may have a disability. We will ensure that it is rigorous. Hopefully, the Member can look forward to that.

We are trying to secure a seamless pathway through all skill levels from entry level and level 1 through to level 8, in order to revamp vocational training in Northern Ireland. It is fair to say that, while we have some outstanding interventions to support people at level 1 and level 2, we still do not have very good figures for progression. That means that we end up having to intervene, and then we only have a minority of people progressing into other pathways or even into employment. That is a major social and economic issue for us, and that is why we are taking so much time and care to ensure that we get the review of youth training correct to ensure that we have a real step change in performance that will lead to much stronger success rates of progression either into employment or other training.

The Member will also appreciate that we have the Pathways to Success strategy for those who are not in education, employment or training. A lot of those funding streams run out in March 2015, but the Department is also working on behalf of the Executive on the design of the wider United Youth programme. There will be a series of new interventions in that programme to support a range of young people to ensure that they have progression pathways.

Mrs Cochrane: I, too, thank the Minister for his comprehensive statement this morning. As he will know, I chair the all-party group on small and medium-sized enterprises, and apprenticeships are a frequent topic of conversation in the group. Can he set out what he sees as the main attractions of the new system of apprenticeships to SMEs?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her comments and questions. The starting point to answer her question is again to reflect on the point that I mentioned to the Committee Chair: the small number of businesses in Northern Ireland that offer apprenticeship opportunities means that we have a very small footprint in the area, probably in the low- to mid-single figures in percentage terms. Other countries have a much higher level of participation from businesses, including societies that have a strong profile of SMEs. With the best will in the world, we will never have a situation where a majority of companies offer apprenticeships, but, if you want to benchmark the situation, you could look to Switzerland or Germany, where over 30% of businesses are engaged in apprenticeship programmes. That could give you an idea of how far you can go with the penetration of the new model in engaging with businesses.

I recognise that a lot of SMEs may be deterred by the bureaucracy involved with an apprenticeship. They may see the training requirements as being too much

of a burden, or they may not believe that they will get a return from it. We need, therefore, to address those fears and misperceptions and ensure that SMEs have the confidence to engage with the model. The central service will be a major asset to SMEs in taking care of a lot of those processes. We will also seek to market apprenticeships specifically to SMEs. We can look to different models of how training can be supported in SMEs, including, for example, group training mechanisms or an SME being part of a wider network where a larger company will overtrain apprentices for the sector as a whole. It is important that SMEs also recognise that they will get a return from an apprentice. We want to see a breadth in apprenticeship training and a duration of at least two years. An apprenticeship that is properly pitched will see a productivity gain for a business employing an apprentice before the end of the training period. Taking on an apprentice should not be seen as a burden by an SME; it should be seen as a means of ensuring that they secure employees who are relevant to a business and who in turn will be an investment in the future security of the business.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his statement. One of the strong issues that came out through the consultation on youth training was the need for better advice, awareness and communication at a grass-root level. That came from the young people themselves. Can the Minister indicate how that can be improved? Are the changes and new initiatives that he highlighted in his statement enough?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. There are probably two aspects that may give the Member some reassurance in that regard. The first is that we are conducting the review of careers, which builds on the excellent report that the Committee put in place earlier this year. That guides the terms of reference of the present review. We are looking to intervene at all levels across our skills landscape to ensure that young people in particular are given advice and guidance about making informed choices. Secondly, as part of our new youth training offer we want to put in place stronger mechanisms for the mentoring and pastoral care of young people, particularly when a young person may be leaving the more secure, more structured school environment. The world of work or training can seem daunting, so there is a need for increased intervention there. That is a point that we have taken on board, and we are looking to see how we can design that into the new youth training offer.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement to the House this morning. I hope that it begins a new era in the provision of apprenticeships for everyone. One concern that I had in Committee is the question of two-year apprenticeships. That is something that employers heavily criticised when they came before us. They did not recognise it. What is the difference between that and the two-year programme to complete that is in the document?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his introductory comments and his question. There were probably three areas that attracted most comment in the consultation. The first was whether the starting point for an apprenticeship should be level 2 or level 3. The second was the breadth of an apprenticeship. What I mean by that is whether an apprenticeship should be very specific to the needs of a particular employer or whether it should be training for a sector as a whole. The third was the minimum duration of

two years for an apprenticeship. In some ways, the three are interconnected.

We have spent a lot of time on the back of the consultation further engaging with stakeholders on those issues to provide reassurance where people raised concerns. The central point that I will make is that we in Northern Ireland have a major skills challenge. We know that, to be competitive globally over the coming decades, we need to upskill and to invest more in our skills. Most of our new jobs will be created at level 3 or level 4 and above, so it is important that our training move with that.

The consensus is that the minimum training requirement for a level 3 apprenticeship should be two years. Those who expressed concern about the two-year duration might also have queried the issue of a level 3 versus a level 2 start. Hopefully, through the focus that we are placing on a revised youth training offer that will include a distinct pathway that involves on-the-job training through, in essence, a traineeship that may be less than two years, people will be assured that we are providing a full spectrum of support for the business community and ensuring that we offer a range of training programmes that will meet their needs at different skill levels. Fundamentally, it is important that we establish apprenticeships as being a gold-standard brand that is attractive to people across all levels of educational attainment. I believe that, through the totality of the recommendations that we are making today, we have achieved that.

Mr Ross: What is the likely cost of all the changes that the Minister has laid out? Will a failure by the Executive to agree welfare reform impact on his ability to deliver the changes he has outlined?

11.15 am

Dr Farry: Again, I thank the Member for his questions. Obviously, the current uncertainty with welfare reform affects everyone's budgets, both in terms of potential cuts to budgets and the difficulties with forward planning.

At this stage, we have a significant budget available for apprenticeships. That is made up of two components: the core funding of the Department through the Northern Ireland Budget and, secondly, the European social fund. We are hopeful that we will have access to a bigger pot of European social fund moneys in the future, as the European social fund for Northern Ireland is set to grow overall, so we are able to move ahead across a broad front in our support of skills. That resource will be available to us irrespective of what happens with the local Budget, although that issue may have an impact on the direct funding of the Department.

We look to a situation in which the new model will be very much demand-led. Indeed, as we look to a greater focus on level 3 and above, apprenticeships, in turn, will become more costly to provide. At this stage, I expect that we will be able to cope with the initial ramping up of apprenticeships within the current headroom that we have, but we will have to keep it under constant review.

Mr Byrne: I welcome the statement by the Minister and the fact that apprenticeships are being examined in relation to employers' interests for the future. On the pilot exercise for engineering, are we talking about fabrication engineering, precision engineering or mechanical engineering? What

is the remit of the term "engineering"? People like Terex in Tyrone and other employers tell me that they cannot get practically trained people who can operate computer numerical control (CNC) machines or machine tooling machines.

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. I would first draw his attention to the engineering action plan that we launched in April, and I will ensure that my officials provide him with a copy of that. It was devised in conjunction with a range of universities, colleges and companies, and it is an asset that we will review on an ongoing basis.

On the more specific issue of apprenticeships, particularly in his part of the world, the beauty of the new system that we are putting in place is that it is entirely demand-led. It is not about government suggesting a particular apprenticeship in one aspect of engineering over something else. We want industry to come together through the sectoral partnerships and determine where it sees the scope for apprenticeships. We have seen that already with the higher-level pilots. Those do not reflect what we in government have done; we have not gone out to industry and said, "Why don't you do a pilot?" Rather, it has been the response of business in Northern Ireland to the fact that a new landscape for apprenticeships is emerging, and they have been proactive in that regard. As government, we seek to channel that through a particular system and ensure that we have the proper standards in that regard.

The business sectors in Tyrone could come together and suggest what engineering apprenticeships they require and at what levels that training needs to be done. They have the asset of South West College on their doorstep, and we will ensure that the quality is there and that the standards are driven through that process. We seek to enable that process to happen, and I encourage the Member to speak to those companies and encourage them to take every opportunity that is presented.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his statement. I certainly welcome it. I am sure that the Minister will agree that, for young people in particular, apprenticeships are positive and important experiences. Does he agree that they are very important for companies as well? An example of that are the software and IT companies that want to not only bring apprentices on but retain them in a very competitive market.

Dr Farry: Again, I thank the Member for his comments. It is useful to look at it from the perspective of the companies and the apprentices. For companies, apprenticeships offer a much more secure way of achieving the technical and employability skills they require. We have a very good general education system, but that does not offer the same guarantee that the skills will be precisely what companies require to make a difference in what is a very competitive world, where they need the investment of a lot of skills.

At the same time, apprentices will know that they have the prospect of much more sustained employment because they will have the skills that companies require. There is less guesswork involved on whether they have done the right subjects and the right course to be relevant to employers. So, they know that they will have skills that are very bankable, and we will see situations in which people who go down the apprenticeship route will have the potential for much

higher earnings over their working life than others. There will be a real incentive for a young person to go down that route.

It is also worth stressing that we are not simply talking about apprenticeships being for young people who might not get into university. Apprenticeships may be seen as some sort of second-rate choice that a young person will make. It is important that we try to create parity of esteem between the pathways that are available. For many young people, the traditional form of higher education will be highly appropriate, but, for a lot of other young people, an apprenticeship will offer a different route to higher-level skills. There are examples already of companies that are recruiting people with good A levels straight from school, who then end up at the same level as a graduate-entry person after a number of years. Often, it is the person who has gone down the apprenticeship route who has the better employability skills and is more adept at working in the particular company's environment. So it is important that we encourage apprenticeships and have real parity of esteem between the different pathways.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his statement in the same way as I have thanked previous Ministers over the last 15 years, but we still have the highest unemployment rate among young people. We still have high levels of illiteracy and innumeracy. I ask the Minister this directly: what are you doing to break down the prejudice against vocational education that still haunts this society, where young people are encouraged to do academic subjects? I read in the papers this morning that only two teachers in the maintained sector got permanent jobs. When will vocational education get the equality that it deserves?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions, and I will start with the final one. That is very much what we are seeking to do with our review of apprenticeships and with our youth training and all the promotional work that goes alongside that. Hopefully, from the comment that I just made to Mr Douglas on the importance of parity of esteem between the different pathways, I am making very clear my support for vocational training. It is also worth making the observation that, as we look around the European Union, it is the societies that have the most developed systems of apprenticeships and vocational training that also have the lowest levels of youth unemployment. I believe that this type of approach is a means by which we can address structural unemployment, particularly among young people, because you have that much closer matching of supply and demand and that greater emphasis on employability skills being provided for young people, particularly when we can create in-work situations for young people even when they do not have access to a full apprenticeship.

I also stress to the Member that literacy and numeracy are absolutely ongoing challenges in this society right across the spectrum. That is why we have put a lot of stock in essential skills qualifications. I am pleased that we have managed to achieve hundreds of thousands of those qualifications over the past number of years, but there is more work to be done, including among young people. We are seeing an improvement in our programme for international student assessment (PISA) scores for literacy and numeracy, but more needs to be done. That is why literacy and numeracy will be a key component of the revised youth training offer in particular.

Mr McCarthy: I, like others, welcome the lengthy statement from the Minister. I welcome his Department's determined

commitment to see radical change and improvements in the role and work of apprenticeships for all ages. He referred to the strategic advisory forum and sectoral partnerships. Can he elaborate briefly on those two items?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. The new structures are central to our new system. I am very conscious that, in government, we can do a lot but that we have limitations. A new system of apprenticeships has to be viewed as a partnership across society in Northern Ireland, and that includes key stakeholders coming together. We see the strategic advisory forum operating at a high level in providing oversight to our new system of apprenticeships, and we see employers, Departments, trade unions and others being key players in that regard. In turn, the sector partnerships are perhaps the most key aspect of the new infrastructure around apprenticeships. They will scope out the new opportunities and put in place the particular standards and qualifications for emerging apprenticeships. They will also drive the reform through the system, increase participation and ensure that we have a real, strong footprint in apprenticeships in Northern Ireland as we seek to ensure that we have the right inward investment in skills to meet the creation of jobs. We are doing a lot of work at present to improve the economic situation here.

Mr Allister: Could I return to the issue raised by Mr Ross but not answered by the Minister? Where are the costings in the statement in relation to what is anticipated? It is only when we get a glimpse of the costings that we can judge whether all this is merely aspirational or whether it is capable of delivery. Surely, as Minister, he must have some idea of the costings. Yes, part of it is demand-led, but he is putting in features of various forums etc, all of which will cost money. He must have an idea of the costings. Can he share that with us?

Dr Farry: The Member should understand that, today, we are talking about the high-level policy as we move forward with apprenticeships. In that way, this is the culmination of the policy review phase of what we are doing. We are now starting the implementation phase, where we are seeking to turn this into reality. If the Member cares to study the detail of the strategy that we are launching today, he will see the action plan and the different milestones within that. I stress again that we have a significant budget that is already available for apprenticeships. That includes access to the European social fund and money directly from the Northern Ireland Budget. At present, we have a combined budget well in excess of £30 million per annum in that regard, so that is an asset that is available to us.

The Member is also right to stress that this is fundamentally a demand-led process. We are reliant on employers coming forward and creating apprenticeship opportunities, and I would like to think that we will be victims of our own success and that we will be overwhelmed by demand. We will see an incremental approach, albeit at an accelerating pace over the coming years. As things stand, we have enough headroom to accommodate this, but we will have to keep it under constant review to ensure that we can plan ahead realistically. If we perceive a need for more resources, I will bid from the Executive. As I said, I believe that this is fundamental to the delivery of our Programme for Government and economic strategy objectives, and I hope that any call in that regard would be very favourably considered.

Schools: Capital Projects

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. A Cheann Comhairle, ba mhaith liom ráiteas a dhéanamh chun an Tionól a thabhairt suas chun dáta ar chlár caipitil na scoileanna agus ar na pleananna breise infheistíochta caipitil atá agam don tréimhse atá romhainn.

I should like to make a statement updating the Assembly on the schools capital programme and my further capital plans for the coming period. In my statements to the House in the autumn of 2011, June 2012 and January 2013, I set out the challenges faced by a schools estate comprising 1,172 schools of varying sizes, primary and post-primary, across five education sectors. The estimated capital value of the education estate is substantial at just over £3 billion, and a useful indicator for investment need is the current maintenance backlog across the estate of £286 million.

My Department's strategy for capital investment into the foreseeable future will remain focused on supporting the development and delivery of a network of viable and sustainable schools, set firmly in the context of 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools' and shaped by the outworkings of the area planning process.

I remain resolute in ensuring that my investment plans will also focus on providing a first-class education experience for the pupils, teachers and, indeed, school communities to ensure that our young people have the type and quality of accommodation required to help them to fulfil their potential.

11.30 am

In developing my investment plans for the schools estate, it is incumbent on me to balance the limited capital resources made available to me against the scale of investment needed across what can only be described as a wide and diverse schools estate. I am sure that every Member can identify a range of schools, primary and post-primary, that are in dire need of investment in the areas you represent. While I would love to be in a position to make a statement that promises investment to all schools in need, I must be realistic and also ensure that any school I announce for any form of investment is not only deliverable but sustainable for many years to come.

In my statement to the House in June 2012, I announced 18 newbuild projects. One of those projects is complete, seven are on-site, and a further eight projects are expected to move on-site before the end of this financial year. The remaining two schemes are at an earlier stage in development and are not expected to be on-site until the 2015-16 financial year.

In January 2013, I announced a further programme of 22 newbuild school projects to advance in planning. These projects are at a much earlier stage in development, and my officials are actively engaging with relevant school authorities to take the projects forward. Economic appraisals have been approved for two of these projects, which have moved to design phase, and I anticipate that others will proceed in the same manner in the coming months.

In February this year, I was pleased to announce 51 projects under the schools enhancement programme. All these projects have approved economic appraisals, and

design teams are now in place for 37 of them, with work ongoing to secure teams for the remaining projects. An initial tranche of these projects will move on-site by the end of this financial year, and, subject to the availability of capital budget, the remainder will progress to construction during the next two financial years.

Today's announcement, coupled with the ongoing work within the Department, means that over 100 major and significant enhancement projects are being actively progressed. That represents an unprecedented level of capital development and renewal across the wider schools estate.

Implementing major works in schools is not my only priority in a given year. In the last three financial years, I have invested £214 million in much-needed minor capital works across the estate, including window replacement; toilet refurbishment; security works, including CCTV, access control and fencing; replacement of mobiles and new modular accommodation; disabled access, including ramps and special needs adaptations; and fire-risk improvements, including rewiring and fire alarms. These works have included addressing statutory obligations across the estate, in regard to health and safety and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). They have also dealt with a range of accommodation issues and additional provision. I have also invested substantially in maintenance works across the estate in recent years, with notable maintenance investment in the last financial year of just short of £53 million.

Turning to the substantive element of my statement to the House today, I wish to set out my capital investment plans for this and the coming financial years. On major capital investment, I will shortly set out my next list of proposed newbuild schools to be advanced in planning, but I feel that it is important, in the first instance, to set out my rationale for selecting these schools for announcement today.

In December last year, in their capacity as planning authorities, the education and library boards, having consulted with school authorities, forwarded lists of potential newbuild projects for schools in their areas. In total, 145 newbuild school proposals were submitted, and the overall list included schools from all five education sectors.

As was the case in my previous announcements in 2012 and 2013, I have agreed a protocol that has been developed to assess the list of projects that were submitted. The basic underpinning rationale of the protocol is that all projects will be considered in the context of the emerging area plans and confirmed as forming part of the core provision in an area, going forward, including confirmation of the size of the school.

On that basis, each project on the list submitted by the planning authority was subject to a number of gateway checks to confirm, firstly, that the project has been proposed by the planning authority in consultation with the relevant school authority; secondly, that the school is viable and sustainable, in the context of my policy on sustainable schools and in line with the needs of the area as set out in the emerging area planning process; and, thirdly, confirmation that there are no area planning uncertainties in relation to the proposed project.

If the answer was no to any of those questions, the project was not considered further and was not scored in the

context of the approved protocol. However, that in no way implies that I will not consider those projects as part of a future announcement.

The next stage involved scoring each of the proposals that made it through the gateway. The scoring was assessed under three broad categories: major works that will effect rationalisation proposals; major works to address inadequate or inappropriate accommodation; and social considerations. The full protocol was placed on the Department's website this morning, along with a list of the schools that I will shortly set out to the House. Before I set out the school projects that will advance in planning, several points on the application of the protocol are worthy of note.

With a limited budget, I had to introduce a limit on investment in any given school. I have therefore included in the protocol a mechanism for supporting investment in our larger schools without having to allocate an overly large percentage of the available budget to those schools immediately. That has been achieved by seeking to identify smaller discrete projects that have merit in their own right but do not require a rebuild of the entire school.

I am also acutely aware of my statutory duties in respect of integrated and Irish-medium schools. I have therefore ensured that my protocol recognises those duties and, accordingly, factored them into the sustainability gateway that was applied. That was achieved by assessing recent enrolment trends to identify where enrolments are increasing and sustainability thresholds are likely to be met in coming years and ensuring that those schools were considered with the other schools that advanced to the scoring phase of the process.

I have also introduced a greater emphasis in the assessment process on schools whose pupils are more greatly impacted by social issues. The indicators that I have selected in the protocol are aimed at addressing those issues, and they take into account the number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and the level of free school meals entitlement in a given school.

Several of the schools that were submitted for consideration as major works were also submitted as part of shared campus proposals that involve rebuilding the school. Those schools will be assessed under the shared campus call for proposals in the first instance. It is my intention to make an announcement on the shared campus proposals shortly.

In selecting the number of projects to advance in planning, I had to consider several constraints and make various assumptions. There are constraints on the capital budget and the capacity of the various stakeholders in the process to deliver further projects in parallel with the existing programme of major works.

While different projects will progress at different speeds, given the likely timescales required to complete the economic appraisal, design and procurement processes, significant spend is unlikely before the financial year 2016-17. Therefore, I had to make assumptions about the level of capital budget likely to be available to my Department in that year and beyond.

This announcement to advance projects in planning does not commit the Department to fund a project within a defined timescale. In any event, such a commitment

would be impossible, given that the Department does not know its capital budget availability beyond March 2015. That said, the schools announced to advance will have a valid expectation that the construction project will follow within a reasonable time frame. It is also reasonable for my Department to plan capital projects for future years, given the lead-in time for the delivery of such projects.

Having given due regard to those assumptions and constraints, I can now announce that major works projects will take place at the following primary schools: Drumlins Integrated Primary School, Ballynahinch; Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh; Iveagh Primary School, Rathfriland; Roe Valley Integrated Primary School, Limavady; Scoil an Droichid, Belfast; St Mark's Primary School and St Luke's Primary School, Twinbrook; and Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus. There will be a newbuild for the recently amalgamated St Patrick's Primary School, Belfast.

The Twinbrook primary school project is linked to a wider DSD-led project to invest in Colin town centre. I place on record my support for that project, which includes plans for a new post-primary school in the area.

The current position is that, while I remain supportive of the project, I am mindful that there are wider area planning issues for the broader west Belfast, Crumlin and Glenavy areas that must be bottomed out before an investment decision on Colin town centre can be considered. This is a complicated process that must be completed before the size of any proposed new school can be confirmed.

I turn now to post-primary schools. Those moving ahead for newbuilds are Cullybackey High School; Dunclug High School, Ballymena; Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon; and Methodist College, Belfast, which is not a rebuild of the entire school but will cover the refurbishment of A block and the schoolhouse. There will be a newbuild for the combined Monkstown High School/ Newtownabbey Community High School; St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen; and St Killian's College, Carnlough.

This announcement is not only good news for those schools to be advanced in planning but good news for the economy. It represents in the order of £170 million of capital investment, which will also be a welcome boost to the construction industry over the coming years as the projects come to fruition.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I welcome today's announcement, which is mixed with good news, partial news and no news. Some of it is a case of jam tomorrow. I particularly want to bring the Minister to one point that he referred to. In the House yesterday and today, he referred to the 18 projects that he previously announced. Only one of those is complete, and the rest are at various stages of the planning process. Given that, is it now time for the Minister to reconsider other procurement options? Is that in the protocol in regard to the announcement today?

I welcome the announcement of new schools in Cullybackey and in Dunclug in my constituency. My only caveat is that I am sad that part of the price tag for that is the closure of Ballee in Ballymena. There is a degree of acceptance and of sorrow that that is the case. Eleven years after it being announced, there is still no newbuild for Devenish College in Enniskillen. It is quite clear that the Minister has not yet got the word that a promise was made that has not been delivered on.

Mr O'Dowd: I thank the Member for his range of questions. If you want jam tomorrow, you have to grow fruit today. These announcements are preparation for and recognition of the lead-in time that is required to make a capital announcement a reality.

In the announcements that I made in June 2012, January 2013 and today, there are learning processes. The Department of Education is now taking forward what is probably the largest capital programme outside DRD. Over this time, despite the difficult financial constraints that we are working under, I made the decision that, while we may live in difficult times, we do not live in impossible times. It is only right and proper that we continue to progress capital announcements and that my officials and the relevant planning authorities work through the required stages to make that a reality.

The Member will be aware that I have often stood in the House and remarked on the red tape that we politicians wrap ourselves in when it comes to spending public money. The timescales and detail involved in business cases and economic appraisals are, in my humble opinion, restrictive. They go beyond what is required in protecting public finances and are in danger of delaying — in some cases, stopping — significant investment from the public purse back into the economy.

You said that only one of the 18 projects announced in June is complete. Several, however, are now on-site, with construction taking place and construction workers gainfully employed in building those schools. I assure you that the delight on the faces of the principals, boards of governors and pupils is real.

I have continued to refine the protocol that I have announced today because we recognise that, to announce a school and get it on site in reasonable time, there has to be a number of definitive things about the school, such as the pupil intake, its place in area planning, whether there are any outstanding development proposals etc. We have introduced that into today's protocol to try to advance things.

11.45 am

The Member is aware that I made an announcement about Devenish College, I believe, in January 2013. It is going through processes towards getting a newbuild. Devenish College will have a newbuild because of the decisions that I made in January 2013. Progress is being made on delivering that newbuild, and that newbuild will happen.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I, too, welcome the statement from the Minister. Indeed, like most Members, I welcome the announcement for specific schools in my constituency, such as Drumlins Integrated Primary School in Ballynahinch and, of course, Iveagh Primary School in Rathfriland. To what extent is the Minister able to use his capital budget to meet social need and, indeed, help tackle the effects of social deprivation on the learning process?

Mr O'Dowd: I also welcome the moving ahead of Drumlins. It has been delayed for a significant number of years and that has been down to site identity. That is one of the problems that has caused delays in the past and one

of the things that I hope this protocol will iron out moving forward, so that, when a school is announced, it is built within a reasonable period.

I have made a conscious decision on this occasion to include social clauses in my announcement on newbuilds. It is only right and proper that, if we have identified and are tackling social disadvantage through our common funding formula, we also enhance provision of facilities for communities that are facing significant levels of social deprivation. I have included scoring for free school meals entitlement in the protocol and have also included a score for special educational needs, because I believe that those in the greatest need require the greatest intervention from the state, and if we want to see a change in the pattern of social disadvantage in years to come, we have to invest to do so.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his statement. I, too, acknowledge the newbuilds for Drumlins and for Iveagh Primary School. They are needed. I also acknowledge the Minister's warning that it is not about funding a project within a particular time. Can I ask about school enhancement projects? There are about 51 projects, and they come to somewhere over £100 million. Given that you do not know what your capital budget will be beyond March 2015, how many projects do you expect to move on in that initial tranche?

Mr O'Dowd: All those projects have been announced to move on to economic appraisal stage, and that stage will identify the next steps involved. I have announced them on the basis that it is my intention that they all move forward if they pass through economic appraisal stage. I, as Minister, as is the case with any other Minister — I listened to Mr Farry's contribution during questions on his statement — have to forecast ahead into a time when budgets are not confirmed, but I can safely say that the Department of Education will have a capital budget. We can either be like a rabbit in the headlights and become stunned by the fact that we do not know exactly what will happen after 2015-16 or we can plan with the intelligence we have to move forward. I also base my plans on other commentary. The coalition Government are on record saying that they will invest in capital and that they see capital as one way of restimulating the economy. If that is the case and those indications continue, I want to make sure that the Department of Education has shovel-ready projects to move forward and to capitalise on any of that funding that comes forward.

Mr Kinahan: I, too, welcome the statement. I always welcome any capital funding that goes to any schools, and I am particularly happy to see that we will get a shared education announcement shortly. I have two concerns, other than the obvious one of area planning. The Minister says that the protocol will take account of the numbers of pupils with special needs, yet every indication from schools is that there are masses of children with special needs who have yet to be assessed. Do we really know what the numbers are? Do we have a thorough way of making sure that we know that number so that we are putting the finance there for them?

Also — this is not quite on the right subject — what about the shortfall of £11 million or £12 million for the library boards that seems to be there for the future?

Mr O'Dowd: I can make assessments only on those children on the SEN register, and we are working diligently to ensure that timescales for assessment are reduced. The Member will be aware that I hope to bring legislation in relation to SEN to the Assembly in this calendar year to improve that situation.

In relation to funding for the education and library boards, the Member will also be aware that I have made a significant bid to the June monitoring round to cover the increased costs that our boards are facing in relation to SEN.

Mr Lunn: I also welcome the statement; there is a lot of good news in it. I refer the Minister to the paragraph where he says that he is aware of his:

“Statutory Duties in respect of Integrated and Irish Medium Schools.”

He says that he has factored those duties into the sustainability gateway:

“by assessing recent enrolment trends to identify cases where enrolments are increasing”.

Can the Minister clarify how that differs from his assessment of any other type of school?

Mr O'Dowd: We have a sustainable schools policy with enrolment trends contained in it. You can take a number of readings of that sustainable schools policy. I am taking a reading of it from the positive element, that the Irish-medium and integrated sectors should be facilitated and promoted, and to do that, at times, you have to provide them with a newbuild. So it is read in a different way from other sectors; it is read through a more positive prism than perhaps would have been the case in the past. I continue to review the protocol to reassure myself that it fully reflects our statutory duties. So the protocol may be open to change in future for that very purpose.

Mr Craig: I also welcome the funding announcements; they are good news for those schools that have received them. As the Minister well knows, I have been championing the cause of Dromore High School. Thirty-three years ago, when I left that school, it needed a newbuild. It was a school built for 500 pupils; there are now 940 in it. We have jumped through major hoops around planning and the identification of a new site. Will the Minister confirm that, to get one of these “shovel-ready” schools, to use his terminology, he will fund the purchase of the site this year?

Mr O'Dowd: Just to confirm: there is no question that Dromore High School needs a newbuild. Unfortunately, I do not have the finances available at this time to announce newbuilds for all the schools that I would have liked. In relation to Dromore High School, I am aware of the work that elected representatives, the school and the SELB have been involved in, in the identification of sites and issues around planning permission. I understand that the board has prepared a business case for my Department. That is being scrutinised with the mindset that we wish to purchase the land. If the business case stacks up, we will move ahead and purchase that land for an announcement at a later stage of a newbuild for Dromore High School.

So, in many ways, the first stage will be crossed — the purchase of the land — then we have to move towards a build.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I, too, welcome the statement that the Minister has brought to the House. It goes some way to mention the maintenance backlog. What is his Department doing to address and prioritise the much-needed maintenance work for schools so that they can operate and open their doors come September, particularly those schools that have been given the green light to amalgamate? In my area, there are two primary schools of single-gender identity and, if they do not get the funding that they need for their maintenance, they will not function come September.

Mr O'Dowd: I thank the Member for the question. As I said in the opening paragraphs of my statement, we have a significant backlog of maintenance in the schools estate: somewhere in the region of £250 million, if not more. Over this last number of years, there has also been significant investment in maintenance projects across the estate. For instance, last year, we spent over £50 million on maintenance. That is unprecedented in recent years. We will spend £17 million this year. I have also made a bid to the monitoring rounds for maintenance programmes and, in fairness, even to, in previous times, the Executive. When we made interventions to stimulate the economy, I secured money for maintenance during those programmes. So I am open to funding maintenance and, in fairness to my Executive colleagues, so are they.

I suspect that the scenario that the Member paints for me may fall under minor works. However, if the Member wishes to write to me with details of the case involved, I will look at it more closely to reassure myself that all measures have been taken to progress the amalgamation of those schools. There is quite a healthy minor works budget available, as well. In recent years, we have spent significant amounts of public money on minor works improving our schools estate. However, if the Member writes to me, I will take a look at that case.

Mr Wells: As the Minister knows, undertakings have been given for a new school at Down High. A very appropriate site was selected and planning approval given. It now appears that his Department is trying to point the school in the direction of a site on the Ardglass Road in Downpatrick — a site that he and his officials know is totally inappropriate and inconvenient, would lead to huge traffic congestion and would force 90% of the pupils who attend Down High to travel across Downpatrick to access education.

Mr Speaker: Apart from all that, can we have a question?

Mr Wells: Will the Minister accept from me that he has placed a totally unrealistic expectation upon the board of governors of Down High School?

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member accept from me that I have not placed any restrictions on the board of governors of Down High School? It goes back to one of the points that I raised with Mr Storey. We as politicians have wrapped ourselves in red tape. It is very difficult to spend public funds when you are encased in red tape. The example of Down High School is a very good one. Down High School requires a newbuild and seeks to have that newbuild on its current site. However, under the rules for economic appraisal and the spending of public moneys, there is a

duty upon my Department and my officials to look at all options in the area to see which is best value for money for the public purse. You can measure it through that simple prism — which is best value? — and end up with site a, b or c.

I am also aware that my officials are taking into consideration comments from local elected representatives and the school around the requirement for the school to be built on its current site for a number of the reasons that you have outlined. I cannot intervene in that process. Let the economic appraisal process take its course. The school has made its voice heard on the matter, as have local representatives. If there is any relevant evidence, such as you have pointed out today, in relation to traffic congestion in the town, then, in my opinion, that has to be taken into account before a final decision is made on the site for Down High School.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire, agus cuirim fáilte roimh an ráiteas seo ar maidin. I welcome the statement this morning and I am sure that the construction industry will welcome it. It will be a stimulus to an industry that has been under pressure for a number of years. Will the Minister tell us what it will mean to the construction industry in finance going into the industry and the number of jobs created?

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. A recent report carried out by the construction industry suggests that every pound announced for capital investment stimulates a further £2.80 in the economy through stimulus in the construction industry. My primary objective is to build new schools for our pupils, parents and communities, but I am acutely aware that the announcement will also be welcomed by the construction industry. There has been a major step up in the number of schools now under construction, which has been welcomed by the construction industry. I have no doubt that the industry will welcome the fact that we are planning into the future for further builds. Having spoken to a number of construction workers and developers on the sites, I can assure you that they welcome it. The construction industry has been through a very lean period, but it now sees a step change, particularly from my Department, in relation to investing in capital programmes.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas cuimsitheach. I thank the Minister for covering a wide range of things there. Yes, the construction industry does appreciate the investment, but it would like to see a lot more happening a lot quicker in the process. I pay particular tribute to the enhancement projects and some of the officials, one of whom I see here, who has been particularly helpful in delivering practical measures on the ground.

Holy Family Primary School in Magherafelt in my constituency has been told repeatedly that it is at the top of the list and is a priority for the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the Department, yet today it still feels deeply let down. Can the Minister give any reassurance as to when, in the immediate future and not years away, that scheme will go ahead and whether his Department accepts that the school is a priority?

12.00 noon

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. I thank the Member for his question and for his kind comments about my officials, who are carrying out significant work on capital investment. I am sure that they will appreciate his comments.

I am acutely aware of the case of Holy Family Primary School, and there is no question that it requires being rebuilt. I cannot commit to a newbuild at this time because I would be giving the Member a false promise. I could stand here today and announce 100 schools and tell all who ask me that I will build them a new school, but I know that it is not going to happen in a reasonable period. What I have tried to do is manage expectations, manage my budget and manage the workload of my Department, the CCMS and the boards that have to follow through on the investment.

I have put a protocol in place that I believe is fair, open and transparent, and I have scored schools against that. As I said in my statement, the fact that a school has not been announced today or perhaps did not score as highly as it expected does not mean that it will not be announced at a later stage. I have no doubt that there will be significant disappointment that that project has not been announced. I can only commit to telling the school that I am doing my best for it and other schools to move projects forward.

Mrs Dobson: I also thank the Minister for his statement and welcome the update and funding announcements for schools. However, will he explain why he has failed to bring forward major capital projects for Lurgan College and Portadown College and, crucially, the Lurgan campus of Craigavon Senior High School, all of which he has been so long aware of?

Mr O'Dowd: I appear to have been aware of it longer than you have been, because I am the one who had to remind you that it was in a dire state. I am glad that the message has finally got through.

Lurgan is a classic example of why we require area planning to work and the needs of the entire school area to be taken into account rather than those of one or two schools in an area. To date, the debate among many in the Lurgan area has been about the needs of one or two schools rather than those of all the schools in the controlled sector. I hope that we get to the stage at which we have a debate, a discussion and a decision about the needs of the entire controlled sector in Lurgan. Then, I assure you, I will commit to following that up with capital investment.

Mr Buchanan: In his statement, the Minister makes much about the outworking of the area planning process. Indeed, he said that all projects would be considered in the context of the area plan and that one of the gateway checks for newbuilds is that "there are no area-planning uncertainties". Given that there are no area plans for the primary sector, how does he marry that with the eight newbuilds announced today?

Mr O'Dowd: There have been draft area plans for the primary sector for a significant period. I understand that the education and library boards are to publish the next iteration of those plans on their websites, if not in the coming days or weeks, in the very near future.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I, too, welcome the announcements made here today, not just for the eight primary schools and seven post-primary schools on the list but for what it means for the local construction industry.

From a local perspective, I particularly welcome the fact that Gaelscoil na gCrann is on the list. I have a special interest there, as my children attend the school. It is an excellent learning environment. This is a great end to the year for the school, which has recently won the all-Ireland drama championship.

Mr Speaker: I am sure that all of that is important —

Mr McAleer: I am coming to my question.

Mr Speaker: — but let us have the question.

Mr McAleer: I am glad that the Department is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in respect of Irish-medium education. What message does the Minister think that sends out to other gaelscoileanna and to the Irish-medium sector in general?

Mr O'Dowd: I welcome the fact that the Member is in the good books with his children on the newbuild at Gaelscoil na gCrann. It is a flourishing Irish-medium bunscoil or primary school. It requires investment, and that is why it has scored the way it has and why I am moving forward with the newbuild.

The message that is sent out today is that we will continue to invest in the Irish-medium and integrated sectors. We will live up to our statutory obligations on that matter. As I said to Mr Lunn, I am committed to continuing to review the protocol to satisfy myself that we live up to those obligations to the Irish-medium and integrated sectors and to ensure that capital and other investment flows into those sectors to give them a sound foundation in the education system.

Gaelscoil na gCrann has flourished in its temporary accommodation. It has done so because it has strong leadership, a strong board of governors, dedicated teaching and non-teaching staff and a community that is involved in the school. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity today to invest in it.

Mr Dallat: I also thank the Minister for his statement. I understand fully his cash-strapped condition. It tells us that teachers who were due for redundancy cannot have it.

Two top secondary schools in my area — St Paul's College and St Mary's College — have statutory notices that they are to close on 31 August 2015 to be replaced by one school, but there is no indication of the new school. Are those two excellent schools to be left to wither on the vine while the Minister continues to plead poverty?

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Dallat never rises to speak unless he has his press release in mind. I can see the headline in the 'Coleraine Times' now: "Dallat challenges Minister". The Minister is not pleading anything. Since coming into office, the Minister has been to the fore in saying that the Department of Education's budget does not suffice, neither in resource nor capital. There is simply not enough money to meet the needs of our education system.

I am limited in what I can say about the proposals the Member refers to. If development proposals have been published, due process will take place. I will make a

decision on them in due course. As I have said, protocols have been introduced to ensure that, when all area planning issues and development proposals have been dealt with, you then make an announcement on a newbuild and the way forward. If those processes are complete for those schools, they will be taken into due consideration for any future capital announcement.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Minister for his statement. Having raised issues regarding Woodburn Primary School, I am particularly pleased that the Minister has recognised that need and included that school on the list and that he has accommodated a newbuild for the amalgamation of Monkstown Community School and Newtownabbey Community High School. Given the strong business case, can he confirm that the newbuild will be on the Monkstown site? Will the Minister advise on why a newbuild has not been included for Islandmagee, given the strong number of pupils at schools in that area, which meets the threshold; the need that is there; and the fact that investment has already occurred in a new site and outline planning permission has been approved?

Mr O'Dowd: I believe that I made an announcement on Islandmagee in January 2013 after consultation with the board. The board has since come back and changed its plans for the area. That is why there are delays.

Where the newbuild will be for Newtownabbey Community High School and Monkstown Community School will be a decision for the economic appraisal process. It will be something similar to what Mr Wells raised with me. Let the processes continue; let the economic appraisal identify sites; and allow the school, the community and elected representatives to make cases for where, they believe, the new site should be.

Mr Byrne: I welcome the statement by the Minister. In relation to the constraints among some stakeholders about design, planning and procurement, can the Minister enlighten us as to what the difficulties are?

I welcome the announcement on Gaelscoil na gCrann. What is the current situation regarding the replacement or newbuild for the Dean Maguirc College in Carrickmore, where people have been waiting a long time for a green light?

Mr O'Dowd: Dean Maguirc College is on a list of many schools that require a newbuild. The fact that I have not announced it today does not mean that it will not get a newbuild in the future.

I did not catch all of the start of your question — I apologise; there was some noise in the background — but I believe that it was about the challenges that we face with procurement, design etc. When you bring forward a multimillion-pound project, you have to progress that by assuring yourself that it is best value for the public purse and that all options have been explored. An economic appraisal can take upwards of a year, and then you move into the design stage. If the project is worth over £5 million, you have to go through the European Journal and ensure that it is in line with all sorts of things. You then go through planning. You then run into problems with bats, badgers and all sorts of wildlife, as well as foliage. You have to deal with all those unexpected matters that come at you during a building programme. Hopefully, you then get to the stage at which you put a contractor on-site. Thus far, none of the projects has run as smoothly as anyone would have hoped

for, but, when you take into consideration the scale of the investment that we are making, it is to be expected that we will run into problems.

In my Department, we have made structural changes to how we deliver capital and have invested in the boards and the CCMS for the delivery of capital, all of which is now starting to pay dividends. We made changes to the protocol because of past experiences, and all that will continue to pay dividends into the future. I remind the Member that we are now delivering one of the Executive's biggest capital programmes, if not the biggest. DRD is perhaps delivering a bigger programme in finance terms, but DE is delivering the largest number of capital projects.

Mr Elliott: I am almost reluctant to welcome the Minister's statement because he may say at a later date, "You welcomed that", but I obviously welcome the capital builds that he has announced for these schools.

I have one query about Enniskillen Model Primary School. He will be aware that this has been going on since 2003. It got to the point of almost being given the go-ahead, but some blockages got in the way. I am looking for an update on that.

Mr O'Dowd: I believe that there are issues with numbers and some design heritage matters with the old school, but I will follow up on that in writing to give the Member the full details.

Mr Agnew: Any investment in schools is to be welcomed, but it would be remiss of me if I did not express my disappointment that there has been no investment in schools in north Down, where there is great need.

The Minister set out the criteria against which he judges a school's application. What level of transparency can schools and, indeed, MLAs expect on the scoring of schools, so that schools can ascertain whether they are close and how close they are?

Mr O'Dowd: The document was published on the DE website today, and it gives all the information on how the protocol was run. Any requests from schools for information will be honoured. Nothing can be hidden; under freedom of information, I would have to release it anyway. I have no difficulty with being open and transparent about the process.

Mr Givan: The Minister will know about the disappointment felt amongst my constituents in Dromore, given the extensive work to move the project forward. Indeed, there is some confusion about why the board prioritised the scheme, and yet the Department has not announced funding for it today. Will the Minister explain why that is? Has he revised the needs model to meet the obligations under article 64 of the 1989 order and what he calls the positive prism, which Members on this side of the House call discrimination against the controlled sector? Is there a reason why some of the schools in the controlled sector did not get funding today?

Mr O'Dowd: I am glad that you went on to clarify your position. I thought that you had changed your position from last week, when you voted against article 64, but you are still on the same page as you were last week, although you are not on the page that you were on the week before that. You might change your position by this stage next week. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Allow the Minister to answer.

Mr O'Dowd: I will do my best to keep up with your position, but apologies if I slip now and again.

Significant work has been carried out on the Dromore project, and I recognise the disappointment that Dromore High School will face today. However, if the business case stacks up, we are committed to buying the site.

That is a significant step forward, and it will increase its accessibility through the protocol as a school that has no significant barriers in its way to moving towards a build. When we run our next capital announcement, if things stay the way they are, I would expect that school to score very highly and come through the process.

I am not involved in discrimination against any sector. The legislation states that I have to positively discriminate in relation to Irish-medium and to the integrated sector, and I make no apologies for that.

12.15 pm

Mr Speaker: Order, Members. That concludes questions on the ministerial statement. I ask the House to take its ease as we wait for the Health Minister.

Mr Campbell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, in relation to yesterday's questions for oral answer to the Education Minister and today's statement. Yesterday, the Minister launched what, I presume, was a pre-emptive strike about today's statement and alluded to the capital build projects coming to a total of £180 million. Today, in the statement, he said that they would come to £170 million. In terms of him misleading the House, can you check Hansard and return to us at a future point?

Mr Speaker: I hear the Member's point of order. All Members need to be careful when accusing Ministers of misleading the House. Let me read Hansard and come back to the Member.

Mr O'Dowd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am happy to clarify. Following Question Time in the House yesterday, a legal matter arose that I do not have privilege to go into detail on, but that will explain some of the concern that Mr Campbell has expressed. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Minister has clarified his position. Let us move on.

Mr Storey: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In the light of the fact that the Minister has concealed information from the House, will the Speaker further pursue the issue and ask the Education Minister to ensure that the reasons why there has been a difference in the two statements will be conveyed to me as Chair of the Education Committee and to the House, which holds the Minister to account?

Mr Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister will clarify his position some time later. Let us move on.

Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the publication of the new strategic framework for public health 'Making Life Better 2013-2023'. The framework will provide strategic direction for reinvigorated action to achieve better health and well-being for everyone and to reduce inequalities in health. It has been informed by a number of key reports and bodies of evidence including 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives', the Marmot review of health inequalities in England; Health 2020, the European policy framework and strategy for health; the consultation response to the draft framework 'Fit and Well: Changing Lives 2012-2020'; and a report on health inequalities by the Health Committee. It has also been developed through cross-departmental and cross-sectoral engagement. In addition, feedback from colleagues in the World Health Organization has confirmed its alignment with Health 2020.

In relation to population health generally, we have made progress. We are living longer than previous generations, and we are keeping healthy and active for longer. This is good news. However, we also know that we continue to face real challenges. Good health is not evenly distributed. Some vulnerable groups and communities, including those living in deprived areas, continue to face worse health outcomes than the Northern Ireland average. We have a growing and ageing population, with the prospect that many more people may live longer with chronic conditions. This leads to ever-increasing demands on the health and social care system. It is vital not only for the future sustainability of our health care system but for our vision of a vibrant, flourishing society that we rise to these challenges. However, the health service alone cannot do this alone.

Health is an outcome of a whole range of influences on everyday life and the accumulation of those influences over the life course from the very early stages through to later years. This includes community, social and environmental conditions, which are in turn influenced by wider circumstances. It is clear that many inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in the conditions of daily life. Population health also impacts on other societal outcomes. For example, we stand a better chance of achieving economic growth through improved health and a productive workforce. Working together to secure improvement in the health of the population, especially if targeted at those most in need and with most to gain, is the right thing to do and an essential priority if we are to limit the growth in the cost of avoidable ill health to our society and economy.

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

The Programme for Government acknowledges the interrelationship between health, disadvantage, inequality, the social and physical environment and longer-term economic growth. 'Making Life Better' is, therefore, a building block towards the achievement of a number of the priorities identified in the PFG and, in turn, is affected by the achievement of other Programme for Government commitments.

'Making Life Better' is a 10-year overarching framework designed to provide strategic direction for policies and

actions to improve health and well-being and address inequalities in health. It aims to create conditions that are supportive of good health and in which people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and well-being potential. To achieve that, it is not just about action at government level, important though that is; it will require strengthened collaboration and partnership work at all levels of society to address the issues influencing the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Based on learning from the previous strategy, Investing for Health, and on international evidence, including the recommendations of Health 2020, the new public health strategic framework will take a whole-system approach to improving health. It recognises the need to collaborate around the wider societal influences that impact on health, such as education and literacy, employment and working conditions, income and housing.

I recognise that DHSSPS needs to continue to build strategic alliances across all parts of government in tackling many of the public health issues and inequalities that we face. The ministerial group on public health has been the focal point for such work under the Investing for Health agenda. Connections with the public health agenda are also made through a wide range of interdepartmental groups on issues such as Delivering Social Change, employment, neighbourhood renewal, fuel poverty and rural issues. Beyond Departments, local government and the voluntary and community sectors have been and will continue to be key partners in delivering the framework. The reform of local government presents an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with councils, particularly on addressing health inequalities. The Public Health Agency (PHA) is working closely with local government to ensure that public health remains firmly on its agenda during and beyond the process. Many other organisations, including trade unions, professional bodies, advocacy and philanthropic organisations and funding bodies, and organisations in the private sector, make important contributions to public health, and we need to make and maintain effective links with them.

The framework sets out implementation and governance arrangements that will ensure a strong strategic lead at ministerial level and secure a joined-up approach across Departments. We have agreed that a ministerial committee for public health will be supported and informed by an officials' group from all Departments. It is important that we provide a visible signal to the public at large of a commitment to strategic and coherent leadership at government level in relation to the health and well-being of our population.

A regional project board led by the Public Health Agency will drive delivery at regional level in collaboration with other key stakeholders, including local government and the community and voluntary sector. At local level, partnerships will align with community planning arrangements over time. We recognise that those groups also need to make effective links with other strategic groups, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership. Clear lines of communication between the levels of the system will be required, and processes will be developed to ensure effective communication and support arrangements within that overall structure.

The issues to be addressed in the framework are wide-ranging, so we have adopted a thematic approach. The actions committed to in the framework are grouped around six themes that reflect a life-course approach and a focus on the wider factors influencing health. Within each of those themes, there are particular outcomes that lend themselves to a cross-sectoral or thematic approach across Departments and organisations. I have already described the need for joint working across government to address the wider structural, economic, environmental and social conditions impacting on health at population level. That is recognised in the theme on creating the conditions.

The proposal to make a priority of giving every child the best start in life was supported strongly in the consultation on Fit and Well. It is retained as a key theme, with a strong emphasis on empowering and supporting parents. National and international findings in relation to early years and the importance of parenting have reinforced the need for a specific emphasis on positive early years experiences as the foundation for realising the potential of children and young people and the best route out of poverty.

On top of what already is being spent through mainstream programmes by several Departments, including mine and the Department of Education, the £5 million funding from the OFMDFM Delivering Social Change framework to deliver increased direct family support and support for parents strengthens our capacity to intervene early in children's lives. Making Life Better will promote a collaborative approach to bring about the incremental development of universal and targeted programmes to include antenatal and postnatal care and parenting programmes.

A further example of the commitment to early years intervention is the establishment of a cross-departmental early intervention transformation programme, with contributions from the Delivering Social Change programme, Atlantic Philanthropies and a collective of Departments: DE, DEL, DOJ, DSD and DHSSPS. DHSSPS will lead on the implementation of the programme. Within the framework, there is also a focus on supporting individuals' transitions into and through adulthood and older age, highlighting the need to work together, for example, to provide the skills and support for employment and lifelong participation in society, and to enable older people to maintain active independent lives, fully engaged in society and their local communities.

A further focus is to empower people of all ages to identify the risks to their health, choose healthy behaviours and make informed decisions about their health. As well as being taken forward through health promotion strategies, this is about an increased emphasis on improving health literacy, providing accessible and tailored advice and information, and embedding prevention across Health and Social Care services. Legislation has been an effective mechanism to secure health improvements, for example, in relation to tobacco and road safety.

Importantly, there is emphasis, too, on building social capital — the links that connect people within communities, which can promote resilience against difficulties and give people a feeling of control over their lives. It is also protective of health. We want to see thriving, united communities. That can be achieved only through a societal approach in full partnership with local communities to build on the assets we have in our communities, and to

work in partnership with local government and other key agencies to address community issues.

The theme of developing collaboration identifies strategic and local actions to enhance collaboration, such as through the governance and implementation arrangements to ensure that health and health equity are considered coherently across ministerial and departmental policy in a health-in-all-policies approach. As I said, we need action at local level as well. Three issues are identified on which we are seeking to generate a collaborative response from local level up. They relate to food, the use of space and the promotion of social inclusion. The use of physical space is one example where collaboration for public health is needed. Many reports identify how the quality of the natural and built environment impacts on physical and mental well-being. The promotion of active travel, age friendly towns and cities, access to green spaces and to local services and the general appearance of our neighbourhoods are issues to which many sectors can contribute. There is scope for creative solutions to address the many factors that influence health and health inequalities through better use of space, from local neighbourhoods up to strategic regional initiatives.

As an overarching principle, the framework recognises that addressing inequalities in health is not just a question of targeting the most disadvantaged in our society. There are differences in health status right across the social spectrum. Therefore, action needs to be taken right across the whole population, but with varying degrees of intensity according to need. That is what the Marmot review calls "proportionate universalism". The principle applies to many of the factors that influence our health. The framework identifies some groups for which targeted action is needed, but it also recognises that decisions about targeted action should be taken at local level, depending on the health issue being addressed, local circumstances and need.

Funding from across local government is already committed to supporting the strategic actions identified in the framework. For my part, I am continuing to progress the PFG commitment to increase the percentage of the overall health budget being directed to public health. Not only will that support the framework in its aim of improving the health of the population and reducing inequalities, but the shift to prevention and early interventions is crucial to the sustainability of the health service. Taking a whole-systems approach, I am alert to the opportunities to identify other funding sources, be they other Departments, philanthropic organisations or European funding sources. I am also alert to exploring opportunities to pool resources where appropriate so that we optimise the public health benefits of spend from every source.

12.30 pm

In conclusion, changes in population health and in health inequalities are a long-term goal. For example, it will take at least a generation before we reap the benefits of our concerted efforts on early childhood development and support for parenting. The capacity and efficiency of health and social care systems undoubtedly also has a key role to play in keeping people well. It is vital that public health and well-being be placed at the centre of our healthcare systems, with increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention and on addressing health inequalities. That is what Transforming Your Care (TYC) and this framework,

Making Life Better, seek to reinforce. However, the health system on its own cannot tackle the root causes of poor health and well-being. We must also look beyond health to a societal approach, requiring national leadership, strategic and local alliances and coherent collective and individual participation and action.

I thank ministerial colleagues for their support and cooperation in formulating the framework and look forward to working together to take it forward. I also thank the Health Committee, whose inquiry report on health inequalities has helped shape the new framework. It is vital that politicians, policymakers, health professionals, local government, other agencies and the public at large be aware of the impact on health and well-being of the economy and of the social and physical conditions in which we live and age so that, collectively, we can participate in making progress towards a healthier, more prosperous society. That is what Making Life Better strives to do, and I call on you all for your support.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I advise Members that we will continue with questions to the Minister during what is normally the lunch break. I also have to tell Members that the Business Committee is meeting in parallel at 12:30 pm.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement and welcome it. I think that it is a step in the right direction of developing cross-departmental priorities on public health and an outcome framework.

Given the high levels of health inequalities that exist, can the Minister explain how the whole-system approach will effectively target and eradicate the problem? Will he also explain the roll-out of the £30 million early intervention fund and tell us whether the shift to public health aligned under TYC will mean that more money will be going to public health?

Mr Poots: The fact that we meet as Ministers and representatives across Departments on the ministerial group is a demonstration that we are committed to a whole-system approach at Executive level. I find those meetings very useful because I hear all the time about things that different people are doing in different Departments. When we refer to the whole-system approach, it is good that we include local government, the voluntary sector, the lobby groups and, indeed, the business sector. I have had meetings with various businesses that, for example, organise for some of the cancer organisations to come in and carry out work on-site. So where you have 500 people employed on one site, you can get the Action Cancer Big Bus to come there. You can get other organisations to come in. A lot of companies are involved in doing pound-for-pound weight loss so they will sponsor people who are engaged in weight-loss programmes. We have good support from the business sector as well as from the wider voluntary and community sector and other aspects of government, and that is what it is all about.

We in the Department of Health will respond to people's healthcare needs. People can proactively avoid using the Department of Health and health services so much by taking actions. We can work together to ensure that more

people take those actions. That is what the whole-system approach is about.

I welcome the £30 million of additional money that is coming in. We will target a lot of that towards the early intervention transformation programme. That will lead to investment in young children that will hopefully deliver better outcomes and truly challenge inequalities. We have children who are being brought up in circumstances that will almost inevitably lead to them not doing as well in life as others. If we can intervene to provide a greater level of support to those children, we will give them a much greater opportunity and ensure that they have an equal chance in life to the rest. That is something that I wholly support.

Mr Wells: The Minister has frequently highlighted the problem of obesity and the impact it is going to have on the health service in years to come. Will he outline what action the strategy will take to deal with that very important issue?

Mr Poots: Obviously, obesity causes a huge challenge to all of us. Sadly, around 25% of children aged two to 10 are classified as being either overweight or obese. Unfortunately, many of those children will never lose that. It is something that they will have all their life. I think that tackling obesity needs to be started from the earliest days, encouraging parents to manage their children's diets better, ensuring that more exercise is taken and so forth. Some 62% of adults were classified as either overweight or obese. A quarter of adults were obese, with a further two fifths classified as overweight. Males are more likely than females to be overweight, so that is a message to all of us gentlemen.

Obesity causes all sorts of problems. It is a major issue for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Its consequences are that many more people end up having to give up work early, and many more people end up reliant on the health service and on benefits because they have not taken enough control of their weight. So, again, the public health agenda is critical to ensuring that we have a healthier population. I referred to the businesses that are doing the pound-for-pound scheme. It is an absolutely brilliant scheme. One of them, I think, is in your area — B/E Aerospace actively engages with its workforce. Business in the Community has been driving that. I encourage more businesses to get involved in ensuring that they have a healthier workforce because, while they invest in all of that training and so forth, it is good to ensure that they will have their workforce there for a long time and have fewer problems with sickness.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his statement, which I welcome. I also welcome your commitment to tackling health inequality. Given that the health service alone cannot address inequality, can you outline a strategic action plan for the proposed ministerial committee of public health?

Mr Poots: I referred to the early intervention transformation programme. We also have Delivering Social Change. Both of those programmes are particularly important to us because they will ensure that we make a difference to people who are in areas of deprivation and perhaps have less opportunity. Obviously, people need to engage themselves. We cannot force people to participate, but, for example, we have directed £3 million for direct family support through the establishment of the 10 family support hubs to coordinate that early intervention service.

We have directed a further £2 million for support for parents, which will provide additional high-quality support to new and existing parents living in areas of deprivation. On top of what is already being spent through mainstream programmes by several Departments, including mine and the Department of Education, the £5 million funding from OFMDFM's Delivering Social Change framework to deliver increased direct family support and support for parents strengthens our capacity to intervene early in children's lives. I think that that is the one that will make the big difference.

For some people, it will be much more difficult to change, but I think that, if you get in there at the early point with young children, provide that support and help and help them to make the right choices in life, we will reap a significant dividend in a generation to come. So it is a long-term investment, but it is well worth making.

Mr Beggs: I, too, thank the Minister for his statement. He has recognised the need for links to strategic groups such as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. I welcome that recognition of the importance of supporting children and young people in improving health outcomes, along with his recognition of issues that are related, such as education, employment and others that can create health inequality if they are not addressed.

I declare an interest as the chair of the Carrickfergus locality planning group of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Does the Minister agree that the new councils, particularly with their increased planning powers, community planning role, local knowledge and contacts, will also be key players that a range of Departments, including Health, should be working closely with to bring about better outcomes by combining and making better use of departmental funding?

Mr Poots: Absolutely. The Member is 100% right. The PHA, for example, has partnered with DRD to commission the active school travel programme in the Belfast and south-eastern areas. That programme is delivered through Sustrans, and the PHA invests around £70,000 a year in it. In addition, the Belfast Strategic Partnership for Health and Wellbeing, which is led by the chief executive of Belfast City Council, the PHA and the Belfast Trust and includes representation from DRD, is exploring ways to make Belfast more cycle-friendly.

That is a demonstration of how it is being done in one council, but there are so many opportunities in a range of areas in which local government can engage not just with one Department but with a number of Departments. To me, that is what community planning is about. People maybe dismissed community planning in the early days when we talked about powers being transferred to councils, but it can make a real and fundamental difference if it is embraced and carried out properly. We in government need to be prepared to work closely with local government to ensure that we can truly engage in community planning and make that difference for people on the ground.

Mr McCarthy: I welcome the statement. There is a lot in it that we know about and that is already there.

There is a lot of hypocrisy going on. The Health Minister talks about health inequalities, and our Committee is investigating that. There is a glaring health inequality in that Northern Ireland, which is a part of the United Kingdom, cannot access over 39 cancer drugs. The

Minister has it in his power for that to be corrected. We visited the cancer diagnostic centre last week, and it was unbelievable how —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I am frantically searching for the question.

Mr McCarthy: When will we see equality in Northern Ireland with what they have across the water in relation to cancer drugs?

Mr Poots: The question does not have much relevance to today's public health statement, but I will answer it in any event.

The power lies with the House and the Executive to ensure that we do this. I am committed to doing it. Those drugs are not National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended and are not part of the deal that has been done with the drug companies. New drugs are coming onto the market that are NICE approved, and we are buying them. Let us be very clear: we are talking about drugs that are not NICE approved. The Prime Minister has decided to go down a particular route in England. We are buying drugs that they are not buying, but they are buying cancer drugs that we are not buying. How do we resolve that, given that there is a £160 million gap between what I have to spend and what I need to spend? Let us make it very clear: I do not have the money to buy those drugs. Others choose to spend money on welfare, for example. There is £120 million, which, if we signed up to welfare reform, would be in the Northern Ireland Budget. That would quickly deal with most of the problems that I have and give me more freedom to do things in health.

In the absence of the money, I want to charge something for prescriptions. Remember, in England, which the Member referenced, there is an £8 charge for every prescription. I want to charge something. It could mean a few pounds on the old scheme, in which only 11% of prescriptions were paid for, with a maximum cap or a charge of as little as 50p for all prescriptions, again with a maximum cap of £25 a year, for example, which would be 50p a week. I am firmly of the view that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland want to support those with cancer and would be prepared to do that. I am firmly of that view. I need the support of the House to deliver cancer drugs, and I implore the House to give me that support to buy the cancer drugs instead of putting me in some sort of chained-up position where I cannot do it and then condemning me for not doing it. Give me the support to do it, and I will certainly buy the cancer drugs. I will buy them straight away if the House gives me the support to do it.

12.45 pm

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his statement to the House, and, indeed, I support him in his impassioned plea for the support of the House for the cancer drugs fund. What progress is being made in tackling teenage pregnancy?

Mr Poots: Teenage pregnancy has been talked about a lot over the years. I am glad to say that teenage pregnancy figures have been coming down, and that is good. It is good that we have more awareness of sexual activity, and, consequently, that is the case. In Northern Ireland in 2013, there were 937 births to teenage mothers under the age of 20, and there were 90 births to teenage mothers aged under 17. The rate in the most deprived areas is

around twice the Northern Ireland average, so, obviously, there is work to be done there in education, which, again, goes back to early years and working with young people throughout school to encourage them to learn more about what comes from sexual behaviours and therefore be able to take actions to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

As I said, our rates of birth to teenage mothers have reduced, but I do not think that we can be complacent. The Public Health Agency, through the sexual health improvement network, has been asked to seek to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy further. Programmes such as the Family Nurse Partnership provide intensive support to assist young parents through those early years, so that it does not happen again very quickly and there is greater support for them. It also encourages young men to take responsibility for the children that they bring into the world. Far too often, young men bring children into the world and take nothing to do with them. That is one of the things that Family Nurse Partnership engages proactively in. It gets the young dads involved, and it is amazing to see the positive responses that we get from the young men and the changes that it can make in their attitude. It is absolutely critical that we continue to do that.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for the statement to the House. Minister, yesterday in the Long Gallery, you were present when we met parents and staff involved in palliative care for children. Of course, we also met little Blake, who made an impression on everybody. They were there lobbying for much-needed investment for proposals coming out of the review of palliative care for children and young people. How will the new strategy complement what is already there to increase cancer awareness and address the issues that the parents raised yesterday about palliative care for children and young people?

Mr Poots: The review of palliative care is close to my heart, and you could not help be touched by the stories that were told by the parents. Indeed, young Blake was quite a star, particularly with the ladies. He seemed to be very fond of the women, and they all seemed to be very fond of him too. He was an absolute star.

The recommendations that have been made are rational and sensible, and we need to look at how we can provide the support that is needed for them. One of them, for example, is to provide a key worker for when someone gets the awful news their child has a condition that will shorten their life and they need a lot of support. Their entire focus will be on providing support and care for the child, which often leads to the point where they are so dedicated to helping the child that they do not get the support and help that they need, and it is important that they get that. There is a lot of work to be done on that.

How that ties in with this document is quite loose. This document is about people taking the right steps to ensure that we have a healthier population. Unfortunately, many of the young people involved have been born with long-term conditions that will lead to their early passing. If there is a means of tying it up, we certainly will, but we also need to look at how we can provide the support and the funding to ensure that we can support the parents of children who have those long-term conditions and have palliative care requirements.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his statement. He will be aware that, when it comes to our rural communities and the promotion of health services, it can, at times, be quite challenging to get the message into our more isolated rural areas. Can the Minister give us an indication of how his Department plans to deal with that issue specifically?

Mr Poots: Some good work has been going on. In the Member's area, the Northern Trust has done a lot of work. It has gone out to farmers' markets, for example. When you get a couple of pleasant-looking nurses, the farmers seem very keen to go in and get a check up, for whatever reason. Taking the case to the people, as opposed to expecting the people to come to it, is working. We identified issues where people had particularly high cholesterol levels, and recommendations were made immediately. We also identified mental health issues and cardiovascular disease — a whole range of issues. That work has been hugely beneficial. The Northern Trust is engaged in work on mental health as well.

I would welcome that type of activity throughout the other trusts that have a rural reach. It is important, particularly as we have quite an older population in the rural community who tend not to bother with doctors too much until it is too late. We want people to have those interventions carried out early, and, as a consequence, the outcomes will be considerably better.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That concludes questions on the statement. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. When we return, the first item of business will be Question Time.

The sitting was suspended at 12.52 pm.

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

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Employment and Learning

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 7 and 9 have been withdrawn.

Veterinary School: Coleraine

1. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his plans to establish a veterinary school at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. (AQO 6424/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

The proposal to establish a veterinary school at the Coleraine campus of the University of Ulster has been brought forward by the university. The university has the discretion to offer veterinary courses from within its existing maximum student number (MaSN) allocation and funding. However, as the university wishes to secure funding from my Department for its veterinary school, it is preparing an economic appraisal to support its proposal. The proposal may be used to bid for additional funding by my Department.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Minister for his answer. I encourage him to welcome the proposal when he receives it. Northern Ireland needs a veterinary school, and Coleraine is the best place for it. In line with his announcement today on apprenticeships, how does he envisage his Department working with local veterinary practices to supplement a higher education veterinary course, should it come?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the supplementary. By way of responding to some of the preliminary comments: we will give a proper, objective analysis of the economic appraisal when it comes forward. The issue of whether Northern Ireland needs a veterinary school or otherwise will be one of those that we will wish to consider. Again, we have to weigh expenditure on this against other skill requirement objectives that our economy may have.

On her comments around other aspects of this, I understand that South West College, which has featured quite a lot today so far, has been exploring opportunities in relation to supporting issues around animal welfare. I am more than happy to ask the college director, Malachy McAleer, to get in touch with the Member to elaborate on some of those initiatives that are being undertaken.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for indicating that he may see the need for a veterinary school in Northern Ireland. It has been well established, even from presentations to the Employment and Learning Committee, that all parties support that. The Minister referred to the economic, I suppose, support from his Department. Will he also consider the possibility of economic support from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development because the subject is veterinary science?

Dr Farry: Again, I thank the Member for the question. By way of context, it is worth stressing that investment in terms of a veterinary school is very expensive. The university is talking about having a school for about 250 students — 50 across five years. We are talking about a total cost of about £78,000 to train a vet, which is probably more expensive than any other profession that you can think of. It is important that Members are conscious of that.

As things stand, the university can go ahead with this on its existing resources, but that means a distortion. Its preferred option is for the Department to bid for additional resources. We can consider whether that bid is made by my Department or is done in conjunction with DETI and DARD, but it still has to be determined.

Mr Dallat: I have listened carefully to the Minister's response. I am sure that he is familiar with the old adage, "Eat horse, and you will get grass". Can the Minister assure us that Coleraine is not being fed another empty promise for which there is no money?

Dr Farry: First, I assure the House that I have no intention of eating horse or grass. [Laughter.] Obviously, the Coleraine campus is a major aspect of the University of Ulster. Indeed, we have made some capital investments in that university in very recent times, so there is ongoing support to ensure that it has modern facilities. It is for the university to allocate courses to its various campuses. I can only reiterate that I will give this a proper, objective analysis. However, at this stage, I cannot give any commitment on what will be the way forward.

Mr Campbell: My apologies for being a few moments late. The Minister is looking at the issue. Will he also establish whether the University of Ulster, at its various campuses, will look at developing specialist schools — hopefully a veterinary school will be at Coleraine, and other campuses will be able to develop — so that there is a holistic approach in a number of disciplines?

Dr Farry: We are very happy to encourage the university to go down that line, especially at postgraduate level, where that type of intervention leads to different types of institutes being set up. Also, corraling people across a range of disciplinary boundaries is a very important intervention that universities can make.

The universities have academic freedom, so it is for them to make those calls. We facilitate the broad direction of travel through our higher education strategy, which places the economy at its core. No doubt, the vice chancellor and his successor will wish to reflect on the comments and encouragement from the Member.

Welfare Reform

2. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the implications of any reductions in his departmental budget as a result of the non-implementation of welfare reform. (AQO 6425/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Executive have not taken any decisions regarding reductions in departmental budgets in respect of delays in implementing welfare reform.

The Treasury is imposing penalties for the delays in implementing welfare reform locally. The Finance Minister has advised Departments to plan for resource baseline reductions in 2014-15 and has said that there may also

be baseline reductions to cover welfare reform and other Executive pressures in 2015-16.

Mr Givan: I thank the Minister for his response. Is he able to outline to the House what the real impact of any reduction in his Department's budget would be for those vulnerable people who are in receipt of different benefits and support to get them into training opportunities and employment? Vulnerable people are the ones whom we are trying to help. Will there be implications if your budget is reduced as a result of not bringing forward welfare reform?

Dr Farry: I concur with the broad thrust of what the Member is saying. Let me frame the answer in this way: there is a range of different means by which we can help people who find themselves in poverty or lacking opportunities to progress in society. It is important that we have a balance of interventions across the board. If we end up in a situation in which we are essentially paying fines to Westminster for not implementing welfare reform — a decision that is out of our hands, and, under parity, we have little choice but to go along with it — there will be implications for our ability to invest in those levers that help people get out of poverty.

Beyond the remit of my Department, we can look at things such as investing in public health, which is important to improving people's life chances, and we can talk about investing in early years education, which is also important to improving people's life chances. From my Department's perspective, we can invest in training programmes and employment schemes. Unless we invest in the employability skills and technical skills that young people need to engage with the labour market, we are condemning people to a situation in which they will be in receipt of benefits.

Too much of the current discussion is on the protection of benefits. Worthy as that is, we have to have a much more rounded discussion and understand that we have a range of mechanisms that is involved in supporting vulnerable people. If we are forced into making cutbacks to those mechanisms, we will be inadvertently condemning people to a life of poverty by taking away the ladder that would allow them to escape it.

Mr P Ramsey: Will the Minister outline the extent of the reduction to his Department's budget as a result of the Budget Bill and the effect that that will have on delivery of the services that he is responsible for?

Dr Farry: There is not actually a reduction as such in the Budget Bill, which is working its way through the House. The Bill gives effect to the Budget that was agreed by the Executive and the Assembly for the entirety of the CSR period. We all know that we are going through a discussion that is, in some ways, a little bit arbitrary and false, because we know that the issue is still looming. The issue is whether there will be cuts made in-year as part of the June monitoring round. That is where the discussions lie. It would be inappropriate for me to talk about the precise percentages and figures, given that only the Executive are privy to them at this stage. Once the figures are agreed, no doubt the Finance Minister will make them known.

It is fair to say that, across a range of Departments, some very difficult decisions will have to be taken on the back of the failure of the Executive and the Assembly to find common agreement on the way forward on welfare reform.

Mr Cree: I am sorry that I did not catch the Minister's response to the first question. Have any of his recent statements or programmes been predicated on the fact that welfare reform will be introduced?

Dr Farry: My Department is not a welfare Department. That is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development. Obviously, what happens with welfare reform does influence the wider context in which policy is made in Northern Ireland. For example, we are progressing our new employment programme, Steps 2 Success, and we hope to make announcements in that regard in the near future. That is something that we would have been addressing irrespective of welfare reform because it is a refreshment of our existing programme. Obviously, we will want to take into account the onset of universal credit and other aspects of welfare reform in how that will be implemented.

Similarly, we have an emerging strategy at Executive level around economic inactivity. That has its genesis outside welfare reform because we understand that this is a deep, structural problem within our economy that needs to be addressed. Indeed, we are the only part of the UK that is adopting an innovative approach in seeking to address that. Again, the crossover with welfare reform will have an influence on how we design the detail of that strategy and the way forward.

Apprenticeships

3. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline what action his Department is taking to encourage the uptake of apprenticeships in further education colleges. (AQO 6426/11-15)

Dr Farry: Apprentices are employed through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. My Department supports the cost of the off-the-job training required for achievement of qualifications set out in apprenticeship frameworks. Off-the-job training is delivered by further education colleges and other contracted training providers.

In addition to training, an employer receives a payment when the apprentice successfully completes the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The incentive ranges from £250 to £1,500, depending on the complexity and level of apprenticeship undertaken.

In January 2014, my Department published its interim report on the review of apprenticeships. Today, we published the fresh Northern Ireland strategy on apprenticeships. One of the proposals is the introduction of a central service to promote and support apprenticeship provision for employers and participants that will advertise centrally apprenticeship vacancies and provide a matching service between employers and prospective apprentices. The central service will signpost employers to approved providers of off-the-job training, including further education colleges. It will also provide advice and guidance for employers and potential apprentices on the support and training available.

Mr Craig: I thank the Minister for his complete announcement to the House on the back of this question. I declare an interest as my son is one of four apprentices appointed to BT this year.

Does the Minister agree with the concept of apprenticeships being a way for even government

Departments to ensure that they have certain expertise and a minimum period of employment, such as is used by the armed forces? In some fields, like IT, Departments have great difficulty competing with the private sector.

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his comments. Indeed, it was his question today that led us to ensure that we delivered the strategy this morning. We wish your son every success with his apprenticeship with BT, which is an excellent company with a great presence in Northern Ireland.

In the public sector, we already have a pilot private/public ICT apprenticeship at level 3. That is, in part, working through NI Direct. That is of benefit and working successfully. One of the policy commitments in the new strategy is to engage with the public sector on public sector apprenticeships. I wrote to my ministerial colleagues earlier this year and received a large number of favourable responses. We are doing detailed work with different Departments in relation to that. So, there is definitely scope for pilots in terms of professional technical aspects of the public sector in Northern Ireland. We hope to be making announcements in this regard in the near future.

Mr F McCann: I thank the Minister for his statement this afternoon, but in light of his statement this morning on apprenticeships, could he say whether further education colleges can play an important role in the creation and promotion of apprenticeships within their own field?

Dr Farry: We view the further education sector as a key delivery partner with respect to apprenticeships.

We also have private sector training providers. In particular, as we look to move the apprenticeship model up the skills ladder and offer a greater number of higher-level apprenticeships, the role of the further education colleges becomes even more critical.

2.15 pm

Further education will also offer a logical progression route for people who are on apprenticeships, including higher-level apprenticeships. In particular, I highlight the opportunity of foundation degrees. Over the past while, Members have stressed the theme of higher and further education, and we are seeking to build on that. We are also developing a further education strategy. FE Means Business goes back to 2004, so it needs to be refreshed. The new policy context for apprenticeships and a revised offer for youth training will be two key drivers that will shape the future provision of further education. The principals of the six colleges are enthusiastic about the way forward for apprenticeships and are keen to become involved and, indeed, build on their existing involvement.

Mr Nesbitt: In the Minister's announcement this morning, he talked about apprenticeships at levels 7 and 8, which are the equivalent of a master's and a doctorate. What uptake does he anticipate at those levels, and what resource and strategy will he deploy to secure the uptake?

Dr Farry: Today, we are launching the high-level policy framework for apprenticeships and making a major switch from apprenticeships being primarily offered at level 2 and level 3, with the dominance being at level 2. We have a fresh youth training offer, which will address the level 2 issue, to be published for consultation in the autumn, and our new model of apprenticeships will run from level

3 to level 8. It is very much in the hands of the sectoral partnerships to develop new apprenticeship frameworks, so we are in the hands of the business community, employers and other organisations. We have set out the guidelines and frameworks in which we will support the decisions of those partnerships. We are already piloting apprenticeships at level 4 and are set to pilot at level 5, so good progress has been made. As we have seen in other parts of the world, it is possible for apprenticeships to be delivered at the equivalent of higher-level skills at levels 7 and 8, and we want to make sure that Northern Ireland is part of that. It is very much in the hands of the business community, however, to come forward with relevant proposals, and my Department will be more than happy to facilitate them.

B/E Aerospace

4. **Mr Wells** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the assistance his Department has given to B/E Aerospace, Kilkeel. (AQO 6427/11-15)

Dr Farry: B/E Aerospace has been an important contributor to the local economy in Kilkeel since operations commenced there in 1993. It employs 800 people in that location. Its business is the manufacture of aircraft cabin interiors, particularly seating, in which the company is an acknowledged world leader. Whilst B/E Aerospace has not sought any assistance from my Department, any request for help or advice on skills development or recruitment issues will be welcome. My Department has much to offer businesses through its wide range of programmes on, for example, management and leadership, apprenticeships and Bridge to Employment on recruitment. Many of those include attractive financial support. Advisers from the Department's skills solutions service would be happy to meet B/E Aerospace to provide further information, if that would be helpful.

Mr Wells: Is the Minister aware that 40% of all aircraft seats made in the world by value are made in Kilkeel and that, as he jets off on his first-class travels throughout the world, he will undoubtedly be sitting on one of those seats? Is he also aware that there are some doubts about the future of the aircraft factory in Kilkeel and that the company has indicated that it will be split in two into a service division and a manufacturing division?

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

Mr Wells: Will he join the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to do all that is possible to retain that employment in Kilkeel?

Dr Farry: Not only will I say that we are a world leader in the provision of aircraft seating but I will go off topic slightly and say that Northern Ireland cows are probably the most-prized cows for providing the leather for those seats. I had the pleasure of visiting one of the main leather suppliers in Scotland recently, and they commented that, because we do not have the same amount of barbed wire as they have in Scotland, Northern Ireland cows provide a far superior quality of cow skin to make the seats. So, we are world leaders in more than one way.

I am more than happy to give an assurance. I understand the Member's concerns. Clearly, B/E Aerospace is a major employer not just in Kilkeel but in Northern Ireland. It is something that we wish to retain. I appreciate people's

unease about the announcements that have been made, and I am more than happy to work in conjunction with the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister to ensure that we can keep this in Northern Ireland. In particular, we are more than happy to contribute on the skills side of the equation.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Phil Flanagan to ask a question about B/E Aerospace in Kilkeel. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Flanagan: Dead on. Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister will be aware that major engineering companies like B/E Aerospace offer day opportunities for students across the North to sample what it is like to work in such an environment. Will the Minister tell the House how his Department supports such initiatives involving schools, colleges and major employers like B/E Aerospace?

Dr Farry: Obviously, the issue of engagement between companies and schools and colleges cuts across my Department and the Department of Education. Though there are examples of very good practice already, unfortunately they are few and far between. The Member will be aware that my Department and the Department of Education have launched a joint review of careers policy. Indeed, the issue of placements, how we can encourage more engagement between schools and colleges and businesses so that people can understand the opportunities that are out there for them and how we can encourage careers teachers and advisers to spend time in industry as well so that they, too, can fully understand such opportunities are all key things that we wish to build on and develop.

Magee Campus: Funding

5. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why a £10m bid from the University of Ulster for a new teaching block at the Magee campus was rejected. (AQO 6428/11-15)

Dr Farry: Members will be aware of the additional capital funding available to the Executive from the UK Government under the economic pact to support specific shared housing and education projects. The Magee teaching block bid was one of those put forward by my Department and subsequently submitted by the Department of Finance and Personnel to HM Treasury for consideration under that initiative. The Magee project was not agreed by HM Treasury for inclusion in the package of shared education and housing projects. The Treasury felt that it did not meet the criteria of being a shared education project.

Mr Eastwood: It is disappointing to hear that another piece of infrastructure for Derry has been turned down by whoever has turned it down. Will the Minister recommit to what was a commitment in the One Plan, which the First Minister and deputy First Minister came to launch in the city of Derry? Will he recommit to the target of 9,400 students for Magee by 2020, given the fact that there is an ongoing consultation on the business case around that? If that business case says what we all think it will say, will the Minister recommit to that and work with his Executive colleagues to bring that about?

Dr Farry: Let me say several things to the Member. First, we are not walking away from the capital bid in relation to

Magee. It did not meet the particular criteria around shared education set by the Treasury for this funding opportunity. It is still premature, in terms of formal business case approval and, indeed, planning permission, for a bid to be made during this financial year for capital funds, but I certainly intend — subject to the various approvals being in place — to make a bid at the earliest opportunity for the investment in the teaching block at Magee.

We also have made significant interventions to meet the One Plan objectives. We have 650 places delivered already in that regard. When I assumed office, there was zero funding available for expansion of the numbers of university places anywhere in Northern Ireland, and, through different means, we have managed to secure the funding to allow us to expand the number of university places.

I also have to say to the Member that, much as I share his aspiration to see Magee develop further, for me to commit at this stage to additional places at the university would be folly. In doing that, I have to baseline a commitment for at least three years, and, in practice, once you announce these places, you cannot simply turn the tap off afterwards. Until we sort out the current impasse around welfare reform and Budget uncertainty, we are in no position to make any further announcements of expansion of the university or, indeed, anything that requires a baseline commitment into the future. We have to get past the current discussions that we are having before any of these discussions can be advanced further.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for a very detailed answer. I welcome the fact that he is committed to the expansion of Magee. In relation to the points raised by Mr Eastwood, what plans have you to go back to the British Treasury to highlight the case for the shared campus at Magee and ensure that we get the money for the teaching block?

Dr Farry: Part of the issue was that there was uncertainty around the criteria for the shared education bids. We took the decision to go ahead and pitch for the Magee campus to see what would happen in that regard. One of the critical issues is the added value that will come from the project. As the Member knows, further education and higher education are already shared, so we needed to demonstrate how we were providing additional value. However, we did not get that one across the line.

There may be other opportunities from special capital programmes to bid again. Equally, there may be another capital reallocation in the Executive due to underspends in other areas that we could take advantage of. Indeed, we can bid for mainstream funding on the capital front as part of the next comprehensive spending review period. I am open to looking at all those options. There is no question in my mind that I am committed to moving ahead, subject to the approval of the economic appraisal of the Magee teaching block capital investment. At the earliest opportunity to do that we will take advantage of whatever funds may be available.

Night Classes

6. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the steps his Department is taking to maximise the number of working people taking night classes. (AQO 6429/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department is committed to widening access and promoting educational opportunities for all individuals across Northern Ireland. Further education colleges offer a variety of courses throughout their main campuses and a network of approximately 500 community outreach centres. In 2012-13 there were 130,000 part-time enrolments on regulated qualifications in the sector and 33,000 part-time enrolments for recreational courses. Those figures include people attending night classes. This is, therefore, a significant area of college activity.

Further education curriculum policy has been developed to ensure that colleges achieve an appropriate balance between provision that strengthens economic and workforce development, enhances social cohesion and advances the individual's skills and learning. My Department sets the strategic direction for the further education sector, and individual colleges are responsible for designing a curriculum offer to meet the needs of learners and employers in their area, including the delivery of night classes.

Students who require financial assistance to meet the costs associated with learning and who are undertaking accredited courses leading to regulated qualifications at FE colleges, including night classes, can apply for help through further education awards and/or college hardship funds. The support available from both those sources for eligible students is means-tested on the basis of household income and is dependent on individual circumstances. Income-based concessionary fees are also available at each college.

My Department has also supported the colleges' advertising and marketing working group to promote the full range of further education provision, including night classes, through their prospectuses, online promotions and links to NI Direct.

Mr G Robinson: Does the Minister agree that night classes can provide a cost-effective and valuable mechanism for gaining and updating qualifications that can enhance promotion and job security in areas of high unemployment such as Limavady?

Dr Farry: I agree with the Member. His comment applies not only to Limavady but across all of Northern Ireland. We stress the importance of lifelong learning and of people constantly investing in their skills. We live in a much more volatile economic situation with a much more changeable labour market, and it is likely that people will change jobs more frequently than in the past. Therefore we want to encourage people to keep their skills as fresh as possible and to think about how they can progress their skills. The role of FE colleges is vital in that regard, whether we are talking about daytime activity or night classes.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I heard the Minister's response about people taking night classes and the funding that might be available to them. I am not specifically talking about means-tested benefits, because he has already outlined that, but does that funding apply to people who may be in part-time work and in receipt of working tax credits and other lower-income means of support?

Dr Farry: I want to be careful not to give the Member an inaccurate answer in this regard. It is best that we judge each situation on the case that is put forward to us.

If the Member has any particular cases in mind, I am happy to look at them in greater detail and see whether any eligible support is available. We need to look at an individual's circumstances in the round before we can give a definitive answer to any particular situation that arises.

2.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Belfast Metropolitan College: Property Sale

1. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the sale of the Belfast Metropolitan College-owned property in College Square East. (AQT 1321/11-15)

Dr Farry: I would love to be in a position to give the Member a fuller answer today, but that transaction, while it is very well advanced and there may well be speculation in the media, is yet to be formally concluded. Until that point, the matter must remain commercial in confidence. It would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on that. Suffice it to say that, when the transaction has been fully cleared, an announcement can be made.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Minister. I suspect that we are into the area of technicalities. Perhaps he can update the House on where the moneys raised by the sale will be utilised.

Dr Farry: Obviously, it is a capital receipt. It will be reinvested back into the further education estate. No doubt, it has already been accounted for in business cases that have gone through, particularly in relation to other redevelopments that have occurred in relation to the expansion of Belfast Metropolitan College.

Apprenticeships: People with Disabilities

3. **Ms McCorley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to expand on his statement this morning in which he said that mechanisms would be put in place to widen access to apprenticeships for people with disabilities. (AQT 1323/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am grateful to the Member for her question. We are looking at the expansion of participation in apprenticeships. That includes the overall figure of people who take advantage of such opportunities. We also want to look at any particular barriers that exist. We have raised issues about some of the gender imbalances that exist already and have highlighted the point about people with disabilities. That will then be cross-referenced with work that we are doing through our disability employment service. We are developing a disability employment strategy that will be subject to public consultation in the autumn. Access to apprenticeships and, indeed, other training schemes will be one aspect of that strategy.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he outline the timeline within which we can expect to see significant changes to access to apprenticeships for people with disabilities?

Dr Farry: The first thing to say is that, today, there should not really be any barriers to people's participating in apprenticeships if they have a disability. The point is that,

while people may have a range of disabilities, many of them are not work-limiting disabilities. Where people have a disability that restricts their ability to engage with work, we have existing schemes that will allow for adaptations to be made in that regard.

The main challenge that we have is probably one of promotional work, first of all to encourage people with disabilities to explore new options and to encourage employers to create opportunities and not to see disability as a barrier. Obviously, people should not discriminate on the basis of disability anyway. It is important that we address people's mindsets in this area, ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage in employment and bring the full range of talents to bear to ensure that the economy grows to its maximum potential.

Redundancies: DEL Assistance

4. Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his Department's strategic approach to helping those who have had the misfortune of being made redundant to reskill and retrain to assist them back into employment. (AQT 1324/11-15)

Dr Farry: Again, I am grateful to the Member for the question. First, we have the Department's redundancy service, which is available to help people in the immediate situation in which they find themselves. Indeed, we offer clinics in that regard when we come across major redundancies. We work in partnership with other agencies to provide a rounded set of services to deal with the different complexities that people find themselves having to deal with.

In retraining, we can offer a range of programmes. Indeed, when we come across major redundancies, we may make some very particular interventions to capture an entire cohort of people who require retraining and look to see whether we can put in place some specific programmes. We explored that on the back of the F G Wilson redundancies that were announced in autumn 2012. I am glad to say that, since then, Caterpillar has been flourishing; indeed, it has expanded to new product lines. Again, that is a success of the Executive's outreach work to get more inward investment.

We also have available our general programmes. Those include things such as apprenticeships, which can be an all-age intervention. They are not restricted to people between the ages of 18 and 24. We also have the Bridge to Employment scheme, which is there to work with employers who wish to avail themselves of opportunities to work with unemployed people. Indeed, the mainstream Steps to Work programme, which will shortly be replaced by Steps 2 Success, is there to help people who are long-term unemployed.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. Minister, you touched on the all-age aspect. I am sure that you will accept that those aged 40 and over who have been made redundant can find it more difficult to find employment. Will you tell us what specific action you are taking to help those in that age bracket?

Dr Farry: The Member is right to highlight the particular problem of older workers re-engaging with the labour market. In our unemployment profile, we have particular pressure points at either end of the age spectrum

— for young people and older workers. The Steps 2 Success programme will be for all ages. Within that, the new contractors will be encouraged to be flexible in their approach and, in doing that, to tailor responses to the needs of workers. People who may have fewer qualifications because they went through school and training in a different time may expect to see different interventions from perhaps younger workers who have the qualifications but, in turn, lack experience. We can see a differentiation in that regard.

I also wish to highlight the Step Ahead 50+ initiative, which provides placements for older workers in the community and voluntary sector. That has proved to be very successful and very popular.

Unemployment: Claimant Count

5. Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to comment on the latest unemployment figures, given that he will be aware that Northern Ireland has always had an unfortunately high number of people who are unemployed. (AQT 1325/11-15)

Dr Farry: The issue of unemployment is highly relevant to us all, and it is an ongoing matter of concern. We are pleased, however, that we are seeing a sustained fall in unemployment; indeed, the current claimant count stands at 55,500, which is 6.3% of the workforce. That is down 500 from the previous month. We have now seen the claimant count decrease consistently for 17 months. That is the most sustained fall in unemployment since June 1995. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is now at 6.9%, which, again, is a decrease from the previous figure. That said, we appreciate that we are moving from what has been a very high unemployment figure, so there is a lot of work still to be done to bring the figure down even further. Within that, we have particular problems with youth unemployment and long-term unemployment, and we have specific interventions to address both aspects.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his answer and his positive response. Will there be some cross-departmental cooperation between his Department and the Department of Education, given this morning's announcement about newbuilds? Will the two Departments jointly seize any opportunities to get our unemployment figures down further?

Dr Farry: We are obviously keen to promote social clauses across government, and they are now mainstreamed. Indeed, Departments have the option of going further. I have no doubt that the Minister of Education will be very committed to ensuring that social clauses are deployed to the maximum in the programmes that he takes forward. All my ministerial colleagues, I believe, share the same outlook.

There is a lot that we can do to address unemployment. We have the more immediate interventions to address people who find themselves in unemployment, through, for example, the youth employment scheme for young people, Steps 2 Success and some other interventions that we have. We also have to look at some of the structural issues that we have to address in our economy to make sure that we try to remove unemployment at source. That involves things such as better careers advice, which is why we are doing the review of careers. It also means the promotion of vocational training, including apprenticeships. I have made reference to the fact that many other countries across

Europe that have stronger footprints in vocational training have much lower levels of unemployment, including youth unemployment. There is a clear lesson for us in that regard. That is why we are putting such a focus on the importance of vocational training as a means not only of supplying the right skills for our economy but of reducing unemployment.

Economic Inactivity

6. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given that an expert group has been set up as part of the economic inactivity framework, to outline the progress that has been made on economic inactivity, which is one of the most intractable problems in our economy and seems to be stubbornly ingrained in our society. (AQT 1326/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am happy to do that. I concur with the Member that this is a deep structural problem in our economy. It has been with us for at least 30 years and has survived the ups and downs of the economic cycle, and that points to the fact that it is a deeply embedded problem. The Member will know that we launched a joint consultation, devised by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on behalf of the Executive. That also involved support from other Departments. That consultation has closed, and we have published a summary of responses to it. A paper is set to be brought to the economic subcommittee of the Executive next week, discussing the way forward in that regard, and, shortly thereafter, the Departments involved will bring a report to the Executive with a view to finalising a strategy. In many respects, the hard work then begins of trying to tackle the issue, which is deeply embedded. We are looking to a series of pilot programmes and proposals coming forward, including those from the community and voluntary sector, about innovative means that we can experiment with to see how we can address the issue, particularly in relation to people who are long-term sick or disabled and those with family commitments who have been excluded from the labour market as a consequence of those.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his answer and welcome the work that is being done in relation to economic inactivity and that particular segment. A subset of that is people who suffer from disability. Is there any one person or expert represented in the group who might advise the group on dealing with the problems that beset people who suffer from disability?

Dr Farry: The work is being advanced by officials from my Department, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and other Departments. However, we have a wide-ranging engagement with key stakeholders. For example, Minister Foster, Minister McCausland and I met a range of businesses and other organisations last Tuesday to discuss aspects of the emerging strategy, and there were people from disability organisations at the table. We have also had stakeholder engagement events, and, again, they heavily featured organisations that work in the disability sector. We have a commitment to ongoing engagement with all those stakeholders, including the disability sector, so I have confidence that those voices will be very much at the table and will be influential in shaping future policy.

Students: Retention Rates

7. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the steps that are being taken to increase retention rates amongst students undertaking further and higher education courses. (AQT 1327/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am pleased to say to the Member that we are seeing improvements in attainment and retention levels across the further education sector. It is something that the colleges are driving under strategic direction from the Department. Indeed, as we look to the development of a revised further education strategy later this year, the issues around retention and attainment will be core features of that discussion.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Minister for his answer. I was privileged to support pupils recently at Banbridge campus of the Southern Regional College, who, as part of their public service course, undertook a charity skydive. I am not asking the Minister to undertake a charity skydive, but — *[Interruption.]* Well, maybe you should.

What plans does the Minister have to look at best practice examples like that and to roll them out across the other colleges?

2.45 pm

Dr Farry: Before I take any skydive, I want a firm assurance that I will be provided with a parachute. *[Interruption.]* Who knows?

We are keen to ensure that best practice is applied across the colleges. Colleges NI is the umbrella organisation for the sector, and, in many ways, the people in that organisation are best placed to spread the news of successful interventions. By the same token, I do not want all six colleges to be mirror images of one another. We want them to experiment, to innovate and to have their own specialisms on behalf of the economy as a whole. It is appropriate to find the right balance. I have no doubt that they will be keen to hear the lessons of what has happened in Banbridge.

Social Development

Building Successful Communities

1. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Building Successful Communities programme. (AQO 6439/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): Members will recall that my colleague the Minister of Finance and Personnel provided an update on the Building Successful Communities programme in response to a question from David McIlveen on 27 May. I do not propose to cover the same ground because, obviously, the answer is available in Hansard. However, I am glad to have the opportunity to respond personally and to reaffirm my complete commitment to the objectives of this ambitious pilot. Those objectives spring directly from the vision of housing-led community regeneration, which I outlined in my Department's housing strategy. That vision is focused on ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access good housing at a reasonable cost.

Recently, officials from my Department's housing division had the opportunity to brief the Social Development Committee on progress to date. It has been requested that a further update be made after the Building Successful Communities seminar, which will be held in September.

Staffing levels in the programme took a number of months to bring to full complement. As a result, while some forums are already established, and the forums have met, others are still in the process of finalising their membership.

The forums that are established are in Lenadon and Glencolin, the Doury Road and the lower Falls. All of them have held initial meetings, which have been positive, constructive and, even at this early stage, hugely helpful in setting out the priorities for each pilot area.

The other three regeneration forums are almost complete and will be meeting very soon. The key thing is that we have a wide range of skilled, dedicated and innovative people across all six forums. It is important that we have a good complement of people with a range of skills and from a range of backgrounds. I look forward to the seminar in September, which will give us an opportunity to learn about best practice in housing-led regeneration and explore potential solutions to meet the particular needs of pilot areas.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Will he clarify whether all the MLAs in each pilot project area were invited to sit on the forums? Will objective need play a central role in the programmes?

Mr McCausland: I am not absolutely clear on the details of who sits on the forums. Some people responded that they were interested in being on them, and some did not. I do not have the details of each one.

Mr Clarke: What does the Minister see as being the legacy of the Building Successful Communities programme?

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question, because it is getting to the heart of the matter. I think that it is about ensuring that we have communities that are successful, sustainable and strong. It is about bringing together the two elements of the Department's remit: regeneration and housing. We should not take things forward in silos and should try to get a broad-based approach. There has been a high level of dereliction in some communities, particularly in inner city areas. People should not be condemned to living in those areas of dereliction for the rest of their lives. That is simply unacceptable. We want strong, vibrant and successful communities. The Member asked about the legacy. In the end, I hope that those communities will become vibrant again, that they are regenerated and are places where people want to live and will enjoy living, working and socialising.

Mr P Ramsey: To follow Ms Boyle's question, what is the Minister's assessment of the equality impact assessment of these programmes or pilot projects?

Mr McCausland: They are pilots. They are moving into an area that I think has been somewhat neglected in the past. The Department for Social Development has the remit for housing and regeneration. Those two need to be brought together. Work is ongoing in regard to the issue of equality. It is important that we bear in mind that equality extends to communities that have in the past been neglected and condemned to dereliction. They deserve an equal chance

with everybody else. I hope that it will address that issue and ensure that they are given equality.

An equality screening exercise and, if necessary, equality impact assessment will be undertaken for the Building Successful Communities programme. Work on the equality screening commenced when I announced the programme, and it is ongoing. In the meantime, my Department will continue with that work.

Mr Swann: The Minister said that one of the legacies of the programme will be a strong, vibrant community. The Doury Road in my constituency of North Antrim is one of the pilot projects. It already has a strong, vibrant community. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) proposal was to demolish the houses in that community. That was stopped by DSD at one stage. Will the Minister give an update on whether that is still the situation? Will DSD prevent NIHE demolishing those houses until there is a way forward?

Mr McCausland: The Member has raised this previously. I have spoken about it, and I have written to the Housing Executive about it. It is important that anything done in that area is done in the context of Building Successful Communities, where there is strong community buy-in.

Welfare Reform

2. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on welfare reform. (AQO 6440/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Member will be aware that I have been seeking to have the Executive discuss the Welfare Reform Bill since the beginning of 2014. I wanted the discussions to not only reach agreement as to when the Bill would come back to the Assembly but consider the package of measures I have developed to help to shape how welfare reform is implemented in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to secure agreement on these matters with a number of the parties in the Executive. Northern Ireland is now having to deal with the financial and service consequences of their failure to agree on how we can move forward.

The continued delay in securing agreement on progressing welfare reform is increasingly putting at risk the delivery of critical social security benefits and tax credit payments for over 400,000 people and families in Northern Ireland. That is because the failure to pass the legislation will mean that the legislative frameworks for social security in Northern Ireland and Great Britain will increasingly diverge, coupled with the fact that the IT systems that currently enable the Social Security Agency to process and pay the existing payments will be replaced by the Department for Work and Pensions with new systems to support the new benefits.

There are also financial consequences for the Northern Ireland block grant. Mr Hamilton has already indicated that, unless there is agreement on welfare reform, he will have to preside over a cuts exercise in the 2014-15 June monitoring round to fund financial penalties of £13 million for 2013-14 and £87 million for 2014-15. There is also the risk of a further financial penalty of £114 million for 2015-16. The situation will be exacerbated the longer the delay. The application of those financial penalties will have a negative impact on spending on other public services,

such as health and education, and measures to improve and grow the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his very extensive answer. In the event of there being a failure around the Executive table to get agreement, what might be the implications for jobs in his Department?

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for that important supplementary question. I have raised this on a number of occasions, and it is important to spell out the implications very clearly. Around 664 staff are currently employed in the Belfast benefits centre, which also includes the Lisahally processing unit up in the north-west. It provides processing for a number of working-age benefits in the south-east of England, London and the Home Counties. That work is done on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). There are also 800 staff employed in the child maintenance service providing services to the eastern region of England on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. The total number of staff providing services to regions in Great Britain is over 1,464.

Following a meeting with Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in March 2012, I highlighted my concerns to the Assembly on a number of occasions that those jobs will be at risk if Northern Ireland does not progress with welfare reform. That is because many of the competitive advantages that Northern Ireland offers DWP will disappear as staff will no longer be operating the same social security systems.

In recent months, we have seen the announcement of the closure of the Driver and Vehicle Agency DVA offices in Northern Ireland and the centralisation of those functions to Swansea. The 1,400 jobs in my Department providing services to DWP have to compete for services in order to keep the jobs in Northern Ireland. Breaking parity, and therefore not operating the same processes and systems, would make those services uncompetitive and more expensive. Surely our job in this House is to protect jobs rather than put barriers in place that would result in the loss of jobs. The total number of jobs is 1,400, including 664 at Lisahally outside Londonderry.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will the Minister update the House on whether the issue of welfare reform and the removal of up to £750 million from our local economy was raised at a recent garden party in Downing Street, which was attended by his party leadership, senior members of the British Government and some of their children?

Mr McCausland: I was not there.

Mrs D Kelly: In an earlier answer, the Minister referred to what he hoped to be his "legacy". Would he give any thought to his legacy being a champion for those who are hardest hit by welfare reform? Does he agree that the highest levels of poverty are experienced by people here in the North of Ireland, and can he therefore outline to the House how he has championed their cause and what representation he has made to the Department for Work and Pensions?

Mr McCausland: I think that the Member's understanding of the thing is very simplistic and superficial, to say the least. I am surprised that any member of the Social Development Committee is not aware of the extensive

work that we have done and the arrangements that we have negotiated with Westminster's Department for Work and Pensions on flexibilities for Northern Ireland and the package of differentials in terms of doing things somewhat differently in Northern Ireland. That is well known; it has been stated on a number of occasions. Those are things that I have developed and negotiated. It took a lot of effort and endeavour and quite a number of meetings with Iain Duncan Smith, David Freud and others to secure those; it also required a lot of work by my officials on an ongoing basis with officials in DWP. It is disappointing that the Member is not aware of the wide range of those and that, when they have been mentioned in public, they have been welcomed by the vast majority of people.

Mr Dickson: While I share some of the Minister's frustrations with the introduction of welfare reform to Northern Ireland, can he tell the House when he last meaningfully engaged with any of the political parties in the Chamber in order to progress that matter or whether he has actually been doing nothing?

Mr McCausland: That matter is brought up regularly, on many occasions, around the Executive table, and that is where it sits at the moment. I hope that the Member would also be aware, from his party colleague, that a ministerial subcommittee has been working on this for some time. We got to the point quite some time ago where everything possible that could be done to extract agreements from Westminster to get a reasonable package of flexibilities and differentials in Northern Ireland had been done. We have been sitting at that point for some time; that is basically as far as it goes.

I met the Secretary of State the other day and was told again, very plainly, that there is nothing more to come from Westminster. I think that some people hold out a vague hope that, if they keep on stalling and standing around doing nothing, eventually, somehow or other, DWP and the Treasury will become super-generous and start lavishing more things on us. That is not the case. The work has been done well and thoroughly. A great deal of time, energy and effort has been put into it. I encourage the Member to speak to his party colleague who is on the subcommittee.

3.00 pm

Window Replacement: East Antrim

3. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Housing Executive's window replacement scheme for East Antrim. (AQO 6441/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised me that the following schemes are due to start in the East Antrim constituency: Larne phase 2 for 283 dwellings is due to start this month; in Greenisland, 343 dwellings are due to start in August; in Carrickfergus phase 3, 177 dwellings are due to start in September; and in Monkstown and New Mossley, 272 dwellings are due to start in November. There are quite a number of schemes in the East Antrim constituency. I can understand the Member's interest in that, because, of all of the constituencies, that is the one where there was the most need. I think, over the period of 2012-13 and 2014-15, in the region of 1,500 houses and homes have had or will have double glazing installed.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his detailed answer. Will he tell us what the current position is in relation to the Programme for Government target to have all Housing Executive homes double-glazed by March 2015?

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive's estimate of the number of dwellings still to have full double glazing installed has been constantly updated as more detailed information has become available from surveys. It advised that the revised required total programme figure is 16,665. In 2012-13 it started 8,856 and in 2014-15 it intends to start the 7,809 that are currently outstanding. That will bring us to the position where it will have achieved its target by March 2015.

The other good news is that, because of the way that the contracts have been handled, the overall value of the contracts is £23 million. That combined cost, following the secondary compensations, represents an average saving of around 21.5% when compared to the average costs in the previous contract. I am sure the Member and other Members will welcome the 21.5% saving on cost.

Mr Dickson: Minister, while I clearly welcome the particular programme that you have outlined and the number of properties that are to be provided with double glazing, can you tell the House which particular methodology will be adopted: that of non-redecoration grant or redecoration grant?

Mr McCausland: That is not the methodology. The methodology is how the windows are fitted, not whether or not a grant is paid. The position is that, because of the way in which the windows are now fitted — which is the normal way that they are fitted in almost all houses, including in the private sector — in most cases there is now no need for a redecoration grant. I know that many years ago, when I had windows fitted in my own home, the work was done in a way that did not require major redecoration, whereas previously, as I saw on many occasions when I visited schemes, the work was being done in a way that left houses extremely defective and in need of redecoration. The fact is that there is now a significant saving, and that is good. That is sensible use of public money.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Michael Copeland to ask a question focused on East Antrim.

Mr Copeland: Can the Minister confirm that both he and his Department continue to avail themselves of the services of contractors who featured in his overcharging statement of last year? Will he now accept that the figures he gave on that occasion were wrong, and perhaps consider an apology?

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is not to do with East Antrim, but it is over to the Minister if he wishes to reply.

Mr McCausland: Neither has it anything particularly to do with double glazing. The three contractors are PK Murphy, Dixons Contractors and Bann. Those are the three that were awarded the contracts by the Housing Executive. The Member is a member of the Social Development Committee and is well aware of the situation regarding the matter that he raised. It is a matter that has been dealt with by the Housing Executive. It has reached a measure of agreement with the contractors, and that is now being assessed by economists within DSD and, subsequently, DFP, as required by public expenditure guidelines.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call John Dallat, and ask him to make sure that his question is related to the original question.

Mr Dallat: Mr Deputy Speaker, to comply with your request, I am absolutely over the moon that the people of East Antrim will have windows and warm houses.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, can I dare ask the Minister when the rest of Northern Ireland might have new windows?

Mr McCausland: I do not know whether the Member missed the answer that I gave earlier: the entire programme will be completed by March of next year, as promised in the Programme for Government. There was a commitment to have it done by March 2015, and it will be completed by then.

Social Housing: Glengormley

4. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the social housing need in Glengormley. (AQO 6442/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In March 2014, there were 233 applications on the waiting list for Glengormley, of which 156 were deemed to be in housing stress. In the 12 months to March 2014, there were 37 social housing allocations.

There have been no new social housing schemes built in the Glengormley area since 1999 — 15 years ago. However, a combined projected social housing need of 116 units has been identified for Glengormley for the period 2013-18. That can be broken down as Glenvarna, 74 units; Queens Park, 30 units; and Hightown, 12 units. In the current social housing development programme, Clanmil Housing has 21 units on site at 369-371 Antrim Road. A further 12 units are programmed to start between 2014-15 and 2016-17, with six units at Ballyduff Road, Carnmoney, and six units at Moss Road. Those will be delivered by the Apex Housing Group.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister and am encouraged that there are new houses in the pipeline. I am sure that he shares my alarm at the fact that not one home has been built in Glengormley for the past 15 years, even though we have had substantial need in Queens Park and Glenvarna. Does he agree that that is unacceptable, and will he undertake to find out how that has happened and why nothing has been done in the past 15 years? Will he also ensure that the Housing Executive proactively addresses that situation as a matter of great urgency?

Mr McCausland: I share the Member's concern that, in the space of 15 years, not one house was completed in the Glengormley area, which includes Glenvarna and Queens Park. That was in spite of the fact that there is significant need there. In those two estates alone, it is 104 units. It is difficult to understand why nothing was done more proactively to address the problem. There may be issues with the availability of land, but, if there is a situation there and you think about it and try to address it, surely something could have been done over that 15-year period.

I certainly share the Member's concern and think that it is important that we get to an understanding of why that has happened. Indeed, the Member will be well aware that the Member of Parliament for North Belfast raised the matter recently on a number of occasions and rightly so. It is the

sort of information that needs to be brought to attention and addressed. There is a clear housing need in the area, yet, over that 15-year period, nothing was built at all.

Some 22 units that are on site are for over-55s, so there are actually no family homes even now in the area. We need to understand that and make sure that the Housing Executive addresses that need proactively.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Minister outline how many relets are on that waiting list?

Mr McCausland: The figure that I quoted of a need for 104 units in Glenvarna and Queen's Park takes account of relets. I do not have to hand the detailed figures for relets, but I am happy to get the information for the Member. Even if you take relets into account, however, there is a shortage of 104 units across those two estates in Glengormley. That is a significant figure in anybody's book, and something needs to be done about it. Of course, where there are newbuilds, you tend to find an increase in demand because a newbuild home is always particularly attractive and people will tend, quite often, to put their name down for that area. There has not been one there in 15 years.

Energy Efficiency

5. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the upgrading of single-walled dwellings to improve their energy efficiency. (AQO 6443/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have been very keen to find a solution to these notoriously difficult to heat properties since I first became aware of them. That is why I asked the Housing Executive, in conjunction with the building research executive, to come up with the most effective and economical solution to retrofit a thermal outer skin, which will greatly improve the thermal efficiency of these properties and so help the tenants to live a more comfortable life. The Housing Executive has undertaken already some work to upgrade external walls of single-skinned aluminium bungalows and rural cottages. This will improve the U value of the external wall element to comply with current building control standards. This is the measure of heat transmittance through a wall, door or window. There has been good progress on the Technology Strategy Board project in Springfarm. The tender to complete the external insulation and associated works to the first three dwellings should be agreed in early July, with an on-site commencement date in August 2014. At the moment, my officials are liaising with the Housing Executive's technical and legal departments to look at options for all no-fines or solid wall properties across Northern Ireland.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response, and I welcome the fact that, finally, maybe we are seeing some movement on the issue as there are a number of these properties in my constituency. What consideration are the Department and the Housing Executive giving to the issue of no-fines properties in the private housing sector?

Mr McCausland: In his supplementary question, the Member commented on the relevance of this for his constituency, and he is right to do that. Of the 5,250 Housing Executive properties that fall into this category, 2,000 are in Belfast, and just over 1,800 of those are in the North Belfast and West Belfast constituencies. The constituency with the next largest number is Upper

Bann, where there are 566 no-fines properties, so, it is a significant problem. There are two constituencies where there are none at all. Generally, they are spread across the constituencies in small numbers, with those three constituencies having the highest numbers.

In regard to privately owned properties, one of the challenges in remedying the defects in Housing Executive no-fines properties is how to deal with privately owned property. In many cases, no-fines houses are built in terraces containing a mixture of Housing Executive and privately owned property. It is not possible to remedy the defects to Housing Executive properties without also doing so to the privately owned properties. Concurrently, my officials are liaising with the Housing Executive's technical and legal departments to look at options for some of the 8,000 privately owned no-fines properties. We are very conscious of the issue, and it is one that we are looking at.

Mr Cree: Are there any difficulties in identifying the number of firms that can carry out this work? Can the Minister confirm that there is no risk of any potential conflict of interest either with him or his party?

Mr McCausland: There are quite a number of companies across the United Kingdom doing this work already. It is not new. It has been undertaken in other regions of the United Kingdom, in various parts of Great Britain, over many years. I had the opportunity of seeing work being undertaken in Liverpool on some of the estates where this work has been done. It is fairly standard. What is being done in Springfarm is to look at the best possible way of doing it. There are questions around the particular thickness of insulation, how that should be applied and what form it should take. They are doing there a comparison across different technologies. I also had the opportunity of seeing some of this work done in Germany on one occasion. There are plenty of folk who are able to do this work, and I am sure that the Member will agree that it is work that needs done.

Housing: Equality Scheme

6. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has formally responded to the Equality Commission following its statement that it is investigating potential failures by his Department to comply with its approved equality scheme in connection with the Housing Strategy 2012-17. (AQO 6444/11-15)

Mr McCausland: No.

3.15 pm

Mr F McCann: Will the Minister assure us that any recommendations from any investigation by the Equality Commission will be implemented in full across his Department?

Mr McCausland: The role of the commission and its power to investigate and make recommendations are set out in legislation. The commission has not made a determination of whether the Department has failed to comply with its equality scheme. That will be decided by the commission following its investigation, and it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Housing: Social and Affordable

1. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Social Development how many of the 2,000 homes he has stated that he will deliver over the next year will be social and affordable. (AQT 1331/11-15)

Mr McCausland: We have stated clearly that our intention is to have 2,000 social homes in the next 12 months and 2,000 social homes in the following year. The other day, I met the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and the Housing Executive's acting chief executive to talk about a range of issues on how we can increase supply. The challenge is to make sure that housing associations in Northern Ireland are in a position to meet that target, which is why we are working with them and looking at the obstacles to building more houses. We are well on line for 2,000 homes this year, and it was important to have that discussion with the Housing Executive and the housing associations to bring out any issues that they had that might be an obstacle or blockage. I welcome the positive, constructive attitude in the meeting and the approach of the Housing Executive and the federation.

Mr McAleer: The Minister said that he will deliver 2,000 housing units over the next year. Will those be housing starts or housing completions?

Mr McCausland: The way in which the figures are calculated for starts and completions can be quite complicated. The aim is to have 2,000 homes started in those 12 months, which would be one of the highest figures for many years and a significant achievement. Given that availability of land is one of the issues, we put a lot of effort into getting land teed up last year so that a start could be made on-site this year.

Housing: Social Need

2. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Development to define what he means by social need for the purpose of the proposed regeneration and housing Bill. (AQT 1332/11-15)

Mr McCausland: If you look at a number of the areas that we are talking about, it is pretty clear what social need is. We are dealing with neighbourhood renewal areas, which are areas of real deprivation and disadvantage; we are dealing with areas where it is clear that what was done in the past has not delivered as it should have done; and we are dealing with areas that are quite often blighted by dereliction. When I look at those communities and see derelict properties, half-demolished buildings and derelict land with rubble strewn across it, I have to pay tribute to the people who stuck it out and continued to live in those communities. They deserve credit for being there, but we should not allow them to remain in that situation. There is real social need. There can be a range of things, which is why we are running a range of pilots to look at areas with particular needs. They will not be exactly the same, and, indeed, the remedies and resolutions that they come up with will not necessarily be the same in each case.

Mr Lynch: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his comprehensive answer. Will he outline what is meant by housing "element" in the development scheme in the proposed housing Bill?

Mr McCausland: I have to be honest: I am not entirely clear what the Member is getting at in his question. However, I am happy to engage with him further to find out exactly what information he seeks, and I am happy to supply that. At this point, in this format, I am not clear what the Member means.

Housing: Racial Intimidation

3. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he agrees with senior Housing Executive officials that the treatment of Michael Abiona by a small number of individuals was racial intimidation, or does he agree with the First Minister, who was unable to conclude whether Mr Abiona was treated any differently than someone from "up the country". (AQT 1333/11-15)

Mr McCausland: It is disappointing to find that people sometimes take situations and turn them to make political points. The Member should learn that lesson.

The situation has been clearly identified by the Housing Executive and others. They have made absolutely clear the nature of their decision and how they see it. Other than what I have seen in newspapers, I am not familiar with the details of the situation. However, that having been said, anyone should have the right to be treated equally by the Housing Executive and should not be disadvantaged or discriminated against in any way because of their race or anything else. The position, as I see it, is therefore clear: no one should be disadvantaged or discriminated against in any way. People have the right under the law in our country to be treated absolutely equally and fairly. I hope that the Member will be reassured by that statement.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the clear response that the Minister for Social Development was able to give. I find it somewhat surprising that he is not across the detail of such a serious issue. I understand that we have had 10 instances in the past three months of people being unable to accept offers of housing tenancy due to racial intimidation. What exactly is the Minister doing to address this serious situation and to ensure that perpetrators are penalised rather than victims, who are accessing housing to which they are entitled?

Mr McCausland: First, these are matters primarily for the Housing Executive and the police. Those are the two agencies that have a primary role.

Mr Flanagan: And political leaders.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McCausland: I will take no comments at all from Sinn Féin Members in here about anything to do with racism, after 30 years of a terrorist campaign that thrived on a racist attack on anybody who was British and not Irish.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Alex Attwood is not in his place.

Housing: Newbuild Bungalows

5. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he is content with the criteria in place for housing association newbuild programmes, with so few bungalows being built. (AQT 1335/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for what is an important and good question, because it is an issue that is often raised. A decision was taken some years ago

that, other than in exceptional cases where there was a particular need because of disability, we would not be in the position any more to have the mass building of bungalows, as we did at one time. There were two issues. One was about the general cost of building, and the other was particularly around the cost of land. Obviously, you are acquiring a greater footprint with bungalows. However, in some areas, the amount of land in public ownership that is sitting unused would make it quite easy to provide bungalows. I have spoken to the Housing Executive and asked my officials to look at this.

Mr P Ramsey: I am reassured by the Minister. Will he take it a step further? In recent developments in my constituency, first, the social mix is not working, because we have an environment of 80 or 90 houses but, within a matter of months, 12 or 15 families seeking transfers out of that estate. Secondly, there is discrimination against older people who live in three- or four-bedroom houses but will not get accommodation. Will the Minister undertake an urgent review of those circumstances and encourage housing associations to build more bungalows?

Mr McCausland: As I said a moment ago, the point has been raised with my officials and the Housing Executive. I have asked them to look at this again because I am not sure that we are in exactly the position that we were in some years ago with land values and so on. The Member is absolutely right also that there are older folk who would prefer to downsize to a smaller property and free up a family home. In fact, one of the first things that I did on coming to the Department was to look at the mix of housing in the social housing development programme. That was because previous Ministers seemed to opt to keep building more and more family homes. If you build to accommodate older folk, who tend to live alone or as couples, quite often you free up a larger home. Many folk prefer a bungalow, but there are some really good schemes, and I encourage the Member to look at them if he has not seen them, where there are small groups of a dozen or 20 apartments for elderly folk.

People have different preferences. I visited an excellent scheme some time ago in Newtownards. I think that it was St Mark's Court, close to St Mark's Church on the main street. One of the pensioners said to me as I was waiting, "We are like a wee family here". It had a sense of family and community. There is another scheme in Bangor where, again, there is a strong sense of community amongst the old folk. In some cases it works extremely well, but we need to look at having more diversity rather than just building more of the same.

Universal Credit: GB Claimants

7. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in Great Britain are claiming universal credit. (AQT 1337/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are many statistics that I carry in my head, but I concede that that is not one of them. Topical questions tend to be more about a topic than a specific figure, but I am more than happy to supply the Member with the exact figure if she wishes to have it.

Mrs Dobson: May I enlighten the Minister? As of yesterday, the figure was 5,610. Given that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions said in 2011 that one million people would be claiming universal credit by April

2014, does the Minister accept that, had we gone with his and his party's proposals in October 2012, we would be experiencing exactly the same problems?

Mr McCausland: It is always good if you are asking a question to know the answer in advance, so I am indebted to the Member for telling me that it is 5,610. That is the situation in Great Britain. I am glad to say that I am not responsible for the situation in Great Britain; I have enough difficulties dealing with the situation here. In GB, clearly there has been slowness in delivering. However, I would point out that it was always intended that Northern Ireland would be at the very tail end of any implementation, so, whatever lessons are learned and whatever difficulties may be on the way, coming in at the end we would not be the ones on whom the lessons were learned; rather we would be in a position where the lessons had already been learned.

Crumlin Road Courthouse

8. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development to update the House on what progress has been made to improve the despicable and disgraceful state of the courthouse opposite Crumlin Road Gaol, given that he will want to join him in welcoming Her Majesty The Queen's visit to the gaol and other parts of the Province. (AQT 1338/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I welcome the question. It was a pleasure to be at Crumlin Road Gaol this morning to meet Her Majesty and Prince Philip on their visit to my constituency of North Belfast.

The Department has engaged Turley consultants to take forward a feasibility study to identify potential usage for the courthouse. A draft economic appraisal has been completed and is being considered by the Department's economists. The next step will be approval of the economic appraisal, which will set out the preferred option and should indicate the way forward. It is a tragedy, when we have such a fantastic attraction in the gaol, which draws so many visitors day by day and week by week, into that part of north Belfast. The whole package has to be not only the gaol but the courthouse and the tunnel linking them. Sadly, the courthouse is in an appalling condition. It has been in private ownership for a number of years and has fallen into decay and neglect, and something needs to be done about that.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for his answer. I share his enthusiasm about how it would look if the two came together. How hopeful is the Minister that we can come to a resolution on the courthouse so that the two buildings can complement each other?

3.30 pm

Mr McCausland: The level of dereliction is now such that it is a real challenge. The roof has been damaged on a number of occasions. The building has been vandalised and there is significant internal damage. It is probably the case that whatever is done will have to be on an incremental basis, but I think that there is potential there. We need to get the report and then see what can be done, but, as I said, it needs to be borne in mind that it is in private ownership.

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education

Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Mervyn Storey has given notice of a question for urgent oral answer to the Minister of Education. 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, as on this occasion will Mr Allister, who tabled a similar question this morning. He will be called immediately after Mr Storey.

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to confirm the number of applications that have been refused under the cost-based teaching redundancy exercise and to explain the reasons for the refusals.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. My Department received 167 applications for cost-based teaching redundancies. Due to the difficult financial environment the Executive are facing, there has been a need to prioritise the funding available at this time. Therefore, all applications were assessed against strict criteria.

Of the applications, 74 met the criteria. However, funding is not available at this stage to effect all these redundancies. I have, therefore, prioritised 46 applications relating to schools in a closure or amalgamation situation. If further funding were to become available, I would be in a position to proceed with the remaining 28 that meet the criteria; 93 applications have not been approved as they do not meet all the criteria. However, again, if further funding were to become available, these would be further considered on a priority basis. Therefore, 121 applications for cost-based teaching redundancies have not been approved at this stage for various reasons.

I have not cancelled teacher redundancies, although I find it somewhat ironic to be called to the Chamber as a Minister who is not funding redundancies. Ministers are usually called to the Chamber for creating redundancies. I will continue to make every effort to secure the remaining funding that is needed to resolve this issue as quickly as possible.

Mr Storey: The bombshell that was delivered by the Minister and his Department to schools four days before the end of term was shameful. I do not want this House to get the impression or to give the impression that the Minister in some way will play politics with this issue. He should seriously address the concerns of teachers and immediately, not in a few days, give clarity to those teachers who find themselves in an invidious position in terms of this issue.

Can the Minister tell the House when he knew that this scheme was not going to be fully implemented and why it was introduced without there being financial security in regards to his budget?

Finally, what will happen to those schools, particularly voluntary grammars, that may end up in a situation in

which the Department will not be held accountable for their budgets but the banks will not overcommit to their overdrafts and financial arrangements? Those schools will end up in a serious financial position.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I encourage Members to ask a question. I pass it to the Minister to consider which one he answers.

Mr O'Dowd: I accept that. I have not been here for that many questions for urgent oral answer, so I am not sure of the procedure in terms of how many or what questions I should answer.

I became aware of the situation when it became clear that the Executive were not in a position to agree the June monitoring round. The Member will be aware, as Chair of the Education Committee, that I made a bid to the June monitoring round for £10 million to deal with redundancies at this time. That bid has not yet — I emphasise the word “yet” — been successful. Once it became clear that the June monitoring round was not going to be in place in time, I informed schools of the position we were in.

I emphasise again, in relation to this matter, that there have been a number of redundancies funded. If I receive or identify future funding, in the region of 28 further redundancies are in a position to be approved almost immediately. However, even if I had the budget, 93 applications have not been approved for cost-reduction redundancies at this time, and there are further procedures to be carried out. So I am concentrating on the group of 28 and trying to identify funding to allow those to be released. The process has to continue for the other 93.

Mr Allister: The Minister must surely know — hopefully, he cares — about the havoc that he has caused in the management of schools. The Minister seeks to blame the late timing on the June monitoring round, but is it not the case that, for many years, we have had those redundancy schemes and transferred redundancy posts filled etc on the back of core funding? Why did he put his eggs in the basket of June monitoring this time, knowing how volatile that is?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think that that was two questions.

Mr Allister: Did he give no thought to the proper management of school budgets?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that the Member has asked two questions already.

Mr O'Dowd: I would clearly prefer my Department and the teachers, schools and pupils involved not to be in this situation. The June monitoring round was identified as a source of funding because the Executive are facing significant financial constraints. I am not blaming anyone. I am not pointing the finger at the Executive or anyone else. I am giving the House the facts of the case and how we got to the situation that we are in today. I am not seeking to pass the blame elsewhere. I am the Minister of Education; I take responsibility for these matters.

We are involved in cost-reduction measures. That is what the redundancies are for, and we planned them throughout the year. The financial situation has deteriorated. I made a bid in the June monitoring round, which has not yet been finalised. I hope that it will be finalised in the days to come, but I am continuing, even aside from June monitoring, to try to identify funding that will allow me to release the 28

other teachers who have met the criteria. As I say, even if I had the financial resources at this time, the other 93 applications have not been confirmed. For them, it is not a financial matter. They have not been confirmed because they do not meet the full criteria at this time.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his update thus far. He referred to the fact that 93 applications are not approved. If funding was available, would those 93 then be approved?

Mr O'Dowd: The purpose of the current round of redundancies is to reduce the cost base in our schools estate. The poor budget that the Education Department is dealing with means that we have, over the last number of years, been reducing the cost base in our schools. That means reducing the number of teachers, which is not good either. In fact, a number of years ago, I redirected some money from redundancies and reinvested it in the schools estate in an attempt to reduce the number of redundancies coming forward.

The guidance issued to employers, employing authorities and funding authorities advised that funding for teaching redundancies would be available only if all the following criteria were met: the payback period is clearly demonstrable, up to two years for a school-based teaching redundancy; it is a bona fide redundancy in the sense that the post is being repressed and will not be refilled at a later stage; it is a genuine full-time equivalent reduction that is not to be increased at a later date; and that posts declared redundant are in schools managing a challenging financial position. Those are the circumstances. As I say, there are 93 applications that, even if I had the money, are not yet approved. All of them may not be approved even if I have the resources available to me.

Mr Dallat: I promise the Minister that this is not a press release, but will he agree with me — I speak as a former teacher — that there must be a better way of treating people who have dedicated their whole life to education, are probably exhausted and burned out and whose plans are now up in the air? Surely, Minister, you will agree that that is no way to treat vocational teachers.

Mr O'Dowd: Of course I agree with the Member. This is not a situation that I or, I am sure, anybody else in the House wishes these current circumstances to be in. However, the teachers who are facing redundancy are not all teachers at the end of their career. These are teachers who are losing their posts as a result of cost reduction within the education sector. Many of those teachers still, I hope, have many years ahead of them in the teaching profession. While I accept that this issue or hurdle has to be overcome quickly, the real issue that has to be overcome is the state of the education budget and the need for a significant investment in education.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his statement and answers so far. Minister, you gave clarification that there will be funding for those teachers who are made redundant due to school closure. I have already written to the Minister this morning in regard to the teachers in Ballee High School, where the school is closing and they have entered the trawl, and some of the jobs that they have been offered are due to teachers being made redundant in the subsequent school. Will he also give security of funding for those positions?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not in a position to talk about individual cases. If the Member wishes to correspond with me in relation to individual cases, then I will give him clarity on that matter.

Mr Wilson: The Minister has said that he would prefer not to be in this situation. Does he accept that this is entirely his own fault? He knew that he did not have the money. He announced a redundancy scheme which required money. He put no limit on that. He gave no indication to schools that it may not happen. And will he tell us now — since many of these teachers are the most expensive teachers who schools were hoping not to have on the budget next year — how he intends schools that are affected by his inept handling of this to fund their budgets next year?

Mr O'Dowd: As we set out in the CSR period, I, unlike other Ministers, from within my own resources put a saving mechanism in place. I funded redundancies from my own Department. Other Ministers, sitting on the Member's Benches, went to the Executive and got quite substantial amounts of money from the Executive to fund redundancies within their Departments. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: As Mr Wilson, as a former Finance Minister, is acutely aware, within my budgetary constraints, I recognised the fact three years ago that we would have to put in investment to save going into the future. I think that that was the right decision.

The Executive's financial position has changed dramatically over this last period of time. I am quite rightly preparing for worst-case scenarios in that regard. I am involved in the June monitoring round, and I am also going through my own budget to see if I can facilitate any of the outstanding redundancies that have been approved.

Mr Newton: Minister, when you were asked the question about whether this was planned for, the answer you gave indicated that it was not planned for. It certainly was not budgeted for. Since you have accepted personal responsibility for this, will you be writing to each of those teachers whose future plan for life has now been disturbed, offering an apology for this incompetence and explaining the situation fully to them and where they stand for their life's future?

Mr O'Dowd: I could spend my time writing letters, or I could spend it trying to resolve the matter. I suspect that trying to resolve the matter would be much more beneficial to the lives of those people who have not yet had a funded redundancy than writing letters of apology. I have no hesitation in apologising to anyone who has faced the consequences of a collective failure to agree June monitoring and deal with other outstanding matters around the Executive table. I have no hesitation in that whatsoever.

I commit to those teachers, schools and families who are relying on a resolution of this matter that I am working at it very hard and I am trying to identify finances to facilitate the 28 remaining redundancies. However, I emphasise again: even if June monitoring were to be agreed tomorrow and I received £10 million for redundancies, the 93 applications that have not been approved still face further scrutiny to see if they actually meet the criteria of the scheme that is in place. If they do not meet the criteria, undoubtedly and quite correctly the Education Committee

would question why I released that finance and, in future times, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) would also question why I did that.

So, the 93 applications that have not been approved still require further scrutiny.

3.45 pm

Mrs D Kelly: It is usually the post that is made redundant, not the person. Therefore, are those 28 posts now deemed to be redundant? Will those people now face forced redundancy?

Mr O'Dowd: At this stage, I do not envisage that scenario taking place. We are involved in a cost-reduction process, but it is one that the funding authorities were told would be funded from the centre — from my Department — so I do not envisage the scenario that the Member referred to arising at this time.

Mr Craig: Minister, you have often lectured people on boards of governors to take their responsibilities seriously. I declare an interest as the chair of a board of governors. Having made the difficult decision to declare redundancies in a school, and if there is no money to pay those teachers next year, what advice are you going to give to those same governors? I am not expecting any lectures from the Department on this one, because we have made those hard decisions to keep budgets correct. If, because of this announcement, we are not allowed to keep our budgets in the black and they go into the red, what advice are you going to give governors?

You have said several times now that this £10 million, if you had it, will not cover the cost, so —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has asked his question.

Mr Craig: — why is this letter of advice saying that it was going to cost £6 million?

Mr O'Dowd: I have not, at any stage during this discussion or in any other discussion, advised that the £10 million will not cover the costs. The Member may have misheard me. I said that, even if I had the £10 million, that is not a guarantee that the 93 applications that have not been approved would be approved, because they require further scrutiny.

We are currently discussing teacher-based redundancies, which are estimated to come in at over £6 million. We are not yet in the realm of discussing non-teacher-based redundancies, whether in schools or across the education administration. That is where the £10 million figure comes from.

If the matter is not resolved speedily, I will send further advice out to boards of governors that have been affected, particularly those schools affected by the 28 remaining posts. I do not accept the Member's description of it as lecturing. Boards of governors have a legal duty to manage their budgets properly, efficiently and effectively.

Mr G Robinson: In the light of this debacle, is this a managed closure process?

Mr O'Dowd: No, it is not a managed closure process. There is no hidden agenda in this scenario. I have outlined how we arrived at where we are today and the events that led to today, but there is no ulterior motive. I would much prefer to be in a position to fund the outstanding 28

posts and to allow further scrutiny of the 93 applications that have not yet been approved. As I have said time and time again during this discussion, this is about cost-base reduction in the Department of Education, funded by the Department of Education despite other Departments receiving significant amounts of money from the Executive throughout the last three years to reduce their costs.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I invite Members to take their ease while we make changes at the Table.

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

Executive Committee Business

Justice Bill: Second Stage

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

*That the Second Stage of the Justice Bill
[NIA Bill 37/11-15] be agreed.*

Since taking up my post as Justice Minister, I have made my intent to reform the justice system clear. As I have stated many times, my vision is for a faster, fairer justice system. This was the opportunity created when powers were devolved to the Assembly: to reshape justice to meet the needs of local citizens, to develop our own solutions and to deliver a system in which we can all have confidence — a system that delivers better services for victims and witnesses, deals with criminal cases more quickly and efficiently, safeguards vulnerable people and protects the public from dangerous offenders.

From the outset, I have been determined to make the most of this opportunity. This has required a willingness to tackle difficult and sometimes fundamental issues — matters which, in some cases, have taken decades to address. This has not been easy. Such work requires careful planning, research and consultation. I share the frustration of many that some areas of reform have not come more quickly. Having seen what could be achieved in our system, I am keen to deliver the necessary reforms as soon as possible.

Like many in the House and elsewhere, I am impatient for change. But the fact is that the system is complex and the product of a long process of development and evolution. It is intricate and interconnected. Changing one part often has a series of consequential impacts elsewhere. While that is never a reason to shy away from changes, it does mean that reform is rarely straightforward. It takes time to ensure that we have properly thought through all of the implications of any reform alongside our justice partners and stakeholders. I am pleased to say that the Bill marks an important step in moving away from planning change to making change happen — going beyond talking about how the system might be transformed to delivering a transformed system.

With the Bill, we make good on opportunities created by devolution. It is about realising my vision for a faster, fairer justice system by delivering a number of crucial and fundamental reforms. I am bringing forward measures to improve the way in which the system supports victims and witnesses, speed up criminal case progression and increase the level of protection the system provides against dangerous offenders. The Bill also brings forward a number of other provisions to improve efficiency and fairness, such as reform of the criminal records disclosure service.

The Bill is about transforming the system. As such, it addresses some fundamental and long-standing aspects of the system. As I describe the various parts of the Bill, the scope of our ambition for this legislation should become clear. I want to make it clear that I do not take such reform lightly, but — as I hope that Members will agree — I believe that the time is now right to make such changes. Indeed, I would consider it a failure to leave such things unaddressed. Too often in the past, these reforms were considered too difficult or too complicated, or it was

thought that they would take too long to deliver. To my mind, if we did not tackle these issues, we would be letting down the people of Northern Ireland.

The Bill's measures represent a long-term commitment to bringing about a transformed justice system. The Bill is a central part of a road map to a transformed justice system. It will not be easy. I am under no illusion about the hard work that lies ahead of us. Indeed, much hard work has already gone into bringing us to this point. I want to pay tribute to everyone who has helped us to reach this stage. I am especially grateful to those stakeholders who gave their time to respond to the various consultation exercises, which were so vital to the production of the Bill.

In developing these proposals, we have consulted widely to ensure that our reforms reflect the true needs of our system and, perhaps even more importantly, that, when implemented, they will deliver real change at the front line. As Justice Minister, I have placed significant emphasis on engaging with the wider community. Indeed, it has been one of the cornerstones of the Department's approach. I want the Department of Justice to be open and transparent about how we make our policies and why.

I want us to work in partnership with others, share ideas and collaborate on developing solutions to the problems that we all face. I believe that the Bill is clear proof of why that is the right approach. It is the hallmark of a mature and rational dialogue to acknowledge that you do not always have all the answers or indeed that someone else may have a better answer. The cause of justice is a shared one. I believe that it is best served when we work together to deliver the type of justice system that we can all have confidence in.

At this point, I pay particular tribute to the Justice Committee, which has been instrumental in the development of the Bill. At every stage of the development of the provisions, the Committee has provided the Department with necessary and crucial challenge and quality assurance. Its work and insight have proved invaluable in bringing the Bill forward. Indeed, a number of the provisions flow directly from the Committee's recommendations or suggestions. The development of the Bill is clear proof of the value of a constructive and transparent relationship between a Department and its Committee, and I genuinely look forward to continuing in that vein.

This is substantial legislation, with 92 clauses and six schedules. I now want to spend a little time describing each of the nine parts in turn.

Part 1 will create a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland. That will bring those two court tiers into line with the High Court, the Crown Court and Coroners' Courts, delivering greater flexibility in the disposal of court business by allowing cases to be listed in or transferred to an alternative court when there is good reason to do so. The new arrangements will enable us to better meet the needs of victims and witnesses, allowing cases to be dealt with at the court venue that best suits a particular case. In addition, they may assist in avoiding unnecessary delay and will facilitate the streamlining of some outdated administrative court processes, thus supporting the more efficient use of judicial time and limited court resources.

Part 2 provides for the reform of committal for trial. As many in the House will know, committal is a procedure used to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to justify putting a person on trial in the Crown Court. Under the current system, proceedings can be in the form of oral evidence, when witnesses can be cross-examined, or a paper exercise that is carried out based on written statements and evidence.

The practice of hearing oral evidence, particularly cross-examination, can have a significant impact on victims and witnesses who may have to give sometimes traumatic evidence more than once. I do not accept that the hardship faced by victims and witnesses in those circumstances is in the interests of justice. In addition, oral evidence hearings can be very lengthy, with hearings typically lasting one or two days, and problems are often experienced in organising witnesses to attend, which can lead to adjournments and, consequently, increased delay. They can also be costly to the legal aid fund. Therefore, the Bill will establish new procedures that remove the taking of oral evidence and cross-examination of witnesses in committal proceedings. Defendants will retain the right to make representations on their behalf at the committal hearing, although it will not be possible to take oral evidence from any other witnesses.

Under the Bill, all committal proceedings will take place by way of preliminary inquiry or "on the papers". That will remove a significant burden from those victims and witnesses who would otherwise have to give their evidence more than once. To speed up the system more generally, powers are also to be introduced to allow direct transfer to the Crown Court for sentencing in cases in which there is a guilty plea, as well as direct transfer for certain indictable offences, beginning with murder and manslaughter cases. In such cases, there would be no committal process.

Part 3 creates prosecutorial fines as a new and proportionate response to deal with cases that do not need to go to court. That will release much-needed capacity in our courts and enable certain offences to be dealt with at an early stage, without recourse to the court, enabling prosecutorial resources to be better directed to prosecuting more serious offending, dispensing with the requirement for an investigating officer to appear in court and releasing resources back to front line policing.

Recipients of a prosecutorial fine will avoid a formal criminal record if the fine is accepted and paid, although the criminal justice system will retain a record of such disposals to inform decisions on any future offending by the recipients of prosecutorial fines.

The Bill creates new powers to enable public prosecutors to offer lower-level offenders a financial penalty of up to a maximum of £200 — the equivalent of a level 1 court fine — as an alternative to prosecution. The prosecutor will have the power to attach a financial compensation order to the proposed penalty in cases of criminal damage. The offender levy will also apply to prosecutorial fines.

Part 4 contains provisions that will directly improve the experience of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system, clearly setting out the services that are to be provided and the standard of service that victims and witnesses can expect to receive. By imposing statutory duties on criminal justice agencies, those provisions

should also give rise to a greater focus on the needs of victims and witnesses across the criminal justice system.

4.00 pm

As I mentioned earlier, my vision is of a faster, fairer justice system. Here is a clear example of how the Bill will make that a reality. When combined with the measures to speed up the justice system, the provisions should lead to a substantial improvement in the experience of victims and witnesses in the justice system.

The establishment of victim and witness charters is a key strand of the new five-year strategy for victims and witnesses of crime. Too often, victims and witnesses are unclear about the services that are available to them. For example, they might not know when they should be provided with information about their case or what measures are available to help them give their best evidence in court. The charters will address that by setting out for victims and witnesses on a statutory basis what services are to be provided, the standards of service required and a clear indication of how they should be treated by criminal justice agencies. The charters will help reduce the burden on victims and witnesses by making the journey through the criminal justice system simpler and easier to understand. The charters will also make clear who to contact should the service provided fall short of the entitlements set out under the law.

Indeed, my Department is already consulting on the content of the draft victim charter, which Members will have been notified about, and I encourage as many people as possible to provide views on it. In addition, the Bill will provide a statutory entitlement to be given the opportunity to make a victim personal statement, ensuring that, prior to sentencing, victims may make their views known about the impact of the crime in question. Given that steps have been taken to notify victims of the opportunity to make a personal statement, that should also improve the victim's experience of the criminal justice system.

The provisions that I am bringing forward in the Bill reflect not only the views of stakeholders and victims but deliver on recommendations made by the Justice Committee in its inquiry into services for victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland. It is an area where the in-depth examination of an important issue by the Justice Committee, building on work done by the Department, has led directly to legislative proposals for change. I think that it is a very good example of the value that can be added by Committees, and I pay tribute to the members of the Committee who conducted that influential inquiry.

Part 5 introduces a number of improvements to streamline the arrangements for the disclosure of criminal record checks. It also introduces a number of additional protections relating to the information that can be disclosed and raises the age of those subject to criminal record checks. Perhaps most importantly, the changes include making criminal record checks portable and allowing online updating. That addresses the current situation where people have to apply for a fresh certificate every time they move jobs or engage in relevant voluntary activity.

The Bill also provides for accepting electronic applications, changing from the current system of issuing two certificates for standard and enhanced checks — one to the registered body and the other to the applicant — to

a system of issuing a single certificate to the applicant only, and introduces arrangements to allow self-employed persons to obtain enhanced criminal record certificates.

In addition, the Bill makes a number of more technical changes to the criminal record disclosure regime, including that criminal record checks should not be carried out for those under 16 years of age, except in certain prescribed circumstances, and requiring that individuals who want to register for the purposes of requesting criminal record checks must be 18 years or over.

Finally in this section, the Bill introduces reforms relating to the disclosure of relevant information as part of a criminal record check. That includes provision for a statutory code of practice to assist police in deciding what information should be released and for the establishment of an independent representations process for those who wish to dispute relevant information provided by the police about them.

Part 6 extends the range of matters that can be dealt with in the courts by way of video or live links. As many Members will know, when evidence is given in that way, a room is provided outside the courtroom, possibly in another building, where the witness can give evidence via a live link to the courtroom. The link broadcasts and receives, meaning that witnesses will see the courtroom and those in the courtroom, including the defendant, will be able to see the witness. Providing evidence by live link does not alter the entitlement to be present at a hearing or the right to consult privately with a legal representative before, during or after a live link.

I want to assure the Assembly that those rights are not affected by the Bill. Indeed, the Bill will serve the interests of defendants and witnesses by allowing wider use of live links to deliver a more efficient justice system. Overall, the provisions are designed to increase the use of live links in courts, prisons and hospital psychiatric units and provide a cost-effective and secure means for patients and prisoners to participate in hearings. These are important proposals for making the best use of the resources of the infrastructure already in place for live links and building on the successful contribution that they have already made to the judicial system.

Part 7 makes provision for the introduction of violent offences prevention orders (VOPO). They are a new civil preventative measure to help mitigate the risk of violent repeat offending. The court can make an order when it is satisfied that it is necessary for the purpose of protecting the public from the risk of serious violent harm caused by the offender. The provisions aim to provide a similar level of protection to the public from the risk posed by violent offenders to that already available through sexual offences prevention orders for managing the risk from sex offenders. Under the Bill's provisions, an order can be made by the court on conviction, or, following application made by the police, at a subsequent stage.

I should say that it is not an automatic measure. Rather, VOPOs will only be made following a determination by the court, on the basis of the information and evidence presented to it, that an order is necessary to prevent serious harm. VOPOs will allow the court to place relevant conditions on the behaviour of the offender. The order also attaches notification requirements, similar to sex offender

notification, requiring an offender to notify specified personal details to the police for the duration of the order.

Part 8 provides for a range of miscellaneous reforms designed to improve the operation of the justice system and to address certain technical matters. The reform to the jury service provisions provides for the abolition of the upper age limit for jury service, which is currently age 70, to be replaced with an automatic right of excusal for those over 70; an increase of the current age for automatic excusal from 65 to 70; and some other technical improvements.

Part 8 also brings forward three important new measures to speed up the criminal justice system. First, the Bill includes reforms to encourage earlier guilty pleas, introducing two new provisions to support a structured early guilty plea scheme being developed for the Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court. The provisions will require a sentencing court to state the sentence that would have been imposed if a guilty plea had been entered at the earliest reasonable opportunity and place a duty on a defence solicitor to advise a client about the benefits of an early guilty plea. With those provisions, we hope to encourage those who are guilty of a criminal offence to admit their guilt at the earliest reasonable stage in proceedings. In so doing, they would be reducing the burden on victims and witnesses and releasing vital capacity back into the system for dealing with other business.

Secondly, the Bill introduces a statutory framework for the management of criminal cases. Under those provisions, the Department of Justice will, through regulation, be able to impose duties on the prosecution, defence, and the court, which will set out what must be completed prior to the commencement of court stages. The regulations will also allow the Department to impose a general duty to reach a just outcome as swiftly as possible. That will apply to anyone exercising a function in relation to criminal proceedings.

Those provisions should ensure that, in future, legal representatives will attend court at an appropriate state of readiness, having made all the preparations necessary for court stages of proceedings. That should speed up the progression of criminal cases by reducing the need for adjournments, thereby reducing the burden on victims and witnesses and freeing up the court resources.

Thirdly, the Bill introduces a measure to empower public prosecutors to issue a summons to a defendant without, first, having to get a lay magistrate to sign it. That will streamline procedures and help to speed up the process in summons cases by reducing the time taken between the decision to prosecute and first appearance in court.

Those three measures, in combination with the provisions I have already outlined on the reform of committal and the introduction of prosecutorial fines, demonstrate my commitment to a streamlined, more efficient system which will maintain the crucial protections for defendants, but which will also recognise that we can, and should, do things better. They are a critical part of a wider blueprint for speeding up our justice system, which also includes the introduction of statutory time limits, the development of an earlier guilty pleas administrative procedure, as I mentioned earlier, youth engagement clinics to speed up the processing of youth cases and improved delivery of forensic evidence.

It should also be clear that those measures support my aim to create a system that is fairer to victims and witnesses and which does not ask more of them than is absolutely necessary to secure a just outcome.

Part 8 contains some largely technical changes to improve the operations of the system. It introduces a power to address a gap in cases where access to premises is not agreed for defence solicitors. Under the Bill, the defendant will have recourse to the court to gain access in order to prepare properly their defence or appeal.

The Bill also addresses a lacuna in court security by specifying that a court security officer's powers extend to the grounds on which the court buildings sit.

Changes to youth justice arrangements are provided in the form of amendments to the aims of the youth justice system, as contained in section 53 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. The amendments are made to reflect the best interests principle as set out in article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A further technical adjustment is made to delete transitional detention order arrangements made in the Criminal Justice Act 2013.

Finally, Part 9 contains supplementary, incidental, consequential and transitional provisions. It provides for the making of regulations or orders under the Bill, interpretation, transitional provisions and savings, and minor and consequential amendments and repeals. It also provides the powers of commencement.

The Bill is part of a blueprint for a better justice system in Northern Ireland: a justice system that protects its citizens, treats victims with respect and fairness, and makes the best use of scarce public resources. In short, it will be a justice system of which we can all be proud. The provisions in the Bill are the product of a long and fruitful engagement right across the community on the future of the justice system. The time has now come to put those discussions into action to deliver the better future we all agree can be achieved and build a faster, fairer justice system for everyone. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I am pleased to speak in the debate. I welcome the fact that we have got to this point. This is what the Assembly is all about: legislating on things that impact on people's lives. Now that we have started the Bill on its passage through the House, it becomes the House's Bill, and it is up to MLAs to shape it. I suspect that many of them will attempt to do so as we go through the next six, seven or eight months. A lot of the areas that will be covered will be very interesting. I trust that we will be able to engage the public on these issues, as we have done so far. The Committee will certainly play its full role throughout the process. I am pleased to speak in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee for Justice on today's Second Stage debate on the Justice Bill on behalf of the Committee.

As the Minister of Justice outlined, the issues covered by the Bill are diverse and wide-ranging. The Committee supports the main aims of the Bill, which are to improve the services provided to victims and witnesses of crime, to introduce measures to speed up the justice system, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of key aspects of the system.

I have great pleasure in drawing the attention of the Assembly to the fact that a number of the most important provisions in the Bill are as a direct result of the Justice Committee's inquiry into the criminal justice services available to victims and witnesses of crime. Those provisions relate to the creation of new statutory victim and witness charters, a statutory entitlement for a victim to be given the opportunity to make a victim impact statement, and the introduction of a statutory framework for the management of cases.

I acknowledge the fact that the Minister has put on record his appreciation of the work the Committee has done in carrying out our inquiry. I return the compliment by thanking the Minister for holding back on a number of his strategies to allow the Committee to conduct what was an in-depth inquiry that heard a lot of evidence from people directly impacted through the courts. That allowed the report to be shaped in that way, and recommendations were made. I recall debating the report in the Assembly. It did not get the coverage it warranted at the time, but, nevertheless, a lot of what the Committee carried out is now in the Bill. I again thank the Minister for letting the Committee do that work. We have got to the point where a number of the clauses will have unanimous support in the Assembly.

I remind the Assembly of why the provisions are so important. I make no apology for going over some of the ground that we went over when we completed the Committee report. Some of it is worth repeating.

In 2012, the Committee brought a report to the Assembly on the crucial piece of work it undertook regarding the experiences of and the services provided to victims and witnesses of crime who encounter the criminal justice system. The findings of that report made for difficult reading. During the inquiry, the Committee heard from and spoke to a wide range of advocacy and victims' representative groups and the main criminal justice organisations. The Committee also spoke directly to individuals and families who had first-hand experience of the criminal justice system.

4.15 pm

It was clear from the evidence received by the Committee that, despite the assistance from voluntary organisations such as Victim Support and the NSPCC Young Witness Service, both of which carry out very good work, victims, witnesses and bereaved families in particular faced significant difficulties with the criminal justice system and criminal justice agencies. Their experience of the process was often frustrating, demoralising and, on occasions, devastating.

Statements such as:

"People are misinformed, ill-informed or not informed at all"

and:

"The trauma suffered by families can often be exacerbated by the criminal justice system"

made the Committee determined to ensure that changes would take place.

Key issues identified by the Committee included the lack of status that victims and witnesses had in the criminal justice process, with little or no input and few rights; and the lack of dignity and respect shown to victims and witnesses during the process. One individual stated:

“the business and interests of the court centre on the perpetrator and the needs of the court, not the victim; they are a by-product.”

Other issues identified included difficulties for victims, witnesses and families in understanding the process; difficulties in obtaining information about their case; the lack of support provided when giving evidence; the lack of emotional and psychological support services and practical assistance; the lack of a joined-up approach between criminal justice agencies; poor facilities in courthouses; and the length of time cases take to reach a conclusion, during which the lives of victims and their families are put on hold.

The Committee agreed with the view of one individual who said:

“there is an imbalance of resources. The defendant has rights and that is how it should be. The defendant has a right to a fair trial, and I am fully in favour of the rights of defendants, but that should not entirely exclude some rights for victims and the families of victims. That is really important. It is not an either/or, it is a both.”

It is clear that engaging with the criminal justice system as a victim, witness or bereaved family is a daunting experience. The Committee concluded that much more needed to be done to redress the balance in the criminal justice system and ensure that the services provided to victims and witnesses and their experiences of the criminal justice system are improved.

The Committee believes that, fundamentally, all victims and witnesses of crime are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to be provided with the appropriate level of information in a timely manner. There is also a need for all staff in each criminal justice organisation who interact with victims and witnesses to fully understand the impact that crime and the criminal justice system can have on them, and to develop the skills and abilities to deal with them in an appropriate manner.

As the criminal justice agencies had clearly been unable to achieve that, the Committee recommended in its inquiry report that a victim and witness charter, providing statutory minimum entitlements of information provision and treatment, be introduced in the next available justice Bill and that the same statutory entitlements be afforded to bereaved families. The Minister accepted the Committee's findings and recommendation, and I welcome the provision for these charters in this Bill, which will clearly set out the services to be provided to victims and witnesses; the standards of service they can expect to receive; how they should be treated by each of the criminal justice agencies; and whom they should contact if entitlements are not delivered. That will assist to redress the balance in the system, which is badly needed.

An issue consistently highlighted to the Committee during the inquiry was the adverse impact that the length of time it takes for cases to go through the criminal justice system has on victims, witnesses and bereaved families,

many of whom are unable to move on while they wait for the criminal justice process to be completed. While delay is a common complaint about the entire criminal justice system, one of the key frustrations for victims and witnesses was the length of time that court cases take and the number of postponements or adjournments that frequently occur.

The Committee shares that frustration and disagreed with the Department's intention to wait to assess the impact of the Lord Chief Justice's practice direction for case management in the Crown Court before considering the option of legislating. The issue of delay had been ongoing for much too long, and the Committee was of the view that substantive action was required now. It believed that there was no excuse for the example that it heard from a bereaved family: it took two years and 10 months for the verdict in the case of their mother's murder to be delivered; on the same day in England, the verdict was given in a murder case that had occurred only 10 months previously.

The Committee therefore recommended that case management should be placed on a statutory footing at the next legislative opportunity, which would assist the judiciary in ensuring that cases are effectively progressed and have a positive effect in addressing delay and, ultimately, the experience of victims and witnesses.

The Minister again accepted the Committee's recommendation, resulting in clauses 79 and 80 of the Bill, which will introduce a statutory framework for the management of criminal cases and enable the Department to impose duties on the prosecution, the defence and the court, which should ensure that cases come to court in a state of readiness and avoid unnecessary adjournments, thus speeding up the process and reducing avoidable delays.

The Committee believes that it is very important that victims of serious crime and bereaved families have an opportunity to relate, during the criminal proceedings, the impact that the crime has had on them and for account to be taken of this impact. Victim impact statements are an appropriate mechanism to achieve that. However, during the Committee inquiry, victims and their families told members that the current system lacked clarity regarding the completion, content and use of such statements. For that reason, the Committee recommended that there should be an automatic right for victim impact statements to be completed in all cases involving serious crime, and that a formal system for the completion and use of them should be introduced as a matter of urgency. The provisions in the Bill give victims legal rights to make a victim impact statement, which will ensure that they can make their views known about the impact of the offence prior to sentencing when someone is convicted of a crime.

The inclusion of the victim and witness provisions in the Bill is an example of the Department and the Committee working well together and achieving a very good outcome for victims and witnesses. I appreciate the willingness of the Minister to take on board the findings and recommendations of the Committee and bring forward the necessary legislative changes. The Committee will be interested to hear again from those who engaged with us during the course of our inquiry on the detail of the Bill.

I want to turn briefly to some of the other provisions in the Bill, many of which aim to speed up the justice system and make it more efficient and effective. The Committee has

received a number of written and oral briefings on the key policy content and has had an opportunity to comment on the various proposals prior to the introduction of the Bill.

The Committee supports the proposals to reform the committal process and to abolish the use of preliminary investigations and the use of oral evidence at preliminary inquiries. During the inquiry, the Committee was advised that the judiciary supported reform of the committal process, seeing no operational advantage for the courts in retaining the right to call witnesses at committal proceedings. Victims and witnesses of crime also indicated that the procedure only served to cause further stress and trauma, as it resulted in them having to give evidence and be cross-examined more than once.

In respect of Part 6 of the Bill, which provides an expansion of the live links provision in courts, the Committee is well aware of the benefit and value of live links provision, particularly for vulnerable witnesses, and recognises that the use of live links provision by expert witnesses should assist with cost and time savings for those involved in that area of court business, resulting in greater efficiency in the court process.

I also note that the Department has taken on board a proposal by the Committee to place a duty on a defence solicitor to advise a client about the benefits of an early guilty plea when it was briefed on the proposals to encourage the use of earlier guilty pleas. When discussing the proposals that resulted in those provisions, the Committee also sought assurances that there was no intention to introduce plea bargaining.

When departmental officials attended the meeting of the Committee last week to brief us on the principles of the Bill, other areas raised included the single jurisdiction for County Courts and the Magistrates' Court, the clause dealing with the aims of the youth justice system and the information that can be disclosed in criminal record checks. I am sure that members will return to those during the Committee Stage of the Bill, which will provide us with an opportunity to seek a wide range of views and consider any issues raised in more detail.

The officials also indicated that there were a number of amendments that the Department may wish to bring forward during the passage of the Bill. Those relate to the exchange of information between Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service in Great Britain; a proposal to introduce a mechanism to enable those whose convictions or diversionary disposals have not been filtered from Access NI checks to ask for a review of such decisions; amending the threshold for the granting of an order relating to defence access to premises, so that it would be made only where access is necessary to ensure a defendant's right to a fair trial; providing for the sharing of victim information for the purposes of offering victims access to services; and some amendments to the provisions on violent offences prevention orders.

The Committee questioned officials on why the proposed new provisions and amendments were not included in the Bill before it went to the Executive and was introduced in the Assembly, and we have requested further information on them to enable the Committee to invite views from key stakeholders and criminal justice organisations at the same time as we consult on the Bill.

In conclusion as the Chair of the Committee, I say that the Bill is wide-ranging, and the Committee for Justice is generally supportive of its principles, particularly the range of provisions that will improve the services provided to victims and witnesses of crime. The Committee will wish to take the necessary time to scrutinise thoroughly all the provisions in the Bill and any new provisions proposed by the Department, and it will report its findings and conclusions to the Assembly in due course.

I will now make a few brief comments as a Member of the House. Obviously, the Committee has just completed its report on the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill. I think that it was the fastest scrutiny period that a Committee has undertaken. We had it through in eight or nine weeks and did not take the maximum period of six months that other Committees take nearly as the norm, even though they maybe do not always need it. However, I suspect that Committee members will seek the maximum period to scrutinise the provisions in this Bill. I have highlighted the fact that the Department wants to table amendments to the Bill that are not necessarily related to it, and I think that that acknowledges its wide scope. I suspect that Members will also wish to table amendments at the appropriate point.

The Committee has heard evidence from the Attorney General on inquests into deaths in hospitals. The Committee was of the view that we did not have time to scrutinise seriously that amendment to the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, and I believe that we will return to it in this Bill. The Attorney General has also highlighted an issue about the rights of audience, which, again, I suspect we will want to consider. My party may wish to table some amendments on aspects of the Bill. We were keen to get the process commenced, but there may be other issues on which my party will want to table amendments, and we reserve the right to do that.

I look forward to the challenge of giving the Bill the scrutiny that it merits in the Justice Committee and the opportunity that it presents for other issues that fall within the criminal justice sphere to be addressed by the Assembly.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Like the Chair of the Committee and on behalf of my colleagues on the Justice Committee, I welcome the Second Stage of what is now called the Justice Bill. I hope that it will pass to Committee Stage later this afternoon.

Until now, the Bill has been loosely described as the "faster, fairer justice Bill", and that gives you some indication of its content. The Minister and the Chair of the Committee outlined in great detail its broad remit. If it can be distilled in any way, I think that it has two main aspects: to improve services to victims and witnesses in the justice system and to introduce measures that will speed up some aspects of the judicial process and therefore make the system more effective and efficient. Such measures include reducing undue delay and having better case management, thereby speeding up the process. Whereas it is a noble intent to ensure that we have faster and fairer justice, we also have to ensure that whatever we do and whatever comes out the other end of the process enhances the process of administering and delivering justice, so the measures in the Bill and, indeed, the policy outline to date have been seen and pushed as ensuring that the Bill will do that.

4.30 pm

The Committee has a role now in scrutiny, and the Chair has alluded to the fact that various Members, various parties and, indeed, witnesses will encourage us perhaps to seek amendments. In our opinion, there are aspects of the Bill that can be strengthened, and we will certainly want to play our role in that. The Chair outlined one of the main aspects of the Bill, and he talked about the Committee's inquiry. At that time, the Committee was best pleased that it was a good piece of work. The Minister provided the space to allow the Committee to take it forward, and we have to acknowledge and commend the fact that the Minister is now introducing many aspects of that inquiry. The inquiry, at its core, highlighted the need for change, and it signposted some of that change. Rosaleen McCorley, my colleague, will develop that more when she makes a contribution.

Sinn Féin supports the idea of a single jurisdiction. It was outlined very clearly that bringing in this measure in line with other aspects of the court system will ensure better case management. The Chair talked about the use of witnesses and, particularly, victims, and it will assist their process of not always feeling that courts are held in inappropriate places. That is to be welcomed.

We are broadly in support of the proposals as outlined on committal. This was raised in some of the evidence sessions with departmental officials. Although you want to see a process that speeds up the process of bringing a case to trial, there may be some aspects of the inquiry that may, in some instances, provide some level of evidence, not oral evidence but some examination. That might ensure that a case does not go to trial when it may not have to.

The issue of prosecutorial fines is similar. We are in support of that because we have seen instances where proper provision for people to accept a fine rather than a trial process can assist the process of justice. We have to have clear lines where that is appropriate. Although we want it to be faster, we do not want it to be expedient where, rather than taking a case to trial, people might feel that a prosecutor can circumvent that. I think that the provisions laid out in the Bill will ensure that that will not happen. It is our job as a Committee to ensure that, whatever amendment or whatever legislation is finally voted on, we protect ourselves against that.

In broad terms, we look forward to Committee Stage. As the Chair has said, given the size of the Bill and the number of clauses in it, we will take the maximum time that is necessary and at our disposal to ensure that we give it proper scrutiny. We look forward to that process.

Mr A Maginness: I support, in general terms, the principles of the Justice Bill, which has been introduced by the Minister. I agree with the basic aim of the Bill, which is to introduce a fairer and faster system, and I think that that is right.

There has been avoidable delay in the system that needs to be addressed. That was made plain during the Justice Committee's inquiry, which the Chair of the Committee has referred to. In my experience as a lawyer, to some extent, victims and even witnesses are regarded as incidental to the legal process and to the trial of the defendant or defendants. The interests of victims were often lost during those trials. Amongst the judiciary and lawyers generally,

there is a realisation that victims count and that it is important that they have a proper and reasonable role in the process of a criminal trial. However, I sound one note of caution: in going in that direction, we should be careful not to say that everything or many things should reside with the victim or witnesses. The pendulum is swinging in the right direction, but it should not swing too far because that in itself could create unfairness and injustice in the criminal justice system. We have to be wary of that, and it is important to get the balance right. However, as the Chair said, lengthy delays give rise to great hurt and suffering among victims' families and the victims themselves. It is important that we address that, and the Bill has some useful provisions for that.

It is important that there should be a victim charter and that it should be taken seriously, which is a provision of the Bill. It is also important that victims of a crime are given an opportunity to make a victim statement to the court. Not all victims will want to do that, but the opportunity should be available to them. The Bill will provide the statutory basis for victims to express their views to a court on the offence that caused them suffering and harm.

As far as the creation of a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts is concerned, I note from officials in the Justice Department that there is no resistance among County Court judges or magistrates to that, and it could provide a better system in which there is more efficient management of criminal cases. It is important that efficiencies are brought into the system. However, I regret that the historic and traditional divisions of the County Court may be dropped and forgotten. They are historic, and there is value in the history of those individual divisions. I also regret that the title of resident magistrate will be dropped. That historic title should have been retained in our system, because it is unique to Ireland. There was a value in the creation of that judicial office.

I move on to committal for trial. There is a proposal for the abolition of preliminary investigations. In addition, there is the abolition of mixed committals and evidence on oath not being given at a preliminary inquiry. I want to make a number of points. In most pretrial proceedings, there is only a service of papers, and the preliminary inquiry is based on a paper exercise. I think that the figure quoted in the Justice Committee last week was that there were 1,600 preliminary inquiries last year and very few preliminary investigations, so we should not get the issue out of proportion. There is at least a theoretical and, I think, a real value in committal proceedings per se, because there should be an opportunity to test the evidence at that preliminary stage.

A complete abolition of evidence on oath could mean that, when you get to the trial stage, issues that could have been raised at a preliminary investigation or inquiry level will be raised at the trial, and that in itself could, in effect, cause further delay and a prolongation of proceedings that could have been dealt with more effectively and efficiently at a committal stage. I am not absolutely convinced that this is the right way to go. There should be at least a residual retention of the ability to call evidence on oath; in other words, oral evidence could be given at that preliminary stage. I do not see that being used extensively, but it could be a safeguard in all the circumstances. I would like the Minister and colleagues to think about

that, because I do not believe that that would give rise to inordinate or avoidable delay.

The other point in relation to preliminary proceedings is that people say it causes hardship to victims and witnesses and that they are lengthy. I am not so certain that they are that lengthy. Also, it may be useful to test a witness at that stage, because, if a witness's evidence is without merit or is found wanting, the subsequent trial could eliminate that witness, and that could, in fact, expedite the trial. That should be borne in mind as well.

The Minister has said that, despite the abolition of evidence on oath, representations can be made on behalf of the defendant. If those representations are made on behalf of the defendant, does that mean that the defendant can explore the papers in greater detail? If that is the case, does that not also lead to a prolongation of things? It might serve the court better to call the witness and determine the issues on the basis of oral evidence at a preliminary stage. It is not quite as straightforward as has been suggested. The Minister and others should look at the situation more carefully and see if, in fact, the objective of getting a more efficient committal proceeding could also be served by having some sort of residual powers to call witnesses.

Of course, representations on behalf of the defendant at a preliminary stage could be quite lengthy in their own right. I raise those few points for the Minister's consideration and the consideration of others.

4.45 pm

I welcome the prosecutorial fines. That is a good step: anything that avoids unnecessary court appearances is good, and it meets the justice of cases at the lower end of the range. It serves the interests of everybody to get rid of some of the cases at that level.

I welcome the changes on criminal records, and it is important that they are introduced. The change on live links is sensible and straightforward and will help in criminal proceedings. Violent offences prevention orders too are useful and helpful in dealing with the potential misconduct of people who have violent tendencies. The removal of a maximum age for jury service is also right and proper.

I move on to early guilty pleas. If one examines clause 77, one will begin to be concerned to some extent. My fear is that the court may be used in a manner that is unintended by this clause. It does not seem to be clear what is intended, and I am not certain that this provision has been properly thought through by the Department. Clause 77(2) states:

"The court in sentencing D for the offence must indicate the sentence which the court would have imposed for the offence if D had pleaded guilty to the offence (or indicated D's intention to do so) at the earliest reasonable opportunity in the proceedings."

It seems to me that it is unclear as to what the court has to do in those circumstances and what the purpose is of the court doing that. I ask the Minister to reflect on that and perhaps advise the Assembly on the intention.

Clause 78 deals with the duty of the solicitor to advise the client about early guilty pleas. That is probably an unnecessary addition to the volume of provisions relating to criminal trials. I am not certain that it is absolutely

necessary. Any good solicitor in advising their client where a plea of guilty is probably inevitable would, in any event, advise their client to plead guilty at the earliest possible stage. I am not certain whether it is absolutely necessary in all the circumstances. Again, that should be reflected upon by the Department and the Minister.

A further point is in relation to clause 79, "General duty to progress criminal proceedings". This introduces regulations to:

"impose a general duty on persons exercising functions in relation to criminal proceedings in the Crown Court or the magistrates' court to reach a just outcome as swiftly as possible."

There are two things there: reaching a just outcome and doing it as swiftly as possible. Sometimes, you cannot reach a just outcome as swiftly as perhaps people might like, so there is a tension between the two ambitions in that provision.

The clause continues:

"(2) The regulations must in particular take account of the need to identify and respect the needs of —

(a) victims,

(b) witnesses ... ; and

(c) persons under the age of 18."

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: Yes, I will.

Mr Allister: Does the Member agree that it is hard to avoid the impression that some of the drafters of this legislation obviously have very little experience of our criminal courts and seem to think they are inventing the wheel? The Member may have had this experience. I certainly spent many a Friday morning at the Friday morning inquisitions in Laganside courthouse, in front of some of our most robust judges, answering questions about the state of readiness of cases, why cases were not ready and when they would be ready. That already happens, by and large, so would the Member agree that there seems to be an inclination by some to want to legislate for the sake of legislating?

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Member for his intervention, and I do agree in general terms with what he is saying. I am just wondering whether it is necessary to include the provisions that I referred to about advising a client to plead at the earliest possible stage and then having the introduction of regulations.

Looking at the regulations at clause 80, "Case management regulations", it seems to me that their imposition could well be quite onerous on many people involved in a case. The clause states:

"(4) Active case management includes in particular —

(a) the early identification of the real issues;

(b) the early identification of the needs of witnesses;

(c) achieving certainty as to what must be done, by whom, and when, in particular by the early setting of a timetable for the progress of the case;

(d) monitoring the progress of the case and compliance with directions;

(e) ensuring that evidence, whether disputed or not, is presented in the shortest and clearest way;

(f) discouraging delay, dealing with as many aspects of the case as possible on the same occasion, and avoiding unnecessary hearings;

(g) encouraging the participants to co-operate in the progression of the case;

(h) making use of technology; and

(i) giving any direction appropriate to the needs of that case as early as possible.”

There are a huge number of issues to be attended there. As Mr Allister said, in the normal process of case management in the courts, the actualité is that judges do scrutinise the readiness of a case, what has been done etc.

I do not think it is necessary to introduce regulations to achieve the laudable objective of making sure that a case is ready for trial. If regulations are necessary, we should not over-regulate, and I think that what we have here is, on the face of it, over-regulation. I think that the Department and the Minister should look at the regulations again and see whether they are necessary to meet the objective, which is to make sure that cases are ready for hearing. I know that these matters will be discussed at length in Committee, but it is right and proper that some of the issues are highlighted in detail at this stage so that the Committee and other colleagues are aware of issues that are, I think, troublesome and matters of concern. People should be sensitive to the issues raised.

Despite what I have said and the detail that I have gone into, I believe that the Bill is, fundamentally, a good one and that it makes progress in the advancement of the concerns and interests of victims and in trying to create a faster and fairer justice system, but we need to be careful in all of this.

My final observation is that criminal trials have become overly complicated, quite burdensome and difficult procedurally. Many of the procedures were introduced over the past 15 or 20 years, and the criminal trial has been transformed into an unnecessarily cumbersome process. I make that as a personal and professional observation, but I think that we should do as much as we can to prevent it becoming even more complicated.

Mr Elliott: I welcome any efficiency brought into the criminal justice system, and I am sure that that is what we hope that the Bill will do. Who would not welcome a faster, fairer justice system, although I hope that the Minister is not indicating that we do not have a fair justice system at the moment, because it would be detrimental for that to be the highlight. I am sure that that is not the implication.

Looking at how we can improve things, I believe that the Attorney General proposed an amendment to the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill that we did not have time to scrutinise. I think that the Chair of the Committee mentioned that. It will be interesting to see whether the Committee and, indeed, the Attorney General wish us to scrutinise that during the passage of this Bill. It may be an interesting subject, particularly in relation to the Department of Health and the various agencies of the health service.

Will a faster justice system bring more savings to the justice process? We have talked a lot in the Justice

Committee and at various times in the House about the legal aid bill. I am one who has said that we need to reduce the legal aid bill but that we also need to look for other efficiencies in the justice system. I wonder whether the faster process proposed in the Bill will result in any savings.

I want to touch briefly on the early guilty plea that Mr Maginness has just highlighted. I was going to raise this issue, but he beat me to it: I am not saying that there no need for it; I am just wondering what the difference is between what we have at the moment and what is in the Bill. Obviously, we will look to explore that in greater detail.

5.00 pm

My understanding is that, at the moment, it is really in the judge's remit as to whether to give some leniency towards early guilty pleas whereas here we are putting it directly into legislation. I am just looking for some clarification on that particular aspect. I am slightly concerned, as well, that when you introduce it into legislation like this there may be added pressure put on those who are facing criminal charges to enter an early guilty plea. Maybe they are under pressure and their advisers, solicitors or barristers are saying, "Look, if you go the entire length with this, you are sure to get a much heavier sentence." The person may feel that they are not guilty, but they may feel under pressure to make an early guilty plea just for a more lenient sentence. I am keen that there will be safeguards to mitigate that, so that we do not put that pressure on people who are before the courts.

The creation of violent offences prevention orders is quite an interesting aspect of the Bill. It is something which I hope will mitigate the risk of violent reoffending by certain offenders:

"those subject to the order would ... be ... subject to notification requirements ... similar to those notified by sex offenders";

and:

"an order can only be made where the court is satisfied that it is necessary for the purpose of protecting the public".

It is a very interesting proposal in the legislation, and I look forward to seeing it through. I hope that it is particularly effective within the judicial system.

One aspect that I am especially interested in, and it has been touched on, is the victim charter and the witness charter. I feel that this is a very important intervention on the part of the Bill. I believe that for far too long victims, in particular, have not known the extent of where cases are, have not got reasonable information and, above all, at times they do not have reasonable protection. I hope that this will be an important intervention and support mechanism for victims. The victim charter will be very important as to what is in it. It will be useful as we go through the passage of that.

The victim statement is also vital. Quite often, victims have felt short-changed within the judicial system, when someone enters a guilty plea and the victim does not have the opportunity to give their side of the story to the court and let it hear what they have gone through. That is a very important aspect, and I look forward to taking it further.

One aspect that has not been touched on by anyone but is an interesting subject is the increase in the age limit for those who sit on juries. The upper age limit is being increased from 65 to 70. Nobody has mentioned that. It is an interesting subject and I think it came from a wider consultation, where the majority of consultees felt that it should be increased. I have no difficulty with that and clearly it is an aspect that people felt strongly enough about to make representations.

My party supports the principle of the Bill and looks forward to its passage through Committee Stage. I am sure, as others have said, we will attempt to make some changes and put down some amendments. I look forward to a pretty lively debate right the way through this process.

Mr Dickson: I commend the Minister for bringing the Bill to the House today. I wish to place it on record that I also share his desire to deliver a faster and fairer justice system for citizens in Northern Ireland. This Bill, along with a wide range of actions already taken by the Minister and the Department of Justice, is delivering, and will continue to deliver well into the future, faster and fairer justice.

I also commend to the House the comments of the Chair of the Justice Committee. The Committee has worked extremely well together on a number of the issues already, and we will particularly talk about the issue of victims and witnesses.

The creation of a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland will serve to bring them into a similar position to that of the Crown Courts and High Courts, whereby the judge will have that discretion as to the location of a hearing, in the interests of justice and as the needs of each case demand. A single jurisdiction will also allow for modernisation, with the records of County Courts and Magistrates' Courts being centralised as opposed to being retained by a clerk in each petty sessions district, and perhaps bring into effect some of the administrative savings that have already been mentioned. That will allow for a more effective, efficient and, hopefully, accessible justice system.

I want to turn to the whole issue of victims and witnesses. There was not a single member of the Justice Committee who was not affected by the issue as we took our evidence and committed ourselves to our inquiry. I am particularly pleased to note the sections of the Bill that provide a great deal of focus for dealing effectively with the needs of victims and witnesses. Along with members of the Committee, I had the privilege — it was a privilege — to meet a wide range of victims and witnesses and those organisations that support them. We listened to their stories and the challenges that appearances in court, court attendances and the legal system brought to them. We found and clearly understood, and, hopefully, now have a better understanding of, some of the shortcomings of the system heretofore — shortcomings that I hope the Bill will start to address.

Our victims and witnesses deserve the utmost care and protection that we as legislators can provide for them. I am pleased by the way in which the Minister has taken account of the Committee's inquiry into the criminal justice services available to victims and witnesses of crime. I hope and believe that the Bill will have a positive effect on victims and witnesses, particularly through victim personal statements. Although the notion of such statements is not

particularly new, only around 20 such statements are made each month. The provision for statutory entitlement to such a process is something that has arisen in the Committee's work and was recommended to the Department. Explicit statutory provision will increase awareness and no doubt serve to improve the experience of victims in the criminal justice system.

The provision of charters is particularly welcome. Those are separate charters, as the Minister outlined, for victims and for witnesses. The indications are that the charters will serve to set out clearly the services to be provided to victims and witnesses. We found that there was a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding and a lack of support or knowledge about where to go to get that support. The charters will clearly set out the standards of service that people should expect to receive, and I believe that they will be of immense and lasting benefit in the legislation.

Committal reform has also been mentioned in the debate. It is fair to say that there are times when people are required to give disturbing and difficult evidence on more than one occasion. That is a difficult and delicate area — Mr Maginness referred to it — and we will have to balance it out in our deliberations in Committee. It is clear to me that reform of committal for trial will reduce the burden that giving evidence can place on witnesses by broadening the scope for paper-based submissions and, ultimately, fundamentally changing the way in which Crown Court cases are dealt with. Evidence suggests that the current system of committal for trial serves to deter witnesses from participating in a subsequent trial. Thus, the removal of the need for them to give oral evidence and participate in cross-examination before a potential trial is to be welcomed, in the name of making the victim's experience of the criminal justice system all the more positive.

The introduction of prosecutorial fines for low-level offences is an important measure in reducing pressure on our courts. Some 45% of offenders automatically plead guilty in Magistrates' Courts, arguably rendering the expense of many hearings disproportionate and unnecessary. Removing the administrative burden by introducing prosecutorial fines at the discretion of the prosecutor before trial will act to free up our courts. Again, that will create a saving and allow the ultimate goal of faster and wider access to justice.

Reference has also been made to the streamlined arrangements for disclosure of criminal records. For example, in 2013-14, there were approximately 124,000 criminal record checks in Northern Ireland. With the changes that are proposed in the Bill and the introduction of portable criminal record checks and online updating, that could be reduced by some 40% over seven years. A note of caution in respect of that is that those checks need to be accurate and ensure that no one slips between the cracks. But, hopefully, it will lead to important financial benefits and will also serve to benefit applicants and employers for whom it is a costly and time-consuming process.

We have already heard reference to live video links. As members of the Committee for Justice, we, again, have had the opportunity to view those links to see their effectiveness and how they have operated in courts, particularly in relation to children's services. It is important that they continue to be enhanced. Video technology

continues to deliver real cost benefits to the court system. I will certainly encourage the continued and enhanced use of that where appropriate and always bearing in mind that it has to serve the justice system and those who participate in it fairly and fearlessly.

Mr Elliott said that there was no reference to the age limit for jury service. I have some notes on that. It is something that, I think, is important. Regardless of their age, it is important that people should be allowed to deploy their talents in helping society to determine the outcome of trials in the criminal justice system. People can be an effective juror regardless of their age. There are many benefits from people over the age of 70 being able to deliver jury service, not least of all the cost savings, for example, in their not having to take time off work perhaps to attend courts. That reform ultimately removes a bar that is now perceived to be unduly discriminatory. That is certainly to be welcomed.

I look forward to the Department's officials coming to the Committee for Justice to help us to debate and understand the Bill's clauses. I look forward to the Committee's taking its evidence and getting a closer understanding of all of those items that are contained in the Bill. I wish the Bill fair passage through the House. I note the very positive comments that have been made in the debate. Thank you very much.

Mr Wells: It is always useful to hear Mr Dickson's comments before rising to speak because you get the official, unabridged and clear view of the Minister on the Bill.

Lord Morrow: The departmental view.

Mr Wells: Exactly. You get something that has been written on tablets of stone in Alliance Party headquarters and handed to him as holy writ by the Minister. Therefore, one gets an insight into the true feelings of the Minister on any particular piece of legislation, be it in Committee or on the Floor of the House. That is useful to know. I have never heard Mr Dickson step out of line once in his entire career from the views of Mr Farry or Mr Ford. Well done thy good and faithful servant; thy rewards are in heaven.

As other Members have said, there is a broad and general welcome for the principles of the Bill, though it is interesting that, already, there is an indication from the Minister that the Department will table amendments to it. That is an unusual procedure, I have to say, but it does give an indication of the all-encompassing nature of the Bill. Literally everything is covered by this piece of legislation. It should actually be called the justice (miscellaneous provisions) Bill 2014, because that is exactly what it is. I am not criticising the Department, because it was needed. We need a fairer, faster and more cost-effective form of jurisdiction in Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is right that this is being done. I applaud the Minister for it.

I am pleased that the Minister has taken into account the work of the Committee for Justice in the treatment of witnesses and victims. Indeed, I have to say, without blowing our own trumpet, that it was Mr Givan, the Chair of the Committee, who came up with the proposal that we investigate that issue.

As Mr Dickson said, Committee members worked closely together. I remember going up to Londonderry, as it will always be, to see how witnesses and victims were treated

in that court jurisdiction, and we heard tragic and telling stories from people who felt that they had not been treated fairly in the courts as witnesses and victims of crime. One thing was very obvious: something drastic needed to be done.

5.15 pm

Over the last 30 or 35 years, I have, for various reasons, appeared in, attended and given evidence to many courts, including the small claims court, sometimes on my behalf and sometimes on behalf of constituents, and I have witnessed just how brutally some witnesses have been treated by the legal profession. If it is intimidating for someone like me, who has spent 32 years in public life, to give evidence in court, what is it like for someone who is plucked from complete obscurity by dint of an accident or event and brought into the bear pit — that is all one could call it — of the judicial system? It is extremely intimidating, even before a learned QC or barrister opens his or her mouth. I think that it is absolutely essential, therefore, that we have a witness charter and a victim charter. The Minister has listened very carefully to what was said, and he is pushing on an open door as far as the Committee is concerned.

Obviously, in this case, the proof will be at Committee Stage, which I can see being a very long, convoluted and complex affair, but I would like to think that, with good cooperation between members, we can improve the Bill. We certainly want to ensure the most rigorous form of protection for witnesses so that they will feel that they have had a fair hearing, that they have not been humiliated and that they have been able to make the best representation they can to the courts. I am far from convinced that that has been the case up to now.

Similarly, we all welcome the victim impact statement, which is useful for several reasons. First, it will give those doing the sentencing an indication of a victim's level of hurt, anger and concern about what has happened. I have frequently dealt with that as a constituency MLA. I think of a little lady in her 80s who lived in Kilmore and whose home was broken into twice by masked men. Her life was utterly destroyed by those two events. Indeed, she had to move into residential care shortly afterwards. It was not what was stolen. What was stolen was actually quite minor, and there was not that much damage to her property, but that woman felt terribly vulnerable about her situation and was forced out of her home.

I believe that someone in that situation has the right to dictate or to stand up and explain the impact that such an incident has had on him or her as a victim, because that would concentrate the minds of those who are sentencing. Secondly, it may give the perpetrator an indication in court of the enormous pain that he or she has caused. So, I think that that is very welcome, and I see it as a very effective way forward.

I also support anything that speeds up court proceedings. It has never ceased to amaze me as a constituency representative how long and convoluted proceedings are, to the extent that witnesses and victims almost give up in despair. Anything that makes it quick and fast but fair is a good thing.

I also hope that costs will be cut down, because, whether we like it or not, the cost of the judicial system per crime committed is still significantly higher in Northern Ireland

than in the rest of the UK. We have to ask this question: why is criminal legal aid over 20% more expensive per crime in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK? Is a robbery in Basingstoke intrinsically any different from a robbery in Belfast? We can no longer hide behind the Troubles and the conflict. If someone breaks into a little old lady's house in east Belfast and steals something, that should not be 22% more expensive to deal with than if somebody breaks into a little old lady's house in East Grinstead. It should not be different, but, for some reason, we still have an overhang of extremely expensive cases in Northern Ireland. If this legislation leads to such cases being dealt with more quickly but still with fairness to the defendants, it has to be a good thing. I do not believe that the Minister has yet been able to drive down costs to what I see as economic levels for judicial proceedings in Northern Ireland.

I still think that there is room for significant savings in the system. If this legislation enables that to happen or, at least, takes it in the right direction, that is a good thing, but I cannot believe that we can stand over that differentiation in costs between different parts of the United Kingdom. We should not be dear any more. There will still be an overhang of cases involving the legacy of the Troubles, and I accept that. There will still be issues of paramilitarism, intimidation and some dissident republican activity, but the reality is that those are now a very small fraction of the cases that are being heard in Northern Ireland. If the Minister is going to set himself a new year's resolution for 2015 in a few months' time, he should set himself a resolution that the costs in Northern Ireland for those standard cases are no more expensive than the average for the rest of the UK. I do not see any reason why that cannot be done. If it is done, it will free up very significant savings in his Department that can, no doubt, in the monitoring round be redistributed to other deserving Departments like Health, Education and Regional Development.

Mr Ford: Ring-fencing.

Mr Wells: I understand that ring-fencing does not prevent the Minister voluntarily giving up money that he does not want and handing it back during the monitoring rounds. My understanding is that ring-fencing only stops money being taken out of the system if he does not want it to be. I think that I am correct in saying that. Therefore, if he brings expenditure down to the UK average and that frees up £50 million or £60 million, I do not think that Mr Hamilton will say, "I am sorry, Mr Ford, I cannot take it; it is ring-fenced". I think that he would be delighted to redistribute it to more deserving causes. Therefore, I think that there is still fat in the system to be taken out, and, if the Bill brings us more into line with the rest of the UK, that is fine.

Access Northern Ireland has been a real trouble spot. We all understand why we need the system, but we get many complaints about the complexities of using it. I will give an example: in my church, there are people who are youth leaders in several organisations such as the Girl Guides, the Crusaders, Sunday school, etc, and it really is daft that those people have to get a separate Access Northern Ireland certificate for each youth organisation that they are involved in. That is wasteful. It does not achieve very much, because, in every case, they come back completely clear, no matter what level of scrutiny they come under through Access Northern Ireland. Therefore, anything

that can achieve a single transferable certificate awarded by Access Northern Ireland has to be a good thing, consistent, of course, with protecting the vulnerable and our young children to make certain that the perpetrators of horrible crimes are detected in the system. We will watch with interest the Committee Stage to see how that pans out.

Finally, I am broadly in agreement with the introduction of fines at a very early stage rather than going through the judicial process. I am slightly worried about the lack of a criminal record arising, because I think that the tendency may be to opt for that too often. Therefore, I want to tease out during Committee Stage exactly how that will operate. Often, the criminal record is the deterrent rather than the fine. A criminal record has all sorts of implications for employment, emigration etc and is therefore quite a deterrent for someone.

Just as an aside, I tried to get into Australia about 15 years ago, and one of the problems that I had was that, because of my parading activities, I had a criminal record. I had to go down to the consul to get my visa to go to Australia, and they were trying to keep me out. I made the point that, 200 years ago, you needed a criminal record to get into Australia and he was denying me the right to get in. I am glad to say that I got round that point, and I have been back to Australia three times. However, I am aware of the complexities of having a criminal record, and therefore I realise the deterrent that it is. A fine may not be that deterrent. We need to be a bit careful before we go down the route of eliminating criminal records simply by means of the payment of cash. That has to be considered in its wider aspects.

Apart from that, I agree broadly with the principles of the Bill. I look forward with great interest to Committee Stage. I have to say that I was worried when Mr Dickson started to congratulate the Committee on how we had worked so well together; we will have to do something about that. No matter where we stand on the human trafficking Bill, it was very interesting to see how the Committee worked together to tease out the complexities of that Bill. This is in a totally different league, in my opinion, because of the 92 clauses. It will be a long but fascinating process. I am sure that the Bill will come out of the Committee more fit for purpose than when it went in. Given the fact that Members and the Minister have already indicated that there will be amendments, I think that the Bill will come back from the Committee very different from when it went in. That will be a very interesting process.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Like the other Members who have spoken, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill. I see it as a positive development. If we are introducing a system of faster, fairer justice, that can only be a good thing. Of course, it has to be treated cautiously, because, as we proceed, we have to ensure that the human rights and civil liberties of the people who are affected by the process are observed. I look forward to Committee Stage, when we will subject the Bill to greater scrutiny.

Today, I will address a few parts of the Bill. Part 4 addresses victims and witnesses. I agree with what everyone so far has said: victims and people who have provided witness testimony to the criminal justice system here have had very poor and negative experiences. They have not always been treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve, so I am pleased to see the

developments whereby statutory measures will be put in place to uphold the dignity and respect of victims.

I will illustrate that experience by quoting a case that happened in my constituency. It involved the murder of a local man, Harry Holland. He was brutally murdered by young people who were trying to steal his van, which he used to provide for his livelihood. He was stabbed to death. Last month, on the day of the launch of the victim and witness care unit, his daughter spoke on Radio Ulster. She spoke of how her family went into court that day, expecting to receive justice and to see the outworkings of the case against the people who had killed their father. She was shocked, because she and the rest of her family discovered that a deal had been done. They were not aware of anything, but a settlement had been reached between the PPS and the accused. They did not get their day in court; they were not part of the process. They felt traumatised and re-traumatised by that experience, and they felt completely let down by the system. In that context, Harry Holland's daughter welcomed this new development in the treatment of victims and witnesses. Sadly, however, it was too late for the Holland family. In that context, I am pleased that this new development will take place and that people will not have to be re-traumatised by the system, having already suffered very badly as a result of a crime.

There was a very positive response from almost everyone in the consultation on the victim and witness process. It was very widely welcomed. Practically everybody looks forward to the new victim and witness charters, which will give statutory entitlement to victims and witnesses. The new victim impact assessment is another positive outcome.

I move now to criminal records and how the vetting system can be streamlined. A review of that process by Sunita Mason made for very interesting reading. Some of her recommendations were far-reaching, and I am sure that they will form part of our discussions when we take the Bill into Committee. Ultimately, we will be seeking a structure in which the correct and proportionate vetting systems are put in place while still providing the appropriate protection to the public.

5.30 pm

Finally, there is no doubt that live links will be advantageous; they will bring many benefits to what can be a lengthy process. I agree that, in essence, it will improve the current system and allow for the more efficient and effective use of resources and time by avoiding delay in the criminal justice system. It will allow proceedings to be advanced without undue delay for committals and breach proceedings. It will also make things easier and simpler for expert witnesses and people who want to give testimony from overseas. The disruption to people's lives in fulfilling their commitment to give expert witness testimony will be reduced by allowing them to do it by a live link. That is a positive development. We look forward to discussing all these issues further. As well as the live links hopefully becoming the norm, we should ensure that, if there is a need, requirement or desire for personal court appearances, they should exist. It should not be across the board; we should keep the facility for whenever it is needed.

We need to use caution when creating a fairer, faster justice system so that we do not create circumstances that will decrease access to justice for those most in need of

it. We must be careful that we observe the human rights of everyone involved and keep that to the front of our mind as we scrutinise the Bill in Committee. To sum up, mar fhocal scoir, I would like to see a robust Bill that will fulfil the requirements of fairer, faster justice while making no compromise on its adherence to the highest standards of human rights compliance.

Mr Anderson: I rise as a member of the Justice Committee to offer a few comments on the Justice Bill before the House today for its Second Reading. It is important to remember that our primary function in the Assembly is to legislate. In that sense, I welcome the Bill and commend the Minister for bringing it forward. This is the second major justice Bill in the past three years. It is certainly significant legislation. As drafted, it contains almost 100 clauses and six schedules. Like its predecessors in the House and under direct rule at Westminster, it covers a wide range of issues.

Members of the Justice Committee were grateful for the briefing that they received from departmental officials last week. We look forward to further similar sessions as the Bill progresses. I am aware that, in coming to the Bill, a lot of the preparatory work has been done through public consultation and in conjunction with the Justice Committee. That will help to smooth the way in the future. However, the officials indicated that there might be amendments coming from the Department. That has been mentioned today. The Bill will be subject to amendments at Committee Stage, but it would have been better for the Minister to present the Bill without the likelihood of early amendments from his Department. Maybe he would comment on that and clarify it.

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

I am sure that no one in the House is satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. We must keep on looking at ways of improving the system. I suspect that that will keep the flow of justice Bills going for the foreseeable future. It is also fair to say that there is considerable dissatisfaction with elements of the criminal justice system. I often hear complaints from constituents and the media about inordinate delays in cases being processed by the courts. It is still taking far too long. The justice system is also regarded as being far too bureaucratic and complicated. In the interests of justice being done and being seen to be done, the whole process needs to be radically shaken up. The Bill seeks to address all of that, and we are told that it will give effect to the Minister's desire to improve the operation of the system. I share that desire, and I welcome and support sensible and practical measures designed to achieve that.

The Bill has three main aims: to improve services for victims and witnesses; to speed up the justice system; and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of key aspects of the system. It will be clear from what I have said already that I wholeheartedly agree with the three key aims. The extent to which the Bill will fulfil them remains to be seen.

I want to speak briefly about some ways in which the Bill addresses the vexed issue of the need for greater speed in bringing cases to the courts and taking them through the courts. Delay remains a problem, with a long list of often comparatively minor and straightforward cases seemingly stuck in the system for years. This is not in the interests of anyone. It is not in the interests of justice. Overall, it simply

leads to a further lack of public confidence in the justice system, and that is not good for our society.

We must remember that people are innocent until proven guilty. Often, although defendants protest their innocence, they feel that many already regard them as being guilty. They want to get their case to trial as quickly as possible. Very often, months or years of their life are taken off them, and, although they are found not guilty, they do not get those months or years back and never feel that they have fully recovered their standing in society.

Those worst impacted are the victims who have to endure the trauma of some terrible incident, and their life is more or less suspended — put on hold — until the matter reaches a conclusion in the courts. You will often hear victims at the end of a trial speaking of their relief that the trial is over. They may or may not be satisfied with the outcome, but they are glad that the long ordeal has reached that point.

My party has long argued that victims must be at the heart of the justice process, and I am therefore particularly interested in Part 4 of the Bill, which makes provisions for victims and witnesses. I strongly support the concept of a victim charter, which is provided for in clause 28, and the Justice Committee has done considerable work on that.

One of the key elements will be to make sure that proper communication comes to victims from the PSNI and the PPS. A victim must be given satisfactory explanations for delays and failure to prosecute. I support the proposal to build on the administrative arrangements for victim statements by putting those statements on a statutory footing. It is only right and proper that a court should hear from a victim just how the crime has impacted on him or her, and the statutory basis for a victim statement will, I hope, add weight to that.

Some of the changes to committal for trial, as set out in Part 2, will also go a long way towards helping victims. I understand that the aim is to abolish committal in its entirety. The implications of that will need to be looked at carefully, but I strongly welcome the proposal to remove the ordeal of victims having to give evidence twice. I welcome clause 11, which allows for the direct transfer of an accused person to the Crown Court when that person has indicated an intention to plead guilty. The idea of encouraging an early guilty plea is a positive move. I also support fully the proposal for a witness charter, as it will provide greater clarity and support in what can often be a stressful and frightening circumstance. I am broadly in agreement with modernising the arrangements for the disclosure of criminal records as outlined in Part 5. I also think that the proposals to expand the use of live links in criminal proceedings, as set out in Part 6, will help to make the system more efficient and will speed up the justice process.

I turn to Part 7, which introduces violent offences prevention orders — VOPOs, as they will be known. We are told that that risk management tool will benefit offenders by helping to prevent further offences, and that is good. We must do all we can to prevent reoffending. However, coming back to the importance of helping victims, I feel strongly that our focus must be on making sure that a tool such as the proposed VOPO will help those who have been impacted by the crime. If a VOPO will, as indicated, contain robust requirements and prohibitions

that will protect the public from the risk of violent harm caused by the offender, that is to be welcomed.

The best way to prevent reoffending and protect law-abiding people is to have tougher sentences so that crime will never pay. That must be our key objective, and the message must go out that crime will never pay. As I have indicated, the Bill is wide-ranging and will go a considerable way towards making the justice system more user-friendly. However, I hope that, as a result of the new Justice Bill, the message will go out loud and clear that the justice system will punish criminals and protect law-abiding citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable, such as the elderly. That, above all else, is what the public want to hear.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Like everybody else, I welcome the Second Stage of the Bill. In his opening remarks, the Minister said that it was the right time to make the changes, and nobody would disagree with him. Major changes are needed in our criminal justice system, particularly in terms of delays, which people have mentioned. Some cases can grind on here for years. As we experienced during the inquiry into the experiences of victims and witnesses of crime, cases in England could be concluded within a calendar year, but here they could grind on. For one family in particular that I remember, it ground on for two and a half years, which had a hugely negative impact on that family.

Most of this has been covered. I just want to briefly mention one aspect of it that covers violent offences prevention orders. Those prevention orders will be a tool to do more to protect the public from violent offenders who continue to pose a risk of serious harm even after their release from prison or when their licence expires. It will be a preventative measure that the police can use to place more control on those offenders in circumstances where they could pose greater dangers to the public. The orders will also ensure better management of the risk from convicted violent offenders who are considered by a court to pose a risk of serious violent harm and will decrease the likelihood of serious reoffending, similar to sexual offences prevention orders, as I think Mr Elliott mentioned, which are considered by the relevant authorities to be a valuable tool in the risk management of sexual offenders. There is a perceived gap in terms of violent offenders, and hopefully these measures will resolve that.

Any measures that give greater public protection are to be welcomed. We all want to see a faster, fairer system of justice. A proper justice system is the cornerstone of society. I look forward to the passage of the Bill through the Committee.

Mr McGlone: Gabhaim buíochas leat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, as ucht an seans a thabhairt domh labhairt ar an Bhille seo, agus, ar ndóigh, leis an Aire chomh maith as an Bhille a thabhairt os ár gcomhair. Thanks very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the Bill and to the Minister for bringing it before the Assembly today. My colleague Mr Maginness has already covered a good part of what I was about to say, so I am not going to indulge in the repetitive nature of that. I will deal with a few broad thematic areas and then one specific area that will be covered, of course, during the scrutiny stage of the Bill.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate at the Second Stage of the Justice Bill.

The Bill contains a number of miscellaneous but nonetheless important provisions that have the potential to improve the operation of the justice system. Provisions for a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts, provisions to amend the law for committal for trial, provisions for prosecutorial fines, provisions for victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings and investigations, provisions to amend the law on criminal records and live links, and provisions for violent offences prevention orders and other issues are absolutely vital to transforming the face of criminal and civil justice in the region.

5.45 pm

The Bill must help improve services for victims and witnesses, who often find the process of attending court very stressful. Services and facilities for victims and witnesses can be improved by creating a new statutory victim and witness charter and by giving victims the entitlement to make a personal statement. Expanding the use of video-link powers between courts is another useful proposal that will help to improve efficiency.

The Bill must tackle delay and speed up the justice system. To reduce the number of cases that come before the courts, the introduction of prosecutorial fines should help filter out unnecessary cases. Many people criticise the delays that are inherent in the justice system, and we must do all that we can to mitigate delay.

Encouraging earlier guilty pleas should also assist in reducing the volume of cases that come before the courts, and we welcome the provision for judges to be given new case management powers and responsibilities. A number of stand-alone reforms are also to be welcomed and have the potential to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and fairness of the system. Those include the modernisation of the criminal history disclosure service, the introduction of a single territorial jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts, the expansion of eligibility for jury service, and the creation of new civil orders to manage the risks posed by violent offenders.

A number of the Bill's proposals were consulted on previously for possible inclusion in a prior justice Bill. Those included the creation of a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts, powers for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to issue summonses and the introduction of prosecutorial fines. We welcome the fact that those important and necessary provisions have been integrated into the current Justice Bill.

The proposed terms of the Justice Bill that is before us must improve the efficiency and effectiveness of key aspects of the justice system, which are often wildly and overly cumbersome. The service must improve the experience of victims and witnesses, who can find court proceedings highly intimidating, and the volume of cases that come before judges must be scrutinised. Justice must be speedy and effective, and the number of cases that waste court time must be reduced. The Bill has the potential to deliver reform of the justice system in a way that the public can truly benefit from.

I now get to the specific issue. Concerns have been raised with me about the youth justice system. Those concerns are around the fact that its current statutory aims are not in compliance with international standards, owing to the failure to include the best interest principle in the Justice

(Northern Ireland) Act 2002. The principle is contained in article 3.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states:

"In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2002 and 2008 concluding observations, which followed an examination of the UK's compliance with the UNCRC, recommended that the UK:

"take all appropriate measures to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child ... is adequately integrated in all legislation and policies which have an impact on children, including in the area of criminal justice".

In fact, the youth justice review recommended that section 53 of the 2002 Act should be amended to reflect fully the best interest principle as set out in article 3 of the UNCRC. Indeed, the correct inclusion of the best interest principle in the statutory aims of the youth justice system would be a very welcome legislative step towards a youth justice system in Northern Ireland that is compliant with international standards and best practice.

That brings us to the proposed amendment to clause 84. I raised it with officials in Committee, who undertook to go back to the Department and check whether the statement was correct. They also admitted that some further work was required to be attended to on that front. There is a view that the proposed amendment under clause 84 is not entirely compliant with the UNCRC, particularly given the concluding observations of the UN committee following its examinations in 2002 and 2008, which I referred to, and that it will not entirely fulfil the recommendations of the youth justice review in itself either. Therefore, there is a very strong view, which I support, that to put article 3 of the UNCRC into practice in the youth justice system, section 53 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 must be amended so as to make the best interests of the child a principal aim of the youth justice system without delay. I suggest that the Minister particularly takes interest in that and revises, looks at or reviews what has been proposed under clause 84, because there is a strong body of opinion out there that it is not entirely compliant with the UNCRC. It is important that this aspect of the Bill is looked at in detail and got right.

Mo bhuíochas leat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, as ucht an seans labhairt agus le tacú le codanna áirithe den Bhille. Tá mé ag dréim go mór le scrúdú beacht a dhéanamh air sa Choiste. Thanks very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the chance afforded to us to look at elements of the Bill that have come before us here today. I look forward to scrutinising the Bill in more detail as it proceeds through Committee.

Lord Morrow: I had better not break with the tradition of everyone else who has spoken in the debate; I had better welcome the Bill too, because it seems to be that that is the custom thing to do and the right thing to do. I think that it is the right thing to do in this instance, and I think that there are many positives in this Bill. I hope that, before the finished product, there will be many more positives in

it. I look forward to the end product. I will endeavour to be brief in my remarks, because I know that there are some Members who are coming on after me, and I suspect that they will maybe not be as brief as me. We will see how it goes.

This Bill seems to address many issues, ranging from committal for trial to non-payment of prosecutorial fines, victims and witnesses, and violent crime prevention orders. I think that we welcome all of those. I am sure that the Minister is very familiar with my specific points as he knows them from my questions for written answer. I do send in an odd one to him occasionally on issues to which I hope to make some reference today. I hope that I am not being presumptuous in saying that some of the issues that I have raised from time to time have been addressed in the Justice Bill, and I welcome that. So, we say to the Minister that we are not afraid to say well done when he is doing things positively, and we acknowledge that.

I am confining my remarks today to Part 2, which deals with committal for trial; Part 3, which is on prosecutorial fines and non-compliance; Part 4, dealing with victims and witnesses; and, finally, Part 7, which is on prevention orders. I will start with Part 2; in particular, Chapter 1, clauses 7 and 8. Those clauses deal with the abolition of preliminary investigations, mixed committals and evidence given on oath at preliminary inquiry. This move will, of course, dispense with some preliminary enquiries — known as PEs — and all preliminary investigations — known as PIs — at Magistrates' Courts. I welcome this development as, in short, PEs serve no real useful purpose and PIs are mini trials that are costly on the public purse and, largely, result in nothing other than a committal for trial, which is the very object that they are designed to avert.

Back in December 2010, the Minister informed me that the composite legal aid payable for a PE is £820. That is him speaking, not me. That was for a solicitor, and, for a counsel, it was some £800. An answer received just this morning, which is coincidental, confirms that the rate is static. The answer also states — this was not in the reply in 2010 — that a further £200 supplement is payable for every subsequent day of PE proceedings.

That is worthy of note at a time when we are looking at a new Bill. I will pursue that matter with the Minister, as I know of no PEs that have required more than one hour, never mind one day. I could be mistaken on that, however, and I stand to be corrected if that is the case.

I also note that on 26 June — this Thursday — an additional fee of £410 for solicitors and £400 for counsel will apply in cases that include more than 750 pages of prosecution evidence. Again, that is coincidental, but that is the way that it is. I am a little concerned at that move and ask when and by whom that was decided. I do not know whether the Bill will address or change that, but I am sure that the Minister will enlighten us when he sums up.

A fee of approximately £800 is paid in the formality-only hearing that constitutes a PE. Across Northern Ireland, 1,467 PEs were held in 2011, 1,616 were held in 2012, and 1,670 were held in 2013. Using those statistics and assuming that all cases were funded by legal aid, which is not an unreasonable assumption — I am sure that most Members would agree with that — I think that that equates to 4,753 hearings at a cost of almost £4 million.

The Minister has confirmed that he plans to abolish PEs in certain indictable cases, which is to be welcomed, and move them straight to the Crown Court, but, according to Part 2, chapter 2, under the heading "Direct committal for trial in certain cases", that would have limited use and would involve cases in which a defendant is pleading guilty or when a charge is of a very serious nature, such as murder. Whilst that is a start and a welcome move, I encourage the Minister to consider amending his proposals to have all indictable offences transferred directly to the Crown Court without the requirement for a formal PE.

PIs and mixed committals are mentioned at Part 2, chapter 1, clause 8. In effect, those are mini-trial hearings held at a Magistrates' Court when the defence does not agree that an indictable case meets the prima facie threshold to proceed to trial by jury. Evidence is heard from any prosecution witnesses under oath who are objected to by the defence who carry out the cross-examination. When a hearing concludes, a ruling on whether there is a case to be answered is made by the presiding district judge. Statistics from the Minister show that only a tiny percentage do not proceed to trial, yet legal aid is liberally handed out for such hearings, which have a solicitor and, very often, at least junior counsel representation. In the figures provided by the Minister to me, there were a total of 93 PIs in 2011-13, involving 173 defendants, all of whom were granted legal aid. Of those 93 cases, 16 did not proceed to trial, which is less than 15%. That is very significant. Of those, 11 cases were withdrawn by the Public Prosecution Service, two lacked sufficient evidence to proceed at the stage of hearing, one was adjourned generally, one could not proceed after a key witness failed to attend, and proceedings were stayed in the remaining case. With the possible exception of the case involving an absent witness, which, of course, could not be foreseen, the remainder could have been decided without the need for a hearing on the basis of evidence proposed to be used. Those proceedings are very costly, tie up court time unnecessarily and often require additional court staff to be deployed and specific days to be set aside for a hearing. I argue that cases that are not to proceed could be adequately examined without the extensive and expensive measures of such hearings.

6.00 pm

In my constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone, PIs are becoming very rare, which I thoroughly welcome. However, this is an opportunity to cite one such hearing in 2010 that was scheduled to last five days on the instruction of the defence. Ultimately, it took five hours and cost over £50,000, of which £45,000 was legal aid. This excessive exercise came in for heavy criticism from the presiding judge who issued the ruling for committal. In a 42-point judgement, the judge was concerned that the defence in question initially stated that 13 prosecution witnesses were required to attend, as their evidence was objected to. Not surprisingly, that number of witnesses would take time, and five days were set aside for the hearing. However, on the first day, whilst all required witnesses attended court, the defence announced that only four would be required. The evidence took a few hours and summing up submissions 55 minutes. Nothing new was uncovered and, rather predictably, the case was transferred to Crown Court. I have already talked about the cost of £45,000 in

legal aid — a figure that does not include court costs or any additional expenditure required to host a hearing that delivered no rational explanation for its existence.

One section of the judgement states:

“This Court remains concerned about the significant delay occasioned by defence counsel requiring a Court to provide 5 days for a committal process, for no reason which could be explained to the Court and for no discernible advantage to the defence, but as of right.”

The point of demanding such hearings as of right appears to often leap into such proceedings. I argue that, while rights must be upheld and respected, there must be tangible evidence of the necessity for the stated rights and how they could be violated if such things do not proceed.

I say to the Minister that, if he is determined to reduce the extortionate legal aid bill, his move to abolish PIs will go a significant way in achieving that, as well as removing what can be an intimidating experience for witnesses prior to the trial itself. Likewise, his move to fast-track certain cases to Crown Court without a PE is a positive step. However, the entire abolition of such verbatim, formality-only hearings could save around £1 million a year in legal aid across Northern Ireland.

I disagree with the Minister in one respect. In answer to my question for written answer, he stated that his proposals in respect of the abolition of PIs are:

“to ensure cases are managed at the appropriate court level and to expedite the disposal of cases where defendants are pleading guilty”.

I have difficulty with that. However, the Minister continues:

“The proposals are not designed to reduce costs, and I do not envisage that there will be any significant impact on the cost of legal aid”.

I do not agree with the Minister on that, and I am sure that he would welcome any move that would help to reduce our grossly inflated legal aid bill, even if it is brought about as a result of change. The judgement ruling has clearly shown that an excessive amount of legal aid and time, never mind additional court costs, was used in the case in 2010 at Dungannon Magistrates' Court to absolutely no useful purpose.

I move to the subject of prosecutorial fines in Part 3 of the Bill and, specifically, the non-payment of such fines. This relates to unpaid fines handed down as penalties as opposed to having to go before the courts, and they relate to summary matters. I welcome the Minister's inclusion of this matter in his Bill. However, I had hoped to see a great deal more in the Bill aimed at tackling the huge number of unpaid court fines. In a question for written answer to the Minister on this very issue on 22 May, I asked:

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

The Minister replied, and I quote the relevant section:

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

When the Minister sums up, I would like him to confirm whether that is the case or whether there has been a change. I look forward to his response.

Like many Members, I was astounded to receive figures that showed that unpaid fines extended to millions upon millions upon millions upon millions of pounds. That simply means that the penalty is being ignored, and there is a perception that that is being permitted. It may not be that way, but that is the perception. As a society, is it tolerable that millions upon millions upon millions upon millions of pounds are not being recovered through unpaid fines? Any new legislation that comes before the House has a duty and a responsibility to tackle that issue and deal with it. I am not being presumptuous, but I hope that, when the Bill is fine-tuned and honed, that issue will be addressed directly.

A fine is supposed to be, to put it mildly, an inconvenience. It is supposed to reflect the seriousness of the offence and the manner in which society expects redress from offenders. Yet, the numbers of unpaid fines and the quantity of money involved are, to say the least, shocking. I cannot find another word for it. If a person defaults on their mortgage or a loan repayment or misses a direct debit, action is promptly taken by the creditor, and on many occasions it can be drastic. Warnings of court actions and interest being added each day for late payments are swiftly issued and very often imposed. Are they imposed in court cases? It should be treated as more than payment default. It should be treated for what it is: contempt of court. Our courts should be respected, as should their decisions. People can walk away and say, “That's fine. I don't pay”. It seems that they get away with that, so there is something wrong with the system.

Figures provided to me by the Minister show that just over £14 million remain unpaid in fines handed down across Northern Ireland from 2009 to 2013. That, by anyone's standards, is staggering and totally unacceptable. A Bill that does not adequately address that issue has a hole in it. Over £9 million of that £14 million was attributed to 45,558 fines imposed in Magistrates' Courts. The Belfast division accounts for in excess of £3 million, with Antrim, Londonderry and my constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone each accounting for well over £1 million. Over £5 million of Crown Court fines remain unpaid, equating to 394 cases. The vast majority of those cases were funded — this is the other insult — by legal aid. Not only have defendants had their fees covered, they have refused to pay court-ordered financial penalties. In fact, they have got off scot-free, not once but twice. Our justice system has to address that, and the Justice Bill has to make provision for it.

The Minister has advised me that he intends to bring forward legislation to establish a new fine collection and enforcement service that will increase the range of collection enforcement options. We look forward to that,

although it appears that it applies only to prosecutorial fines. Further, I welcome clause 22(3), which deals with failure to pay fines. This is the relevant point:

“The fines clerk must notify the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland that the prosecutorial fine has not been paid.”

That is a step in the right direction. That should have been happening long ago, but I suppose it is better late than never. One has to ask why that has not already occurred with the outstanding £14 million of court-imposed fines. Firmer action must be taken to bring it home to offenders that they are not calling the shots and that freeloading will not be tolerated, as it seems to be at the moment.

I am pleased to see that steps are being taken, in my constituency at least, to address such issues. Fines are now being issued at a Magistrates' Court with a statutory four weeks to pay. Judicial discretion on extensions will be considered only on written application after four weeks have lapsed. I also welcome the Minister's intention to apply new legislation retrospectively if the Assembly passes the proposals. This will mean that those who already owe significant amounts in fines will not be exempted from any new measures to recoup them. I further ask the Minister to consider my previous suggestion of having legal aid costs or at least a percentage of costs built into fines, particularly for repeat offenders. He has also agreed with me that a levy for all persons convicted of an offence who were in receipt of legal aid could go some way to offset the burgeoning legal aid bill.

I want to move on to the others points in the Bill on which I have made representations to the Minister through questions etc. I want to make some remarks about victims in Part 4 of the Bill. I very much welcome the proposal for a victim charter. I took part in the consultation, as I am sure many other MLAs, if not all, did. I have serious concerns that victims and their rights are grossly forgotten in the clamour of defending accused and convicted persons, who appear to be better tended to than victims. Whilst I robustly retain support for the right to a fair trial, much more needs to be done to protect and support victims of violence. I will restrict my comments on this point until the consultation on the victim charter is published, and I look forward to seeing that.

I have grave concerns as to the effectiveness of the violent offences prevention orders listed in Part 7 of the Bill. The two types of order to which I largely refer are antisocial behaviour orders or ASBOs and sexual offences prevention orders, or SOPOs. The Minister will be aware that I have been a sceptic about the viability of those orders and measures. From extensive and wide-reaching research that I conducted, I have come to the conclusion that some orders are nothing more than a polite invitation not to reoffend. I find it particularly concerning that offenders are, in effect, left to their own devices with a piece of paper outlining some dos and don'ts. There have simply been too many breaches of these orders, which very often lead to another victim or victims. Sentences for such breaches are not excessive by any standards. In many cases, those under an order are prepared to run the gauntlet to see whether they are apprehended. It is a catch-me-if-you-can attitude. Recent figures show that ASBOs are on the decline in Northern Ireland, and I welcome that. To many offenders, they simply constituted a badge of honour.

6.15 pm

I have no faith in SOPOs whatsoever. I have made significant representations to the Minister in respect of two high-profile cases of SOPO breaches in the run-up to further offences being committed, in which more victims were traumatised. I refer to the case of one sex offender who committed a string of SOPO breaches before attacking another woman. I was infuriated by the lengths to which I had to go in order for the Minister to finally order a serious case review into the handling of that offender, who has now been deemed dangerous under the 2008 Act definition. Despite my request being refused several times, as the case apparently did not meet the serious case review criteria, the Minister finally relented and such a review was conducted. The content, which was delayed for some time, claimed that a forthcoming attack could not have been predicted. I totally disagreed. Anyone who was blatantly ignoring court-imposed orders, including SOPOs, would, to my mind, indicate an unwillingness to conform. Furthermore, I refer to the case of a convicted sex offender in Craigavon. This individual lured a six-year-old child into his Lurgan home, where she was sexually assaulted. This man was permitted to live in an area close to schools and alongside families with young children despite having prior paedophilia convictions that he was refusing to acknowledge as criminal offences. He also repeatedly breached SOPOs imposed by courts. I accept that, when I pressed the Minister to order a serious case review, he did not prevaricate. However, I had to make follow-up enquiries to obtain the report and, as happened in the case of a similar individual, a conclusion was reached that nothing could have been done to predict an imminent attack. I have yet to read a report on either case that does not contain that phrase. That is possibly because it appears that, in many instances, it is taken for granted that people, whatever their remit, can see the future.

I will stop there. There are a few other things that I had planned to say but will not. Hopefully, the Bill will move on to the Justice Committee, where it will be scrutinised in great detail. I believe that, as a result of that scrutiny and today's debate, we can get a Bill that will be fit for purpose and serve Northern Ireland much better. We can put in place legislation that is competent to do a job that needs to be done. I wish the Minister well with it and wish the Committee well in its scrutiny of it.

Mr Allister: In any ordered society, one of the most significant steps that the state can take is to remove liberty from its citizens. It is often a necessary and essential step and a proper response to criminality, and I hope that none of us would quibble with that. Equally, I hope that no one would quibble with the fact that, over the years, in our British justice system, we have built up a number of carefully balanced protections for all citizens and that, even though a person is charged with the most odious of crimes, he or she is entitled to fundamental due process built on the principle that all of us are innocent until proven guilty. The onus for proving guilt lies on the state. There is no presumption of guilt, and the onus on the state is that it must be established beyond all reasonable doubt. In the attending due process, there are no shortcuts. Those are fundamental principles on which our criminal justice system is built, and I, for one, would have it no other way. I am disappointed, therefore, that in bringing a Justice Bill to the House, there was not even a nod of acknowledgment from the Minister or the Chairman of the

Justice Committee towards that. The surge and the urge were to talk about efficiencies, introducing shortcuts into the process and doing things of that nature.

I want to comment on a number of the Parts of the Bill, and I suppose that there is no better place to start than with Part 1. I reassure the House that I will not deal with every Part. Part 1 introduces the notion of a single jurisdiction for the County Court and the petty sessions, and it is done, in the words of those who promote it, to create greater flexibility.

I just caution the House as to its outworkings. Will it, in fact, protect the interests of victims and witnesses, or will it be operated to judicial or even professional convenience? Very often, a case does not finish in one day. The magistrate, district judge or judge may want to consider issues and very often he or she will say, "I will give judgement next Friday morning in this case." As things stand, that judgement effectively has to be given in the jurisdiction where the court sits, but in the Crown Court, where you have an all-Northern Ireland jurisdiction, multiple times that judgement is not given where the case was heard and the witnesses and victims live, be that Enniskillen or Londonderry. It is given next Friday in Belfast, maybe freeing the judge up to play golf in the afternoon — who knows? Certainly, it delivers him or her of the burden of travelling down to Fermanagh or Londonderry and spending the afternoon travelling back.

So just let us question whether, when we talk about a single jurisdiction and greater flexibility, we are really talking about serving the interests of the victims and witnesses, or whether we are serving other interests; and whether the interests of the victims and witnesses might, in fact, be better served by retaining all of the case in the local jurisdiction. I make that point in particular because this Bill talks about a charter for victims and a charter for witnesses. I hope that, on this first part, that is indeed what it proves to be, and not a charter for someone else.

I come to the issue of preliminary investigation. I have to say that Lord Morrow got his PEs and his PIs badly mixed up. A PE is where the case is decided on the papers and no evidence is called; a PI is when evidence is probably or possibly called. I think it is important to understand how we arrive at the position of having a file of papers within our system. In the continental system, for example, evidence and witness statements are taken, in the main, in front of an investigating magistrate. Probing questions are asked, and the product is statements from the witnesses.

In our system, statements are taken by the police in a unilateral exercise with the witness. They can, in consequence, be quite self-serving. They certainly are not rigorously tested. And those statements are then put together and presented as the prosecution papers. Only the prosecution has had an input, effectively, into that process. It is in that scenario that the Justice Minister comes to the House and says that there never should be any circumstances in which, before someone is put on trial, that evidence is tested: that you simply accept at face value what it says.

I have yet to read a set of prosecution papers that do not, on the face of it, appear plausible or even convincing about the guilt of the accused. It is, on occasions, the testing of that evidence that shows that it is not entirely as it seems. How is that done? It is done through cross-examination,

putting to witnesses alternative scenarios, their possible motives and their inconsistencies — all of that — and suddenly finding that what reads like a very coherent and convincing statement is in fact full of holes and is falling apart. Very often, the defence, who will call for a PI, might wish to take that opportunity. Sometimes, it does not, because in the taking of that opportunity it is engaging in alerting the prosecution witnesses to its line of attack, so, more often than not, people keep their powder dry.

PIs are not something that defence counsel and defence solicitors embrace as the be-all and end-all. I respectfully believe, from my own experience, that they are relatively infrequently used, but to say that they should never be capable of being used and that you should never be able to test a case before it comes before a judge and jury is totally disproportionate. In fact, it could be grossly wasteful of public money. If there is a flawed case in which the witness statements will fall apart, is it not in the public interest to discover that at the earliest opportunity in the petty sessions and to have the case stopped, rather than to discover it at the end of an expensive three-week Crown Court trial?

So to this idea that blocking PIs will save huge amounts of public money. Lord Morrow told us that 16 PIs had been successful in the period that he referred to. That was 16 trials that were avoided and did not have to be paid for. On the balance sheet, it is more than simply input. There are also outgoings in these matters. I say to the Minister that it is far too draconian and a step too far to impose, as he wishes to impose, a blanket ban on any testing of evidence through the hearing of that evidence at a preliminary stage. It is not something that is currently abused, I believe, but it is something that is a useful safety net and sifting process that should not be abandoned. The very least that should be done is that it should be bestowed in the presiding district judge, on application, the discretion in the interests of justice to grant a mixed committal, not so that every witness might be called but so that the evidence of key witnesses who are pivotal to holding up the whole case, if there is reason to believe that their evidence is a fabrication, can be tested and exposed as such.

I ask the House this: what is wrong if you build in or retain the best of what we currently have by bestowing that discretion on the presiding district judge to allow that to happen in the interests of justice? I say to the Minister that a Bill that imposes such a blanket ban does not serve the interests of justice at all.

6.30 pm

I will turn to the issue of prosecutorial fines. I must say that parts of this stagger me. The system seems to be wide open to abuse. Under the Bill, all that you have to do to avoid prosecution in respect of such a matter is to consent that you will accept a fine. It is not that you have to pay the fine. You consent to accept the parking ticket, so to speak. Whether you ever pay it is another matter. Whether, by not paying it, you impose huge administrative costs on the Courts and Tribunals Service to chase you for it does not come into the picture. All that you have to do is accept and say, "Oh yeah, I will have one of those, please." If you do that, you cannot be prosecuted. If you look at clause 20(2), you see that the test for whether you can be prosecuted is not that you pay the fine. It states that:

"If the offer in a notice under section 17(1) is accepted, no proceedings may be brought for the offence to which the notice relates."

One could begin to understand it if it said, "If the notice is accepted and the fine is paid, no proceedings may be brought for the offence to which the notice relates." But you can buy yourself immunity from prosecution by simply saying, "I will accept", without ever having to pay. Yes, of course, if you do not pay, it is translated ultimately into a fine, but not something that ever appears on your record. Some habitual petty criminal could go through years, month on month, accepting prosecutorial fines if they are offered to him and never building up a criminal record. Why should they not be part of a record? If someone accepts their guilt, which is the inference of accepting the fine, why should that not appear on a criminal record? I say to the House that that is particularly ill thought out. It seems that you can be offered them with no cap. You can be offered them indefinitely. That seems to me to be absolute folly and I do not really understand why anyone would want to do that.

I then come to clause 77, which contains the wonderful declaration that the judge, in sentencing someone who has pleaded not guilty, will decree for the record what the sentence would have been had they pleaded guilty. What purpose does that serve? In that case, it serves no purpose. Someone who has pleaded not guilty and been convicted, retrospectively, ex post facto, is told, "By the way, if you had pleaded guilty, the sentence would have been five years instead of eight years." Where does that take justice?

I made the point in an intervention that one would think that those who have come up with ideas for the Bill really think that they are inventing the wheel. We already have Court of Appeal guideline judgements that set out what the percentage rebate should be if someone pleads guilty.

It is already there. It is already known. I can think of no circumstances in which, if you were a barrister or a solicitor, you would ever let your client into the dock without having told them, "By the way, if you fight on and are convicted, you will probably be looking at this range of sentence. If you plead guilty, you are probably looking at this range of sentence".

To think that it is a breakthrough for criminal justice to put it in clause 78, with all the solemnity that that brings, and that it shall be the solemn duty of solicitors to advise their clients of what would happen with an early guilty plea is such nonsense. That is the bread and butter of solicitors and barristers who practise in criminal courts. It is so elementary that everyone does it. So, really, are we just creating clauses to bulk out the Bill? One would wonder.

I do not see which process clause 77 advances. Let us consider for a moment the practicality of clause 77. It states that a judge:

"in sentencing D for the offence must indicate the sentence which the court would have imposed for the offence if D had pleaded guilty to the offence ... at the earliest reasonable opportunity in the proceedings."

What is the earliest reasonable opportunity in the proceedings? Let us take a typical case of someone who has six charges against him. His case has always been, "I will not plead guilty to all six charges". The prosecution

has boldly said, "It is all or nothing". Disclosure then begins to unfold, and suddenly documents start to appear that reveal that the prosecution case is not as strong as it might have first appeared. There is suddenly an anxiety to accept a plea to two of the charges and to abandon the other four. You could say that that person has not pleaded guilty at the earliest possible opportunity. So, what is the purpose of this — I was going to say "academic exercise", but it is not even an academic exercise when it comes to sentencing someone to say, "For the record, this is what the sentence would have been", because you cannot retrospectively visit the actual deserving circumstances at the time of the original arraignment and ignore factors such as the impact that disclosure etc can have on the run of a case.

If it is about building up some sort of precedent so that other people charged with robbery might know what the sentence would be if they pleaded guilty as opposed to fighting it, assuming that all robberies are deserving of the same sentence, do they not already know that? Have we not already established that through multiple Court of Appeal guideline judgements? What is it that is sought to be attained with clause 77? I must say that what that is is way beyond me.

I read clause 28 on the victim charter with interest. I ask the Minister this: in the circumstances of the recent on-the-runs (OTR) scandal, would the charter impose an obligation to inform the victim of an OTR situation? I am not sure that it would, but should it not? If the Minister really wants to reach out to victims, might he not also consider that for inclusion?

So, I look forward to seeing how the Bill progresses. I trust that it will emerge in more tenable form than it presently is, in some regards, and I trust that we will not, just for the sake of whatever it is we think we are doing, wash away some of the bulwarks of our criminal justice system, such as the right to cross-examine at an appropriate stage in proceedings, which is rather fundamental and rather too glibly desired to be swept away. Committal, I hear, without even preliminary inquiry, never mind investigation. In that, the Minister is taking us entirely in the wrong direction.

Mr Ford: I am grateful to those Members who have lasted the course this afternoon and evening for what has been, generally, a very thoughtful and positive engagement around these important issues. I have no doubt that that will continue. It became a little bit dubious at one point, when we got to the stage where Jim Wells was praising Stewart Dickson for praising Paul Givan, then, clearly something dreadful is happening which is causing embarrassment on all sides of the Chamber. Although, it does, in actual fact, reflect a lot of very positive engagement between the Committee and my officials over many months, not least around the issue of victims and witnesses, which, I am glad to say, saw very significant agreement.

I hope that we will see that continuing spirit of goodwill, although, inevitably, at the Second Stage debate, we tend to all largely agree, and then we will fight over small elements of it as we go through Committee Stage, Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage, but, hopefully, we will come back with a Bill that can be agreed at Final Stage, given the measure of goodwill that is here.

If I can ever so slightly break the consensus of the peace, love and joy that broke out this afternoon, I think that I will disagree with Jim Wells in one respect when he said that he expects to see a Bill finally back that is very different. I expect to see a Bill back that is different but not necessarily very different. I think that the key issues will be to see how we work through some of the details.

It is slightly ironic that the Department and I are now being criticised because amendments have already been hinted at. I suspect that we would have been in a worse position if we had not given an indication that some amendments were likely. Because of the timescale for getting a Bill of this scale into place, we have literally had the position that most of the wording was finalised some months ago. Therefore, it is perhaps inevitable that possible amendments have been identified in the interim, but I have no doubt that if the goodwill that we have seen from the Committee members so far continues, we will see good work being done on that. I am grateful for the positive words from so many members of the Committee about their willingness to engage, because it is an ambitious blueprint for the transformation of the justice system. As a result of this Bill, we will see a fundamental reshaping of the justice system.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Most elements attracted very little discussion, although Mr Allister just recently objected to a single jurisdiction, which Alban Maginness mentioned in terms of his love for the history. I fear, however, that if we were to recreate Somerville and Ross, memoirs of an Irish DJ might convey a slightly different impression from memoirs of an Irish RM. That particular form of words has been lost. We will have to see that we maintain the best of what is in the past as we seek to streamline. I think that there will be issues to ensure that when we look at a single court jurisdiction, we make sure that it is not in the interests of anybody playing golf but is principally in the interests of the victims and witnesses.

One of the issues that appears to be broadly —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: Yes.

Mr A Maginness: In relation to the single jurisdiction, I understand the efficiencies and so forth and convenience that could be derived from that, but we have a constitutional position here where the judiciary and the Executive are separate, and the Executive do not interfere with the judiciary.

Sometimes, with all these efficiencies and attempts to regulate the courts, I wonder whether we are treading into that constitutional area of prohibition where, in fact, we should not be interfering with the judiciary. That might appear to be an exaggerated point in relation to the common jurisdiction, but it is something that, I think, we should bear in mind.

6.45 pm

Mr Ford: I take Mr Maginness's point on that. I do not agree with him that when we talk about the administration arrangements we are straying into the role of the judiciary. However, I certainly accept that it is an issue that Members need to be very careful about in a number of different areas.

The reform of the committal process appeared to attract general support around the House, except from the two members of the Bar present. I am not sure exactly how to take that. As far as I am concerned, we have to look at the issue. The committal process existed to justify an issue going to trial; it was not to have a pre-trial. My major concerns are based on what I have seen and on what has been highlighted by members of the Committee around when the committal process amounts to a PI and not a PE and, effectively, becoming a first go at vulnerable witnesses. I do not think that that is acceptable in the present day. Whilst I appreciate the concerns that have been raised by the two barristers amongst us on the issue, I think that we need to look carefully. I notice that Lord Morrow, for example, wishes me to go faster and further than we are proposing to go in this area. Perhaps that is something that the Committee may wish to tease out a bit more.

I did not expect Mr Allister to bring in the continental system of the inquisitorial magistrate. I thought that, in our situation, we relied on the PPS to test the quality of evidence when it is put forward by the police after they have conducted their inquiries.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: That is an issue where, I believe, we can protect the defendant's right to a fair trial, but it will be for the Committee to work out exactly how it will be done. I give way.

Mr Allister: Unless the Minister should misrepresent me, I was not advocating the inquisitorial magistrate. I was pointing out that, if this goes through, there will be no inquisitorial element in our system until you get to trial. In the interests of justice, there should be some sifting opportunity of an inquisitorial nature before you get to trial, if the presiding magistrate thinks that that is appropriate.

Mr Ford: I think that my point remains: most people, including, I believe, the PPS, believe that the PPS carries out that process under the system that we have. It is not exactly the same as the continental system, nor, of course, is there a procurator fiscal as in Scotland, but I believe that it is a system that shows there.

On a specific point that was also made by Lord Morrow, committal reform is not specifically a financial issue; it is an issue about the protection of vulnerable victims and witnesses. There may well be some financial consequences from it. It has been highlighted that there might be negative financial consequences as well. At this point, the key issue is to protect those who are vulnerable and who will have to give evidence at the full trial rather than the specific issue of funding.

There seems to be a broad measure of support for prosecutorial fines. Initially, Jim Wells, and, subsequently, Jim Allister, suggested that there was the potential that some of these issues could be applied too often, and there was a question as to whether some people would be on a formal record. The reality is that a prosecutorial fine will be recorded and the information will be held. Further details can be taken from that information to establish whether a prosecutorial fine might or might not be appropriate at a future stage.

The legislation, as it sits, does not prescribe the circumstances in which that might be offered. I thought

that that was something that we would see as being appropriately decided at the discretion of the PPS. Furthermore, I think that it is similar to what the House has approved previously — the concept of fixed penalties in certain minor offences where there is an issue about how often a fixed penalty can be awarded. Clearly, it is a matter that will have to be followed through, but it is not something that we should get too hung up about. It is a clear issue, where there is the option to provide something that will streamline the court processes by removing a number of minor cases from the courts.

Lord Morrow made points about the difficulties we have with fine collection at present. There are two fundamental issues. The first is the significant issue of resources for the Police Service in the role it currently has in statute for the enforcement of fines. The second point is the recent court decision relating to the imprisonment of non-fine payers and the fact that that route has been closed. That is why we have taken the decision that we need to produce a new system, which is the one proposed for the fines and enforcement Bill. I confirm that it is my intention to proceed with that, as has been outlined to Members in the House in the past. That will provide a civilianised service. It will also take the pressures off the police and deal with the issue of committal to prison without a further court hearing. We would then be in a significantly better place than, frankly, what has been the case for a number of years. It is not a post-devolution problem; it is a problem that existed pre-devolution.

The one area that seemed to attract universal support — I think that every Member who spoke, starting with the Chair and Deputy Chair, mentioned it — was the charters for victims and witnesses. Again, it does no harm to repeat that, building on some preliminary work done by the Department, the Committee did a very extensive piece of work. I am grateful for the very positive comments that were made by a number of Members about the way in which the proposal has been taken forward. There will clearly be a lot more discussion about the two charters. I have no doubt that we will have some interesting debates about exactly what goes into them. The fundamental principle has to be right. It has been almost universally welcomed by all those with an interest. I think that we will see significant improvement.

I am very conscious of some of the comments, particularly from Tom Elliott, about concerns as to how victims and witnesses have been treated in the past. Rosie McCorley's comment about the recent introduction of the victim and witness care unit shows that some of these procedures are already in place administratively at this stage and that they are starting to make significant improvements. We will certainly need to ensure that the charters are in statute, carried through and that they properly make sure that the justice system meets the needs of victims and witnesses to make their experience less bad than what might have been the case previously.

Similarly, the concept of a personal statement has been largely welcomed. The issue of the disclosure of criminal records — the Access NI point — was raised. We have had difficulties for a number of years because of the multiplicity of certificates issued. It is something that we need to continue to deal with. The point highlighted by Jim Wells about somebody carrying out voluntary work in a number of different organisations in one church

was probably a slight exaggeration. From my personal experience, that would all be covered by information from Access NI, but there are clearly problems if somebody is a volunteer with different organisations not under the same umbrella. Even then, some cases relate to employment as well. That is why we are very keen to see the concept of the portable certificate, the online application and the ability to get round those difficulties, which will make things much more efficient than had been the case.

It is generally about the key point of making the system more efficient and ensuring that we move forward in a better way. I am delighted that, although the term “faster, fairer” does not appear in the title of the Bill, if nothing else because the Attorney General thought that it was a little bit Orwellian, when most of us in the Chamber today have used the term “faster, fairer” it was because we know what we mean. We mean it in the concept of plain English with a genuine meaning, not in an Orwellian sense.

Speeding up justice has been a focus for the Department since I took office just over four years ago. Some of the specific proposals we have around early guilty pleas and statutory case management will have opportunities in that respect. Tom Elliott asked whether early guilty pleas would produce savings. I assure him and Jim Wells that any savings that may be made from any aspect of the Bill will be well used in the justice system. We are not expecting to see huge savings, but, given the budget problems that we face, there is plenty to spend money on within the Justice Department. I have no doubt that members of the Committee could suggest many more things that we could spend money on.

Early guilty pleas is not an issue of plea bargaining; it is an issue of recognising that the vast majority of cases that come before the courts see a guilty plea or a have a finding of guilt. It is a matter of informing people about the practical realities and ensuring that that information is there. First, by ensuring that clause 77 is publicised to make people aware of it — one might say, in the Voltairian sense, *pour encourager les autres* — others would realise what happens if you plead guilty at an early stage rather than at a late stage. Whilst it may be that lawyers tell their clients that this is the case, I think that there is no harm in making that explicit, with lawyers made fully aware of that, as we seek to enhance the concept of the better use of early guilty pleas. Jim Allister spoke of the inquisitions in court on a Friday morning in Belfast to ensure that cases are being prepared and well managed, but, sadly, that is not the case in every court in Northern Ireland, and we need to ensure that that does become the case in every court. I believe that there are real issues there.

I was also ever so slightly baffled by Mr Allister's reference to clause 77 in the context of somebody who might be not guilty because, as I read the first part of clause 77, it makes it absolutely clear that it is talking about somebody who is found guilty or who gives a guilty plea at a later stage than might have been the case.

So there are opportunities there to move things forward to help to enhance the efficiency of the system, and, as we face those difficult budgetary issues, there will be some benefits from it, but, primarily, there will be a benefit for victims and vulnerable witnesses in not having cases drag on, not having concerns about when they will appear in court and not fearing that they might have to appear twice to give evidence in cases. Those are the real issues, and

that is building on the Committee's work to enhance, as best we can, the experience of victims and witnesses.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Minister giving way at this point. The Member for North Antrim made an issue about when is the earliest reasonable opportunity for somebody to plead guilty. Does the Minister agree that, to a certain extent, we need to move away from the constant onus that, as some may say, lawyers are very interested in getting people off on a technicality? Does he agree that we need to start saying to the perpetrators of crime that the earliest opportunity to plead guilty is when they know in their heart that they are guilty and have committed the offence?

Instead, the relentless approach often taken by the legal profession — understandably so, to give the best representation to the defendant — is to put victims through the wringer. At times, they do so in the hope that the evidence will start crumbling, not necessarily because the perpetrator is guilty but because those trying to give evidence might withdraw from the case because of the way in which victims are often, as they told the Committee, intimidated by those in the legal profession who, in their view, abuse them through the adversarial approach often adopted in our court system.

Mr Ford: I would be a little cautious about advising lawyers, particularly in this company, of what their duties are to their clients, but there is no doubt that, in some cases, there are major difficulties in sustaining the evidence of vulnerable victims and witnesses. That is why, for example, the Department is about to do the second recruitment tranche for those who will assist vulnerable victims and witnesses and, indeed, defendants to give their best evidence in the legal process. We recognise the need for registered intermediaries to carry out that function, and there is no doubt that, in some cases, there is, if perhaps not entirely adopting the language that Mr Givan used, an effort to wear down witnesses who may be particularly vulnerable, and that is a problem that we have to deal with.

In the wider look at how we manage the process of speeding things up, we now have real opportunities. Later this week, I will have a meeting, which will have present the Chief Constable, the Lord Chief Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions, as we look at a pilot project to manage some specific reforms in that area. I hope that, within a matter of months in at least one part of Northern Ireland, we will see from the pilot project opportunities to build on the work being done to ensure that the system functions as fairly as it ever did but significantly faster than it has in recent years.

A specific point was raised, perhaps by only one Member, when Patsy McGlone talked about the aims of the youth justice system. Whilst I am aware that there are those in the children's lobby groups who have some concerns about the proposal as it currently stands within the Bill, my advice is that the provision delivers on both the spirit and the letter of the youth justice review and on what is intended by the UNCRC. I will certainly be interested to hear any evidence that comes to the Committee to the contrary, but my advice at the moment is that it is an entirely satisfactory provision.

7.00 pm

On that basis, it seems to me that we have achieved a significant balance of agreement around the issues here. There will be an interesting time for the Committee. I trust that it will not take every last minute to do its work. I also trust that, as it looks at some of its other work, and in light of some of the references made by members of the Committee about, for example, legal aid costs, it will continue to assist the Department as we work to deal with that major budgetary problem at the present time. I will put that particular point back to it in the spirit of generosity with which I was rude to Jim Wells earlier.

Tonight we have had an extremely positive and valuable contribution from all sides of the House as we look to reform the justice system and to provide a faster, fairer justice system for all of our people. I commend the Bill to the Assembly with the expectation that it is likely to pass in the next minute or so. I wish the Committee well in the work that it will do and promise the continuing engagement of my officials and myself in assisting the Committee in its due process.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Justice Bill [NIA Bill 37/11-15] be agreed.

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Speaker.]

Adjournment

Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh

Mr Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have up to 15 minutes and all other Members who wish to speak will have up to approximately seven minutes.

Mr Elliott: I welcome the opportunity to bring forward this Adjournment topic on post-primary education in Fermanagh. I suppose it has been broadly titled so that it encompasses the wider range of the educational sectors within the county. I know it is something that gets a lot of press and media attention, and even a lot of aggression in some areas in the county at the present time, mainly within the controlled and voluntary grammar sectors, and, indeed, the Catholic maintained sector.

I have attended — and I know other MLAs and public representatives have attended — meeting after meeting in the last couple of years in relation to the subject. I think I am right in quoting the Minister and the Department — “every school a good school” is obviously one of the phrases that are commonly used. I believe that that policy could be wide-ranging and acceptable to everyone. However, I believe that every school could be a good school given the chance and opportunity to develop, move forward and be progressive. That does not mean that every school must be a big school or have large numbers of pupils. Every school does not have to have over 1,000 pupils. In fact, I would contest that you get some of the better educational experiences at the smaller schools with 200 or 300 pupils as opposed to those with larger numbers.

Within the controlled sector, I recall the promises made in 2004 and 2005 of a newbuild for Devenish College. That is a case that has come up over and over again. I am sure that Minister O’Dowd and, indeed, his predecessors have heard it on various occasions. Indeed, the former Duke of Westminster High School at Kesh and Enniskillen High School merged to form Devenish College. I think that was in 2004. However, it was agreed at that time for the two individual campuses at Enniskillen and Kesh to remain until the new school of Devenish College was built on a brand new site. Unfortunately that did not happen. The Kesh site was closed before its time and, 10 years later, we are still waiting on the newbuild that was promised at that time.

Is it any wonder that there is a lack of confidence and trust in the Western Education and Library Board and the Department of Education? One of the big problems at the moment, irrespective of the sector, is that lack of confidence. To be fair, I accept that announcements such as the one that the Minister made this morning help to build a new confidence. However, if promises were made 10 years ago and nothing happens, it dents the confidence not only of the pupils at the school, many of whom have now left, but of the board of governors, the teachers and, indeed, the wider public.

We then go through the succeeding years with no progress being made on that newbuild but with the staff in Devenish College putting in a huge effort to ensure excellent teaching and the provision of a great educational experience for their pupils, even with very limited accommodation. It is fair to say that they should not have to teach in those conditions. Imagine how much easier their role would have been and how much better the experience of the pupils would have been if a new school had been in place 10 years ago.

I have a daughter who is starting Devenish College this year. When we went to the open night, the board of governors told us that it would have the newbuild in place by the time that she leaves. I do not know whether that will be in five years, six years or seven years, but I really hope that the Minister can put my mind at rest, not only from the point of view of a public representative but from that of a parent.

In January 2013, the Minister announced that there would be two newbuilds for Fermanagh: one for a merged Lisnaskea High School and Devenish College; and one for a merged Portora Royal School and Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar School. Then, totally unexpectedly, in that same month, there was an announcement that Lisnaskea High School was to close. It would merge with Devenish College, but the site in Lisnaskea would close. That was one of the biggest blows to the community in south-east Fermanagh. I know that the pupil numbers were dwindling, but the problem again was that it was being closed before its time.

Did we not learn any lessons from 2004 and 2005 when they closed the Duke of Westminster High School in Kesh with no newbuild in place? Did they not learn those lessons and keep the pressure on by retaining Lisnaskea High School and its building? I feel that something was missed there, especially when that school was proposing cooperation with other neighbouring schools such as St Comhghall’s College, St Aidan’s High School in Derrylin and the other schools in Enniskillen. It was unfortunate that that happened at that time.

At the same time, the two grammar schools in the controlled and voluntary grammar sectors, the Collegiate and Portora, continued to fill their allocated total numbers of 500 pupils each, or 70 new pupils a year, and, unfortunately, other schools were left to pick up what some people would term as “what is left”. That is an unfortunate way to put that, because many pupils who go to Devenish College, the integrated school, Castledearg High School or Omagh High School can have every bit as good an educational experience and opportunity as those who go to either the Collegiate or Portora.

That led to the Minister’s announcement in January 2013 of the two newbuilds in Fermanagh, and that has obviously led to significant friction between the schools. Sorry, maybe it is not between the schools but between personnel and individuals in those schools. I accept that people need to fight for their school. They need to be passionate and, at times, maybe even aggressive, but I ask that they respect the thoughts, proposals and positions of the people in the other schools, because they are equally fighting for their school.

Please do not run down the other schools. Please do not have a go at the teaching staff or the board of governors in those other schools, because it is not helpful.

In my church on Sunday, it was the children's prize-giving day. My rector, the Reverend Brian Harper, intimated of the ongoing debate about the post-primary sector in Fermanagh that he was concerned about the focus of the debate being on the individual schools as opposed to being on what the real focus should be, which is the children, and that some schools may be seen as more special than others. He said clearly that all children should be treated equally and that there was a commonality of them all being children of God. If they take that as a starting point, that is a good place to commence.

One of the major concerns is the process that is followed by the Department of Education and the Western Education and Library Board. Again, I have spoken to the Minister about this. You must go through a merger, an economic appraisal and all the other processes before you can access the finance. In the Minister's statement of 22 January 2013, when he announced those new projects for Fermanagh along with many others, he said:

"In making this announcement, it is my intention that the projects will be taken through to construction."

There is always a "but". He continued:

"However, I wish to make it clear that the authorisation to proceed with construction will be based on the level of capital funding available at the time and all necessary approvals being obtained." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 81, p42, col 1].

I know that the Minister will say that this is the process, but we are all here to change processes. Can we not change the process so that funding is allocated first? That would stop the division between so many schools arguing over the issues that may never happen and may never take place. That would be really helpful and appropriate.

I know that there is also an ongoing debate in the Catholic maintained sector, and I noticed the recommendations, from 2012 I think, from the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education. It recommended the retention of the two single-sex schools in Enniskillen — St Michael's and Mount Lourdes — and the all-ability school in Lisnaskea. Generally, my reading of that was the closure of all the other schools in the Catholic maintained sector in the area. Those are the schools in Belleek and Rosslea, St Aidan's High School and St Mary's in Irvinestown. I know that that has caused some significant debate as well. I have attended St Mary's in Brollagh with other MLAs, and I have attended St Aidan's at Derrylin on a number of occasions.

I cannot find the consultation anywhere, but I noticed a report in 'The Impartial Reporter' from May this year that intimated that another consultation was out and that St Eugene's of Rosslea would close in 2016 and a co-educational college for 11-to-19-year-olds across campuses in Lisnaskea and Derrylin was proposed. That means the retention of St Aidan's in Derrylin along with St Comhghall's in Lisnaskea. Obviously, the people of Derrylin and of that school will be very pleased about that proposal. I do not know how far that has got at the moment, and I think that the consultation closed earlier this month. It is an interesting concept of working together,

and the people of Lisnaskea will be very sore that they did not have an opportunity to explore and continue that opportunity to work together with those other schools. Obviously, they will wonder why they did not have that opportunity and now St Aidan's has. They will be saying, "Best wishes to St Aidan's" and will wish it well and will want to see that progressing. I know that St Mary's High School, Brollagh, at Belleek is looking around the cross-border opportunities.

Representatives were up here two weeks ago and are exploring those opportunities on cross-border education provision as well as trying to attract more pupils from their immediate area.

7.15 pm

I appeal to everyone in the process to hold their nerve and have respect for others in the debate and in the discussion, not just in here but in the wider educational debate in the county, as that is important. The schools have made proposals. Some have stated that, in the controlled sector, we could retain three schools of 600 pupils each at the Collegiate, Portora and Devenish. That is obviously skewing the numbers significantly towards the grammar sector, if that is what the wider community wants. However, I would like a very strong educational academy at Devenish College and for it to be built for at least 800 pupils. I ask the Minister to look at the opportunity of continuing to progress that and not to have it relying on a merger between Portora and the Collegiate. Devenish needs to be moved forward on its own and not be reliant on the merger between those two schools.

Lord Morrow: I welcome the opportunity to take part in this important debate. I warmly congratulate Tom Elliott on securing the Adjournment debate on an issue that is very topical, particularly in County Fermanagh. Last week, my party colleague Arlene Foster laid a petition before the House containing the names of over 7,000 people from across the community in County Fermanagh who value and want to retain the Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen. Community opposition has arisen because of recent proposals from the Western Education and Library Board that would mean the closure of the Collegiate and Portora Royal schools by September 2015. We are told that that is to facilitate the creation of a single co-ed non-denominational voluntary grammar school with a lower intake than the two current schools.

There is a particular irony here. The Education Minister stood before the House this morning and made a statement on major capital works. He was able to announce that a number of schools across Northern Ireland would benefit from new buildings: a fine statement and fine words. However, there should be a word of warning to the schools that may be celebrating the good news announced by the Minister. As Tom Elliott said, 10 years ago, when the Duke of Westminster High School closed, the newly created Devenish College was given the promise of a newbuild. Last year, we were told that a new school building would be delivered following the closure of Lisnaskea High School, but that promise has once again not been honoured. There is no new school.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): That is not true.

Lord Morrow: Lisnaskea High School is closed. I do not see what is untrue about that, and I do not see a new

school. Where is the untruth? The Minister will get his chance to refute that.

A decade after the initial promise was made, the closure of the Collegiate Grammar and Portora Royal schools is the latest precondition for the provision of a new school building for Devenish College, so the Minister has added another one. That is the way that the Minister works his wonders to perform. Unfortunately, he never comes up to the standard when it comes to delivering.

It is worth mentioning that the proposed new school would be based on a split site at either end of Enniskillen, with no guarantee of a new building. At least no more promises are being made about a newbuild. I think that my colleague Mervyn Storey accused the Minister this morning of offering a “jam tomorrow” statement, but that might be wildly overoptimistic. Even the jam tomorrow does not come. If the jam is delivered to these schools in the way that it has been to Devenish, pupils starting post-primary education this September will not just have left the school but those who decide to go to university could graduate before the new buildings are delivered. That is the speed at which the Minister delivers.

I do not accept for a moment that it is necessary to close two high-performing schools in order to achieve the best outcome for education in Fermanagh. Rather, the first statement that we should hear from the Minister is that a newbuild for Devenish College will be delivered immediately. He will get that chance in a few minutes, and he can give us the starting date, closing date and all the rest. But we will not hold our breath.

Numbers have fallen at Devenish College. I suspect that is no surprise. It has to be emphasised that this has not been because of a drift towards the grammar sector; the cap from the Department of Education means that intake there has been static. Instead, those numbers have been moving to other non-selective schools in the area or beyond. It is notable, of course, that some of those alternatives have modern buildings and facilities — exactly the facilities promised but not delivered by the Department of Education. I suspect that we will get another promise here later tonight, but we will wait.

The feelings of the community were laid before the House last week. Whilst the Western Education and Library Board has repeatedly failed in its task to deliver a strategic plan that can support all schools and command full community support, the Minister now has an opportunity to see if he can succeed where it has failed. I am sure that he is up for the challenge. Any teacher would remind us that there is a monumental difference between hearing what is said and actually listening to what is said. Will the Minister today prove that he has not just heard the views that have been represented but has actually listened to them?

It is wrong that, instead of being given support, these three schools in County Fermanagh are being played off against each other. That is the game that is being played. Anyone can see that; it is obvious. It is time for the Minister to show that he will stand up to flawed proposals from the Western Board and do the right thing for education in County Fermanagh. The talking is over for County Fermanagh. It is time for the Minister to deliver and prevaricate no longer. We have had all the promises, broken and failed. Can we now get some delivery? That is what we are looking for

here today. When the Minister stands up in a few minutes, we want a concrete proposal — not just words but delivery.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I also welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. Post-primary education in Fermanagh is a very important subject. However, I do not believe it can be looked at exclusively in a Fermanagh context, because some schools are close to counties in the South. Pupils in the Fermanagh area also go from the closed Lisnaskea school to Fivemiletown, which is not that far away.

I will put all of this in some context. In 2007, the Commission for Catholic Education and the Western Education and Library Board separately began reviews of their sectors in Fermanagh, with a view to rationalising their respective schools estates. This resulted in pre-consultation documents that set out options and sought views, followed by consultation papers outlining recommendations. Responses in the county were very high, and that is a good thing. It highlights that people in the county value the education of their children. However, we all know and agree that not all schools are viable or sustainable. The Minister of Education launched area-based planning in 2011, which puts pupils first and ensures that they will get the best education for generations to come. In the new way forward, children and young people and their education must come first, not institutions. It is up to the managing authorities to implement that policy. The Minister will ensure that decisions are consistent with policy, taking on board the views of communities.

All that said, change must come about to prepare our young people for the 21st century. It is understandable, as Members from the region have already outlined, that sectors and schools want the status quo to remain. Staff, boards of governors, parents, pupils and communities often believe that their school is a good school that has served its students with a quality education for decades. That is why you get campaigns across the county. We have all visited schools that feel that they are under threat. On the other hand, some believe that the school estate and education models cannot stand still in an ever-changing society and economy. Education is a particularly difficult aspect of society to bring about change in. I once read that when the biro pen was introduced into the classroom, many educationalists said that it would dilute the quality of education. That was not that many decades ago.

The Member across the way mentioned the issue of Portora versus the Collegiate, and we saw the petitions being handed in last week. I do not want to say what the best solution is. It seems that one school is being pitted against another, which leads to fear, anger and concern amongst parents, pupils, schools, communities and staff. Forced marriages do not work.

I read recently that Professor Gallagher, an educationalist, told the Education Committee, of which I am not a member, that he had engaged with a sample of parents in nearby Omagh on a range of educational issues regarding post-primary education. What came out of that was that most parents were primarily interested in getting a quality education for their children. They were much less concerned about having a full range of choices or whether the education was in one type of school or another. The key point was that parents will be flexible about local provision as long as they feel that it works for their child.

One must ask why the WELB, after many years, has not facilitated the building of a working relationship between the schools. That would be a much better approach to creating fundamental change than forcing organisations together.

No one can escape the frustrations and anger felt in school communities throughout the county. The governing authorities must manage through engagement and by listening to school communities. I have no doubt that the Minister will take on board their views when the consultation period closes.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an díospóireacht thábhachtach seo anocht. I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this important debate, which is on an issue that is close to the hearts of many people across Fermanagh. From Belleek to Derrylin, from Irvinestown to Rosslea and from Lisnaskea to Enniskillen, it is something that is up for discussion in every village and town. As you know, we do not have any cities. It is an issue that affects everybody. I thank Tom for keeping us here late to debate it, and I must commend him for doing so at a time when Arlene Foster is out of the country. I think that he is getting one back on her for having the petition last week.

Rural Ireland is under serious pressure. The urbanisation of public services and the abandonment of rural areas is a major pressure point for rural communities. The retention of small schools plays a key role in sustaining life for people who live in rural communities, so it is important that we keep a close watch on how services are delivered for people in rural areas.

The starting point for this debate on post-primary education in Fermanagh goes way back. We look at the sustainable schools policy, which recommended enrolment of at least 500 in post-primary schools, although the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) will tell you that it wants to see 900 or 1,000 in schools. The entitlement framework means that schools will have to provide 24 subjects at Key Stage 4 and 27 subjects post 16.

The background to the Fermanagh context, as other Members have indicated, is specifically the separate and disjointed planning by the management authorities in 2007 and 2008 for the rationalisation of the schools estate in the two main sectors.

So, there was a post-primary review of controlled schools in Fermanagh by the Western Education and Library Board and a parallel review of the Catholic sector by the Commission for Catholic Education. Those two reviews laid the foundation stones of this evening's debate. One really must question why the managing authorities, once they have set a proposed direction of travel, appear to do very little to bring these school communities together over time, help to build relationships and start to have mature conversations with and between stakeholders.

7.30 pm

What have the managing authorities done since they produced these documents to effectively manage change? I suppose this debate clearly shows that their approach and strategy leave a lot to be desired. Forcing people together when there is very limited history of working together does not work, and it does not appear to have worked in Fermanagh.

In relation to the Collegiate and Portora proposal, which is the hot topic of conversation at the minute, I understand that for many of the people involved the proposal being advanced is not one of a merger or amalgamation in their view but is seen by many as an aggressive takeover, as it would see all children being educated in a school under the Royal name. It is particularly frustrating for some people that some members of the school community appear to be losing their identity whilst others are retaining theirs. It is not a point about the monarchy but about the identity of people and their close affinity with their school.

It is understandable that many people feel that their voices are not being listened to. On this occasion, it is striking that it is women who feel that their voices are not being listened to on this issue. Across all of Fermanagh, people want their voices heard in relation to education.

There have been lengthy delays regarding Devenish College. I will leave it up to the Minister to tell the truth about what has happened with Devenish College in the past and to challenge the falsehoods that are coming from some Members. The issues facing this school will not all be solved by a newbuild. Without agreement on a way forward for the controlled sector, Devenish will remain in a difficult position.

Some people from Fermanagh are choosing to go to school outside the county. They are choosing to go to the high school in Omagh, to Fivemiletown or to Castlederg. That is their choice. The education and library board predicted that, when Lisnaskea High School closed, pupils would transfer en masse to Devenish College, but a significant number transferred to Fivemiletown College and to the integrated school in Enniskillen. So, you cannot simply predict what is going to happen, and a newbuild will not solve all those problems.

As well as the two reviews that I mentioned, we are further down the road with an area planning process initiated by this Minister, and one that I fully understand the rationale for and fully support him in achieving. However, it is clear to me that the managing authorities have failed to comply with the most basic terms of reference that he set out as part of the process; namely, exploring opportunities for cross-sectoral and cross-border planning.

In Fermanagh, neither the education and library board nor CCMS has engaged in such discussions. They have left it to local communities to drive such options. Not only have they not given them any support, it is my view that they have been hostile and resistant to such alternatives. In west Fermanagh, people have come up with an innovative proposal to work with their closest educational neighbours and develop a cross-border learning community based around St Mary's High School, Brollagh. This is an innovative, forward-looking proposal that is thinking outside the box and has attracted widespread community and political support.

People can land on the moon or live in outer space for months on end but some in our managing authorities seem to think that we cannot educate our children with each other in a cross-border setting. I reiterate my full support for this alternative proposal and to urge the Minister, as he is considering the development proposal at this minute in time, to row in behind it and make the delivery of it a reality.

In Derrylin and Lisnaskea, we have seen the upset and energy that local people brought to the table when they felt that they were being dictated to in a top-down approach by people in Omagh or Holywood. The retention of education in Derrylin is a sensible and serious proposal that should happen.

In Enniskillen, we see stand-alone proposals being brought forward by CCMS for the Catholic sector and by the education and library board for the controlled sector with no acknowledgement that the other sector exists and that school communities wish to work together. What is going to happen there is that we will have one Catholic school for boys with about 1,400 boys in it and a Catholic school for girls with about 1,400 girls in it. So, CCMS's solution to ending academic selection is to remove the choice for young people, and that is simply not good enough.

There is far too much segregation in our school system. We have division based on religion, class and identity but also on gender. That needs to be brought to an end. I am running out of time, and we have not even discussed the future of the integrated sector. We have not discussed the options that are presented for shared education in the county or the opportunities for the Irish-medium sector. I have an awful lot more that I would like to say.

Mr Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Flanagan: It is striking that some of the primary schools want to work together but the managing authorities are resisting it, yet, when schools do not want to work together, the managing authorities are forcing it upon them. That tells us everything that we need to know about what is going on with the managing authorities in Fermanagh.

Mr Byrne: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to take part in the debate today. Even though I am not a native of Fermanagh, I have a keen interest in Fermanagh as my wife comes from there. I congratulate Tom Elliott on securing the Adjournment debate this evening.

Education goes to the heart of every community, as we all know. It is natural that parents want the best for their children, which, in many instances, may be contrary to what the Government, Department or, indeed, the stakeholder sectors want. The closure of Lisnaskea High School is sad as it marks the end of an era for the people who were part of and attended that school. I recognise that schools have to be viable, which means that they must be able to prove that they are sustainable, but I do not believe that the current numbers game is a sensible approach in relation to the interests of rural communities.

I travel through Kesh regularly, and it is sad to see the secondary school there — the former Duke of Westminster school — boarded up. If such schools are closed, it is important that the physical building is kept alive through suitable adult education or community activities. I saw that when a secondary school in Plumbridge closed, the building was left abandoned and had to be demolished. I have also seen St Eugene's in Castlederg close. Hopefully, something can happen to that building, but nothing has emanated from anywhere yet.

In the controlled sector, I understand that it is proposed that Lisnaskea be amalgamated with Devenish College in a new building on the Tempo Road in Enniskillen and that

Portora be amalgamated with the Collegiate on one site. Portora seems to be the most floated location for that at present. Many are welcoming that development as they see it as the way forward for post-primary education in the area. They see two new school builds that will be modern and cater for the needs of those in the sector. However, there are those who are sceptical and, indeed, opposed to the amalgamation proposal, particularly for the two grammar schools.

A combination of the board of governors, parents and former pupils of the Collegiate has embarked on a strong campaign to retain the school as an independent girls' grammar school in Enniskillen for the county of Fermanagh. We heard about the recent petition with 7,000 signatures that was presented here by Mrs Foster. That is very telling community activity in the interests of that school. Recently, I met a delegation of governors, parent reps and teachers from the school who are united in their campaign to retain the Collegiate as an independent school with its own character and ethos. The wishes and views of that school community should, I believe, be respected. The school has an excellent educational track record built up over many decades, and the local education planning proposal seems at odds with the interests of the Collegiate community.

In the Catholic maintained sector, there are also grave concerns and anxiety about the provision of secondary education throughout the county of Fermanagh. In particular, there is great concern and, indeed, anger about the proposed closure of some rural secondary schools such as St Mary's High School, Brollagh.

The community of Erne North, comprising the Garrison and Belleek communities, feels very strongly that CCMS and the Department of Education made little effort to retain the school as a viable entity for the secondary education of the people of the area. Despite all the talk, and I mean talk, about North/South cooperation on education, nothing meaningful has yet been attempted in order to maintain that school. If it closes, pupils from the Garrison and Belleek area will have to spend one and a half hours every morning and evening on a bus on a bendy road to Enniskillen. The prolonged discussion on the future of the school created a lot of uncertainty, which meant that some parents, concerned about their children's educational future, opted to send them to the bigger schools in Enniskillen. Those are the fortunate children, in that their parents travel to work in Enniskillen. Unfortunately, the children of Erne North are left with no choice but to travel 25 miles or more on that bad road to Enniskillen. The nightmare for parents is that the decision to close may go ahead.

St Aidan's in Derrylin has been fighting to survive, as has St Eugene's in Rosslea.

We have St Mary's College in Irvinestown, again under a cloud of uncertainty. I welcome the fact that St Aidan's High School of Derrylin, along with St Comhghall's College in Lisnaskea, may have a viable future with a shared campus between the two schools.

In Enniskillen, we have St Joseph's College and St Fanchea's College, both excellent secondary schools. We have also two excellent grammar schools in the Catholic sector: St Michael's College and Mount Lourdes Grammar School. These schools have built up an enviable

reputation. They have a strong history and a strong educational ethos; but sometimes the authorities are intent, with a predetermined policy initiative. That seems to be adding to the pain and difficulties experienced in many communities, but particularly in the county of Fermanagh.

Mr Storey: My colleague who preceded me lives closer to the county; I am further away from the county, but I can assure you that it lessens not my interest in the issue, obviously as Chair of the Education Committee but also here to be of help and support to my colleagues Lord Morrow and Mrs Foster who, unfortunately, cannot be with us.

I congratulate Tom on securing the debate on this issue. I have visited Fermanagh on a number of occasions. The Education Committee was in Fermanagh last Wednesday, and we had a very useful exchange with the Fermanagh Trust. We saw the work that it has done there, particularly with regard to shared education.

What I want to do in the few minutes that are allotted to me is to try to give some sense as someone from outside the county, looking in to what is going on — or not going on. A number of comments have been made in the House this evening which I think need some further clarification and consideration.

As has been said by Tom and by Lord Morrow, the case for Devenish has been well made, and yet despite all the years that have passed and all the promises made, we still find ourselves in a position where the case rests on, “You might get it, provided that we get something else.” If that is ever a policy on a promise, I think it is a very poor way to go about delivering education.

The cynic in me would say, if you look at what has happened in some elements in the maintained sector, that if you promise the Minister and the bishops that you will move away from academic selection, then you will be guaranteed your money, as is happening in the Minister’s own constituency in Lurgan. That is clearly defined in a letter which he sent to the board just a few weeks ago, in which he actually went so far as saying, “Look at what has happened in regard to St Michael’s — £25 million — and if those other schools would only learn the lesson and do what they are told, then they might get the money.” I think that there is an issue there as to how the Minister behaves, in terms of the way in which this process rolls out. The case for Devenish has been made. I have to concur with my colleagues: let us move on and get Devenish built. Let us move on.

I want to pick up on a couple of comments that were made by representatives of the Minister’s party in the county. I would love to know: what are they for? We have heard a lot of talk about “Let’s blame the managing authorities”, “Let’s have a go at CCMS” and “Let’s have a go at the boards”, and then they use all the terminology about listening to the community. Previously, Mr Flanagan said, left to local options, that was not a good idea, but you have to still listen to the community. So can the Members opposite really tell us, in terms of the maintained sector, are they supportive of Brollagh? Do they want Brollagh to stay? Are they supportive of the other schools in the maintained sector in the county, or are they trying to ride about 14 different horses in the Grand National and hope that, somehow, no decisions that will impact on them will really be made? Do they think, “As long as the focus stays on

Portora and the Collegiate and Devenish, that will take the heat off us”?

That is not shared education. That is not working together.

7.45 pm

I commend Mr Flanagan — I think that it was him, but maybe it was the other Member — for at least having the honesty to say that the managing authorities were doing this process separately. Why? It suits them to do it separately. There are elements in the maintained sector that talk a good talk when it comes to collaboration, but do not ask them to give anything up.

If the Minister and the Members of his party think that, somehow, the easy option here is the controlled sector, I am saying that those days are over. The controlled sector has taken the highest hit of closures —

Mr O’Dowd: That is not true.

Mr Storey: It is true.

Mr O’Dowd: It is not true.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Storey: I will produce the evidence to prove that it is true. It has taken the highest hit of closures. The maintained sector has got around it by way of amalgamations. When it comes to closures, it is quite clear that the controlled sector has been disproportionately affected. What do I want to see in Fermanagh? I want to see the wishes of the community in terms of the Collegiate respected.

I agree with Tom. There is a risk that we now have a situation in which it is them and us. That is not good for provision. Let us remember what is at the heart of this: the provision of education for our children and young people. I believe that the Collegiate’s position needs to be respected, as do the concerns being raised by Portora, which has appalling capital provision at this time. Anybody who has ever been in the school’s sports hall will know that it is an absolute shambles. It is disgraceful, and the school needs capital.

Let us remember that the Western Board was talking about building one big school on Portora hill and putting everybody there. That was not an option. What can be delivered in Fermanagh for non-Catholic pupils? Let us remember that we are talking about a minority community living in a county where they have had many challenges and issues. The Minister needs to give serious consideration, without any more equivocation and talk about “If you do whatever”, to moving Devenish and allowing the Collegiate and Portora to work out a solution when we get to a point at which they can have a conversation that creates the environment in which different things could be done, the premise being that it is for provision and for the best interests of the young people of Fermanagh.

I commend Tom for securing the debate, and I look forward to what the Minister has to say. I trust that soon we will see some clarity in terms of decisions for education in the county.

Mr O’Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to set out once more my policy on area planning, this time with a particular focus on

post-primary education in Fermanagh. In responding to the debate, I wish to put on record that I have noted the concerns raised about area planning by Members in the previous debate and that, as we continue to refine the area planning work and press ahead with the necessary restructuring, I will take Members' concerns into consideration.

I have often said, and I am happy to repeat it, that the vision that we have set for education here is aimed at ensuring that all our young people — all of them — have the opportunity and are encouraged to reach their full potential in education. The problems that beset sections of the controlled sector are not of my making but of others' making. Policy decisions taken outside the Department of Education are having the most detrimental impact on the controlled sector.

Mr Storey may quote selective figures about closures and amalgamations etc but the fact is — *[Interruption.]* It is very difficult, Mr Speaker, to have a sensible debate —

Mr Speaker: Order. You must allow the Minister to respond without interruption. Order. The Minister must be heard.

Mr O'Dowd: The policy that is causing the biggest problems for the controlled sector in Fermanagh is not my policy but that of the Members on the opposite Benches. It is their subservient relationship with the voluntary grammar sector. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No, I will not.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: It has been detrimental to attitudes towards education and perceptions around education, and it has been detrimental to non-selective schools in the controlled sector. Belated, misinformed challenges to me will not hide that. If you are serious about education for all and about the needs of communities, whether they be in Fermanagh or elsewhere, you need to review your own policy.

You most certainly need to review your subservient relationship — and it is subservient — to the voluntary grammar sector. Its needs cannot always come first. The needs of the selective sector cannot always come first. If they do, you end up with an imbalanced education system in which non-selective schools suffer. That is particularly evident in the controlled sector.

With regard to the particular issues that face Fermanagh, there are 13 post-primary schools in the area, which currently serve around 5,000 pupils in total. Of those 13 schools, only one has a year 8 to year 12 enrolment that is above the sustainable schools minimum enrolment indicator of 500. Ten of those 13 schools have fewer than 400 pupils, with six having fewer than 300 pupils.

I accept the comments that have been made that Fermanagh presents particular issues with regard to the rurality of the communities that its schools serve. With regard to future planning, I accept that there are also pockets of minority communities in Fermanagh, but the demographics in the region are declining and, based on NISRA statistics, are set to do so for a number of years.

I will concentrate on the rural end of Fermanagh for a second. As I said before, the best way to save a rural primary or post-primary school is not simply by signing a

petition, but by signing the admissions form and sending your child to it. That is the best way to save a rural school. I am very supportive of participatory democracy. Petitions have their place. However, if you are serious about it, sign the admissions form and send your child to a local rural primary or post-primary school. That is the best way to save schools.

I will touch on the proposals for Brollagh for a moment. I have had significant correspondence on Brollagh. I recently met its support group. I am taking its views into consideration before I make any final decision on that development proposal. I hope to make that decision in the near future. There are other development proposals in and around that area that are at various states of readiness and publication. They will come my way in due course. I will deal with them based on the evidence that is before me at that time.

In relation to the history of education provision in Fermanagh, I have been a Minister only since 2011. I will not be held accountable for decisions that were made by direct rule Ministers in 2004. If a Member of the House is vexed that Devenish was announced in 2004 and has not been built by 2014, I have to throw the question back: as an elected representative, what have you been doing? You clearly have not been vocal enough or raised the profile of the case. I know that we had a masterclass from you, as we always do when you present yourself in the Chamber to address me, on how not to win friends and influence people. If you want a masterclass on how to do that, you are the classic example.

Lord Morrow: Was I supposed to grovel?

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us have remarks through the Chair.

Mr O'Dowd: You are a classic example of how not to influence someone in a good way. You excel at it. When you approach Ministers with the attitude that you approach me with, perhaps that is why there was a failure to deliver Devenish until I came into office.

Lord Morrow: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No; I will not. Thank you.

In January 2013, I made a statement that Devenish would be built. It would appear that the Member does not understand how a building is constructed, never mind how you get to the stage of building. When I stand here in the Chamber and say that a new school will be built for Devenish, it does not suddenly appear. It does not magically pop up. There has to be a considerable amount of preparation work on business cases and economic appraisals. All of that takes time to go through.

For the Member's information, my permanent secretary and the chief executive of the Western Education and Library Board meet regularly to discuss newbuild programmes in the Western Board area, and Devenish is on the agenda every time they meet. In due course, there will be an economic appraisal from the Western Board about moving Devenish forward. I have committed in the past to building Devenish, and I will build Devenish going forward.

One challenge facing Devenish is falling enrolments. Is that surprising when elected representatives from the

area stand up and tell people that it will never be built?

[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: They stand up and broadcast across the airwaves that Devenish will never be built. I would not mind if they were on the airwaves saying that and doing something positive in the background to move Devenish forward, but in my time in office, since I made that announcement, none of the Members opposite has asked me for a meeting to discuss the progress of Devenish. Not one Member has asked me for a meeting to press me or influence me on Devenish and ensure that my officials, the chief executive of the Western Board and I are carrying out the work. They go on the airwaves and stand in the Chamber tonight to tell anybody who is prepared to listen that it will never happen. It has to happen for the benefit of education in the area, and it will happen.

The consultation on the Collegiate and Portora runs until 14 July.

Mr Elliott: Will the Member give way before we get on to that?

Mr O'Dowd: Yes.

Mr Elliott: I hear what the Minister says, but will he accept that I raised the issue of Devenish with him on the Floor on at least two occasions? I may not have asked for a meeting, but I assure him that I will now. I raised the issue with his predecessor, with whom I had a meeting. I filled out the admissions form as he has said, and I will send my child to Devenish. I want him to clarify my relationship with the voluntary grammar sector because I am not sure what it is.

Mr O'Dowd: For the benefit of the record and for clarification, I was directing my comments at Lord Morrow. I am happy to clarify that Mr Elliott has raised the issue of Devenish with me on several occasions. I have no difficulty in clarifying that. I was directing my comments at those who choose to tell everyone who chooses to listen that Devenish will never be built and then do nothing about it.

A development proposal has been published for Portora and the Collegiate, and the consultation continues until 14 July. I have agreed to meet a delegation of interested parents and members of the Collegiate, and I am happy to do so. I am happy to meet any interested parties who are representative of the area or who have a stake in the schools.

Following those meetings and the closure of the consultation on 14 July, I will bring together all the evidence available to me and make a decision based on the educational needs of all the young people in Fermanagh. I note that the Western Education and Library Board released a significant, lengthy press release yesterday responding to unhelpful commentary in some local media and other places. I hope that that answers some of the issues that have been raised. I also welcome Mr Elliott's comments about having a respectful debate on the matter as we move forward.

Adjourned at 7.59 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 30 June 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Public Petition: ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria

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

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Caithfidh mé a rá go bhfuil mé thar a bheith buíoch díot as an deis seo a fháil chun an achainí seo a chur faoi do bhráid agus faoi bhráid an Tionóil. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of Newry and Mourne ME/Fibromyalgia Support Group to you and the Assembly. As you know, both of those conditions are extremely serious. They leave the sufferers in great pain and devoid of energy.

For many years, the Newry and Mourne ME group has been working hard to inform people about the illnesses and to provide advice and support to them. For the most part, the work is carried out by volunteers, who, largely, are patients who suffer from ME and fibromyalgia. I have great admiration for people who use their own time and resources to help others who suffer from the same illness. Today's petition asks the Minister of Health to adopt the Canadian consensus criteria on ME and fibromyalgia.

The criteria have been agreed by a plethora of experts in Canada and other countries throughout the world. The Newry and Mourne support group and many others believe that they offer the best option for sufferers to find relief from the illness and, ultimately, to be cured of it.

As I said, Mr Speaker, I am honoured to present the petition to you on behalf of the group. It has been signed by hundreds of people. The group has done amazing work in promoting it. I am sure that our Health Minister will read the petition and the documentation contained in the file very carefully. I hope that his response will be a positive one. On that note, Mr Speaker, it only remains for me to thank you very much.

Mr D Bradley moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward a copy of the petition to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and to the Chair of the Health Committee, Maeve McLaughlin.

Public Petition: Detoxification Provisions: Foyle

Mr Speaker: Mr Ramsey has sought leave to present a public petition. The Member will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject matter.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank you, Mr Speaker, and the Business Office for facilitating this petition. I present the petition to the House on behalf of many people in my constituency who feel aggrieved at the recent decision not to have a detoxification centre in the constituency.

Mr Speaker, you will be surprised and shocked to learn that, today, there are 48,000 signature and 12,000 names online as part of a Facebook campaign. In all my years in the Assembly, I have never seen a petition of such magnitude. That is evidence of the concerns of so many. There is a realisation that there is an unmet need in our city. None of us in the House or in our constituencies can look at our families, our neighbours and members of our community and not see those faced with addiction problems, whether that be alcohol misuse or abuse or, in many cases, alcohol or substance abuse.

There is a human cry from my constituency. Andrew Quigley lost his life several months back. That was a triggering mechanism for many people. I commend the small action group in the city, which very patiently and methodically gathered the names over a number of months, highlighting the issue of a young man whose mother, Colette, said publicly that her son could not get access to addiction services. Had he had access to detoxification, his life may have been saved. I say very honourably in the House that, if there were a detoxification centre in Derry, my heart and soul tells me that lives would be saved.

I ask the Health Minister and the healthcare trust commissioning body to look again at the decision. Derry is not just another town or city; it is the second city of Northern Ireland. It is the capital of the north-west. As such, there are people who believe that the House, the Assembly and the Executive have failed them. I will meet the Health Minister soon after this debate. I appeal to him directly to look at the evidence because, for a number of years, there has been a detoxification centre in Omagh. There was never any evidence that families, and young people in particular, had access to that treatment centre in Omagh.

Mr Speaker, I know that you share some of my concerns. I am glad that you share those concerns and support the campaign wholeheartedly. It is for the House and all political parties in it to support the campaign. We have

here the names of almost 60,000 people from the city of Derry, which has a population of 110,000, who are saying that we need a detoxification centre.

Mr P Ramsey moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward the petition to the Health Minister and send a copy to the Chair of the Health Committee, Maeve McLaughlin.

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

I beg to move

That the Budget (No. 2) Bill [NIA 36/11-15] do now pass.

The passing of the Final Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill by the House will provide legislative cover for the currently agreed Budget and enable Departments to continue to use resources and spend cash on public services for the remainder of this financial year. Of course, as I said on many occasions, the Budget position is continually moving and in-year changes will amend the opening position reflected in the Bill. That will be of particular importance this year as most departmental budgets will have to be reduced if we do not progress welfare reform. As is customary, I will bring updated legislation to the House in February 2015 to authorise the final position for this financial year.

The public expenditure issues and many other issues around this Bill have been debated fully over the past two weeks, and I do not propose to repeat them today in my opening remarks. However, I want to reinforce the issue of welfare reform, which dominated the Budget Bill debates a few weeks ago. We in the Executive and in this Assembly are faced with a stark choice. Delivery of welfare reform will see the welfare budget rise more slowly but it will see that budget being funded by Her Majesty's Treasury. Should we not implement welfare reform, Her Majesty's Treasury will expect to see the savings being taken from our budgets and the Executive must then take action to address this issue. That will undoubtedly require tough decisions. Those decisions must be made early in the financial year to allow Departments to plan accordingly.

We must either implement welfare reform or plan early to address the budgetary reductions. Inertia on this position would simply have the effect of paralysing our public services as funding would be held back in anticipation of a reduction further down the line. I am sure that some Members will again raise the issue of welfare reform and may even challenge my assessment during this debate, so I may well return to it in my concluding remarks.

It is important to state that the provision in the Bill represents the final year of the Budget 2011-15 as agreed by the previous Assembly in March 2011. Members will be aware that there have been a number of changes to the position since then, and these have been agreed by the Executive and brought before the Finance and Personnel Committee for scrutiny in advance of this debate. The Committee agreed accelerated passage, and I am grateful for that. The Committee's work in examining the changes to budgets that have led to the Bill before us today is often unheralded but it is a crucial aspect of devolved government. I will ensure that my officials continue to provide financial information in a timely manner to allow the Committee to continue exercising its important role.

Transparency in public finances and the financial process that underpins those finances is to be welcomed. However, as we heard in the Chamber over the course of debating this legislation, transparency is not uniform across all Assembly Committees. I encourage all Departments to provide transparent and timely information to Committees

to allow them to exercise a proper scrutiny role over departmental Estimates information.

In terms of that transparency, the Finance and Personnel Committee and, indeed, a number of Members expressed frustration about its technical nature and the lack of read-across to the Budget position. My officials have provided summary tables that I understand are helpful to the Committees in reconciling the Estimates and Budget figures, but I agree that the process remains somewhat opaque. I believe that there is an opportunity for the Assembly to transform this process, and I hope that we can progress that in the near future.

This year, we as an Assembly find ourselves facing substantial pressures on the Budget. Most, if not all, Departments face additional pressures in some form and, unfortunately, I do not have an infinite supply of funding. We are able to supplement our block grant with additional receipts, regional rates and reinvestment and reform initiative (RRI) borrowing, but even that is not sufficient. Going forward, we must find better ways of doing what we do. We must look to reforming our public services so that we can deliver more for less.

12.15 pm

I firmly believe that reform is the only way that we will be able to provide world-class public services within the future budgetary constraints that we face. We must ensure that every penny spent on the provision of public services is spent wisely and spent on high-priority services, but we must also ensure that we live within the constraints placed upon us by Her Majesty's Treasury, including reductions in relation to welfare reform. They cannot be ignored and we must plan accordingly.

With that appeal, I bring my remarks to a close and ask Members to support the Bill.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As I said during the previous debate, the Committee has agreed, under Standing Order 42(2), to grant accelerated passage to the Budget Bill on the basis of having been consulted appropriately on its expenditure provisions. It is imperative that the Department meet its requirement for appropriate consultation on each occasion, given the importance of such Bills progressing through the Assembly before the summer recess.

As for the remainder of this financial year, I reiterate my previous point on the contribution of Assembly Committees to the Budget and financial processes, and the importance of regular, timely and effective scrutiny of the financial forecasting and performance of Departments. That will enable Committees to identify issues in real time and obtain assurances that the necessary corrective or preventative action will be taken. It will help to ensure that no moneys are returned to the Treasury as a result of underspends beyond the thresholds agreed in the Budget exchange scheme and that retrospective action is not needed to regularise any excess spend.

I also explained during previous budgetary debates that the Committee is taking forward work, in collaboration with the Department, to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the Budget process. That should, in conjunction with other measures, help to improve the

Budget and financial processes and related parliamentary scrutiny and accountability.

The proposal for the MOU arises from the previous Committee's inquiry into the Assembly's scrutiny and advisory role in relation to the Executive's Budget and expenditure. It was also a key recommendation from the Executive's review of the financial process. It will facilitate the constructive and meaningful input and scrutiny by Members and Committees, which will assist in overseeing the effective and efficient delivery of the Executive's strategic priorities. It will support the Executive in their role of managing public expenditure and further promote good working relationships between Departments and their Committee, as well as Departments and individual Members.

The Committee recently wrote to the Minister to ask for an update on his consideration of the draft memorandum of understanding, which was developed jointly by Committee staff and DFP officials. Perhaps the Minister will provide some positive indications in his winding-up speech today.

In anticipation of exercising its coordination function in the Assembly scrutiny of the draft Budget 2015-16, the Committee has been undertaking preliminary research and investigation into strategic finance issues, most recently financial transactions capital, efficiency savings, performance against savings delivery plans and borrowing from the European Investment Bank. Further such cross-departmental work will be undertaken on preventative spending and on the year-end surge of spending by Departments.

I will move on to speak from a party political point of view. The Minister referred to welfare reform, as it is called, which not only exercises many politicians here but, quite clearly, many across the water. I was reading 'The Economist' last week, and it was interesting that even it now states that universal credit is one of the great Whitehall disasters of recent times. We also see that the Westminster Public Accounts Committee has deemed the personal independence payments situation a "fiasco" and described the incompetence of DFP as "shocking". So a number of things happening with welfare reform in Britain clearly indicate that the entire process is on the rocks. That being the case, we have to ask ourselves whether it is wise to tie our load to what is, effectively, the sinking ship of welfare reform and the agenda of the present Tory/Lib Dem coalition in London.

Whilst Labour is taking a contrary position and following some of the welfare reform agenda, it is quite clear that the strategy and the agenda that has been pursued by Iain Duncan Smith is not working and will not work. Given that the Government are breaching their own welfare caps and cannot even put their own IT system in place, I do not see the need for us to follow them down that road, when it is quite clear that it is not going to work.

I want to refer back to the Westminster Public Accounts Committee report on welfare reform in Britain. According to the report, the implementation of welfare reform has been so poor that terminally ill people have been waiting months for their entitlements. That is a commonplace problem across the water, and we have to ask ourselves how we, as human beings, can oversee, or consider overseeing, a welfare agenda that leads to a situation

in which terminally ill people lose their entitlements, sometimes weeks before they lose their life.

We will continue to oppose the welfare agenda of the British Government at Westminster, and it is absolute lunacy to tie ourselves to what is now a sinking ship. Understandably, the DUP wants to get into bed with the Tories next year, and perhaps a lot of this is more to do with that than welfare reform itself.

We need to look at other costs as well. We are obviously facing into another summer, and, unfortunately, there is the potential for conflict on parades. We need to deal with that. Some of the greatest risks to our peace process are parades and conflict on our streets —

Mr Speaker: Order. I am very conscious that the Member is moving slightly away from the subject matter. I am trying to be helpful, so I ask him, as far as possible, to keep to the debate before the House.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Those represent a big threat to costs and the policing budget, and we need to cognisant of that. They are also a tourism and investment deterrent and undermine stability. Anyone who listened to the radio this morning will have heard representatives from the business community say that they want politicians and political parties to sort out the remaining issues over the summer. All political parties need to get to grips with that. They affect not only communities in parts of Belfast and elsewhere but our economy, community relations and all our futures. We need to start to get to grips with the issues.

The Minister has made much of public sector reform, and the Committee is certainly interested in pursuing that further. He has put some changes in place, but we really need to see some delivery. The Committee will soon conclude its inquiry into flexible working. All of that is important in freeing up resources for future budgets. Once the Committee concludes its inquiry, we will want to hear more positive soundings from senior officials in the Department about introducing flexible working and freeing up resources and space in public sector buildings. We have heard from a number of organisations, particularly those in the private sector, that do not understand why the public sector cannot catch up or try to introduce a degree of risk-taking into the process to ensure that the agenda is successfully pursued.

We have also heard from a number of organisations and businesses based here that are taking technology to public sector organisations in lots of other countries but feel that they are up against the wall with the public sector here. We really need to get technological improvements in place, and with the Department of Health in particular, because the inefficiencies there are absolutely enormous. The Minister of Health has not got to grips with that. Sometimes it seems that he is the Oliver Twist of the Executive: every time that there is a monitoring round, Mr Poots says, "Please, Mr Finance Minister, give me some more". The Health Minister has to look in the other direction and deal with the inefficiencies in his Department.

To conclude, I support the Budget Bill, and my party supports the Budget Bill as it is presented. However, there are a number of challenges with the economy and with dealing with some of the wastage that is still taking place in the public sector. That involves dealing not only with public sector reform but with the big issues around parades and

the issues that are affecting civil society and which the business community is alarmed about at the moment. That is something that the Executive as a whole need to get to grips with over this summer.

Mr Girvan: I, too, stand to speak in favour of the Final Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill. In doing so, I appreciate that a number of the discussions have already taken place and that, within the Committee, there has been quite an extensive look across what is happening from Department to Department. However, I appreciate that there is a review of the process and that clarity is required within that. The budgets as they are presented are extremely difficult to interpret from one Department to another, so there is a certain amount of crossover that needs to be linked into to ensure that we are looking at everything in the whole.

The Bill, primarily, is to allow the Departments to go ahead and make the spend to the end of this financial year. I appreciate that there have been difficulties in trying to manage the Budget right through the whole term of this Assembly in that we set the Budget in March 2011, as has been mentioned. That is the Budget that we are working on currently. That Budget indicated a £4 billion reduction from what we receive as a subvention from Westminster over that whole period. I appreciate that you cannot really cut £4 billion without having some pain. It has not necessarily been a painless process, but we have risen to the occasion. We have dealt with what we have in what I believe to be a reasonable and mature approach towards that. In having agreed that, I think that, from that point of view, it needs to be looked at positively.

Additional pressures have been brought upon the Budget. Irrespective of what the Chair of the Committee has said, failing to deal with the welfare reform issue will have and is having an input to our Budget as it is this year. If Westminster were to decide to do something different along the line, we would take the benefits of that, but we are currently receiving penalties. As that stands, we can ill afford to stand the reduction, which will hit not only DFP but every Department. That is something, because it is a block grant that we receive, and that block grant will, therefore, have to be cut accordingly to manage that. I appreciate that it has been said that we are watching what is happening in Westminster, but I think that there is more to be gleaned from what is happening within the process in this House as to what is going on in the Republic of Ireland. There are those who are playing politics, with Northern Ireland as the small pawn in their bigger pitch.

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Girvan: Yes.

Mr Weir: Some dire warnings have been made about the financial impacts for future budgets. On the radio this morning, it was mentioned that the Minister of Justice may well be writing to the Policing Board to say that, because of the cuts, he will be looking for £10 million to come off the police budget. Will the Member agree that it is a mythological hope that, from across the water, Labour will in some way come riding to the rescue and abandon this and put us in a much better financial position? Last week on the radio, even Eamonn McCann, somebody who is not of the same way of thinking of many of the people on these Benches, indicated that, if people were expecting the Labour Party to come riding like the cavalry to the rescue on this issue and then to pump a lot more money

into the Budget, they were living in a fool's paradise. With the exception of the bedroom tax, which has already been dealt with by imaginative means by the Executive, as has been indicated, this has focused not on Northern Ireland but on the opportunity for appearance of opposition to austerity in Dublin. The problem is that, one way or the other, Sinn Féin, North and South, whichever way round you see it, is like being shackled to a corpse on its part.

12.30 pm

Mr Girvan: I like the analogy and think that it is very apt. I agree with the Member's comments.

Many comments have been made on how our public sector can work more effectively and efficiently, and that area needs some imaginative thinking. Unfortunately, once you start to mention anything to do with public sector reform, there is always a fear that job losses will be incurred. As a consequence, there will be those who will be opposed to any change. I am not necessarily saying that we look at job losses but that we look at economies. We must ensure that we invest to save, and some people maybe misinterpreted what the invest-to-save scheme is. It needs to be made clear to all Departments that they should look at the initiative holistically and on the same basis. On occasions, people have classed the invest-to-save scheme as not that at all.

The Committee carried out a flexible working inquiry. Flexible working is alive and well in the Civil Service, including hot-desking and other aspects, and it could maybe be rationalised on the estate. We should consider that.

We are working under the constraints of HM Treasury's five-year budget that was set in 2011. We have to be positive about other areas. We have come through what is probably the worst recession that the world, not just our economy, has encountered over the last 100 years. Some people have said that there has never been anything like the cuts and the depth of recession that we have come through since the 1930s. We hear announcements about jobs being created by the positive intervention of the Assembly and the Executive. Some say that that is happening not because of the Assembly but in spite of it, which is not necessarily the case. There are areas where we need to be positive to ensure that we not only grow our private sector economy but retain and support our public sector.

Nigel Smyth was on the radio this morning talking about the business sector and what needs to be dealt with to encourage inward investment into Northern Ireland. Parties in the Chamber have a role to play to ensure that things go smoothly over the marching season, which could ultimately have an impact. There are those who are stirring it up behind the scenes, and they are doing it quite effectively. Those from the Benches opposite have decided to threaten to bring us back to where we were with certain parades, and that has a negative impact on our economy.

I support the Final Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill and hope and pray that everyone else will do the same so that we can allow the Bill to progress to its next stage.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, as an deis cainte a thabhairt domh sa díospóireacht seo ar an Bhille Buiséid uimhir a dó.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Budget (No. 2) Bill.

As you know, Mr Speaker, the SDLP has consistently outlined its opposition to the current Budget. We did not vote for it at the beginning and we have, on a number of occasions, outlined a significant number of concerns relating to its shortcomings, chiefly in relation to the health service, job creation and housing, all of which are areas that have come under great pressure in the years since the Budget was passed.

However, having made our concerns known, we have also contributed in a positive and constructive way to all the debates around the budgetary issues. We put forward proposals as to how we could manage Northern Ireland's finances differently, most notably by the introduction of an annual Budget process and the establishment of a Scottish-style commission to assess the opportunity for greater devolution of fiscal powers to Northern Ireland. We also highlighted numerous areas from which more money could be raised, and we emphasised projects on which extra money could be spent for the benefit of people here. Our mantra has consistently been that the whole purpose of devolution is so that Northern Ireland's leaders can do things differently in order to improve the lives of our people. For those reasons, we will again not support the Budget Bill today.

The second element that I want to focus on is the need for a new Budget next year to take us through until the Assembly election. The SDLP hopes that this new, one-year Budget will better provide for the people of Northern Ireland and we will fight to ensure that it does. We have criticised the Executive in the past for developing a Budget without a Programme for Government. Yes, the existing Programme for Government is at least a broad framework upon which the Executive can base their final budgetary year before the election; however, it is flawed and somewhat outdated three years on. You could say that it is an old Ordnance Survey map when a satnav with real time updates is required.

So, I look forward, in hope, to the 2016 Programme for Government and Budget. The SDLP believes that any future Northern Ireland Executive should publish a Programme for Government as their first act following the 2016 election. Agreement on a Programme for Government would demonstrate unity of purpose and commitment to delivery by the parties involved, alongside the provision of measurable budgetary targets that are available for scrutiny by the Assembly and through public consultation. Such action would follow examples of best practice set by coalition Governments in the Republic of Ireland and in the UK.

Finally and most importantly, as we look towards the 2015 Budget and the 2016 Budget and Programme for Government, the SDLP will continue to highlight how those documents must reflect the needs of people here. The North's consumers have had to deal with a jump of over 20% in the price of goods since the start of the global economic crisis. At the start of the year, the Ulster Bank highlighted the key economic issue for 2014 as being the cost of living crisis, stating:

"Normally in economic downturns financial hardship is confined to those people out of work. However, in

recent years, a growing number of households in work are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet.”

This is because wages have not kept pace with inflation, climbing only 10% in the six years since the peak of the housing market bubble in August 2007, compared to an 18.8% rise in the UK consumer price index. In fact, that means that most people took a pay cut of 8.8% between 2007 and 2013. To tackle this, a new Budget must begin to create a living wage society. A number of elements are required to do that, and the first, of course, is job creation.

The SDLP has consistently highlighted the need for job creation outside Belfast and capital investment in infrastructure, to underpin economic growth in the long term, and investment in shovel-ready capital programmes, which boost employment in the construction industry, to stimulate the economy in the short to medium term. Even the coalition Government in London have realised that and proposed an Infrastructure Bill for England. Sadly, however, the Budget failed to adequately prioritise such development.

The second element necessary to creating a living-wage society is protecting the interests of low-paid workers and ensuring that their conditions and wage levels increase. Sadly, the SDLP was the only Assembly party to vote against the increase in pension age for public servants and the reduction in redundancy payments for civil servants. In doing so, the SDLP demonstrated its commitment to protecting the interests of hard-pressed households and trade union members. It would have been welcome if the rest of the Assembly had also done so.

It is also imperative that we tackle the scourge of zero-hour contracts, the use of which can mask whether an employee is truly receiving a living wage. In recent times, we have seen an increase in zero-hour contracts, and the volatile job market has meant that many low-paid workers and those on short-term contracts are finding it harder than ever before to pay their family bills.

It is clear that the Northern Ireland Executive must take action on those issues to develop the North as a living-wage economy. Food and energy prices continue to rise, and the governor of the Bank of England is telling us to expect an interest rate rise this very year. If the Executive and the Assembly fail to take action in budgetary planning, our hard-working households will continue to suffer.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to today's debate, and I will leave it at that for the moment.

Mr Cree: At the Second Stage of this Bill, I referred to several resource bids that were anticipated to be made in the June monitoring round. These were classified as “inescapable” or “high priority”. I asked why they were being treated by way of in-year monitoring instead of being included in the core Budget. The question remains unanswered, and now that we appear to have major problems with agreeing June monitoring, the fate of those bids, and the important work that they are expected to finance, becomes a crucial issue. Perhaps the Minister will advise us on that matter and on whether any steps are necessary to alter the Budget figures that are before us.

I gave him two examples: £160 million to health and some £2 million to the Victims and Survivors Service. Again, I would appreciate it if the Minister could advise on that. There was also a planned capital surrender of £5.5 million.

Is that also likely to be available from OFMDFM in the June monitoring round?

Another concern that I and the Ulster Unionist Party have is the carrying forward of year-end underspends from 2013-14 through the Budget exchange scheme. No provision was made in the Estimates for that, as it is usually allocated in the June monitoring. It may be contained in the spring Supplementary Estimates, but that is a long way off, and we really need to know what we are talking about now.

The major issue with our Budget is that we do not know how welfare reform will affect it. No decision has been made, and penalties are being applied to the block grant. Again, an update from the Minister on that would be appreciated.

When we last debated the Budget, I was interested in knowing the detail of the £800 million that was being held in the centre. What is the situation in the centre?

Someone once said that all politics is local, and, just to prove that is so, I would be grateful if the Minister would confirm that the £9 million remains included in the DEL figures for the performing arts, technology and innovation centre at the South Eastern Regional College in Bangor. That work has been eagerly awaited for many years.

12.45 pm

My colleague Robin Swann, as a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, raised an important issue earlier this month. At its meeting on 3 June, the Committee discussed a wind farm development and anticipated that it would generate savings of £1 million in 2014-15. Major development and planning issues remain to be resolved, so it appears highly unlikely that those savings can be achieved in the current year. So why are they included the Budget? That is totally unrealistic.

As a contingent action — its words, not mine — the Department has stated that Forest Service intends to use additional income from the sale of timber to mitigate that risk. I wonder whether the Minister agrees that the Department's strategy in this instance is open to major criticism and, indeed, is significantly flawed. Its budget is based on environmental and green issues to generate savings, but those cannot realistically be achieved in the time frame. The reality is that Forest Service will be forced to embark upon a very anti-environmental deforestation programme, which will have been authorised by the Department to meet the financial deficit that it has created. Surely that is misleading, to say the least, in any budget plan.

My colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party will raise other points and contribute to today's debate in due course. Before I finish, I would like to raise a point that has been a concern for me for several years. I last raised it during the Second Stage debate, and the Minister will not be surprised that I raise it now. We need to have a financial process that is clear, accountable and fit for purpose. We do not have that at present, virtually everyone has agreed. Perhaps the Minister could again detail any progress since our last discussion on this by way of introducing the new process, which will greatly improve the situation.

Mr Dickson: I rise on behalf of the Alliance Party to speak in support of the Bill, despite those areas where

we have serious concerns. Nevertheless, the progress of the Assembly and Executive requires that we support a finance Bill.

When we debated the Supply resolution for the Main Estimates in early June, I noted the looming crisis faced by public services due to the failure of the implementation of welfare reform. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that I return to that subject. We are nearly a month further down the line, and it would appear there has been little progress, given that last week the Social Development Minister told me in the House that the matter is sitting at the Executive table and that is as far as it goes in his contribution.

I ask the Finance Minister directly: can he tell the Assembly what he is doing to meaningfully engage with those who are blocking welfare reform? It is all very well to lay the blame squarely at the door of those who are blocking the legislation. However, does the Minister feel that the dire financial consequences could be communicated more effectively? Sinn Féin and the SDLP are either unmoved by the figures we are talking about coming out of Health, Education and other Departments or they are not convinced that the situation is as bad as the Minister has portrayed it.

I say again to them that they are playing a very dangerous game. As well as the penalties imposed, Northern Ireland, like the rest of the United Kingdom, is facing further substantial cuts in the coming years, which will also have to be addressed. Perhaps the Minister would like to outline what he considers the extent of that to be. Therefore, it is unlikely to change even if there is a change of Government following next year's Westminster election.

We share many of the concerns about the changes to welfare that are being implemented by the United Kingdom Government. We opposed those changes at every stage of the Bill's passage at Westminster. However, the concern of Members across the House does not negate the fact that the UK Government have made it perfectly clear that they are not prepared to give us further concessions.

Members need to be prepared to take difficult decisions or we will face a financial disaster. I was expecting to see some of the results of that demonstrated in the June monitoring round, but that has not yet appeared. Can the Finance Minister tell the House where it is, given that today is the last day of June? He previously told us that we should expect a 1.5% cut across the board in June, which will have a profound effect on the delivery of services. We need to know what the cuts will be and how the services will be affected.

Until welfare reform is resolved, we will continue to face major uncertainties. We can debate Budget allocations, but, until the Assembly faces up to its responsibilities, we do not know what further sanctions could and will arise and what the implications will be for all Departments. The only way the matter can be resolved is through the working group that has been set up, and I encourage the working group to redouble its efforts. We need agreement between the DUP and Sinn Féin. We are under no illusion that that requires the First Minister and deputy First Minister to reach consensus on the matter. Today is time for leadership, not procrastination, when it comes to our Budget. It is time for responsibility to be taken and for

the public to be told the reality about public finances. We support the Bill.

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Budget Bill Final Stage today. I am speaking as the SDLP spokesperson on health.

The health portfolio takes up a large proportion of the Budget, with a net cash requirement approaching £4.5 billion. In that context, every pound is significant, and it is for that reason that the SDLP has sought out evidence of measurement around how the money apportioned to health is being used. It is a prudent and reasonable approach, and so prudent and reasonable is it that the House has, on several occasions, backed motions brought by the SDLP to make that very point. Is health funding being used prudently? Is there wastage? Are we measuring across that spectrum? Those are logical questions that must be answered.

Where is the money going? In the Main Estimates, some of the areas marked for funding are as follows: £209 million for health, community and social care services; £102 million for dental services; £487 million for pharmaceutical services; the trusts are taking a sizeable amount of £3.6 billion; and the Business Services Organisation (BSO) weighs in with some £36 million. In pharmacy, the Minister is proposing prescription charges, but has there been an interrogation of how we are spending that nearly £500 million, particularly around the use of branded drugs and general drug use and wastage?

Alongside all that and more, we have a change agenda, Transforming Your Care (TYC), to fund. That is currently underfunded. Bids have been made and not matched. A sum of £28 million was requested last year; £9 million was received. That puts a question mark over the whole Transforming Your Care process. It is a significant underspend and may get worse. For example, community health and social care services receive over £200 million in total. The Health Committee, through its engagement with community care stakeholders, has constantly heard of the same problem: they are not being funded. Imaginative community initiatives that have proven their success, such as the one operating in the Western Trust to prevent long-term heart problems, could not sustain themselves as the investment simply was not made. How is that transforming your care? They cited a convoluted commissioning process and overall weak community health infrastructure as the problem. Let us remember that the objective of TYC was to utilise that sector more. We were supposed to fund the community side, and that was supposed to take the heat off the very expensive A&E and hospital side. It has not happened.

So, where do we draw our conclusions? We can see the £209 million in the Estimates but we cannot see where it will be put in practice. Another example is the BSO, to which the Estimate is £36 million, but we know that there has been a catalogue of errors with the new pay system that the BSO manages. How much has that cost over what was initially anticipated? Has that been accounted for or is that merely chalked up as wastage? Transforming Your Care was agreed upon by most when it was first presented. The overall aims, as I said, were laudable. However, the SDLP has serious concerns about how it is being measured.

In the last debate on this Budget, I read out the contributions from unions on TYC. Some think that it is about privatisation, and others simply think that it is a cost-cutting mechanism. The Royal College of Nursing really does not know what it is. It is saying that today in real time. That is not a historic comment. I remind the Minister that the respected community and voluntary associations said last year that their concern was that the opportunity will be taken to save money by stealth, that not all the savings will be recycled back into the system and that more resources may be required than are currently allocated during the transitional period. I suspect that they are getting close to the nub. Those opinions are testament to the very point I am making: Transforming Your Care implementation is not being measured sufficiently. There are not clear points of progress that the SDLP can see.

In response to our questions, the Minister gave an update on the 99 targets initially present in Transforming Your Care. Very few of those have been fully implemented and, at worst, they are haphazard. They are stop, they are start and they are certainly not measured. The limited successes that the Minister was able to outline pale in comparison to the number of targets that were stagnant. For example, one of the claims was that an information infrastructure had been established for information on mental health. The reality is that that is a website, and it is a year late and still has not started.

There can be no doubt that the party opposite brings welfare reform into this debate, as it already has done. However, I have to ask this: if welfare reform is coming and cuts to budgets along with it, is it not now more imperative that we measure our current system to make sure that it is as efficient as it can be, given the significance of the spend that there is in the Health Department? Should we not now analyse in detail the millions of pounds of transitional TYC money? That includes the £3.6 billion that has been given to the trusts, the operational costs of the Health and Social Care Board and the huge monetary resource given to administration, which, in the Estimates, takes up a column of its own: admin costs for community care, £26 million; admin costs for ophthalmic care, £96 million.

It is worth noting that this House, as I said on a number of occasions, has backed the SDLP in motions calling for measurement. Instead of acting on that call for measurement and the reasonable request from the House, the response from the Health Minister and the Finance Minister has been to scaremonger. During the last debate, the Finance Minister stressed the point that simultaneous press releases had not gone out from him and his party colleague, the Health Minister, in relation to funding. I remind him that, when Minister Poots was warning of the dangers of a Health deficit, Minister Hamilton was echoing his words at exactly the same time. Both stories went up on the BBC on the same day, 15 minutes apart from each other. So, instead of having a Finance Minister who is measuring and scrutinising the Health spend, we see party counterparts cheerleading each other. That is not accountability, and it is in stark contrast to how the former Finance Minister treated the situation when Mr McGimpsey was in charge.

In relation to cancer drugs, Minister Poots told the public that, in order to get the funding for increased drugs spending, we need to impose prescription charges. He did not tell us that he was already receiving money through the

pharmaceutical price regulation scheme (PPRS), which may be used for this very purpose. In fact, his Department could not say where the £9 million given to the North in the last three years through PPRS had gone. I ask again today: where has that money gone, how much are we getting now and what are we spending it on? Given the nature of the PPRS deal — that money should be spent on innovative drugs — where is the new money going to be spent? Just this morning, we saw a press release from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) in relation to the new deal. In this quarter alone, the Department of Health, nationally, will get back £74 million. It is projected that our share of that will be 9.92%. We can all do the maths. That is in the first quarter, and it is going to be replicated over the next three quarters. At a rough estimate, just shy of £30 million may come back. It should be spent on innovative drugs and is a comprehensive and solid answer to the Minister's claims that only prescription charges and welfare reform will answer this issue. The money has been there, the money is there and the money will be there for cancer drugs and the development and encouragement of innovative drugs.

Incidentally, it does not end there. If we incorporate this, there is the potential for us to develop our biomedical research and biotech industry around this. There can be jobs, taxes and further encouragement to our overall economy as a result of taking a holistic approach to this. The Minister, I suggest, should jump off the prescription charges and welfare reform arguments and use the money that is there. It will benefit patients on cancer drugs and this society as a whole.

The point is clear: health is a huge budget, and every pound spent should be measured in terms of its outcome. The SDLP does not see evidence that the Department, the board or the Minister is undertaking the measurement that is required.

1.00 pm

Mr Eastwood: I did not expect to be called so quickly, Mr Speaker, but thank you for that.

The Members from my party who have spoken, Mr Bradley and Mr McKinney, who has just sat down, talked very eloquently about some of the issues that face us. Mr McKinney laid out clearly the issues with the health service, and Mr Bradley spoke more generally. I will take up some of the issues and then, as I usually do, revert to talking about Derry, as you might have imagined that I would. I will probably try to weave Derry into all the other issues as well — I am a bit like Mr McElduff in that respect.

One important issue that Mr Bradley touched on was the idea of a Calman-style commission to look at the opportunities for the North around fiscal powers. There has been much debate about corporation tax. I do not believe that it is a silver bullet, but I do believe that it is a very important issue. Anybody who has been to the States and spoken to anybody there about trying to attract investment to this part of the world will know that we are up against it, because our direct competitor — I argue that it should not be our direct competitor but our partner — is the Republic of Ireland, just across the border, which is able to offer a much more attractive package.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: Yes.

Mr A Maginness: The Member raises very interesting points, not just on corporation tax but on the general range of fiscal powers, the Calman commission and so forth. Given the current situation in Scotland, with the referendum on independence, and the fact that all the major parties have conceded that Scotland deserves to receive and will receive greater fiscal powers in relation to its self-governance, is there not an even stronger argument that we in Northern Ireland should also seek stronger powers in fiscal matters?

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Member for his intervention. His point is very well made. I have a view on what might happen in Scotland in the next few months, and I hope that a certain side of the campaign is very successful. I think that it will have an impact here that might be immeasurable, and I am not sure that everyone has quite grasped how important it is for us. The Member is right: Scotland will not be governed in the same way after the referendum, no matter what happens. If they get independence, they will obviously have much greater fiscal powers; if they do not, “devo max” is, I think, very much on the cards, and we need to start looking at what impact that could have on us.

We also need to think a bit more creatively. I keep telling people that we have a 12.5% rate of corporation tax in our city — in Muff, Bridgend or Killea. There are opportunities for us to work on a cross-border basis with the Irish Government and the organisations in the South that are trying to attract investment to the Republic. We can do that by asking them to look at a cross-border enterprise zone for the north-west. I know that there was a recent announcement for Coleraine — good luck to Coleraine — but we have been asking for one for quite a bit longer. We think that the cross-border element provides a tremendous opportunity, and we have everything in place. The area around Bridgend in Donegal has that very attractive tax system. Look at one company that has relocated from Derry to Burnfoot, just down the road: E&I Engineering employs hundreds of people, and I think that about 80% of them are from Derry. They spend money in Derry and buy houses in Derry. The company may pay tax in the South, but both sides of the border benefit. We need to start looking at ideas like that to reinforce the fact that we should not be in competition with the South but in partnership. It is not about us on this side of the House waving a tricolour in anybody’s face; it is about common sense. We had a document called ‘North South Makes Sense’, because it just does. Nobody’s allegiance to any nationality or nation is threatened by that. There are massive opportunities in the way in which we do things, particularly in the economy, that should run across every Department. I know that in our city and in other places the border becomes less and less relevant in people’s everyday lives, but it should be less relevant in government policies, particularly those for the economy.

Mr Bradley also spoke of the need for Budgets and Programmes for Government to be done in unison. The idea that we all turn up after an election and we are all in government and then we have a row about what the Budget and the Programme for Government should be does not make any real sense. I would far rather see parties go into a negotiation around a Programme for Government and a Budget that has a connection to it at the beginning of the term. We have an opportunity in the final year of the mandate to begin that process, and, hopefully,

at least after 2016’s elections, we can start to do things a little differently.

That brings me to the important point. One of the major issues in our city is that we have had countless plans. We have loads of plans. We know exactly what needs to be done on the economy for Derry, and it is important that that be done, not just for Derry but for Northern Ireland. We do not want to see queues of people leaving our city or any other place in the North for Australia or England and never coming back, nor do we want to see people continuously claiming benefits when they could contribute to the economy in a very positive way. We had the answer, and it was called the “One Plan”. I know that the Executive seemed very committed to it, because, when I was mayor, I stood beside the First Minister and the deputy First Minister when they came to the Waterside in Derry to launch it. That was after 18 months of people in the community and business sectors and all the local statutory agencies and political parties getting together. It was a difficult process and maybe not one that anyone would want to repeat. We came up with 11 catalytic projects that would make a huge impact, in our view, on the city’s economy and social deprivation indices.

We all signed up to the plan, which was pretty much unheard of. It was a great process, in that political parties from in here were able to work together out there, somewhere else, like we do in a lot of areas in the city, and come up with a plan that we thought the Government should adopt. As I said, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister came down, launched it and praised us for doing all the hard work, and then, when we saw the first draft of the Programme for Government, it was not even mentioned. We kicked up a fuss, and the strategy board in Derry wrote a strongly worded letter, and then it was mentioned. It said that the Executive were committed to developing the One Plan, with particular reference to the sites at Ebrington and Fort George. We had already developed the plan: the problem was that we needed it implemented. Unfortunately, if it was not going to be in the Programme for Government, it was not going to be in any of the ministerial commitments after that. For me, that was a major mistake, and we have ended up seeing the outworkings of that.

We had a fantastic week in Derry, with probably hundreds of thousands of people walking along the quay. It was like walking through Cannes or somewhere like that. They were looking at yachts and spending money, enjoying the weather and one another’s company. There were people from every background getting together. Derry can do things like that very well, but, unless we get the economic drivers and the infrastructural fundamentals correct, those things will come and go.

Mr Dallat: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: I will, yes.

Mr Dallat: I detect a certain smugness from my colleague from Foyle, and I can understand it perfectly. I accept that Derry is the envy of the rest of Northern Ireland in how unionists and nationalists can get together and carry out the kind of fete that happened last week or, indeed, last year. However, does the Member agree that there is one thing missing: transport infrastructure? Derry is, I think, the only city in Europe that is not connected by a motorway, and it still struggles with a railway that is hugely

successful. I was on the train on Saturday, and it was packed, but it irritates me when somebody on a bicycle can complete the journey to Belfast more quickly. Yes, you got the boats, but only for a week. They are away now. We also need that ferry between Magilligan and Greencastle. I know that our colleagues in Belfast in particular must feel envious of the maiden city's success, but surely it is time to put the capital investment into our second city and make it the showpiece that unionists and nationalists up there have worked hard for. They have won the arguments. What is needed now is the money.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Member for his eloquent intervention. The House will probably thank him for shortening my speech because he said most of what I wanted to say. He is right. The point that I was making is that we can do fantastic things when people in Derry get together and decide to work together to get these things done. We can attract world-class events. It is a pity that Radio Ulster seemed a wee bit more interested in Glastonbury than in the Clipper festival this morning, but that is another issue.

The Member is right: unless we get the infrastructural development correct, we cannot reach our full potential. We are not asking for anything special; we are asking for the opportunities and tools to do these things for ourselves. There needs to be a proper road network that does not just end in one part of Northern Ireland and does not go to another part where a huge number of people live. A couple of weeks ago, a man cycled to Belfast more quickly than he could go by train. He beat the train. What does that tell us about where we are and where we need to be? I could probably do it. You could even do it, Mr Weir. *[Laughter.]* Mr McKay could definitely do it. Another point is that, when you try to get a train from Derry to Dublin, you find that the Dublin train leaves Belfast five minutes before the Derry one arrives. You would nearly think that it was deliberate. *[Laughter.]* There is another issue. I will not focus my anger about it on Mr Farry because I think that he gets all the focus on it when it is a bigger issue. It goes back to the point that it was not put into the Programme for Government. It is the issue of the development of Magee. It is nothing to do with welfare reform, as Mr Farry told me last week: it is a 50-year-old debate. We were even debating it back when John Hume and the unionist mayor came to this place with a lot of other people to demand a proper university for our city. The One Plan commitment is for 9,400 places by 2020. The way things are going at the minute, we will not make that. Again, it is not just about us asking for more places for the university so that people do not have to go to Liverpool; it is about underpinning the city's economy. It is not just about the number of students but about the type of courses and being able to create jobs and attract jobs to the city. It just needs to be done. We send 15,000 students from the North somewhere else every year. That is a university a year that leaves here. We spend all the money to educate them in our schools, then we send them somewhere else. Eighty per cent of them do not come home and do not contribute to our economy.

I know that it is kind of broken-record stuff from us. We are often called whingers. It is not about whingeing; it is about asking for what is fair and right. Derry has proven that, given the opportunities and tools, we can deliver something very good and exciting for the people of the city and the North of Ireland.

Mr Hamilton: I genuinely want to thank Members for their wide-ranging contributions today. It is important that the impacts of the Bill on local people are debated fully in the context of a local Budget. I welcome the contributions today. I will do my best to respond to the issues raised as comprehensively as possible during the rest of the debate. At the outset of my remarks, I thank again the Chairman and the Committee for Finance and Personnel for their assistance in the accelerated passage of the Bill. The support of the Committee enables the Bill to receive Royal Assent by 31 July, ensuring that the flow of funding to public services will continue uninterrupted throughout the remainder of the year.

1.15 pm

I will address some, if not all, of the comments made by Members this afternoon, and I turn first to those of the Chairman, Mr McKay. In his capacity as Chair, he mentioned the development of a memorandum of understanding between my Department and the Committee on the Budget process. I am content to support that in principle and will respond in more detail to the Committee in due course. I will say one thing, though, which is important. Given the opportunity that a one-year 2015-16 Budget presents to develop and test a draft memorandum of understanding against the one-year process, I am content to do that. However, to pick up on a point that Mr Cree regularly makes in the Chamber when I am here, that is not a substitute in any way for a fundamental review and reform of our financial process, which has been long outstanding and is very much needed.

We have gone through the process again, and the criticisms about this Budget process were the same as were made about the previous process and the one before that and so on and so on. That shows the need for that reform not just because of the openness and transparency that it will bring to an important process — the Budget — but because it will hopefully lead to a better use of resources. If Members and those who use money to provide services can see better where it is spent, you would hope that it would lead to a better use of resources. I throw it back to the Committee Chairman, given the party that he is a member of, and urge him to bring whatever influence he can to bear on his party colleagues who are not as enthusiastic about the review of the financial process. He urged me to be reforming — I thank him for that — but I also encourage him to be an advocate for reform when it comes to the review of the financial process.

If Mr McKay reflects on his remarks, he will see that he said that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report talked about the incompetence of DFP being shocking. To be fair, there may be occasions on which he may have the right to say that, but I think that, in this instance, he was referring to the Department for Work and Pensions's (DWP) incompetence as being shocking.

It is fortuitous that the Minister for Social Development has arrived not just so that he can hear what I have to say but so that he can help me if I get flummoxed and get the information wrong.

As for criticisms of the roll-out of welfare reform or, indeed, some of the elements of welfare reform that have been legislated for across the water, who would not

criticise many aspects of the Welfare Reform Act, as it is now, across the water? I can stand proudly and say that members of my party were in the House of Commons to vote against many elements of the Bill when it was going through the House of Commons. As a party, we have been consistent in referencing those parts of the Bill, even the Bill that was initially before this House, and in saying which bits we did not like. We are content with some bits. Everybody in the House should endorse the principles of trying to make work pay and trying to simplify the benefits process. Nonetheless, there are bits of the welfare reform agenda that are not what we would propose if we had a blank sheet of paper. That is why, within a week of taking up office, Minister McCausland dispatched himself to London to negotiate with DWP to ensure that the exemptions and flexibilities that could be negotiated were negotiated, and he has been exceptionally successful in doing that.

We have a package of measures that, while not ameliorating all of the worst of welfare reform, certainly goes some way to doing that and reaching that objective, to the extent that the bedroom tax will not affect people in Northern Ireland in the way that it affects people in Great Britain. We also got various payment flexibilities, which were demanded not just by Members of the House but by people outside it in the community and those dealing with vulnerable people. As I have said in the House before, this package of measures is the envy not just of English MPs but of my governmental counterparts in Scotland and Wales. We should be very pleased with what the Minister for Social Development has been able to achieve.

Mr McKay ran through a series of reports — I am glad to hear that he also reads ‘The Economist’ — about IT delays and issues with implementation. Whilst I am sympathetic to the points that he raises and, no doubt, my ministerial colleague is also sympathetic, they are, in many respects, immaterial to the debate that we are having in Northern Ireland. We are faced with a Government in London who remain ideologically committed to doing this, even though they face escalating costs and delays in the implementation of ICT systems and the negative implications of those things for the implementation of the new benefits and the changes to existing benefits. They are determined that their vision of welfare reform will be implemented. As Members in the House know, without me having to rehearse it all again, we are bound by the 1998 Act to follow parity and ensure that the system of benefits that will apply in London, Newcastle, Manchester or Liverpool is applicable here in Northern Ireland. Despite the delays and rising costs of implementation, it is very clear that the Government in London are proceeding.

The cost for us of not proceeding, as I have said in the House many times during the Budget process, is that we have already lost £13 million. That is £13 million worth of services that could be delivered and are not being delivered. I remind Members, particularly those opposite who come with a list of very meritorious projects that they would like to see developed in their constituency or for the benefit of people across Northern Ireland, that losing £13 million from our Budget does not help the Assembly or the Executive in funding those projects, never mind dealing with existing pressures. What we will lose will rise to an additional £87 million this year, and so it goes on. It will be over £100 million next year and more and more as the years go on. This is not something that will impact on

services in the future; it is starting to impact on services now.

As for my party cosying up to the Tory party, I note that the party opposite has been seeking meetings with the Prime Minister on a one-to-one basis since he came into office in 2010. I understand that he has finally acceded to their request and is meeting them this week. I do not know what is on the menu, I do not know what they will be entertained with and I am not even sure what they will discuss, but it is rich for the party opposite to lecture my party about our relationship with any party in Westminster when they are running around trying to pal up to the Tory party as well for whatever reason.

I will jump ahead a little and refer to Stewart Dickson’s comments about whether the parties that oppose movement on welfare reform are unmoved by the figures or believe that they are not as bad. I think that it is a bit of both. I think that they are unmoved by the figures. I will play devil’s advocate, which is difficult for me to do, but £13 million being lost probably does not sound like a lot of money in the grand scheme of the Budget. However, when you increase that to £87 million, it will be a grand total of £100 million, and then you will have £100 million next year and then more than that. Then it will start to bite, and they will realise that it is as bad as we have been saying. It would be bad enough if we were just losing £100 million out of our Budget this year, unfathomable as that is, but, when you have the pressure from Ministers such as the Health Minister, the Justice Minister, the Education Minister or other Ministers coming into the Chamber and saying, “I am already under pressure to the tune of x hundreds of millions of pounds, and you are taking money off my budget to pay for these penalties” —

Mr G Robinson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, I will.

Mr G Robinson: Which Departments does the Minister think could lose out on that £13 million?

Mr Hamilton: To address Mr Robinson’s point, ultimately, it is a matter for the Executive to agree on how best they think those pressures of the £13 million, the £87 million to come and the future pressures that will affect next year’s Budget are to be dealt with. It is hard to escape the conclusion that, given the quantity of reductions and pressures involved, no one should be immune. That is not a position that I relish, and the Minister for Social Development will shift uneasily in his seat at hearing that news, as it will put pressure on his budget as well. Unfortunately, it is the reality of the situation that we face. If we face that degree of reduction, I do not think that any Minister in the Executive can or will be immune from that degree of reduction, critical as all the services that they provide are.

It is something that is being discussed, and, while I cannot get into the granular detail of the June monitoring round, to finish Mr Dickson’s points, we are discussing a June monitoring round. It is the most challenging monitoring round that the Assembly has faced since it came back in 2007, because of the pressures that we are under. The Member said that we needed to know what cuts there would be. That is precisely the point. The Social Development Minister will agree that I have been laying out in fairly stark terms to colleagues the degree of reduction required to deal with the existing welfare

penalties and those that are yet to come in this year, as well as addressing pressures that have built up at the centre anyway. I have been putting in fairly stark terms the difficult choices and tough decisions that I think Executive colleagues have to make now so that Departments have the certainty that they need to plan for the remainder of the financial year. That is creating a stumbling block. I suppose that we would expect that, given the degree of cuts and reductions that there are.

I go back to the original point: when Members opposite and the Ministers from those parties see in bald terms what those figures are and what it means for their Department and then take it back to their Department and calculate what it means in service reduction, they will, I hope, start to understand. Unfortunately, however, many still seem to be unmoved by the degree of reduction required to deal with the penalties that we face.

I will go back to some comments that Mr McKay made on reform and the use of technology. I will highlight some of the achievements that we have made, and I am grateful to him for highlighting the fact that some things have been achieved, not just the use of technology, which I will come to in a second, but in property management. Since 2009, the property division in my Department has saved over £15 million in rent, rates and service charges by providing much more modern, higher-density, open plan office space. IT Assist, one of the shared services for which Enterprise Shared Services in my Department is responsible, has reduced the cost per user for computers and telecommunications equipment by over 30%. It is not just about reduction; it is about service improvement. Our own PAC described our prompt payment work in Account NI, where over 90% of invoices are paid to suppliers within 10 days, as world-class.

I agree with the Member that the better use of technology is a key driver and a major part of my reform agenda. This year alone, we have seen the launch of initiatives like Spatial NI, through which all of our mapping and geographical information has been put online and made accessible to the public. All of our genealogical information has also been put online through the General Register Office. Those are two small examples of where it can happen. The next phase, which will be led by the digital transformation service, which, again, is within DFP, will be to take many more of those services and put them online where people want to use them and where, of course, it saves us a considerable amount of money. As I am sure the Member and the House will appreciate, making such a degree of change and reform is not always simple and straightforward. It takes some time to roll it out.

Mr McKay also talked about companies coming to Departments selling technology. We have got to be careful, in the first instance, particularly around procurement law, that somebody does not just walk into the Department headquarters and say, "I've got something that will revolutionise how you work". They may well have something that will revolutionise how we work, but we cannot simply have Departments buying from the first person who comes into their offices. It is important that Departments identify need first and then go out to purchase the appropriate technology, which will save money but also improve the customer experience.

Dominic Bradley who, up until now, has been a loyal and faithful servant at Budget times — he is missing now —

rehearsed pretty much every point that he made about the Budget. He talked about the 2015-16 Budget and the need to better provide for the people of Northern Ireland. I agree. As a principle, better providing for the people of Northern Ireland is, surely, why we are all here. In response to Mr Bradley I say that, in a situation where we already have less money coming from Treasury — there are about 1.5% to 2% reductions to our 2015-16 Budget, compared with 2014-15 — and we have all the welfare penalties that we talked about, it is hard to see how those aspirations can be met. It is bad enough that we have that 1.5% to 2% reduction, but to have all of those additional penalties slapped on top of us makes providing better for the people of Northern Ireland that bit more difficult than it already is.

Mr Bradley also said that the economy needed to do better and, as he did at Second Stage, proceeded into a bit of a moan about job creation. He bemoaned the Executive's record on job creation, the fact that they did not spread that out beyond Belfast and the thinking that there was some sort of ring around Belfast beyond which job creation did not extend. I thought that that was incredibly ironic, because, as we stand here today, 484 new jobs are being announced by First Derivatives in Newry, which, I think, is in the constituency that Mr Bradley represents.

I think that, on reflection, he will welcome the record of the Executive in creating jobs not just in Belfast; we are supporting the creation of high-quality jobs in places like Newry as well.

1.30 pm

He talked about the Programme for Government. There is an ongoing review of the Programme for Government that will look at the extension of existing targets for a year and the creation of new targets. He said that we should consider using something other than an old Ordnance Survey map. As the Minister responsible for Ordnance Survey, I am very proud of our mapping; it is one of the very good services that we provide in Land and Property Services (LPS). He encouraged me to use a satnav more. As somebody who has just advocated technology in response to Mr McKay's comments, I caution about the use of satnav because, in my constituency, poor people have articulated lorries being sent up their street even though it is a cul-de-sac. That is a bit like Mr Bradley's satnav; he wants to spend lots of money, but he does not offer me any ways in which I can raise that money. That sounds a bit like a road to nowhere.

Mr Cree raised a number of very detailed points, which, if need be, I will try to respond to in writing. He talked about pressures — I think that I referred to them in response to Mr Dickson — developing in year, such as £160 million in Health and some in the Victims and Survivors Service. He asked whether budgetary adjustment was required for those. It will be required only if decisions are taken in this monitoring round or future ones to fund those pressures in some way. The adjustment would then happen in the Budget Bill early next year. It was very narrow of him to talk about the North Down constituency, South Eastern Regional College (SERC) and DEL's work at Bangor with the performing arts. Again, I can come back to him, but there is nothing I am aware of to suggest that that money is not there. However, that is primarily a matter for the Minister for Employment and Learning.

I welcome Fearghal McKinney's backhanded admission that he was wrong in terms of the release of two statements by the Health — he is shaking his head; he is not saying that he was wrong. The record shows that there was not a simultaneous release of statements by my Department and the Health Department in mid-May, as the Member suggested at Second Stage. I corrected him at Second Stage. I thought that he was being humble, and I would have taken it in that regard had he backed away from his previous statement. The former UTV man was perhaps blaming the BBC for putting them on its website at the same time. I am happy —

Mr McKinney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Oh, you want to get into this one. OK.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for giving way. The point is that the Health Minister made a point about prescription charges and welfare reform, saying that there was no option other than the alternatives. The Finance Minister made the same point at the same time on a programme on the BBC. Both of them went up on the BBC within 15 minutes of each other. The Health Minister and the Finance Minister were singing off the same hymn sheet at the same time, saying the same things. Where is the scrutiny in that? Where is the scrutiny that was demonstrated by Mr Wilson, the former Finance Minister, when he was interrogating the Health Minister Mr McGimpsey and suggesting ways for him to save money? The Finance Minister was backing the Health Minister, and the Health Minister was backing the Finance Minister.

Mr Hamilton: The point is not what the Member has said; the point is that, at Second Stage, Mr McKinney questioned whether I had released both statements, whether the Health Minister had released both statements, or whether the DUP press office had released both statements. He talked about two statements being released when, in fact, no statement was released by me or the Health Minister. It was inaccurate of the Member to come to the House —

Mr McKinney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: No. I have heard enough.

It was inaccurate of the Member to come to the House at Second Stage and say that, on a date in May, the Health Minister and I colluded in some way and released simultaneous press statements. No press statements were issued on that day by me or the Health Minister.

I shudder to think that the Health Minister and I might have some sort of symmetry and be working together and trying to do things to provide services better for the people of Northern Ireland, as Mr Bradley wanted me to do. I shudder to think that I would have a working relationship with Mr McCausland. Maybe I should do business by being at loggerheads with party colleagues. Mr Ford is in the House; he and I have a very good working relationship even though we are not members of the same party. The colour is draining from his face as I say that I have a good working relationship with him. He is looking for more money. Maybe he does not think that it is a good working relationship, but I like to pride myself on having a good working relationship with the Minister of Justice, as indeed I do with other Ministers. That is what I should be doing. I should be working with and listening to them. I cannot address all the concerns that they have; I do not have the

money to do that. However, I try to work with Mr Ford and Mr McCausland, and I certainly try to work constructively with Mr Poots, when he is responsible for spending 45% of the Budget in Northern Ireland. That should be welcomed by the party opposite.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for giving way. He may be being a little bit harsh on Mr McKinney. Surely the Minister is only emulating the good working relationship that exists between the leader of the SDLP and the deputy leader?

Mr Hamilton: I suppose that, if that is all that you have to go on, that is maybe what you would expect. Mr McKinney said at the start of his comments that he was speaking as health spokesman, but he then went on to give a speech that was by and large about operational matters that are better dealt with by the Health Minister. This is the last year of the 2011-15 Budget, and spending on health has increased from £4.3 billion in 2010-11 to £4.65 billion in 2014-15, which represents an 8.3% increase over those three years. It will expand again this year. Last year alone, over £100 million in additional expenditure was granted to the Department of Health. The Health Minister has made £490 million of savings between 2011-12 and 2013-14.

I also heard Mr McKinney criticising the Minister on the non-delivery of his Transforming Your Care policy. I did not know that the SDLP was supportive of that policy. I am sure that the Minister of Health will welcome its *volte face*.

Colum Eastwood talked about a wide range of issues, including tax-varying powers. I remind him of the review that has been undertaken as a result of the economic pact, which is looking at scoping out the potential for further tax-varying powers, although I have always been very clear that, if we were to consider those, they must produce a defined economic and social benefit for Northern Ireland, and they must be affordable. I will look at them all on a case-by-case basis.

He also talked about enterprise zones, and I remind him that the first Northern Ireland pilot of that is in fact in the north-west. Without getting into the higgledy-piggledy or the nitty-gritty of the rules of enterprise zones, they are not something that we can create everywhere in Northern Ireland or, indeed, for the whole of Northern Ireland, as some people in the business community have suggested. However, there are certain circumstances, particularly where capital-intensive industries are developing, starting or growing, where we can potentially look at new enterprise zones, but I think that it is important that people come forward with a compelling case before we go to Treasury.

To be fair to Mr Eastwood, he said at the start that he would talk extensively about Londonderry, and he was a man of his word. Other Members from the Foyle constituency likewise have spoken during previous stages of the Bill and bemoaned the lack of investment in the north-west. I understand that everybody in every constituency will say that they need investment in this, that and the other, and I do not deny that. Mr Dallat intervened and talked about roads, saying that it was the only city in Europe that did not have, did you say a dual carriageway or a motorway going into it?

Mr Dallat: A motorway.

Mr Hamilton: I am sure that the people of Armagh will be disgusted to hear that you have excluded them from

the definition of a city in Europe that does not have a motorway going into it.

Look at what has been happening in the Foyle constituency and in Derry/Londonderry over the last number of years. Mr Dallat used the word “envy”, and I think that many people representing other constituencies are rightly envious of what has been happening in the north-west. Look at its job situation and the recent investments by companies such as Convergys, which has brought several hundred jobs into Londonderry; Fujitsu is expanding its existing footprint there; and Ilex has been developing the north-west regional science park. As for tourism and events, there has been the success of the first UK City of Culture, so there is a lot for people in Londonderry to be proud of. Sometimes, what I think they lack is the positivity around what is happening there being enunciated by some of their representatives. By all means, come into this House and say to me and to other Ministers that we need investment here and there: it is not just a Member’s right; it is their duty to do that. However, let us celebrate the great things that are going on there, the great things that this Executive have been able to help —

Mr Dallat: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, I will, very briefly.

Mr Dallat: Does the Minister agree that the envy that I was referring to was the envy of the people and the extraordinary way that they have put their differences behind them? I include the Speaker in that, if I am allowed to. That has not really been matched by the amount of capital investment and infrastructure that our second city — I should have said — needs.

Mr Hamilton: I am not going to be tempted or be drawn into a debate along the lines that the Member is referring to. There is much that has happened in Londonderry that the people have achieved, that I think is admirable and that could well be copied and emulated by others, but, equally, I would not just dismiss the extent of capital investment that has gone into that constituency. It has been huge, in terms of physical infrastructure and community and social infrastructure, which perhaps comes back neatly to the point that the Member made.

I think it is sometimes easy — it is something that we all do in this House and this country — to almost instantly forget the good investments that have been made, which have reaped benefits and have allowed events like the City of Culture, the Clipper festival and other positive things that have happened in the north-west over the last number of years. We should not forget that some of those things would not happen if it was not for investment by the Executive. We should welcome that and not dismiss the investment that has taken place over the last number of years.

I will bring my remarks to a close by thanking Members for their contributions today and, indeed, over the last number of weeks. As we move further into 2014-15, there will be many challenges for the Assembly and the Executive. Tough decisions lie ahead for Ministers in seeking to deal realistically and appropriately with the apportionment of funding to front line and priority services. We as an Assembly must not shy away from those decisions but must work together to ensure that priority public services are maximised within the available funding.

More widely, we continue to see the evidence of improvement in our local economy and there are now opportunities that we need to grasp. The Executive are determined to support those getting back into work and ensure that the unemployment claimant rate continues its downward trend. We need to continue supporting our private sector in delivering economic recovery and growth. The Assembly and Executive must continue to make a difference by seeking to drive down public sector costs, increase private sector opportunity and use all the levers available to help Northern Ireland businesses and hard-working families towards a brighter economic future.

I will endeavour to ensure that the focus of the Executive remains on delivering key front line public services as efficiently as possible. I know that the Assembly will endorse that objective. On that note, I commend to Members the Budget (No. 2) Bill.

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that this is a Budget Bill and it requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That the Budget (No. 2) Bill [NIA 36/11-15] do now pass.

Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

*That the draft Business Improvement Districts
(Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014
be approved.*

The regulations are made under sections 5(2)(f), 6(3), 9(3) and 17(2)(b) of the Business Improvement Districts Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. I will outline briefly the purpose of the business improvement districts (BIDs) legislation. The Business Improvement Districts Act provides for the establishment for the first time of statutory BIDs in Northern Ireland. It empowers interested traders and business owners across Northern Ireland to get together with their local council to look at improvements that their area may need. A plan is then developed and costed and, subject to a successful ballot, an annual levy is set, which each business involved in the BIDs area would be required to pay over a five-year period.

The Business Improvement Districts (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, which were laid before the Assembly on 29 May 2014, provide significant supporting operational detail and procedures, including detailed instructions on the processes for developing a BID proposal, the holding of ballots, appeals and the administration of the BID levy, all of which support the framework for the establishment of BIDs provided by the Act.

The miscellaneous regulations will further support the establishment of BIDs in Northern Ireland by providing detail on the power of veto by councils over a BID proposal; the procedures to be followed in the provision of rating information from the Department of Finance and Personnel for the purposes of developing and canvassing on a BID proposal; and deciding who is entitled to vote in the BID ballot.

1.45 pm

Councils will have a statutory responsibility to support the development of BIDs and facilitate their establishment. That will include confirming that a proposed BID does not conflict with council plans for the area. The power of veto provision in the regulations sets out the matters and circumstances that a council shall have regard to when deciding whether to exercise a veto on a BID proposal.

One of the first steps in the BID development process is for the BID proposer to obtain non-domestic rating data from the local rating authority, and, in Northern Ireland, that is Land and Property Services of the Department of Finance and Personnel. That information will be used to evaluate the viability of establishing a BID in the area. The information is also required for the canvassing and ballot stage of the process to ensure that the correct ratepayer is identified and is able to vote. Although the sharing of that information is covered by the Data Protection Act, the regulations introduce fines and penalties to protect against any misuse.

It is up to the BID proposer to determine which non-domestic ratepayers will be eligible to vote, and that will be set out in the BID proposals submitted to the council.

A person shall be entitled to vote in a BID ballot if, on the date on which the notice of the ballot is published, that person falls within the class of eligible ratepayers who are entitled to vote as described in the BID proposals.

I recently announced support for BIDs through a pilot BID programme, and a number of pilot areas are working on developing their proposals. It is important that the final stage of the legislative process is completed and that the regulations are put on the statute books as soon as possible to allow the pilots to continue as planned. I am sure that Members across the Chamber will welcome and support the regulations.

Mr Brady (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. The Committee for Social Development considered the Department's proposal to make the Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations at its meeting on 5 June and again at its meeting last week on 26 June.

The Business Improvement Districts Act is an enabling Act, and the Committee, in its consideration of the Bill, acknowledged that much of the detail would come through subordinate legislation. The regulations are subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, which addresses Committee concerns that they should be subject to wide consultation and that the Assembly should have an opportunity to consider them.

The regulations support the establishment of business improvement districts, known as BIDs. They allow for the Department of Finance and Personnel to provide information from its non-domestic rates records for the purposes of developing and canvassing in relation to a ballot on a BID proposal; and to introduce fines for the misuse of that information. That relates to the assertion that Land and Property Services will take on a role in the administration of the BID levy.

The Committee, on the basis of the evidence that it took at Committee Stage, viewed business improvement districts as a positive scheme overall, but it is clear, of course, that in any instance of business incurring a cost, even if the results are positive, the businesses affected should have a chance to have their say on whether they are content. That step is included in the primary legislation and the regulations provide the required detail.

The regulations are particularly important as they outline who is entitled to vote in a ballot, which is a crucial element of the BIDs legislation because all businesses within a business improvement district are required to pay a levy. Evidence from stakeholders led Committee members to agree that the benefits to be reaped by a business within a BID outweighed the price of a levy. Nevertheless, it is vital that any businesses that would be affected have the opportunity to vote on whether they want the BID to go ahead.

Before closing, it is important to note that the Department informed the Committee that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had identified a couple of technical errors in the regulations. The Department corrected them, and the Committee agreed that it was content with the amended regulations. I therefore recommend that the amended draft statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly.

Mr McCausland: I am pleased with the consensus of support across the Assembly for the regulations, and I thank the Deputy Chair and the rest of the Social Development Committee for the positive way in which the Committee dealt with the regulations. I am certain that we all want to see our towns and city centres flourishing once more, and providing a statutory basis for BIDs will contribute to that aim. So, I thank Members for their interest in the regulations and commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the draft Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

The draft order amends a drafting error in Part V of the Police Act 1997, which was made by the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, which provided for the introduction of the filtering scheme. The error relates to the provisions covering the treatment of convictions for those aged under 18. In one place in the order, instead of reading:

“the person was aged under 18 on the date of conviction”

it reads:

“the person was aged 18 or under on the date of conviction”.

That needs to be amended. Following the original order, decisions on the filtering of convictions for those aged under 18 have been made by Access NI in line with the intention of that order as passed by the House. This order, if passed today, will come into operation on 8 July this year.

I thank the Justice Committee for its consideration of the draft legislation. I apologise to the Assembly for the need for the amendment. Pausing for anything further to say in the absence of the Committee Chair but hoping that others will respond, I commend the draft order to the House.

Mr Wells: The Committee is broadly content with what is being proposed. It is a sensible modernisation of the situation, and we have no objections whatsoever.

Mr A Maginness: I will not speak for very long. I support the Minister. It is a sensible amendment and something that the Justice Committee fully approves of.

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Wells for the eloquent way in which he stepped in for the Committee Chair at very short notice. I am sure that the Committee Chair will be reprimanded, and I seriously do thank Mr Wells, Mr Maginness and the Committee in general for their help as ever in dealing with this minor correction. I ask Members to support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Mr Speaker: Order, Members. Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, so I suggest that the House take its ease until then. The business will continue after Question Time, when the next debate will be the Adjournment debate. The Assembly is now adjourned.

2.00 pm

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

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will clarify for Members that, following Question Time, there will be an Assembly consent motion on the Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014. I wish to correct the impression that we will move straight to the Adjournment.

Oral Answers to Questions

Environment

Dereliction Intervention Funding

1. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the second tranche of the dereliction intervention funding programme. (AQO 6447/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I thank the Member for the question. With your permission, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, I perhaps require an extra minute or so to answer it.

I understand that the Member has clarified that his question refers to the next tranche of dereliction intervention funding rather than the second tranche.

I recently invited bids in anticipation of further financial resources becoming available for the next tranche of dereliction funding. It is encouraging and concerning to note that 23 of the 26 councils made submissions for proposals to effect improvements and enhancements in their areas. It is encouraging because it provides clear evidence that the scheme is welcome and effective, since nearly every council wishes to benefit from it. It is concerning because it draws to our attention the fact that there is still a real and significant job to be undertaken across the North in tackling eyesores that have a detrimental visual effect.

The dereliction intervention programme has a fine history. The initial proposal was to reduce the potentially negative impact of some run-down areas in the Portrush and Portstewart area quickly and in time for the influx of visitors to the prestigious Irish Open in 2012. It did exactly that. The next major project was to make improvements to my home city — our home city, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker — in the run-up to and during its tremendous City of Culture year in 2013. I know from personal experience how effective the project was in supporting and enhancing the visitor experience. Another high-profile intervention improved the visual environment for visitors to the G8 summit meeting in May of that year.

As well as these larger projects, there have been many smaller improvements across numerous council areas. By all reports, these have been welcome and acclaimed. It is obvious that the scheme has had a remarkably positive impact, particularly when measured against the comparatively modest sums employed. It is also clear that there has been a beneficial impact, in that adjacent and

nearby private property owners have been encouraged by the uplift to the area generated by small and large schemes, and have responded by tidying and renovating their own properties. This helpful by-product had been envisaged in the creation of the programme.

I have made a strong bid in the June monitoring round for £1 million for dereliction intervention funding. The Executive have not yet completed their considerations of the round, but I will be pressing the case for provision for this excellent scheme. It is fundamentally important that the Executive ensure that the impetus and momentum that was built up in the programme's early years should be maintained. If Executive colleagues provide resources for the dereliction programme, as I hope they will, I will ensure that they are allocated amongst councils as soon as practicable thereafter.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: You did that in the three minutes, Minister.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his response. I accept what he said about the success of the funding that has been allocated so far and what it has achieved. If he is successful and more funding is allocated, will he personally see to it that councils that were not successful on the last occasion, like Craigavon Borough Council, will be able to avail themselves of it next time?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, agus go raibh maith agat fosta as an am breise. Thank you for that wee bit of extra time. Hopefully, it does not lead to penalties.

I thank Mr Moutray for that supplementary question. He quite rightly identifies the success of the fund, which is evidenced by the demand from councils. Hopefully, my bid will be successful, and, if it is, I will have my officials consider the bids from all 23 councils that made submissions. If a council has been unsuccessful to date in applying for the fund, there might be work that needs to be done between that council and my officials. I will ensure that that work is done and that suitable bids are put forward by councils for much-needed work in their areas.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. The Department recently hardened its definition of "dereliction". The Minister might agree that it would be a good thing if provision could be made within the grant for work to be done in areas between buildings, disused and underused land and dilapidated streetscapes, even if it required some element of match funding. I welcome the Minister's thinking on that.

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist shuimiúil sin. I thank the Member for that interesting question and the interesting point he has raised. Dereliction goes beyond buildings. He referred to gap sites, which are like a row of teeth: it is the one that is missing that causes the row to be ugly rather than the ones that are there.

I am aware that, in some bids from some councils, there has been a covering up of those gaps with hoardings and so forth that have been creatively adorned, maybe by local community groups and artists. However, I am unaware of any significant building work being initiated on those sort of sites as a direct result of the dereliction fund. I am certainly open to the Member's suggestion.

Mr Copeland: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. What cooperation, if any, has his Department enjoyed with

the Department for Social Development regarding these matters, particularly public realm schemes?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. This is a very important matter, and it is one on which I am happy to say that there has been coordination between my officials and officials in the Department for Social Development. The reason that many people, including me previously, cite for dereliction and problems, such as vacant properties, in our towns and city centres is the lack of coordination between Departments. So it is extremely important that all Departments work together. I can ensure that my Department and my officials work with other Departments. In this case, the relevant Department is the Department for Social Development, which is charged with urban regeneration and community development. It is vital that we work together, particularly in these times of straitened budgets, to ensure that we and the public are getting the biggest bang for our buck.

Councils: DRD Functions

2. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the discussions he has had with the Minister for Regional Development in relation to transferring current Department for Regional Development areas of responsibility to the new councils. (AQO 6448/11-15)

Mr Durkan: On 11 April 2013, the Executive agreed the functions of Northern Ireland Departments that should transfer to the new 11 councils on 1 April 2015. It was agreed that off-street parking — with the exception of park-and-ride and park-and-share parking places — and Donaghadee harbour and its management would transfer to councils from the Department for Regional Development.

In accordance with the Executive's agreement, it is for individual Ministers to decide on the detail and manner of functions and services transferring from Departments to new councils.

The Department for Regional Development and the other transferring Departments, including my own, have been working closely with local government sector stakeholders in the transfer of functions working group, which was established to facilitate the effective transfer of new powers to councils. The group has been working to identify the governance, operational and financial implications of the transfer and consider possible solutions to addressing them before they are presented for political decision.

The progress of the working group has been regularly reported to me in my capacity as chair of the regional transition committee. Each Department that is transferring functions or powers has submitted comprehensive information on the resources — budget, staff and assets — attached to the package of functions and powers that are to be transferred to local government. Work is under way to provide final allocation models for each of the new councils.

Officials in my Department will continue to work in conjunction with Department for Regional Development officials to facilitate the smooth transfer of the agreed functions from Departments to the new councils.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he give reassurances that the terms and conditions of staff will be the same once they transfer over to councils?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his supplementary question and assume that it refers directly to DRD staff who are carrying out the functions that will be transferred to local councils. Different Ministers, as I have said, will take different views on how assets should transfer, those assets being such things as budgets and, very importantly and crucially, staff.

As regards DRD, the staff will come across. My Department will be transferring the staff associated with the functions that it is transferring to local councils. I know DSD is taking a different approach. It is transferring the functions of community development and urban regeneration and the budget that is currently associated with the staff. Then it will be up the councils to decide how to spend that budget — whether or not they will take the staff on secondment from DSD. It is vital that staff are protected within this whole transfer or transformation of local government. They are what makes local government work and it is not going to work without them.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. What training will be offered or provided to councils and councillors who will soon have statutory powers for parking in town centres?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. Having seen him try to park outside, I think he could certainly do with the training himself. *[Laughter.]* I have on several occasions within this Chamber spoken of the importance of capacity building and training for members of the new councils. A lot of the focus has been on the headline functions that are transferring, such as planning, or the brand new functions, such as community planning, and how we will build members' capacity to deal with those issues. This is the first occasion on which capacity building for this particular function has been raised, but I can assure the Member that it will be addressed within the extensive capacity building programme that is being rolled out for the members of the new councils.

Mr Dallat: Was the Minister suitably impressed by the proposals from the Department for Social Development to reduce the transferring budget to meet its own comprehensive spending targets?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Dallat for that question. I am aware that the most recently proposed DSD budget allocation, which was issued just a fortnight ago on 16 June, continues to be based on the assumption that transferred resources will be subject to a 4% reduction as part of the 2015-16 Executive Budget process. This is an area that, in my opinion, will certainly require further discussion to resolve. In my view, this position is certainly not consistent with the assurance provided to councils that the transfer of functions would be rate neutral at the point of transfer. I will continue to make this case, as I have been doing, with the Minister of Finance and Personnel and other Executive colleagues.

We spoke about the importance of transferring the functions. It is vital that the staff are equipped and have the capacity to deal with them. It is also important that the budget is there to deal with these issues. There could be a detrimental impact on confidence within councils and confidence in the whole process of local government reform should we start cutting budgets before we even transfer the functions.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you to the Minister for his answers so far. You have touched on the transfer of planning powers. Will you give more detail on the process for the transfer of those planning powers and Planning Service staff? Are you confident it will all be in place for next year?

2.15 pm

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Kinahan for his question. I will certainly not try to hide the fact that this is very challenging. Planning, in itself, is an often contentious and complicated area. Transferring that function to local government is, in my opinion, fraught with risk. However, I have confidence in the capacity building programme that was put in place by my Department and is being rolled out. In planning, Community Places is on board to assist with training for the new members, and I believe that that will give the competence and the confidence to councillors to deal with planning issues.

We will not just cut them adrift at 1 April. The Department will retain an oversight role, as other transferring Departments will over the functions that they have transferred, to ensure that new councils are dealing with planning applications as they should be. Next week, I intend to attend the first shadow planning committee meeting of the Derry and Strabane council. I know that part of the training process will include role play, mock meetings and so forth, but it is a very extensive and intensive programme of training, and I believe that it will deliver.

Exploris: Business Plan

3. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the process in place to progress the business plan for Exploris through the Northern Ireland Executive. (AQO 6449/11-15)

Mr Durkan: From my perspective, the process is relatively straightforward although, as of yet, unproductive. I tabled a paper for Executive decision on 30 April this year and followed it up with an urgent procedure paper to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 8 May. I then followed that with a second version of my original paper on 18 June. My Department also made a bid for capital funding of £900,000 at June monitoring, the outcome of which requires an Executive decision. To date, the business case has still not been discussed by the Executive, and no decision has been made regarding the capital funding requested by the council. I am still committed to funding all reasonable costs associated with the seal sanctuary up to a limit of £120,000 a year.

Mr McCarthy: I thank Minister Durkan for his fairly positive response and, indeed, for his support all along. I also thank Ards Borough Council, Friends of Exploris, trade unions, the public in general and, indeed, Members of the Assembly for their support to see Exploris retained and rejuvenated. Will the Minister give us an assurance that he will do all in his power, in the interests of Exploris staff and the economy of the Ards peninsula, to ensure that the capital required to rejuvenate Exploris will come along as soon as possible? That will enable Ards Borough Council to withdraw, hopefully, the closure plans that it has put in place and will enable the council and Exploris to move forward positively.

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr McCarthy for that supplementary question. I will try to make my answer as long as it was. I recognise the value of Exploris to the local economy in the Portaferry area and also what it contributes as an educational facility. I visited Exploris recently and was quite taken by its intrinsic charm. I can assure the Member that I have done and will continue to do all within my power to ensure that the capital investment required to keep Exploris open is forthcoming from the Executive. I have brought that to the Executive table and will ensure that it stays on the Executive table, and I look forward to a positive announcement in the not-so-distant future.

Mr McKinney: Is the Minister aware of any support from any other Department in relation to the Exploris business plan, particularly, for example, in relation to its tourism potential?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr McKinney for his question. Various Departments have expressed support for Exploris and the business plan prepared by Ards Borough Council. However, as of yet, no Minister, including the Enterprise Minister, who is responsible for tourism, has formally agreed to the proposals set out in the business plan, including the provision of the capital grant of £900,000. The purpose of the Executive paper that I have tabled is to obtain their formal approval.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I ask Mr Cree to speak, I remind Members to avail themselves of the nearest microphone when speaking. Doing otherwise causes difficulties for Hansard.

Mr Cree: I also thank the Minister for his positive responses. There has been talk about capital for this. Has any work been done on, or does the business plan cover, the resource required going forward?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. The business case basically outlines the fact that, without this capital injection, Exploris must close. However, with this cash injection and these necessary improvements made, Exploris can be put on a sound business footing for years to come. I have committed — as I reiterated to Mr McCarthy today — up to £120,000 per year of revenue funding from my Department. That is the cost associated with the seal sanctuary. It does not usually come anywhere near that amount, but that is how much I am prepared to fund it.

Wind Energy

4. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his plans to address the need for harmonisation of planning policy on wind energy on an all island basis. (AQO 6450/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I strongly support the principle of increased cooperation between North and South and greater harmonisation of planning policy to address the common environmental challenges that we face, wherever that is appropriate. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland share similar strategic development issues, and it makes sense to work together on these matters of common interest where that can provide mutual benefit to all parts of this island.

In working towards increased policy harmonisation, my planning officials already regularly communicate, cooperate and share practices with officials from the South

on issues of common interest, and I will ensure that they continue to do so. In addition, high-level cooperation exists between both jurisdictions in relation to strategic planning for infrastructure, and there are also well-established trans-boundary consultation arrangements in relation to planning applications and development plans being considered under the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2012 and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

I acknowledge that wind energy development has, in recent times, become a controversial issue in both the North and South. In response to those concerns, I undertook to use the opportunity of the consultation on the single strategic planning policy statement to listen to the views of people on the issue. I will also seek to take account of any recommendations that may emerge from the ongoing Environment Committee inquiry into wind energy.

At the same time, I am also aware that the planning rules governing wind energy in the Republic of Ireland are subject to review and potential changes. Last year, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DCLG) published consultation proposals on proposed revisions to that Department's 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' in relation to noise, separation distance and shadow flicker. DCLG indicated that, following consideration of the submissions, the revisions to the guidelines will be finalised and adopted. When that happens, my officials will consider them and advise me accordingly.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he ensure that this matter will be brought up at the next meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC)? What plans has he to meet Phil Hogan on the matter?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist. I thank the Member for that supplementary question. As outlined in my first answer, I believe that cooperation on strategic, environmental and planning matters is an issue of great importance that can provide mutual benefit to all parts of the island. As I said, the North and the Republic of Ireland share similar strategic development issues, opportunities and challenges. High-level cooperation already exists between both jurisdictions, and I will ensure that my officials continue to communicate, cooperate and share practices on a regular basis. I will also discuss it with Minister Hogan. In my view, a formal arrangement through the NSMC would be to everyone's benefit.

Mr Campbell: I am sure that, upon reading the text of the question and listening to the Minister's answer, particularly the references to an all-island basis, the good people of Rathlin Island might feel excluded.

On a more serious issue, will the Minister talk about offshore wind energy, particularly when it comes to areas of outstanding natural beauty off the north-east coast of Northern Ireland? Will more attention be paid to ensuring that they are protected in the event of any future application, such as that of about seven years ago?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. I assure him and the residents of Rathlin that I mean them no offence.

Offshore wind has come to the fore in recent months and is an issue that will divide opinion, undoubtedly. I believe it is vital that, as the Department of the Environment and an Executive, we have in place policies on offshore wind, as well as onshore wind, and how we can best deal with those types of applications in a way that can generate the electricity that we require and the employment and investment that we desire, yet protect and preserve the environment that we cherish.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the Minister's commitment to an all-island energy policy. Will he highlight whether he has any concerns around the security of all-island energy availability? Does he agree that there needs to be greater education amongst the public in terms of alternative energy sources?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mrs Kelly for that question. The security of the electricity supply is one issue that keeps coming up, again and again, in meetings that I have on a constituency level and in a ministerial capacity. I believe that we all have a duty, as elected representatives, to educate our electorate on those matters, the importance of establishing security of supply and the role that embracing renewable energies will have in providing us with that security of supply. It is about providing potential and existing inward investors with security as well, and the knowledge that our electricity market is going to remain stable and that we, as a region, are not going to be undercut or out-priced by other regions bidding for inward investment.

Mr Elliott: Given that much more renewable energy is going into the electricity grid at the moment, including wind energy, will the Minister explain why electricity prices continue to rise for the consumer instead of coming down, as predicted, through the use of renewable energy sources?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. However, I must advise him that, as I am sure he well knows, it would be better directed towards another Minister in the Assembly. As Environment Minister, I bear responsibility for climate change policy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. I believe that is something that we share collective responsibility for. While I deal with the planning aspect of renewable energy, particularly energy from wind, the Minister responsible for energy is Minister Foster, the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Talking about wind, that very successfully spun that out. We end the period for listed questions. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the progress of the Belfast metropolitan area plan (BMAP), which has been running for some years, is on the DOE website in draft form dated 2004 and still has not been adopted by DOE even though, as he understands it, its lifetime is to run out in 2015. (AQT 1341/11-15)

2.30 pm

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mr Dunne for that question. Quite

rightly, he has brought to the Chamber concerns in the wider community in Belfast and beyond about the lack of appearance to date of BMAP. He points to the dates: this has been in creation since 2004 and there is a notional end date of 2015. As Minister, I am responsible for its publication, and I believe that it is vital that it appears on the shelves before it passes its “best before” date.

I have raised the issue of BMAP at the Executive. BMAP went through all the necessary statutory processes, was signed off by Minister Kennedy and got its certificate of general conformity. I have brought it to the Executive for approval and that is where it sits. From that, an Executive subgroup on BMAP was established, a meeting of which I chaired, to hear concerns from some Ministers about some aspects of BMAP. However, I am coming under increasing pressure, as I believe all Members will, from businesses, social housing providers and so forth to ensure that we get BMAP published as soon as possible and practicable. I ask Mr Dunne to implore his Executive party colleagues to ensure that I can do so.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. How will BMAP fit in conjunction with other council plans, such as that in North Down and Ards, where two plans will run under the one council — BMAP and the Ards plan? How will planning decisions be made in that case, in which there are two different policy documents?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that interesting question. It is vital that these documents complement each other rather than compete with each other. Many of these questions will be addressed as we move forward with the transfer of planning to local government. I am aware that some shadow councils have already commenced work on their new local development plans in conjunction with my planning officials. That is vital, but it again brings the focus back to why we need to publish and adopt BMAP. In my opinion, it is high time that the Executive acceded to my request to adopt it.

Planning Service: Staff Relocation

Mrs D Kelly: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I thought that I would be addressing you as Mr Speaker by this stage, but that appears not to be the case just at the moment.

2. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the many letters she is receiving from Planning Service staff, to outline how the location of Planning Service staff will be decided on, how staff will be consulted and what criteria will be used to inform the decision-makers. (AQT 1342/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mrs Kelly for her very pertinent question. It is not dissimilar to a question that Mr Easton asked in ordinary Question Time, except that he was referring to DRD staff who may be relocated to deal with the functions transferring from that Department. I should not stand here slagging off other Departments about what they have to do to allay the concerns of their staff without being able to do so myself.

Great steps have been taken to ensure that planning staff will be placed where they want to be placed. That process has been under way for some considerable time, and I am sure that Members will have noticed quite a bit of rearranging of the furniture in their local planning office as

new faces appear and others move on to other offices. Not all planning staff will transfer to local government. We will have to retain planning staff centrally. Those decisions will be looked at in the round, and that will come very soon.

Mrs D Kelly: In particular, it is women with caring responsibilities who have concerns about how it will be managed. Will people who have particular family responsibilities be given an opportunity to have their say and have their needs taken into account?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I assure Mrs Kelly that that certainly will be taken into account. It is vital that we protect the workforce and ensure that we do not render people incapable of work — meaning that those with caring responsibilities would have to travel an impracticable number of miles to get to work, especially if that is on a part-time basis. So, yes, the needs of staff are very much to the fore in my thinking when dealing with staffing issues.

Tyres: Illegal Dumping

3. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister of the Environment what enforcement measures his Department has in place to deal with the illegal dumping of tyres. (AQT 1343/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. It seems that Members never tire of questions about tyres. I have had a Goodyear of them now. [Interruption.]

Mr Allister: You could always retire.

Mr Durkan: Tread carefully. [Laughter.] The illegal dumping of tyres is an issue that cause headaches for my Department, local councils and the general public. I am happy to say that — no pun intended this time — we are, slowly but surely, getting to grips with the issue. I am working on it with my counterpart in the Republic of Ireland. It is important that we have a cohesive, joined-up approach, as it is often the case that tyres from down South are dumped here and vice versa. That work will actually go as far as establishing a producer responsibility scheme, which, I believe, will be vital in the long term in the battle against the dumping of tyres, which are extremely damaging and detrimental to the environment. In the short term, my officials work closely with councils on the issue through the fly-tipping protocol. However, I believe that there is room for improvement in the relationship between my officials and certain councils on the issue. It is vital that we work together to address it.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. More specifically, a number of residents have expressed concerns about the number of tyres that have recently appeared at the Ballyduff bonfire site in my constituency. Can the Minister assure us that his Department, working with the residents, the PSNI and other groups, will work to ensure that those tyres are removed?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mrs Cameron for her supplementary question. I am glad that, in it, she pointed out the fact that my Department can do that only in conjunction with other agencies, the council, the local community and the PSNI. I assure Mrs Cameron and all Members that my Department will not be found wanting when it comes to working with other agencies and the community to address the issue.

Newry: Carbane Development

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I want to make a point of information before I ask my question. The Minister referred to my parking abilities earlier. First, I have to say that I arrive at the Building far too early for the Minister even to see me park. *[Laughter.]* Secondly, someone of his elevated status does not have to worry about parking when he has a driver. *[Laughter.]* I think that we will leave it at that. I could not let that pass, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle.

4. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will reconsider his decision to allow an out-of-town development at Carnbane, which is approximately 3 kilometres from Newry city centre, given that he will be aware that there has been a lot of local opposition, particularly from city centre traders and the chamber of commerce. (AQT 1344/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist. I thank the Member for the question. I know that Mickey always arrives early just to make sure that he gets a parking space. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that it is topical questions, not topical debate.

Mr Durkan: The Member quite rightly points out that my decision to proceed with an approval for an out-of-town, multi-use development on the edge of Newry has caused some consternation in the Newry area, and he asks whether I have decided to reconsider my decision. Subsequent to my decision, which, I believe, will be good for the Newry area in the long term, and the announcement of my approval, I have granted a meeting to the Newry chamber of commerce and other local interests who are vociferous in their opposition to my decision. They have outlined a very strong case, I have to say, and have brought new information to my attention. They have asked me to visit Newry with a view to having a look around the city centre, and I have agreed to do so in advance of my issuing any green form. I have also agreed to a site meeting with the applicant in this case, as I believe that that is only fair.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answer. I am sure that he will be very welcome in Newry. Newry city centre has approximately 70 acres for redevelopment. I just wonder whether the Minister can give us some idea of what he considers an appropriate distance from a city centre for an out-of-town development. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Brady for his supplementary question. He alluded to the current space available in Newry city centre. The issue was raised with me by representatives of the chamber of commerce when they came to see me, and I look forward to seeing it for myself. When we talk about appropriate distance, I was going to say and have said since taking on this Ministry that each application will be judged on its own merits or otherwise. What is suitable for one area may not be deemed suitable for another. Asking what distance would be deemed suitable is akin to asking, "How long is a piece of string?".

Crawfordsburn Country Park

5. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment, given the media reports of large quantities of alcohol being cleared away from Crawfordsburn Country Park — not

for the first time because there have been a number of incidents over the last few years, along with the resultant litter problems — what additional help or resources he can give to the hard-pressed staff there to ensure that everyone can get the fullest enjoyment from that magnificent facility. (AQT 1345/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Weir for the question and for bringing the issue to my attention, as it has not been brought to my attention before. Since being appointed Minister 11 months ago, I have had occasion to visit Crawfordsburn Country Park twice, and I must say that it is an excellent and beautiful facility. Therefore, I am happy to give my pledge to Mr Weir that I will ensure that my officials work hard to support those charged with maintaining Crawfordsburn Country Park as a clean place that we can all enjoy.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings an end to topical questions. I thank the Minister. We must move on to questions to the Minister of Finance and Personnel.

2.45 pm

Finance and Personnel

Public Procurement: SMEs

1. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his proposals to ensure the removal of the barriers faced by small and medium-sized enterprises when accessing public procurement opportunities. (AQO 6462/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Improving the access of SMEs to public procurement opportunities has been a key area of focus for the procurement board over the last three years. Under my chairmanship, the board has overseen a programme to simplify processes, reduce bureaucracy and remove potential barriers to SMEs. Building on the recommendations made in the Finance and Personnel Committee's report on public procurement, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), in conjunction with centres of procurement expertise (COPEs), has implemented a significant number of measures aimed at improving SME access. They include simplifying processes by focusing on the production of clearer specifications; standardising terms and conditions for all contracts; removing the minimum eligibility requirements for low-value supplies and services contracts; and awarding contracts on lowest acceptable price when possible.

In taking the programme forward, CPD has worked with business representatives and the construction industry to ensure the widest possible acceptance of the proposals. The list of measures is too long to read today, but I will arrange to make it available to Members. More improvements are planned, with the development of a new procurement portal — eTendersNI — to be introduced in the autumn. The new portal will help to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs through the use of standardised templates and processes across the public sector. The portal will be aligned with the latest European procurement directives. Together with others, Northern Ireland has lobbied strongly for the relaxation of

European regulations that have acted as barriers to SME participation in public contracts. I am pleased to say that there has been a positive response, and the new directives are more SME friendly. Northern Ireland is working with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the benefits are reflected through the transposing regulations.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: If Members are having conversations, I ask them not to interfere with proceedings. There were very loud murmurings of conversation.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answer. I was going to ask him what steps are in place to level the playing field between SMEs and larger companies, but he has answered that to a large extent. SMEs feel that they are not often on a level playing field when making procurement bids against larger companies.

Mr Hamilton: The Member talks about perception. There is definitely a perception that small and medium-sized enterprises in Northern Ireland, which are the bulk of our economy and account for some 99% of businesses, are somehow disadvantaged when they are up against larger companies. All the evidence suggests that small and medium-sized firms from Northern Ireland are outperforming much larger companies, which is what the Committee found when it did its work on procurement a couple of years ago. The experience that those firms gain from public procurement in Northern Ireland stands them in good stead when they bid for work in, for example, the Irish Republic, and there is an interesting statistic that companies from Northern Ireland get more work in the Irish Republic in public procurement than the other way round.

While there is a downside, particularly on the capital side, in that a significant amount of the work being carried out by our major construction firms, which are still medium-sized firms, is now happening across the water, the fact that they are able to win huge construction contracts — a lot of them in Scotland and some in England — is testimony not just to the skills that those Northern Ireland-based firms have but to the fact that they have been able to use significant capital spend in the past in Northern Ireland to get used to public procurement. They are able to go over to Scotland, compete with Scottish firms, win that work and bring that value back to Northern Ireland.

Mr Clarke: I am pleased that the Minister sees the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Northern Ireland. Will he indicate how many of those SMEs win public sector contracts and how it compares with other parts of the UK?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. As I said in response to the now-departing Mr Brady, who is obviously very satisfied with the answers that he got —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: He is past caring.

Mr Hamilton: That is unfair, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will give you a Northern Ireland example to back up my comments to Mr Brady. In 2012-13, 2,889 contracts totalling £1.4 billion were awarded by COPEs, of which 79% were awarded to local businesses, 80% were awarded to SMEs, and 66% were awarded to SMEs based in Northern Ireland. Those figures compare quite favourably with Scotland and Wales. The other day, I noticed that the leader of the Labour Party, Mr Miliband, I think, said that, should his party be elected to form the next Government, one of its targets would be that 25% of all contracts let in

England would go to small and medium-sized businesses. As the Member can tell, if 66% of those 2,889 contracts are awarded to SMEs based in Northern Ireland, we are well ahead of the national average.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. What processes are in place to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises that supply goods to government are not excluded by the requirement in some tenders that a certain number of products have to be supplied and that any company that cannot supply that number is excluded?

Mr Hamilton: Clearly, nobody is excluded, in the sense that any firm can bid for a range of contracts, but it is important that, when we as a customer procure goods, services or even capital projects, we are mindful of the capacity of the firm that we are procuring and buying from to deliver. That is why, as the Member has highlighted, there will be occasions when criteria around the viability of a business to deliver are assessed in the process. I cannot think of a specific example, nor would I go into a specific example in relation to procurement, but you cannot have a multimillion-pound contract being delivered by a firm that has no experience of getting anywhere near that. In such a situation, you would have considerable doubts about its ability to deliver and, therefore, provide the service that we need. Ultimately, we are not buying these goods just for the sake of it. People rely on the services that are delivered using those goods, so it is important that we, as a customer, have some certainty. That is why, from time to time, those thresholds will be part of the criteria on which we assess tenders.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that. He will be aware that one of the drawbacks and difficulties that SMEs have when going through public procurement is experience. It is a magic circle: how do they get experience without first getting into the contracts? Can the Minister explain what his Department is doing to help contractors get the experience?

Mr Hamilton: Again, that, in many ways, relates to the question asked by Mr Bradley. This is important: you would not want to let a tender for a huge construction project, such as a hospital, to a firm that has no experience of building a hospital or healthcare facilities on that scale. You would be worried about the ability of that firm to deliver the project on time and within budget. Experience is one of the components that has to be there, along with price and other considerations, when you are weighing tenders. This gets to one of the conundrums with procurement and why, frequently, there is no right answer. Certain circumstances will suit some suppliers, and other circumstances will suit others. I understand some of the valid reasons why we want to go with experience, but, when you go heavily on experience, it is seen to exclude new or, perhaps, smaller firms. When you go down to no experience, you maybe have risks about the ability to deliver the project, and you have concerns about their experience in managing large projects.

Procurement is a fine balancing act. One of the things I have learned over the past number of years is that there are competing factors, whether it is value for money or getting SMEs to get more contracts. It is a fine balance to find. I think that we have got the balance more or less right in Northern Ireland, but that does not mean that we should not constantly and continuously improve our processes.

With the help of the procurement board, that is what we have been trying to do over the past year.

Mr Allister: Why does the Minister not move towards the multi-supplier framework agreements that pertain in large measure in Great Britain? The work is divided into lots, and those with a particular interest who are smaller contractors can apply and compete. Is that not a road worth travelling and testing, as it seems to work much better in the rest of the UK?

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure if it works much better in the rest of the UK. There are issues of scale in respect of what might happen, say, in Whitehall Departments. They have had less concern about trying to use procurement to support SMEs, not least because their economy is structured somewhat differently from ours. The point that the Member raises reminds me of discussions that took place in the House and in Committee rooms seven or so years ago but from a reverse perspective, when the procurement service and CPD had been moving towards bigger framework contracts with lots. People were turning their face against that, and a lot of suppliers were concerned about that. You will recall the reason or one of the reasons, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, from your time on the Committee. I agree that frameworks can deliver experience and value for money, which is incredibly important in my position — at the end of the day, we should never lose sight of the fact that we are trying to get services or projects delivered in a value-for-money way through procurement — but there was concern from some suppliers that, if you failed to get onto, say, a five-year framework contract, that was you out of that type of work for a full five years. That might negatively impact on that business. Procurement is not here to solve all our social or economic ills, but that concern was listened to at the time, and there was something of a retreat from wholesale framework contracts.

We have been trying to make progress in a related way through our collaborative procurement strategy, which was approved by the procurement board in June last year. That looks at all the areas across government where common services, goods and supplies are purchased, and it tries to drive value for money through that. I am pleased to say that, against a target of saving £30 million over a three-year period — the first two contracts we looked at related to security and electricity — 8.7% in savings, which equates to nearly £2 million saved to the public purse, has already been achieved through collaborative procurement. However, to go back to the point made by Mr Elliott —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: You are out of time.

Mr Hamilton: — there are balances to be struck.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That was a useful question and a detailed answer, but can we try to work to the two-minute rule?

Public Sector Reform

2. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline how he intends to take forward his public sector reform agenda. (AQO 6463/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive recently endorsed my proposal to engage the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, more commonly known as the OECD, to conduct a strategic review of public sector

reform in Northern Ireland. That independent review will outline what we are doing well and identify areas where we can improve, benchmarked against international best practice. The recommendations of the review will help to shape the reform programme going forward. In parallel, the public sector reform division in my Department has been developing a range of reform tools available to the Civil Service and wider public sector to support Ministers in progressing public service improvements. For example, an innovation laboratory project took place last week. I have also recently launched an innovation scheme, inviting staff to submit ideas to generate real financial savings and/or service delivery improvements. The scheme has been piloted initially in my Department. Since February 2014, I have been engaged in a series of bilateral meetings with my Executive colleagues. The support for the wider reform measures has been encouraging. We need to work collaboratively with Departments, business areas and front line staff as a catalyst and an enabler of reform.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his response. Will he outline the sort of work the OECD will carry out as part of its review?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I repeat that I am pleased that Executive colleagues have agreed to engage the OECD to look at what we are doing in respect of public sector reform in Northern Ireland. There are two broad areas that the terms of reference will enable them to look at in terms of reform in Northern Ireland. The first is in what might be described as cross-cutting areas and levers for making reform happen, which is things like procurement, HR policy, IT and digitalisation. Those areas, by and large, are my responsibility as Minister of Finance and Personnel. I want them to come in and look at those areas and suggest where we could improve what we do in procurement, HR, IT and digital delivery, at all times benchmarking us against international best practice across the 34 OECD member states.

The second area of work that I have also received support from Executive colleagues to look at is particular areas of policy. It could be in health, justice or education, where our Ministers have either already started reform projects and want to mark those against international best practice or where they are considering reform and want to use the breadth of knowledge from OECD to suggest where they might head in respect of reforming the policy areas in their Department. It is encouraging that an organisation of the stature of the OECD has been willing to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive on that work. I look forward to that starting over the next couple of months. It will be the first time that the OECD has done a public governance review of a sub-national Government like ours. In that respect, it is quite a prestigious thing for Northern Ireland to take the lead in.

3.00 pm

Mr Dallat: I am sure that, as I represent the Coleraine area, the Minister will not be a bit surprised when I ask him for assurance that the reform agenda does not include cutting public service jobs.

Mr Hamilton: It is not just Coleraine; this could apply to any part of Northern Ireland. Of course, we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that the jobs that the Member refers to are in just Coleraine, but other people around Northern Ireland are affected too. I have been careful to

say from the start that the objective of reforming the public sector has not been to reduce headcount. We have to accept, mind you, that we face significant public spending challenges over the next number of years.

As I was saying during the Final Stage of the Budget Bill earlier — I think that the Member was present — we are going into 2015-16 with around 1.5% coming off our Budget compared with this financial year. That puts our Budget and our public services under extreme pressure. My mantra around reform has been fuelled not just by that fact but by the fact that, if you project the next five years down the line, Treasury and the Office for Budget Responsibility are saying that that is the picture that is here and it is here to stay, particularly with the pressure on current expenditure. That is why I have encouraged Ministers to agree — I welcome the fact that they have, to a man and a woman, done so — with the sentiment that I have been pushing that they do not look at cutting public services, but, where services are not working or where they have succeeded, there is scope for stopping them or toning them down. Ministers need to look at how they can deliver and achieve better outcomes with what they have. Doing more for less is an elusive goal. It is challenging and difficult, but it is something that we have to embrace because, in the years ahead, because of public spending cuts and welfare reform penalty pressures, it will be essential that we continue to reform public services and make the best use of the people we have. They will have to use the innovation and creativity that, I think, they all possess.

DFF: Late Committee Papers

3. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why his Department continues to issue late papers to the Committee for Finance and Personnel. (AQO 6464/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has regular, constructive engagement with the Committee for Finance and Personnel. I am satisfied that my Department has appropriate procedures in place regarding the provision of papers to the Committee and will ensure that these are followed. However, as Minister, I am responsible for ensuring that I am content with all the output of my Department, including briefings for the Committee. It is inevitable that there will be occasions where briefing material is not ready in time to meet Committee deadlines.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Does he accept that there has been a slowdown in the processing of papers and an increase in the lateness of papers coming to the Committee? Does he accept that this is not good enough and can and would potentially undermine the workings of the Assembly?

Mr Hamilton: I welcome the Member's interest in the workings of the Finance and Personnel Committee. I would have thought that she had enough to worry about, being Chair of the Health Committee, but I am sure that her colleagues will welcome her concerns about the tardiness or otherwise of papers being presented to the Finance Committee. My party colleagues tell me that they have plenty of work to do with what the Committee does and what the Department supplies it with.

I communicated this to the Committee in April: I value having a good working relationship with the Committee,

as, I am sure, any Minister in the House would, but occasionally — it is only occasionally, as, I think, the statistics will bear out — papers will not be ready to be with the Committee, for a host of reasons, within the arbitrary deadlines that it sets. It is ironic that a member of Sinn Féin should raise an issue about delaying things from moving forward, given the track record of that party in many respects in the House and the Executive. When I saw this question, it sparked something in my head about a paper from my Department. It was not even from me; it was a paper from Mr Wilson when he was Minister — Mr Cree will smirk as he realises which issue I am talking about — about a review of the financial process. That paper was put forward by my Department to the Executive for agreement to change and reform our outdated budgetary process in this place.

That paper has been with the Executive since 9 March 2012, held up by Sinn Féin, and I am being criticised because papers are arriving a couple of days later. I think that that says it all.

Social Clauses

4. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the inclusion of social clauses in government contracts. (AQO 6465/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Programme for Government includes a commitment to include social clauses in all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction. I can confirm that all contracts should include social clauses for equality and health and safety. Beyond that, Departments are free to define those social considerations that are to be linked to the subject matter of the contract, those that will be furthered by contract-performance clauses, or those that will be by a combination of both.

The procurement board agreed that Departments should set targets for the inclusion of social clauses, and it monitors progress against those biannually. However, reporting has been inconsistent. I am disappointed to note that not all Departments make returns and that levels of assurance on the accuracy and completeness of the figures provided are low. The Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) is working with Departments to improve the quality of returns. However, I urge my ministerial colleagues to ensure that activity in their departmental areas is maximised and accurately recorded.

More positively, CPD has, with effect from 1 January 2014, implemented the detailed monitoring of training and employment clauses in construction contracts with values over £30,000 awarded by centres of procurement expertise. Returns for the first quarter, which ended on 31 March 2014, indicate that contracts awarded during the period include 2,949 weeks of training, 308 weeks of student placements and 8,733 weeks of employment opportunities. That is substantially ahead of the figures reported by Departments and presents a more positive picture. The scope for training and employment clauses on supplies and services contracts is less as they tend to be of shorter duration. However, CPD is working with Departments to increase the level of activity in larger services contracts.

Mrs McKeivitt: Does the Minister have any plans to increase the profile of the social clause in public contracts,

with particular reference to the likes of giving more opportunities to the young apprentice?

Mr Hamilton: It is something that is a Programme for Government commitment, although I was not in the Executive at the time and have to admit that I thought that it was an ambitious target to have them in all contracts. Some other jurisdictions are only including social clauses in contracts above a certain level, which is easier to do for lots of different reasons. I am quite pleased that what we have been able to achieve in training, student places and employment opportunities seems to be going very well. It is harder to say that categorically, given that Departments are not consistent in reporting what they are doing. That issue is frequently raised at the procurement board, and it was raised at our last meeting a couple of weeks ago.

It is important that CPD, in managing all those on behalf of the whole Executive, can create the mechanisms for all Departments to consistently report how many social clauses they are including in contracts, whether it is for training, student placements, prompt payment, equality or health and safety. Then we could have a better picture of how we are performing. I suspect that we are performing infinitely better than we were a number of years ago; nevertheless, it is important that we can track progress up or down over the next number of years.

Mr Campbell: By way of comparison, can the Minister outline how assessments of social clauses in government contracts are monitored in, say, Scotland and Wales?

Mr Hamilton: It is important that we benchmark ourselves, particularly against our near neighbours, in respect of things like that, particularly as I do not think that there is another policy area that I am responsible for in which I hear — Mr Allister was at it earlier — everybody else being described as better at it than we are in Northern Ireland. We are always talking about how wonderful Scotland is at procurement. However, I recall that the Scottish Labour Party, in its parliamentary election manifesto a couple of years ago, said that public procurement in Scotland needed to be improved and that it wanted to look at Northern Ireland for examples of how to improve it. There is a bit of a grass-is-always-greener attitude about those things.

In respect of social clauses, the Welsh Government have developed guidance to support public sector organisations to adopt what they refer to as community benefits. There is a list of priority policy areas that match up with their Programme for Government, but it does not set targets, as they recognise that community-benefits approaches can vary significantly from project to project.

In Scotland, legislation on community benefits passed Stage 3 in May 2014. Again, that is for all regulated procurements with values above £4 million. So, whilst we may be having some difficulties measuring and assessing exactly and precisely where we are across all Departments, I think that we should be commended for the fact that our target is to include community benefits or social clauses — however they are referred to — in all public procurement contracts. Whether they are in capital contracts, where it is easier, or in supply contracts, where it is a little bit more difficult, we have said that it must be in all contracts, it is not above a certain threshold and no targets have been set as in Wales. So, in many respects in that regard, we are more advanced than our neighbours in Wales and Scotland.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. How are the outcomes from social clauses measured and tracked against local needs?

Mr Hamilton: Before I start talking down what we have done too much, or appear to, we need to bear in mind that we are in the early stages of developing our approach to social clauses. Guidance was issued to Departments only in the last little while to try to more clearly define what social clauses are and what Departments should be adding into contracts in respect of social clauses.

There are arguably social clauses of a kind in all contracts, particularly in construction contracts where there are health and safety and prompt payment issues. There are, of course, always equality matters in terms of employment. However, those sort of broader clauses, whether they deal with apprenticeships, youth employment or student placements, are sometimes a bit harder to define. So, there is flexibility for Departments to define social considerations that they see fit for particular circumstances.

We always need to bear in mind that, at the end of the day, we still want contracts delivered, and we should not be deflected from the good delivery of contracts by dreaming up ever more imaginative and weird and wonderful social clauses. However, I understand that there is that degree of flexibility in the procurement guidance note that allows Departments to consider social considerations and the benefits that might flow from social clauses in a particular contract without it being a sort of generic thing that is just slapped down from on high.

Mr Copeland: I also thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Will the Minister detail the number of apprenticeships that have been achieved through the process so far within Northern Ireland, GB, the European Union and elsewhere from contracts that have been issued by Northern Ireland Departments?

Mr Hamilton: I am tempted to say that I cannot give that answer, certainly not off the top of my head. I will have to go away and start doing some long table addition for all that. It may not be possible to follow that through to the extent that the Member wants, and I am not sure whether he wants us to compare our performance versus others or just what Northern Ireland firms are doing elsewhere. I am happy to converse and communicate with him and try to get him the answer he is looking for.

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

Emigration

1. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he will recommend to the Executive the development of a strategy to tackle emigration, in light of the fact that his Department has published figures that show that over 25,000 people left the North last year — a figure higher than at any other time, including during, for example, the conflict. (AQT 1351/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I take the Member's point. I think that he is genuinely concerned about a mass movement of people outside Northern Ireland, and clearly we want to see as many people who are from Northern Ireland and who

are educated here taking root, setting up homes, having families and contributing to our economy. That is why I very much welcome that our economic strategy, which is led by DETI and Arlene Foster, is reaping benefits and bringing in more jobs. I also very much welcome the announcement of nearly 500 jobs in First Derivatives in Newry today; it is good to hear an announcement of a local firm increasing to that sort of scale. One of the most important ways in which we can keep local people who are educated in Northern Ireland here and ensure that they take root here is by ensuring that our economy works.

I understand the Member's concerns. Before we jump to a range of conclusions, we need to spend a little bit of time analysing the figures published at the tail end of last week to see whether people leaving Northern Ireland perceived their move as enforced because of a lack of labour opportunities or whether it was more a matter of their choosing to avail themselves of economic or education opportunities presented to them.

3.15 pm

Mr McElduff: I thank the Minister. I suggest to him that young people need a future and employment prospects. I take on board the points made about job creation and the job announcements in Newry and other areas recently, but will the Minister consider applying pressure on the European Union to widen the youth guarantee scheme so that it operates on an all-island basis?

Mr Hamilton: That is the responsibility of the Minister for Employment and Learning. I am racking my brains to try to remember what I picked up at the last North/South Ministerial Council plenary meeting. If I recall rightly, Dr Farry and his counterpart Ruairi Quinn, the Education Minister in the South, looked at whether the youth guarantee scheme could be extended across the whole of Ireland. The South gets a more generous benefit from the scheme than we in Northern Ireland do. I think that, because of some situation with the criteria — they are called NUTS criteria, which seems appropriate sometimes when you think about it — the scheme does not apply to Northern Ireland in the way that it does to the South. Maybe there are more nuts there than here. I do not know — that is a dangerous one to get into.

It is primarily an issue for the Minister for Employment and Learning. I think that the Member's point is right and echoes my point that improving economic conditions is key to ensuring that people migrating out of Northern Ireland for labour opportunities and the young unemployed have opportunities. I hope that, with our economy growing by 2.6% and projected to grow by more than that this year, with unemployment continuing to fall and with investment by indigenous companies like First Derivatives and others, there will be opportunities so that the migration that there has been, particularly from some parts of Northern Ireland, will become a thing of the past.

Photovoltaic Payback: Public Buildings

2. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, given that there are companies that can provide free, profitable photovoltaic (PV) schemes, with homeowners receiving payback in seven years, how he can stand over the payback period supplied by his officials on 28 May when they gave a briefing to the Finance and

Personnel Committee in which they said that there was a 50-year payback for PV systems on public buildings. (AQT 1352/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There was a bit of noise in the Chamber. Did you say 15 or 50?

Mr Agnew: Fifty.

Mr Hamilton: I freely admit that I am not an expert on the payback of various renewable sources of energy, power and heat, but that sounds a little high to me when you consider the plethora of them appearing on domestic properties across Northern Ireland. There is nobody as savvy as a homeowner when it comes to calculating whether this is a worthwhile investment, albeit, in most cases, with a publicly funded subsidy.

I am not against using any form of renewable heat or energy in public buildings. Part of the asset management strategy that my Department is responsible for looks at saving money, not just through rent, service charges, rates and things like that but in our energy consumption. A lot of the buildings that civil servants currently populate are quite old and, therefore, less energy efficient. When the leases run out, there is an opportunity to move to new buildings. We want to save money on rent, rates and service charges and by getting more people into the space, but we also consider energy efficiency as part of that. That does not exclude using the sorts of renewables that the Member is talking about in the existing buildings that we own.

Mr Agnew: I welcome the Minister's answer. For his information, the officials also said that the payback period for solar thermal energy was 100 years, which to me seems incredulous. Given what the Minister said, will he look at this issue and push officials in his Department to support the work of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in promoting renewable energy by ensuring that we look at the public estate and put more renewables into public buildings?

Mr Hamilton: I am happy to give that assurance. The Member will appreciate that, whether it is 50 years, 100 years or considerably less, it is a technology that is very much developing. We could make a sizeable investment now and find that, in a couple of years, it was not good value for money as the technology advances. I suppose that there is always a risk, particularly with that type of thing. We also have to bear in mind whether we own the building, and, if we do not own the building, it is not necessarily our responsibility to make the investment, even though we may be the beneficiary of it. There are wheels within wheels in all of this, but it is not something that I object to taking a look at in principle, particularly if the investment does have a shorter payback period than 50 years. I think that 50 years would see all our time in politics, and then some. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, there is some resistance to that. Not only is the technology good for the environment but it saves a few pounds, and it is important that we look at those opportunities when they arise.

Bank of England: Meeting

3. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline what was discussed when he and the First Minister met the governor of the Bank of England. (AQT 1353/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for her question. It was my first opportunity and that of the First Minister to meet the relatively new governor of the Bank of England, Mr Mark Carney, when he was in Belfast at the tail end of last week. I very much welcomed the opportunity to have a full, frank, long conversation with him on a range of subjects. As the House would expect from somebody in my position, we focused on the economy and what he thought the prospects are for our economy, which I have to say are positive.

We also concentrated on the issue that we have talked about many times in the House, which is national lending initiatives not reaching Northern Ireland and having a positive impact on businesses in Northern Ireland. From talking to business representative organisations in Northern Ireland, I can say that there still appears to be issues with access to finance. The governor listened to our concerns and understood the issues that we have with access to finance. He also understood the very different nature of the banking system in Northern Ireland and the problems that that has caused, particularly the issue of property overhang, influenced by our Irish banks. It was a useful conversation and the start of a dialogue that we hope to keep up in the years ahead.

Mrs Hale: Did the Minister discuss the impact of the likely interest rate rises on the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: We did. Before we had our meeting, I noticed that he had been quoted in the national news talking about likely interest rate rises and the level that they might reach. Inevitably, that did come up in conversation. The First Minister and I obviously came from a particular Northern Ireland perspective, and we agreed with the governor that, if the economy rapidly improved, there might be scope for him and the monetary policy committee to look at interest rates. We impressed on the governor the particular circumstances in Northern Ireland and told him that, whilst we are seeing an improvement in our economy — the 2.6% growth last year that I mentioned — falling unemployment and rising employment, there are still problems with disposable income in Northern Ireland. Therefore, any sudden and sizeable increase in interest rates may have more of a negative effect here than it might have in London, the south-east of England or the rest of the United Kingdom.

Family Law Review

4. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his opinion on the family law review, particularly in respect of fathers' custody and visiting rights in light of Justice Coleridge's recent statement about access. (AQT 1354/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am not particularly au fait with the specifics of the judge's recent statement. As the Member knows, this is an incredibly sensitive area and one in which it is very difficult for any state or its Government to be in a position to arbitrate in those very difficult positions in which families have broken down and there is little scope for them coming together to agree the best way forward. At the end of the day, we should all focus on the children and their needs.

That is why we are seeking to consult on this issue. I move towards consultation on family law in Northern Ireland, knowing full well that the very consultation itself will see

diametrically opposed views in respect of what is the best way forward. It is important that all of us in the House always bear in mind that we should consider, first and foremost, the children and what is best for them in these sorts of circumstances.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for his response and welcome it. We are all aware of families becoming estranged and the difficult circumstances that arise from that. Will the Minister reflect on Justice Coleridge's statement in the court and whether, at some stage, we might meet to discuss it and a way forward?

Mr Hamilton: I am happy to do that. I will familiarise myself with the statement that the Member refers to. It is an area that I know, as I said, is fraught with difficulty in trying to move forward. Given that there are lots of conversations about trying to reform what is, in some respects, viewed as a bit of an outdated legal position, I think that we need to consider carefully all contributions that have been made. In doing so, as I said, we must always bear in mind that we have to consider and weigh up in the balance of it all what is best for children and their rights.

Infrastructure Projects: Delivery

5. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he hopes to progress the plans he listed last week when he outlined his proposals to improve the delivery of major infrastructure projects. (AQT 1355/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am pleased to have been able to announce and to have, so far, gained widespread support for my suggestions and proposals for improving the delivery of major infrastructure projects. They include a lot more centralisation of procurement and delivery of our projects; the development of a strategic pipeline of projects; and trying to change the culture within the Civil Service, so that projects are delivered on time and professionally.

Some progress has already been made on the first objective, which is to create a centralised procurement and delivery service. The Health Minister and I have agreed that the transfer of health estates come to the Central Procurement Directorate later this year. It is important that the expertise and experience that is there is brought to the centre. That will benefit us all. A strategic pipeline of projects will require Executive agreement. However, as I have said in the House a few times, the objective merits of taking such an approach are obvious. To have a list of strategic economic infrastructure projects that we can pick from as money becomes available can only ensure that we are spending our infrastructure capital budget wisely. That, of course, will require Executive agreement, but, given that the proposals are sensible, I hope that we get support.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. What is Northern Ireland's capital budget looking like over this next few years?

Mr Hamilton: We can speak with certainty only about this year and next. This year, after having experienced a 40% reduction to our capital budget over this Budget period, we are starting to get back up to the trend that we had before the 2011 downturn. For the first time in three years, we entered this financial year with a starting position of over £1 billion of capital spend. That rises quickly to £1.6 billion when you consider our reinvestment and reform initiative borrowings and our capital receipts. That gets

us up not quite but close to where we were before 2011. I am obviously keen to see all of that money spent on strategically important projects.

Moving forward, it would appear that, certainly in 2015-16, about 1.5% to 2% increase in our capital budget is likely, even on top of that £1.6 billion. So that also bodes well for Northern Ireland and our ability to develop and improve our infrastructure.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. That ends the period for questions to the Finance Minister. I ask the House to take its ease while we change the top Table.

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

3.30 pm

Executive Committee Business

Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion

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

That this Assembly consents to the Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014 in the form of the draft laid before the UK Parliament on 6 May 2014.

The Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order will abolish the Food from Britain (FFB) council, which ceased operations on 31 March 2009. In practice, the order dissolves FFB in law. It will also transfer any property, rights and liabilities of FFB to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, so there will not be any liability for this Assembly from its abolition.

The order also requires the Secretary of State to make arrangements for the provision of final reports and accounts to go up to the date of abolition. That is a normal requirement in these circumstances, and the cost will be met by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The proposed abolition of FFB is not new. Members may recall that, in March 2011, the Assembly gave its consent to the Public Bodies Act 2011. That Act granted British and North of Ireland Ministers the authority to abolish, merge or transfer the functions of various public bodies. FFB is listed in schedule 1 of that Act as one of the public bodies that could be abolished.

The abolition of FFB is the joint responsibility of the four Agriculture Ministers in Britain and the North of Ireland. The making of the order therefore requires, in line with section 9 of the Public Bodies Act 2011, the consent of the Scottish Parliament, the Assembly for Wales and this Assembly. The British Government have requested such consent from us, and that is the purpose of today's debate.

By way of brief background, FFB is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) whose function was to assist British and North of Ireland food and drink companies in export markets and to promote speciality food and drink products. Government funding for FFB activities was provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Following a decision by British Ministers to end government funding, FFB ceased operations on 31 March 2009, so it has been defunct for over five years. The cessation of activities by FFB has had a minimal impact on the North, because Invest NI has provided a comprehensive range of support to food and drink companies. My Department also operates a regional food programme.

Last year, there was a public consultation on the proposed abolition of FFB. Whilst only one response was received from the local industry, it was an important one. It came from the NI Food and Drink Association (NIFDA), which is a key industry body and is well placed to assess the

impact, if any, of the proposal on the local industry. In NIFDA's reply, it supported the abolition of FFB.

Furthermore, the Agri-Food Strategy Board continues to play an important role in ensuring that the potential of the sector is maximised. As Members will be aware, the board recommended the creation of a single agrifood marketing organisation in the North to consolidate all marketing and promotional activities. The board believes that that is essential to securing new and developing export markets.

In response to that recommendation, the ETI Minister recently initiated a review of agrifood marketing and promotional activities. My Department is represented on the steering group for that important work. The review offers the potential to identify options for the improved delivery of marketing and promotional arrangements that are tailored to the specific needs of agrifood businesses here as well as opportunities for working with bodies in other jurisdictions, such as Bord Bia and Scotland Food and Drink. I therefore commend the motion to the Assembly.

Mr Frew (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): In March 2012, the Assembly agreed to a legislative consent motion on the Public Bodies Act 2011, which allowed certain public bodies to be dissolved or abolished. One such body was Food from Britain, which was a non-departmental body that was established to assist UK food and drink companies in export markets.

Food from Britain has been non-operational since March 2009, and it has no budget or staff. Following its abolition, a regional food programme was introduced to address any concerns, and the range of programmes from Invest NI was strengthened. It is generally accepted, therefore, that the official abolition of Food from Britain will not have any major material impact on the Northern Ireland agrifood industry.

As part of the process, a UK-wide consultation took place, with DARD advising local stakeholders. A total of eight responses were received, with one from Northern Ireland in favour of the abolition.

As a Committee, we considered the proposal from the Department at a meeting on 27 May 2014. The information received by the Committee clearly showed that the abolition will have minimal effect in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the Committee is content for the Department to proceed in seeking the Assembly's consent to the Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014.

Mrs Dobson: I welcome the opportunity to make a few brief comments on the legislative consent motion. As the Minister and Chair outlined, the Food from Britain body was playing no real role in the promotion of the produce of the agrifood sector here or in Great Britain. Indeed, its uselessness was further highlighted by the work of the Agri-Food Strategy Board. Its abolition is, therefore, the logical thing to do.

I would like to raise another body that many feel is long overdue for abolition: the Agricultural Wages Board plays no real beneficial role in Northern Ireland.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Could I ask the Member to return to the subject, please.

Mrs Dobson: I would like to now call on the Minister to abolish that along with others quangos that are unnecessary. The difference to the one being abolished today is that it costs public money and gets in the way of the sector it is meant to support.

Mrs O'Neill: I thank Members for their comments. The issue raised by Mrs Dobson is not relevant to today's debate but I continually keep all bodies under review. I think that the Agricultural Wages Board does a piece of work that is necessary in protecting the rights of farm workers, particularly workers from the migrant population so, in my view, it plays an adequate role.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly consents to the Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014 in the form of the draft laid before the UK Parliament on 6 May 2014.

Adjourned at 3.37 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 1 July 2014

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr P Ramsey: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As we have a long day ahead of us, are you minded to relax the guidance on the wearing of jackets?

Mr Speaker: Yes. I am very happy with the point of order that the Member raises.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Last week, there was what was billed as an important announcement about the future of single farm payments. It was made outside the House, and the Minister has had the opportunity, yesterday and today, to come to the House and make a statement about that important matter. Is there any explanation why there is no statement on single farm payments and the future of CAP in Northern Ireland?

Mr Speaker: As the Member will know, I always encourage Ministers to come to the House. I do that continually. The Member will know that, under Standing Orders, I have no power to pull Ministers into the Chamber. It is an important issue, but those decisions very much rest with the Executive and with individual Ministers.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Last week, I unavoidably missed a question at one of the Question Time sessions. My colleague Mr Ramsey tried, I think, to communicate with your office that I was called at short notice to a hospital where a close friend was undergoing emergency surgery. As a consequence, I was absent. So, apologies to the House, but there were extenuating circumstances.

Mr Speaker: I understand that there are some circumstances where Members just cannot be in the House. I appreciate the Member coming to the House and apologising.

Public Petition: Loane House, Dungannon

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

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Over 8,000 people have signed this petition, and, on behalf of Sinn Féin, I want to take this opportunity to thank the businesses in Dungannon town, the Clogher valley, Blackwatertown and the Torrent area. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Eithne McCord of the South Tyrone hospital forum. I want to thank members of other political parties who also contributed to this petition, and, last but not least, I want to thank my own parish of Killeeshil, which also greatly assisted us.

In its consultation, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust is proposing to close Loane House. There are 45 non-acute beds in Loane House, and eight of those are for stroke patients. A multidisciplinary team of professionals provides care to patients with medical and rehabilitation needs during their stay in Loane House. The closure of Loane House would lead to the further blocking of acute beds in the trust's two acute hospitals, neither of which can cope with their workload as things stand.

There are equality issues, in particular when it comes to gender, as most of the workforce are women. There is an equality issue around age, in particular for those aged 65-plus, and for people with disabilities. There is also an equality issue for people who live in rural areas who will have to travel considerable distances to access services if Loane House closes. The Southern Trust states that it finds it quite challenging to provide equality of access to services. To be quite frank, I find that not good enough. NHS chief, Simon Stevens, recently stated that community hospitals should play a greater role in the care of older people. Loane House in Dungannon meets that criteria, and I ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that the facility remains open.

Ms McGahan moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward the petition to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and send a copy to the Chair of the Health Committee, Maeve McLaughlin.

Committee Membership

Mr Speaker: As with similar motions, the motion on Committee membership will be treated as a business motion. Therefore, there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson replace Mr Samuel Gardiner as a member of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; that Mr Danny Kinahan replace Mrs Sandra Overend as a member of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; that Mrs Sandra Overend replace Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson as a member of the Committee for Education; that Mr Tom Elliott replace Mr Robin Swann as a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; and that Mrs Sandra Overend replace Mr Tom Elliott as a member of the Committee for the Environment, with effect from Friday 4 July 2014.

Assembly Commission Membership

Mr Speaker: As required under Standing Order 79(4), I wish to inform the Assembly that Mr Lesley Cree has given notice of his resignation as a member of the Assembly Commission, with effect from 4 July 2014. Therefore, a vacancy on the Commission will exist. The motion to fill that vacancy will be treated as a business motion. There will, therefore, be no debate. Before we proceed, I advise Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That, in accordance with Standing Order 79(4), Mr Samuel Gardiner be appointed to fill a vacancy on the Assembly Commission, with effect from Friday 4 July 2014.

Ministerial Statements

Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

Today, I am publishing 'Aspiring to Excellence', the final report of the international review panel on the structure of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. The report constitutes the key aspect of stage 2 of the review of the teacher training infrastructure. Members will recall that, in November 2011, I announced this two-stage review. The first stage was an objective analysis of the financial stability and sustainability of the two university colleges. The focus of the second stage was designed to set out options for an educationally excellent, financially sustainable and more shared and integrated approach to the delivery and funding of teacher training.

When I assumed office in May 2011, a consultation exercise had been initiated by my predecessor into a then recommended merger between Queen's University and Stranmillis University College. However, it was clear that there was not sufficient support in the Assembly to take forward the necessary legislation to implement it. Therefore, at that stage, while keeping on the table the option of that particular merger proceeding, I took the opportunity to take a more holistic view of our teacher training infrastructure.

It struck me that with five different providers of initial teacher education for a population of 1.8 million, our system was very fragmented and inefficient. It was also apparent that, while all the institutions were open to everyone irrespective of their background, there is, nevertheless, considerable religious separation in the training of teachers. At a time when greater efforts are being made to promote more sharing and integration in our education system as a whole, it was debatable how far this could go in practice if sharing in teacher training was itself not yet being maximised. Therefore, in November 2011, I made a statement to the Assembly to initiate the two-stage review.

For the first stage, independent consultants Grant Thornton were appointed to carry out an analysis of the financial stability and sustainability of the two university colleges. This was reported to the Assembly through a statement in May 2013. That study found that the cost of training teachers in the university colleges is significantly higher than elsewhere, and it provided sufficient evidence to signal the need to examine the case for reform. While the unit of funding was historically linked to that used in England, it was then enhanced in Northern Ireland by several premia. These payments were intended to compensate the colleges for the unavoidable additional costs incurred as a result of their small size and other diseconomies of scale. The primary objective was to ensure the sustainability of the two colleges.

Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College are the only teacher training establishments in the UK that receive premia additional to their core funding. This amounts to over £2 million per annum and has led to significant differences in the costs incurred in training a teacher here compared with elsewhere. In 2011-12, the cost of training a teacher in the colleges in Northern

Ireland was almost 40% higher than in the comparator English institutions cited in the report. The annual cost of training a teacher in our university colleges is also significantly higher than the average cost of training a teacher at our local universities. One year of a BEd course at St Mary's and Stranmillis costs the taxpayer 32% more than a one-year postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) course at Queen's University or the University of Ulster.

Furthermore, these differential costs are not the full story. The teacher training activities in the two university colleges are further supported by income from my Department for non-teacher training courses in other areas. The funding provided to the two colleges for those places amounts to almost £2 million a year. Notwithstanding their inherent value, there is clearly a substantial opportunity cost attached to them, particularly in light of the economy's need for more graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Even with these de facto subsidies, there are questions regarding the medium-term financial sustainability of the colleges, and without those subsidies, their future would be in even greater peril. In summary, our two university colleges are highly dependent on the number of teachers being trained, on the levels of grant per student and on funding for non-teacher education courses to remain financially viable.

On the back of that stage 1 report, I announced that I would proceed to stage 2 of the review. The terms of reference for this stage focused on the need to examine the case for the reform of teacher education provision in Northern Ireland and whether the funding being provided could be better used by the teacher training institutions if they were prepared to move towards a more shared or integrated system.

In September last year, I appointed a panel of international education experts to conduct the review. The panel consisted of a team of five international education experts: Dr Pasi Sahlberg, Professor Patricia Broadfoot, Professor John Coolahan, Professor John Furlong and Professor Gordon Kirk.

I would like to record my appreciation to the panel for the significant contribution that each of them made to understanding the complexities of our current teacher education provision and for using the information that they gathered, alongside their own knowledge and experience, to focus on how best to develop the Northern Ireland teacher education infrastructure in order to facilitate world-class teacher training.

10.45 am

Initially, the review panel provided an overview of current best practice in the field of initial teacher education provision internationally. Following that, teacher education providers and other stakeholders were invited to make submissions outlining their vision for the structures necessary to create a world-class system of initial teacher education that would also enhance and improve sharing and integration. Over 100 submissions were received and all were considered by the panel.

The panel then directly engaged with each of the five initial teacher education providers and other relevant stakeholders. The discussions focused on the international trends identified by the panel and the issues raised in the stakeholders' submissions.

The panel presented me with its report before the end of June deadline. In the interests of transparency, I have decided to publish it immediately. I urge MLAs, stakeholders and the wider public to read the full report and form their own judgment. For now, I will provide a summary and briefly set out the way forward.

The panel recognised the quality of many aspects of the current teacher training provision, including endorsement by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GCTNI); very positive evaluations from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI); alignment with the standards of university quality assurance regimes; and high rating in the National Student Survey. It also recognised a commitment from all the providers to participating in shared education and preparing students for an increasingly shared educational environment.

Nevertheless, it also pointed to significant weaknesses in the existing provision, such as its size and relatively fragmented nature and its quality when judged against international standards. It commented on the lack of an overarching Northern Ireland teacher education strategy and urged that such a strategy be developed. It noted a disjoint between initial teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD) and interpreted its terms of reference to focus on the necessary institutional design to address both aspects of teacher education. It further observed that, notwithstanding the existing partnerships between the institutions, the potential for collaboration was not yet fully developed. Finally, it reflected upon an uneven research performance between the universities and the teacher training colleges.

The panel also pointed to a number of anomalies and inequities in the current system. The first was the differential access for students in different institutions to the certificate in religious education. The second was the implications that arose from there being two different admissions procedures. It also noted the difficulties arising from the imposition of non-departmental public body (NDPB) status on the teacher training colleges by the Office for National Statistics.

The panel has given the study a key international focus, analysing international trends in teacher education and identifying them as principles that should underpin a world-class system of teacher education here, and it examined local provision in light of those principles.

The panel emphasises that programmes should be academically strong, practice focused and based on relevant research. In particular, it was keen to stress the importance of the intellectual underpinning of provision, especially the need for practice-focused teacher education built on relevant educational research.

On that, the panel states:

"In our view, teacher education in Northern Ireland needs to be strengthened academically and cognitively. Provision has not yet been sufficiently infused with the intellectual power which university involvement in teacher education makes possible. That intellectual power derives from the universities' research activities. Like any other field of human endeavour, teaching requires a continuing pursuit of fresh ways of conceptualising, innovative approaches to professional action, and more sophisticated

appraisals of how human learning is to be facilitated. All of those involved in teacher education in Northern Ireland must therefore make more determined efforts to bring to the education of teachers and their continuing professional development the fruits of research and other scholarly activity. Without recourse to the findings of such activity teacher education will stagnate and the quality of the education provided by the schools will slip into steady decline, with irreparable damage to the life chances of young people, the country's economic standing and its social well-being."

It also noted that the OECD has recently placed a strong focus on the importance of quality teacher education as a driver for improved educational performance and recommended that teacher training have closer links to universities or university-like institutions.

Across all societies, but in particular given the context of Northern Ireland, it maintains that teacher education should be pluralist, in that it acknowledges the competing interpretations of teacher education and its nature and purpose. The panel viewed that as including the Catholic tradition, other faith traditions, those agnostic on faith matters and specific preparation for a more integrated or shared approach.

In turn, the panel, while recognising that teacher education provision in Northern Ireland should recognise and support different philosophies of teacher education, believes that more should be done to support a shared approach to teacher education. It maintains that pluralism cannot be accepted in isolation of a complementary commitment to sharing.

For instance, it states:

"we maintain that all programmes of teacher education, irrespective of the tradition to which they adhere and within which they operate, should make provision for students of different faith and none to engage with each other across existing lines of social division, through at least the shared use of premises, where possible, through mixed classes, through shared teaching and other forms of social engagement, which bring students from different faith traditions into full participation in forms of activity that increase mutual understanding."

The panel sets out that the establishment of a world-class teacher education system can best be fostered in a certain context. It emphasises four particular elements: an agency or body providing strategic direction for teacher education; an agreed pattern of teacher education programmes; the introduction of a more rational and dependable system of workforce planning; and the effective use of resources.

It is fair to say that the issues involved impact on the work of the Department of Education and my Department. In the report, the panel makes it clear that, in the overall interest of promoting the quality of teacher education, it is hoped that both Departments can work together on the issues. In making that clear, the panel also stressed at many points in the report that comments on the wider teacher training and educational context are not intended to be formal recommendations to the Department of Education. Rather, they should be seen as an articulation of the best circumstances for a successful institutional model.

Four options have been identified for reconfiguring the infrastructure of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. Each is evaluated by the panel with reference to four key criteria: sustaining and building on existing quality; securing the efficient use of resources; the need to respect pluralism, including different faith traditions; and practicality of implementation.

The panel has rejected the status quo as an option, commenting that it is not robust enough to deliver the change that is required. While recognising that the options proposed differed in character, the panel detailed a number of common features that should be exhibited under each, including that every teacher education course should include a programme of shared education and that all undergraduate recruits should apply through the UCAS system.

The first option, option A, is a collaborative partnership. Under that, initial teacher education would continue to be provided by all four current providers. St Mary's and Stranmillis would continue to exist as autonomous colleges but in an enhanced partnership. It would be a condition of the funding grant to Queen's University, Stranmillis and St Mary's, that they be required to work more closely together, with QUB actively exercising its role as the validating university in the collaborative delivery of a comprehensive programme of initial teacher education, induction and in-service training.

Option B provides for a two-centre model, including a Belfast institute of education. Under that model, there would be two main centres for teacher education in Northern Ireland. The first, based at the University of Ulster, would concentrate its provision in the north-west, including developing its CPD role.

For the second centre, provision in Belfast would build on the existing academic relationship between Queen's and the university colleges to create a QUB institute of education. St Mary's and Stranmillis colleges would continue to exist in their current locations, although with a somewhat changed role and constitutional status.

The institute would offer a single undergraduate BEd programme through its two colleges, with the colleges free to develop the majority of their undergraduate teaching in ways that are appropriate for their particular ethos and mission. All other teaching, including for masters degrees, and research would be conducted under the supervision of the institute.

Under option C, initial teacher education would be coordinated as a federation across Northern Ireland. That supra-institutional agency would be entrusted with ensuring that the various institutions achieve greater efficiency and increase standards. The federation would be at the hub of collaborating institutions.

Under the final option, option D, initial teacher education across Northern Ireland would become the responsibility of a single institution — the Northern Ireland institute of education.

The institute would have a single budget, a single suite of academic programmes and a single set of academic and support staff. It would have responsibility for coordinating and quality assuring the delivery of initial teacher training and in-service provision across the whole of Northern Ireland. The governance of the institute would

be constituted to ensure the long-term protection of the historic mission and ethos of the existing institutions. That could include the provision of a separate religious pathway in the BEd degree, capacity for the activities of chaplains and the continued availability of a chapel for worship.

All the options are set out fully in the report and are evaluated against current international trends in teacher education.

This is a very comprehensive report, covering complex issues, and is worthy of careful consideration. I plan to use the summer months to consider it carefully and recommend that Members, the current institutions and other stakeholders do the same. As previously indicated, in the autumn, I intend to use the report and the options for discussions with the institutions and other stakeholders, with a view to finding agreement on a configuration of institutions that delivers world-class standards, achieves financial sustainability and promotes greater sharing and integration.

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I thank the Minister for his statement. This process has been ongoing for quite a while. I, as Chair of the Committee, and members of the Committee possibly thought that the report would bring a more focused final recommendation rather than the four options that are in front of us, but it gives us something to move on from. In the Minister's summarising, he expressed all the positive sides of option D, but he failed to highlight that the panel sees option D as scoring lowest in practicability. Will the Minister still consider that as an option?

I also note that none of the four options overtly tackles the inequalities that are introduced by the Catholic certificate of education. Will the Minister ensure that whatever outcome he pursues will tackle that inequality? Can he also give an assurance that he will include the Committee for Employment and Learning and this House in any final decision?

Dr Farry: I thank the Chair for his comments and questions. This has been a long-standing issue before the Assembly. I suppose the question is how far you want to go back. The Chair and I were talking this morning about Lord Londonderry back in the early 1920s taking an interest in these matters. In more recent times, Members will be aware that there were efforts in the Chilver report back in the early 1980s, and, more recently, in the early 2000s, there were similar exercises. My predecessors in the Department initiated the formal consultation around the potential merger of Queen's and Stranmillis, but I think that this is the first time that, under devolution, we have the opportunity for a more holistic view as to the future of the teacher training infrastructure.

The panel was deliberately asked to provide a range of options. That is important because it gives us flexibility for how we take forward discussions with the stakeholders in the autumn. There is no preferred option that the panel has endorsed. While, personally speaking, I have my own views, and I am on record in that regard, I, too, remain open-minded about the option that will find favour and will be one that we can deliver here in Northern Ireland.

The panel has provided the commentary alongside each of the options that I have outlined today in a brief manner, in the spirit of a statement to the Assembly. While option D is the most radical in its reforms, hence the comment that it is

perhaps the least practical to deliver, it is also worth noting that it scores most heavily in improved efficiency and in the delivery of a world-class system of teacher education. So, it is important that we have a rounded view of each of the options. Again, Members and others can consider those in full detail.

Finally, the Chair made comment in relation to access to the certificate of religious education. The panel identified that as being an inequity in the current system. There are two different ways that the issue can be addressed. Outwith my responsibilities as Minister, there is an issue about our equality law in Northern Ireland and whether schools should have the ability to take decisions based on whether someone does or does not have that certificate. That is a matter for OFMDFM and the Department of Education to take forward.

Plan B, as we could perhaps term it, is to ensure a more readily available equality of access for all students to the certificate, which enhances their employment prospects across the board, rather than the situation today, in which those who can access the certificate more readily have a wider range of schools to apply to than those who do not.

The Chairperson also mentioned engagement with the Committee. Ultimately, we will have to consider how decisions are taken, depending on how the discussions go with the stakeholders in the autumn. I am certainly committed to keeping the Committee fully informed of progress. My officials are appearing before the Committee tomorrow to discuss the report, and I know that attempts are being made to organise a session with the panel in the early autumn for further discussion and scrutiny of the report and its options.

11.00 am

Mr Speaker: This is a very important detailed statement to the House. Apart from the Chair, to whom I gave some latitude, there is an extensive list of Members who want to ask a question. Members should not make further statements on the statement; it should be a question on the statement.

Mr Buchanan: I will certainly stick to the question. I thank the Minister for his statement to the House. Will he advise whether any costings have been done for the four options? Will St Mary's adhere to the panel's recommendation that all undergraduate recruits should apply through the UCAS system?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. The options have not been costed as such, but, in terms of finance, we know that the status quo is not sustainable. We made a statement on that already, and Members will be aware of the Grant Thornton report, which sets out the compelling arguments on that situation. It is worth putting it on record that the panel members found the analysis in the Grant Thornton report to be very persuasive.

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

The UCAS issue was addressed by the panel as being an inequity in the system because it means that students can hold offers from Stranmillis and St Mary's at the same time, and St Mary's is maybe in a better position to control entry than Stranmillis. Even though teacher education is sometimes oversubscribed, we have a strange situation in

which Stranmillis has had to fill places through clearing at times, because people have had the double admissions option due to the approach that St Mary's has taken. We have encouraged St Mary's to use UCAS and will certainly continue to do that outwith the wider discussions that we want to have over the general way forward.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement to the House. Does he agree that the review cannot consider the future of St Mary's in isolation from its place in the community of west Belfast and further afield? He is also fully aware that our party supports the right of St Mary's to have the financial autonomy and government support that it requires to promote its mission of academic excellence, teacher education, Irish-medium education and access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. I call on the Minister this morning to engage positively with St Mary's and to support the college in developing measures that will ensure its long-term sustainability. It is time to put an end to the years of uncertainty for the college, years in which management has been forced to be preoccupied with the issues. It is clear that St Mary's resolved to remain autonomous. I ask the Minister, in all good faith, to sit down with —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. We are waiting for a question.

Mr F McCann: Does the Minister not believe that it is time to sit down and work with St Mary's on its long-term future and that the purpose of the report is to close St Mary's either through the front door or the back door?

Dr Farry: There is no set agenda for the outcome of the report. Suffice it to say that the status quo is not an option. I am more than happy to sit down with St Mary's to discuss not only the future of the college but the wider system of teacher education in Northern Ireland. The report is designed to facilitate that. I obviously recognise and, indeed, the panel recognised the important place that St Mary's holds in the community, particularly in west Belfast. The panel has gone to great lengths to stress the importance of pluralism in teacher education, and the point about pluralism and diversity is recognised in all the options set out. It is worth stressing that pluralism and diversity can be accommodated through a range of institutional formulas.

Obviously, the public sector contributes very heavily to St Mary's, but we have to bear it in mind that we have to deploy taxpayers' money with a degree of responsibility and efficiency. We do not have an efficient approach to teacher education in Northern Ireland; our costs are out of step with those in teacher education in other parts of these islands and elsewhere. The panel is keen to stress that, if we find efficiencies in the current provision, they should, in the first instance, be reinvested in the improved provision of teacher education. There are ways in which that could be accommodated. We have a duty to look seriously at the way in which public money is used and to consider doing things differently. St Mary's needs to be part of that discussion. We cannot carry on with the way we are doing things at present.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for bringing the report today. He will acknowledge that it has been fairly contentious, and the Committee did not find favour as we went through the process leading up to this.

I refer the Minister to paragraph 8.21 on page 48 of the report, where the colleges will be required, under the new funding arrangements, to increase shared education and engage in greater collaboration. Will the Minister give an assurance to the House that, irrespective of what option goes forward, he will protect and respect the ethos and integrity of each of the institutions and that they will not be financially penalised?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. Obviously, this issue is highly contentious. In some ways, education and the particular issue of teacher education go deep to the heart of identity issues in Northern Ireland. No one is under any illusions that it is anything to the contrary. In terms of the issues around the ethos and identity of the colleges, the options provide different means by which those can be respected as we move forward. There is the issue of whether that is accommodated through different institutions, through the institutions coming together in collaboration or through a single institution. The historical missions and each ethos need to be consolidated and protected in the new designs.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for his statement. How do the options set out in the report compare with international best practice?

Dr Farry: To an extent, that question builds on the one asked by Mr Ramsey. It is worth stressing that the trend is strongly towards the consolidation of teacher training in a university setting. There are numerous examples of that across these islands and the wider world. While there may be exceptions in that regard, where small teacher training facilities continue, they are very much in the minority.

Closer to home, we see examples of successful change. A major reform programme is under way in the Republic of Ireland to consolidate their teacher training institutions, including bringing a number of them together under Dublin City University. In that regard, it is worth stressing that what is primarily a secondary institution is finding a means of accommodating institutions coming into it that have had a very clear denominational background. That should give people reassurance that it can be done.

We also have to look at situations elsewhere in these islands, where you have a number of single institutions that address a number of religious and denominational issues. For example, you have Liverpool Hope University and the University of Roehampton. Roehampton is an interesting example: it was formed by four different religious-based colleges coming together in the mid-1970s. You also have the example of Homerton College becoming a part of the University of Cambridge in the past few decades. Again, that is a college with a long history going back to the mid-18th century. Perhaps the most interesting example is Glasgow, where you had St Andrews, which was a Catholic training institution, forming a partnership with the University of Glasgow and subsequently becoming a part of the university, with a new institute of education. Again, in that merger, the means were found to respect that historical religious ethos and mission.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his statement this morning. Last October, when officials appeared before the Committee, and again in November, there was a high degree of criticism of the process. There was mention of political interference and the independent review panel having been steered. How do you respond to that?

Do today's report and recommendations vindicate that criticism?

Dr Farry: I am not sure whether that comment is valid. This was an independent review panel, and it is its work that has been produced today. The five people involved are of huge standing as international experts in the field of education. They have been very robust in the methodology that they have adopted in engaging with the stakeholders and have sought to find options that accommodate the mission and ethos of the institutions. I have no difficulty in commending and recognising the quality of the work, and I believe that it provides us with a solid foundation on which we can proceed to have further engagement with the stakeholders with a view to finding an agreed way forward.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. What does the report have to say about teacher education for the Irish-medium sector? Does the Minister agree that St Mary's is a specialist and high-performing provider of teacher training through immersion in the Irish language?

Dr Farry: I certainly recognise that, in a general sense, St Mary's is a quality provider of teacher education. The panel members recognised that in the report. They also recognised that we could do a lot better in teacher education across the piece. That is not meant to be a comment on any individual institution, but it is a reflection of the fact that we have an overly fragmented system and that, through a more collaborative approach through a range of options, we all stand to gain a better outcome.

The Member is right that St Mary's has developed a specialism in Irish language. In all the options, there is a commitment to respecting diversity in the education system and to ensuring that teachers are prepared for the range of sectors that may exist in Northern Ireland in the future, including the Irish-medium sector. Where that type of specialism needs to be catered for through all the options, that space can be carved out to ensure that people are prepared for that sector.

Mr Ross: Will the Minister remind the House of his personal preference of the four options that are laid out; tell us when he anticipates that he will bring his final decision to the Executive; and tell us when he believes the landscape of teacher training in Northern Ireland will be changed?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his questions. I am on record as a supporter of integrated education. I would favour having a single, integrated system of teacher education in Northern Ireland, but, in saying that, I recognise that mine is only one of many voices and that we need to have an agreed way forward on teacher education. I have to respect the views of others, and we have to ensure that what we put in place will be sustainable for the future and will cater to all needs in our society. I believe that the process I intend to embark on in the autumn will address that.

The initial plan will be to have meetings individually with the different providers and some other stakeholders, before moving quickly to round-table discussions. After we have had that initial round of discussions, we will map out further what other work needs to be done to find common ground. I appreciate that this will not be an easy task, in that there are a lot of strongly held views on the future, but I hope that, as a result of the report today, particularly when people properly scrutinise it and fully understand the importance of the comments and observations that have

been made by the panel members, people will appreciate that we need to change from the current status quo.

It is not simply about coming up with a different financial arrangement. It is not simply about moving in the direction of sharing and integration, important as they are. There are important educational implications that arise from the particular institutional focus that we have. Ultimately, the real prize here is ensuring that we prepare teachers for the modern world of education.

11.15 am

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an mhéid atá ráite aige go dtí seo. The Minister's agenda is abundantly clear, as, indeed, is that of his panel, which has done likewise in other places. As the Chair said, it demonstrates how bureaucratic the system of governance here is when, three years after getting the job, no decision has been made and we are no clearer about what the Minister is actually going to do. St Mary's has indicated that it is resolved to remain autonomous, and we support that, but it is willing to embrace —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We need a question.

Mr Flanagan: — shared education if its position is respected. Can I ask the Minister whether he believes that there is something wrong with a teacher training college that has a deeply held Catholic ethos?

Dr Farry: Let me say a couple of things in response to what the Member has said. First of all, this is the first time under devolution that we have had a holistic view across the range of teacher education providers in Northern Ireland. A consultation was initiated by my predecessors in the Department around the Queen's/Stranmillis merger. If there had been sufficient consensus in the House for the necessary legislation to go through, we would have proceeded with that. The opportunity for action in this area was there, but it was not going to find support, so we have taken the opportunity for a much wider look at the issue.

What we have done is taken a structured approach to providing the evidence and the strong case for change in the system. The Grant Thornton report has looked at the financial issues and has clearly spelt it out that the status quo is not financially sustainable, including a context of continued subsidy, never mind a situation where subsidy is gradually removed from the institutions.

The report that we are publishing today sets out the evidence, particularly in light of international trends, for how we can reconfigure our situation. I am clear in accepting that we have to have a system that respects religious pluralism. For the foreseeable future we will have a Catholic sector in Northern Ireland that, of course, has to operate in the context of a stronger framework of shared education. It is important that we prepare teachers for all the different sectors and that we can accommodate the needs of diversity in Northern Ireland through a range of institutional formats. All the options set out are worthy of consideration in that regard.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next Member to speak, I want to make it clear that I do not expect to have to remind Members that it is not statements on the statement: it is questions. I hope that is sufficiently clear. The Speaker himself made it clear before he left

the Chair, so it is questions, if you do not mind, on the statement today.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his statement. I am sure, Minister, you will applaud the work of our teacher training colleges in providing good teachers to educate our children. Many parents still choose a faith-based education. What steps are you taking to ensure that there is more equitable access to a certificate in religious education?

Dr Farry: Building on the answer that I provided to Mr Flanagan, I accept that we will see pluralism in our education system for the foreseeable future, and it is important that we prepare teachers in that regard. Let me also say that, in so far as we may have a Catholic sector, that does not mean that children in those schools are taught exclusively by teachers who come from the Catholic faith or a Catholic background. We should have a situation here where any professional teacher, irrespective of their background, should be capable of teaching in any educational setting in a professional manner, irrespective of the particular ethos of that type of school.

In relation to the certificate in religious education, there is a view across a number of parties in the House that we need to address that issue. One option is through amendments to equality legislation, which is beyond my responsibilities. The other option is through ensuring more ready access to that certificate. At present, students from Stranmillis normally access the certificate through distance learning via the University of Glasgow. In other institutions, that is more readily available or, indeed, is hardwired into the curriculum. That creates a certain inequality in opportunities for employment on the far side, and we need to address that — there is no question about that.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his statement. Does he agree that the two university colleges — Stranmillis and St Mary's — work on joint projects at the moment? Will he assure the House that he will work with the two colleges to ensure that

“sustaining existing quality and building upon it”

will ensure their sustainability into the future?

Dr Farry: Again, I thank the Member for the questions. I obviously recognise the existing collaboration. In so far as the options recommend deeper collaboration, that is not at the expense of recognising the good practice that pertains. That includes the joint special needs literacy project that Stranmillis and St Mary's are engaged in, some shared continuing professional development (CPD) programmes and the Classrooms Re-imagined: Education in Diversity and Inclusion for Teachers (CREDIT) programme that is funded by the International Fund for Ireland. Those are all good projects that we can build on and deepen.

The process that we are engaged in is all about finding a sustainable solution for teacher education in Northern Ireland as a whole, and the views of Stranmillis and St Mary's are critical in that regard. We are committed to working with them to provide and find a sustainable solution for the system as a whole.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Mervyn Storey, the Chairperson of the Education Committee. We will extend some latitude to you.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): That is a very dangerous thing to do, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

Speaking initially as the chair of the Education Committee, I welcome the statement. It includes issues that are of particular interest to the Education Committee, including a highlighting of the disjoint between initial teacher training, continuing professional development for teachers and the issue that has been raised in the House of the differential in access to the certificate in religious education. In the spirit of seeking to promote working together, will the Minister join the Education Minister and work towards an agreed policy that will see the removal of the certificate on the basis of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order? As a member of the Executive, will he ensure that he joins his Education Minister colleague in that?

I want to conclude by asking some questions as a Member. Will the Minister tell the House that the access arrangements for the certificate are fundamentally flawed? Currently, if someone seeks a certificate, they need a letter of recommendation from a local parish priest, which creates considerable difficulties for many young people. Does he believe that Stranmillis is fundamentally hampered? It no longer has representatives from the Transferor Representatives' Council because of actions taken by Sir Reg Empey?

Dr Farry: I thank the Chair of the Education Committee for the questions. The report is very far-reaching, and, while the panel has a very specific terms of reference on options for institutional design, it made wider commentary that is applicable across the piece for education and, in particular, teacher education. I am more than happy to have discussions with my colleague the Minister of Education in that regard.

The Member focused particularly on issues about the certificate in religious education. Again, it is worth stressing that there are two ways in which we can address this, one of which is through amending equality legislation. I am more than happy to give my personal support to working with the Minister of Education and OFMDFM to address that issue.

I concur that the situation that applies today regarding the relative ease of access or otherwise is a major inequity in the system that impacts on equality of access for graduates to employment. I also concur that we have to address that.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Will he comment further on the importance of links to universities to maximise potential linkages to educational research?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the question. In some ways, this is probably the key implication that I take away from the report. I appreciate that a lot of Members are focusing on the future of the institutions individually. This morning, equality issues have been a major theme as well. However, the real prize that we have to focus on is the infusion of teacher education into a rich research environment, and that is what is provided through the university setting or through closer links to universities. That is perhaps the background to the trend internationally towards teacher education in the context of a university. It is why there has been a consolidation or reconfiguration of teacher education in different jurisdictions, including our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland, in recent years.

There is a real prize to be found, and it means that the robustness of the qualifications that teachers receive will stand on a par with those achieving other academic qualifications. It is important that we ensure that we provide the best opportunities for our graduates, not only for their potential pathway into education but into other fields and endeavours.

Mr Allister: In the best — or is it the worst? — Alliance tradition, the Minister is sitting on the fence when it comes to telling us which option he prefers. I suspect that most of us can work it out. What is the essence of the difference, if any, between the impact of options A and C on the autonomy of each of the colleges? Under any of the options, is the UCAS requirement enforceable and, if so, under which?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the question. Let me make it clear that my approach is one of seeking to build consensus. I have put my very clear views on the matter on the record on numerous occasions, including earlier today in a response to Mr Ross. If we are to find something that is sustainable, it is important that it has broad-based support, and that is why it is important that we have options that can be the basis for further discussions with all the stakeholders.

The difference between options A and C is that option A is a collaboration and option C is a federation. In a federation, you will see a move of some constitutional issues towards the central authority. There is a distinction in terms of governance between the two options, and, again, I encourage the Member to read the report in full. Indeed, those options can be further elaborated on in the discussions that we may have with the stakeholders in the autumn.

The UCAS issue is important. I have already commented on the differential opportunities that arise from that and the particular impact on Stranmillis in terms of planning ahead and student entry. It is in the bizarre situation of being simultaneously oversubscribed and having to fill places through clearing because of people holding an offer for St Mary's at the same time through the non-UCAS strand. I certainly will use my best endeavours to ensure a common admissions policy across the institutions, and, indeed, the panel members were keen to stress that point as well.

Improving Unscheduled Care

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Assembly is well aware of the growing concern among the public last winter about the quality of care provided by our emergency departments (EDs) and the robustness of governance procedures across the health and social care system in Northern Ireland. I made clear in my statements to the Assembly earlier this year my disappointment about the events that had contributed to the public's unease and announced a series of actions that I had taken or would take to respond to the concerns. Today, I want to inform the Assembly of the progress on these actions and the next steps to further improve the quality and governance of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

On 10 February, I announced that I had commissioned the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to conduct a review of unscheduled care services in the Belfast Trust with a view to the wider regional context.

That followed the RQIA's inspection of the emergency department and acute medical unit of the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) following the major incident declared by the Belfast Trust on 8 January. The RQIA has completed its review and submitted its report to me. I have accepted its findings and recommendations, and the authority will publish its report today. I thank the RQIA and the expert team, led by David Stewart, for their thorough examination of the issues and their proposals for transforming the delivery of unscheduled care.

11.30 am

On the major incident at the RVH, the RQIA has identified planning and systems failings by the Belfast Trust in the period leading up to the incident on 8 January. Management of the flow of patients, in the Royal Victoria Hospital and across the trust as a whole, could have been handled better. I am very disappointed by the trust's apparent inability to identify and plan for those anticipated pressures. I am contacting the chairs and acting chief executives of the Belfast Trust and the Health and Social Care Board to ask them to account for those systems failures. I require their assurance that they have learnt lessons from the RQIA's findings and are taking steps to prevent the failures from happening in the future.

While none of the other trusts was in the same position as Belfast, the RQIA has made a number of recommendations for concerted action across the region to improve the delivery of unscheduled care. I believe that, if we are to secure improvements in the delivery of unscheduled care, a regional approach is essential. I am therefore announcing my decision to establish, from today, a regional task group to take forward the RQIA's recommendations, under the leadership of my Department's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, and its Chief Nursing Officer, Charlotte McArdle, who will co-chair the task group. The task group will take immediate action to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the RQIA's recommendations. I want to see results, and I have set the clear aims for the task group of eliminating all avoidable 12-hour waiting time breaches from this winter onwards and, over the next 18 months, of making significant progress towards achieving the four-hour waiting time standard.

Members will recall that I commissioned the Health and Social Care Board to examine serious adverse incident (SAI) reporting arising from our emergency departments in the five-year period from 2009 to 2013. The findings are being shared with the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and will be placed on the Department's website.

In summary, the findings are that, in the five years covered, 83 serious adverse incidents were reported. Of those, 48 involved the death of a patient, while 13 identified some element of delay in aspects of a patient's care. Delays arose for a range of reasons, including issues around the triage process, a missed diagnosis, the accurate and timely communication of information, and the speed with which medications or treatments were delivered. It is impossible to say definitively to what extent any delay contributed to any death.

I am very well aware that we often talk about systems and processes designed to prevent things from going wrong or to learn from mistakes that have been made, such as the SAI process. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that at the very heart of all of this is the patient — a son, daughter, father or mother — and families deeply affected and hurt by what happened to their loved one. I am determined that all our processes and systems will be as open and transparent as they can be, while respecting the need for patient confidentiality, and that they fully meet the expectations of patients and their families in being informed and receiving clear and unambiguous answers to their questions. Those are some of the governance aspects that I have asked Sir Liam Donaldson to consider in the work that I am commissioning from him.

There has been some confusion in public discussion and commentary about the role and purpose of the SAI system. It is intended as a means by which incidents and unexpected events are investigated so that learning can be identified, shared and implemented. If things have gone wrong, it is important that lessons are learned, thereby preventing a recurrence. The reporting and learning from SAIs can have a positive impact on the quality and safety of healthcare. An open and learning culture encourages the reporting of SAIs as a valuable means of highlighting and resolving potential problems with services. All our services — emergency services are no exception — are becoming increasingly complex, and there will always be incidents from which we can learn.

Elimination of lengthy delays is critical to ensuring high-quality care and to improving patient experience. I believe that this can be done. The HSC achieved a 44% reduction in the number of 12-hour waiting time breaches during last year. That is a considerable achievement, and I pay tribute to all staff in the HSC who worked hard to deliver this improvement, but there is still much more to do.

I have therefore directed the task group to address, in particular, the design and implementation of more effective patient pathways for our frail elderly people and patients with respiratory conditions. To achieve this, the whole system will have to work together, including our GPs, Ambulance Service, community care teams and staff in acute hospitals.

I believe that the integral involvement of the HSC's professional staff in the work of the task group is essential to its ultimate success. This is not a managerial-focused

initiative. It will be strategic in its intent but practical and operational in its delivery. It will also be vital that learning and perspectives emerging from the Royal College of Nursing and the College of Emergency Medicine summits, held earlier this year, are acted on, as appropriate, by the task group.

The task I have set is challenging. However, I am convinced that it can be achieved. The winter period will, no doubt, bring its own challenges. When pressures emerge, as they no doubt will, we must put our wholehearted support and encouragement behind front line staff, who have been tasked to deliver transformation in unscheduled care. It can be achieved by harnessing the talents of our staff, whether they are doctors, nurses and social workers or managers and policymakers. I believe that they will have your support, and I commend this statement to the House.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. It is clear that RQIA has identified planning and systems failures by the Belfast Trust. In the Minister's statement is his quite stark comment:

"I am very disappointed by the Trust's apparent inability to identify and plan for these anticipated pressures."

Will the Minister give the House an insight, first, as to what the systems failings were and what recommendations will be progressed? Will he also go as far as to comment on the response of the ombudsman this morning to high levels of dissatisfaction with the complaints processes in health trusts?

Mr Poots: I met all the trusts in early autumn and was given assurances that actions were being taken to anticipate rising demand for emergency and unscheduled care, as always happens in the winter. One of the failings in the Belfast Trust that we could identify clearly is that it had too much scheduled care coming in immediately after Christmas. It had a lot of elective surgery and so forth to take place. People had been booked in, and, therefore, beds were taken up. The trust should have anticipated that a greater number of people would come in on the unscheduled pathway and held some of those procedures back further. That was a very clear failing.

It is important that we ensure that we deal with complaints from the public in a clear, transparent and consistent way. Some trusts perform better than others in managing complaints. I have experience of that and would, therefore, like to see a greater level of consistency applied throughout trusts in how they respond to complaints. I am and have been trying, with some success, although work is still to be done, to make the health service a more open and transparent organisation.

We are coming from years and years — decades — of not having the level of openness and transparency in health that there was in a range of other services. I want to change that. If we get it wrong, I want the public to know at an early point and for us to deal with the issues that arise from that.

That is what serious adverse incident reporting is about. I do not want the press and media to jump all over serious adverse incidents because we do them, because that

has the potential to actually drive people not to carry out serious adverse incidents when they should be carried out. I want us to do that, and I want us to be very clear with the people who suffered as a consequence of not receiving the care that they should have. That will be made known to them at the earliest possible point.

Mr Wells: The Minister, in his statement, has given a commitment that all avoidable 12-hour waits at A&E departments will be eliminated. Some Members will be fascinated by the definition of “avoidable”. Obviously, we all want to see a very significant decline in these waits. Will the Minister define what he means by “avoidable” so that we have clarity on his commitment?

Mr Poots: On occasion, there will be surges. Sometimes, those surges cannot be anticipated. That is one instance in which you would have an unavoidable delay. One of RQIA’s recommendations will be for the trusts to update their escalation plans to ensure that, when things go wrong and when something outside the control of the hospital happens and large numbers of people are in attendance, they can escalate the plans much quicker to get more staff in, make more beds available and ensure that those people are treated more quickly.

So we recognise that unavoidable delays will be there, but that will not leave us with thousands of 12-hour breaches. They will happen quite infrequently, and therefore “avoidable” is not a term that we are putting in to leave the door open for thousands of 12-hour breaches to continue occurring.

Mr McKinney: We were saddened to learn this morning of the scale of the SAIs. We should remember that at the heart of each one is an individual and a family. Given the scale of them, does the Minister accept that there must be a question mark over whether we are actually learning from the SAI process? In that context, does the Minister agree that it is appropriate or necessary to have an external eye looking over the SAI processes, underpinned by legislation, to ensure that the growing dissatisfaction and concern in the public mind is addressed?

Mr Poots: The Member is absolutely right that we are dealing with human beings and individuals. The SAI process takes place over a long period — five years — but that does not lessen the impact for any individual who did not receive as good a quality of care in that period of time as they might otherwise have received.

We are going to have that external eye, and the Member should be aware that we have commissioned someone of real standing to carry out that piece of work: Sir Liam Donaldson. He will be looking at all of this, including the SAIs and all the issues around the quality of care. Quality is something that we want to prioritise, and we have the ‘Quality 2020’ document, which sets out very clearly what we believe we should be achieving on quality. That is not merely an aspiration: it is something that we intend to deliver on.

11.45 am

Mr Beggs: In the Minister’s statement and, indeed, in some of his answers, he placed much focus on 12-hour breaches, which are coming down. However, the 2013-14 A&E waiting time statistics show that there has been a further reduction in the number of patients treated within four hours and a worryingly increasing bulge in the number of those waiting between four and 12 hours — almost

150,000 in the last year. My question to the Minister is this: is he simply dealing with a symptom at the upper end of our A&E rather than dealing with the problem, and does he accept that there will be an ongoing risk of serious adverse incidents whilst there continue to be delays of more than four hours?

Mr Poots: I certainly think that there has been a greater concentration on dealing with 12-hour breaches. Obviously, 12 hours is a considerably longer period of time than four hours, and it was deemed that tackling that was of greatest importance. The Member knows that we have made considerable progress on this issue. For example, when I inherited the job, we were looking at something like over 10,000 12-hour breaches in that year. We are now down to 3,000. That is 3,000 too many, in my opinion, but the figure has come down by 7,000 breaches. That is a significant improvement, and I am sure that the Member will take an opportunity at some point to welcome that improvement and say that it has been a major step forward.

I recognise that there has been a decline in the number of patients treated within four hours, and that is also something that we intend to tackle. So, whilst the focus this year will be on delivering further improvement in the 12-hour breaches, we are looking at the four-hour breaches over an 18-month period. It is something that we will be looking at and addressing, but we will do it in a holistic way. We will deal with the first challenge, which is the 12-hour breaches, but seek to carry out improvement across and throughout the system. The RQIA report and the task force group will assist us in doing that. There are quite a number of focuses that will be applied in how we deal with our elderly population, respiratory conditions and so forth that will assist us in all of that.

Mr McCarthy: Like our Committee Chairperson, I note the Minister’s disappointment at the Belfast Trust’s inability to plan for unscheduled pressures. We all share that disappointment. The Minister wants someone to account for what he calls “systems failures”. What action will the Minister take when someone from the trust or the board is found to have fallen down on the job, resulting in a bad experience for our patients? Will it be a case of heads rolling, a slap on the wrists, or simply just carrying on and hoping?

Mr Poots: The Member knows that the way that the system works is that I appoint a board and a chair, and the board holds the trust to account in terms of the Executive. There are monthly, public meetings that Members can attend to see how the board is performing in holding the trust to account.

I am pleased that, earlier this year, I was able to appoint a new chair to the board to hold the trust to account; that was a direct appointment by me. I will ensure that the chair knows at all times what my expectations are of the Belfast Trust and that I apply appropriate pressure on the chair to ensure that that organisation, which has over 20,000 employees, a budget of £1.2 billion, and which is by far the largest organisation in Northern Ireland and one of the largest public service organisations anywhere in the United Kingdom, actually delivers on the targets that we set for it. It is absolutely vital to do that, and it is incumbent on the trust to ensure that that is the case.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the Minister’s statement to the House this morning. Can he provide detail of the

unannounced hospital inspections to be carried out by the RQIA?

Mr Poots: The RQIA is tasked with carrying out a series of inspections. It has sometimes been said to me that the RQIA places a large focus on our nursing homes and so forth and that there has not been enough focus on our hospitals. So we have asked the RQIA to undertake a rolling programme of unannounced inspections, which will examine the quality of services in all acute hospitals in Northern Ireland each year from 2015-16 onwards. Those inspections will focus on a number of quality indicators about triage, admission, assessment, care, monitoring and discharge of patients. They will focus on a selection of quality indicators that will not be pre-notified to the trusts for each inspection, and no advance warning will be provided to trusts as to which sites or services within a hospital will be visited as part of an unannounced inspection. It is intended that the RQIA inspection reports will be published on a hospital-by-hospital basis as they are completed.

The proposal is to introduce these unannounced inspections from 2015-16, rather than immediately, because the RQIA already has a number of planned reviews under way, which focus on acute hospitals and which are, coincidentally, more wide-ranging than focusing on particular services. Those reviews include: a review of the experience of older people in acute hospitals, which will be completed within the next three months; a review of discharge arrangements from acute hospitals, because effective discharge arrangements are an essential part of the smooth flow of patients through hospitals, and the work of this review will inform the recommendations of the wider review of unscheduled care; and also a review of the inspection of the regional stroke strategy, the hospital aspects of which are of relevance to the unscheduled care review, and which will examine whether arrangements for fast-tracking stroke patients through the system are working effectively. Combined with the current review covering the Belfast Trust emergency department and the management of flows through the trusts, which also includes some regional elements, our advice is that the programme of unannounced inspections could begin next year.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement and I welcome the fact that he has accepted that a regional approach is essential because there are other areas outside Belfast, and other hospitals such as Daisy Hill. I accept that the RVH is a regional centre.

In your statement, Minister, you said that you directed the task group to address particularly the design and implementation of more effective patient pathways for frail elderly people and patients with respiratory conditions. That is very much to be welcomed. I ask that people with mental health problems who present at emergency departments also be considered because they often have particular problems that need to be dealt with, possibly in a different way, and a more effective pathway could be put in place for those particular people.

Mr Poots: With the frail elderly, I have to say that I think my focus is the appropriate one. I do not want to take away from the needs of people with mental health conditions, but I think that it is wholly inappropriate for elderly people to be on trolleys beside all the mayhem that goes on in emergency departments and have to wait for long

periods of time, either to be admitted to hospital or to be treated and discharged. Therefore, it is my first priority that we deal with the elderly population, and particularly our frail elderly, with dignity and the care that would be expected for those people. This is an area in which we can deliver considerable improvement. RQIA has made recommendations to the Belfast Trust. I have discussed those with the chair of the Belfast Trust, and he accepts that those recommendations are viable and the trust will act on delivering them. It is very important that that is the case and that we have treatment pathways, particularly for our frail elderly, that will ensure that we can carry out that level of service with the dignity that should be afforded to those people.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for initiating the report and bringing forward its findings. I think we all agree that it is important that they are actioned to stop any recurrence of what has been found within the Royal. Can the Minister advise as to what is being done to improve staffing levels within the Royal Victoria Hospital A&E?

Mr Poots: In terms of staffing levels within the hospital, we have advertised and recruited considerable numbers of additional nursing staff. I believe that it is around 100 nurses for the emergency department and, indeed, the acute medical unit. At present, there are 10 consultants in the RVH ED. My wife used to work in the ED in the RVH, and I think that it had one or two consultants back in the 1980s, during the Troubles. So, people can see how things have changed even since that period, and the usage of the hospital has changed in that period, because one would assume that it was an extremely busy place when dealing with all the trauma from the bombs, the bullets and so forth.

We have recently recruited four substantive emergency department consultants, although the full complement will not be in post for another number of months. The trust will also increase the out-of-hours consultant cover at the weekend in line with when the additional consultants come into post. It has also recruited three locum ED consultants, whom it hopes will commence on 14 August. The RVH emergency department has senior clinical decision-makers on site from 8.00 am until 1.00 am Monday to Friday, and a consultant on-call rota operates from 8.00 am and from 5.00 pm at weekends. The extra posts will improve weekend out-of-hour consultant cover. Middle-grade doctors work in ED throughout the night, and the Belfast Trust's ED consultant complement is greater than that in any other trust in Northern Ireland, though it does not yet meet the College of Emergency Medicine's recommendation, which is a challenge for all trusts right across the United Kingdom, not just in Northern Ireland. It certainly is not specific to the Belfast Trust.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the Minister's statement. Indeed, I have enormous sympathy for him in his endeavours. I pay tribute to the staff of our hospitals for the sterling work that they do. Will the Minister agree with me that the ongoing hemorrhaging of adverse reports is sapping the energy of those people? Can he assure the House that the people who are now charged with implementing the recommendations are the people to do it, or does he feel that it is perhaps time he relied on some independent source of energy to make sure that he is not let down yet again?

Mr Poots: The Member makes a number of valid points, and if I am let down, the population is let down as well. So, that is not a good situation to be in. Setting up the

task group and tackling this in a reasonable way will move some of the responsibility away from the Health and Social Care Board and give additional sustenance and support to the trust in delivering those things, and we should view that positively. We have capable people in our Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer to help us address that challenge, and I think that they are appropriate people to co-chair the task group. We will give them appropriate support.

We have had a series of issues to deal with in health and social care, but unscheduled care has come up over and over and over again. To this point, we have not got on top of it in the way that we would like to have. I think that what we are announcing this morning is significant and puts us in a very challenging position. I will be held to account next January, February and March if things do not show a significant improvement, but, again, I will be holding those people to account. We have inherited a difficult problem and we have been working hard to resolve it. We have not got there as yet, but we are putting the right systems in place to tackle this so that we can deliver a better quality of care in Northern Ireland.

The one caveat is that people need to use the services wisely. I recently noticed on social media that a row had broken out because someone had called 999 and got an ambulance out to take them to hospital because they were dizzy. We have a misuse of ambulance services, but we need those ambulance services to transfer patients and to be there when people have emergencies.

We have a misuse of our emergency departments. We need our nurses, doctors and professional staff to be able to respond to real emergencies and deal with the frail elderly and the nasty knocks that people will take. However, people abuse the system. We need to get that message out as well. We need the media and the public to support us in saying that it is wrong for people to abuse the service in the way that a significant percentage of users do. We need to challenge those people. It is all well and good for us to seek to correct things, but, if the level of abuse goes up, it will undermine the correction that we carry out.

12.00 noon

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his statement. He will, I am sure, be aware that, until the incident at the Odyssey, the term “serious adverse incident” (SAI) was probably not in the vocabulary of a lot of people in Northern Ireland outside the healthcare family. Bearing in mind that, since the incident, the media, and perhaps even those seeking to score political points, have jumped upon the term and called it what it is not, does the Minister feel that it is now time to reassess how fit for purpose the serious adverse incident system actually is?

Mr Poots: I say at the outset that the purpose of the serious adverse incident reporting system is to identify and promote learning from events. The investigation of an SAI provides a mechanism to effectively share learning in a meaningful way with a focus on safety and quality, ultimately leading to improvements for service users. Where SAIs have been reported, I expect four main things: that there will be an investigation at an appropriate level by people with the right skills to carry it out; that patients and families will be told that the case is an SAI and that an investigation is ongoing; that patients and families will be

involved in the process to the level that they choose and will be informed of the outcome; and that learning must be identified and shared.

Whilst the process is a non-statutory system that exists to identify learning and support improvements in the quality and safety of Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland, it is not the only mechanism in place to identify and support learning. A wide range of work is ongoing nationally and in Health and Social Care to develop and update evidence-based best practice and improve safety and quality. As a learning process, it complements the processes of statutory accountability, which apply to all parts of HSC, in dealing with deaths that meet the relevant criteria for some form of formal investigative process. We will look at all the learning processes, in conjunction with other parts of the United Kingdom. If we feel that the processes need to be enhanced further or that improvements can be carried out, certainly we will enact those.

North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Finance and Personnel wishes to make a statement.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) met in special EU programmes sectoral format in Armagh, on 30 May 2014. I represented the Northern Ireland Executive and was accompanied by junior Minister Jennifer McCann. The Government of the Republic of Ireland were represented by Brendan Howlin TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The meeting began with a short discussion on areas of mutual responsibility as part of the ongoing review into sectoral priorities. Minister Howlin then provided a short outline of the informal ministerial meeting on cohesion policy that he attended in Athens at the end of April 2014.

The chief executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) updated the Council on progress since the previous special EU programmes sectoral meeting in December last year. At the end of March 2014, the Peace III and INTERREG IVa programmes were fully committed. Funding from the withdrawal of the peace-building and conflict resolution centre and the Narrow Water bridge projects has now been reallocated. It was noted that all expenditure targets for the Peace III and INTERREG IVa programmes have been met to date. The INTERREG IVa programme must spend approximately £85 million by the end of 2015 and the Peace III programme approximately £90 million. Those targets are challenging, but the importance of maximising full EU funding allocations was emphasised.

Ministers confirmed that they remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge.

Council noted that the INTERREG IV transnational and inter-regional competitive funding programmes were successful in providing an additional £9 million to Northern Ireland in the 2007-2013 funding period. SEUPB continues to work to promote the positive impacts of EU programmes through public events and confirmed that it would hold two conferences later in the year to highlight the achievements of the Peace III and INTERREG IVa programmes.

Council was updated on the progress of the development work for the 2014-2020 INTERREG V and Peace IV EU programmes. It was noted that the public consultation for the programmes would begin in early June, and, as I am sure many Members are aware, it opened on Tuesday 3 June for a period of eight weeks. I urge those who are interested in shaping the programmes to input into this consultation process. Post consultation, the operational programmes will require approval from the Northern Ireland Executive, the Government of Ireland and the Scottish Government before onward transmission and negotiation with the European Commission.

Ministers discussed the recommendations outlined in the SEUPB staffing review and noted that there is to be further consideration by officials of the recommendations.

Council approved changes to the North/South pension scheme and noted that consultation on further reform of the scheme is under way. Council agreed to hold its next

special EU programmes meeting on a date to be agreed in autumn 2014.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Minister, you will be aware that delays in processing applications for INTERREG in particular are a problem that has dogged European funding here for many years. Given that the South and elsewhere in Europe simply do not suffer from these problems, what actions will you take in the months ahead to ensure that the new tranche of funding will not be dogged by the same problems and to reduce the application processing times?

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of the characterisation of the processing of our INTERREG programmes as slow. I support any attempts to hasten approval processes so that from application to decision, whether that is approval or rejection, the process is as quick as it possibly can be. There are some necessary stages in the process, and, having looked at the various stages, I do not think that there are any that, in their totality, can be removed. I want to keep those very necessary legal steps in that process, but that does not mean that the time taken to do each stage could not be sped up. My officials are working with their counterparts in the Irish Republic and with the SEUPB to examine the possibility of doing just that.

It is easy for individuals in the process who, perhaps, have a particular perspective or agenda to say that Northern Ireland is the slowest and worse than everybody else. I accept that, on average, the process takes a year, which is high and could do with coming down, but, if you compare, for example, the Irish Republic/Wales INTERREG scheme with ours, you will see that it is much smaller. The average size of their projects is about €900,000 versus ours at €2.5 million, yet they are only about eight weeks quicker on average at processing. It is a much smaller scheme in its totality: our current scheme is about €260 million; theirs was much lower. Their average project size and, therefore, the complexity of any assessment, was lower, yet their processing was only marginally quicker. It is easy for someone to characterise what we are doing in Northern Ireland as being incredibly slow, but, in reality, when you compare it with others not that far away, you see that they are not much better.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he outline some of the details of the outcome of the staffing review?

Mr Hamilton: A staffing review has been ongoing since 2012. The motivation to review staffing was that, over the years prior to that, the number of staff in the SEUPB had grown, for understandable reasons. It dealt with the early stages and critical middle stages of the Peace and INTERREG funding, and it was felt that there was a requirement to have more staff to ensure that all the assessment work, which the Chairman asked about, was done as quickly as possible and that the money that we were drawing down from Europe, or our entitlement from Europe, could be spent. Given that those projects are now coming to an end and indeed the fact that future programmes are of a smaller quantity, there was a feeling that there was a need to look at the SEUPB's staffing situation again with a view to bringing that down.

In fact, at the last Special EU Programmes Body's sectoral meeting in December, we agreed the staffing review that would see the number of staff come down to 60 last year and 57 this year. There is an expectation that additional staff savings of 10% that were mooted in that report should also be achieved. It is only right and proper that, in circumstances in which programmes are spending less money and there is not the pressure that there was back in 2012 and indeed the years before that, we should, like in all parts of the public sector, look at trying to reduce cost.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá ráite ag an Aire ag an chruinniú den Chomh-Aireacht ar an 30ú lá Bealtaine gur dheimhneach na hAírí go bhfuil said fós ag tabhairt tacaíochta do choincheap Dhroichead an Chaol Uisce. An féidir leis an Aire a mhíniú cad é atá i gceist leis an ráiteas tacaíochta seo don todchad? The Minister stated that, at the meeting of the NSMC on 30 May:

"Ministers confirmed they remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge."

Will the Minister explain what that expression of support will mean in practice?

Mr Hamilton: It means what it says. In fact, support for the concept of the bridge was given initially at the last NSMC plenary meeting. I am trying to recollect when exactly that was. It was a number of months ago. It was certainly towards the tail end of last year. Sorry — it was at the early stages of this year. Given what has happened with the inability to proceed with the Narrow Water bridge and its not being able to be completed, and the associated problems that that caused in getting the money that was allocated to the scheme spent in time on good projects, I am glad that we have been able to do that. In fact, that was discussed at the recent sectoral meeting. The money has been allocated to two projects. One was the upgrade of the cross-border Enterprise rail scheme. The other is the upgrade of the Boyne viaduct, which is obviously related to the Enterprise scheme as well. I am glad that we have been able to ensure that that money has been reallocated and has not been lost.

I can understand the desire of some to perhaps want Ministers to go beyond supporting the concept of the bridge and actually say that they support it and that there will be funding for it. However, in a situation in which we have only recently secured the budget for INTERREG, there is no programme in place. In fact, as I mentioned in the statement, we are consulting on what the themes should be on which we spend that money. It would be jumping the gun somewhat to say anything more than that we are supportive of the concept of the bridge. I think that the record will show that in the past, with the first attempt to build the bridge, nothing was done to stop, prevent or hinder it from happening, going through its processes. I would expect the same degree of professionalism, if indeed a future application were permitted by the next INTERREG V programme, to be carried out by all relevant Departments in Northern Ireland and indeed the South as well.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for his report and congratulate him on getting it onto one A4 sheet of paper. That ticks a box.

The Minister expressed the £175 million that there is for Peace III and INTERREG IVa as being both "fully

committed" and "challenging". What safeguards are there that that money will be spent by the end of 2015?

Mr Hamilton: Unfortunately, we have wasted a second side of A4, which we should have used for something worthwhile or useful — a crossword or something perhaps.

All of that is challenging. The money has been fully committed, so projects are there for the money to be spent on. If everything goes according to plan, all of the money will be spent. Obviously, there is continual monitoring and assessment by SEUPB.

Of course, some of the projects will be led by some of our Departments here, which will ensure that there is appropriate oversight of the expenditure to ensure that it gets out the door and none of it is lost.

12.15 pm

I suppose there is always a degree of risk. As we know in this place, from time to time, there are reasons why the money that we allocate to Departments cannot be spent. The difficulty we have with European funding is that we do not have some of the flexibilities that we have with our own funding, not that we have many flexibilities. We do not have the same flexibility, and, if we find out very late in the process — we are about 18 months away from the date by which expenditure has to be made — there may be issues.

As for managing that, I understand that, whilst the end date for actual expenditure is December, the SEUPB is keen that most things come to it midway through 2015 so that some of the problems that the Member talks about can perhaps be seen early on.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he outline what he believes will be the proposed themes and budget for the INTERREG V programme?

Mr Hamilton: I am pleased that the INTERREG Va programme now has an indicative budget of €282 million, which is comparable with INTERREG IV. At this minute, there is no agreement on which areas and themes the money should be spent on. The draft scheme that is out for consultation at the minute proposes four programme themes. They are research and innovation; environmental protection and resource efficiency; social inclusion and combating poverty; and sustainable transport. I am pleased that sustainable transport has been included as a result of negotiations led by my Department but obviously influenced by the Department for Regional Development. We have been able to include that as one of the proposed programme themes. Indeed, research and innovation also includes a substrand for developing renewable energy technologies.

I was very keen that, whilst not denigrating or downplaying themes like environmental protection and social inclusion, there was much greater emphasis and focus on themes that boost the economy, given the economic pressures that Northern Ireland, the Republic and, indeed, Scotland face, hence the need to push sustainable transport and research and innovation, including renewable technologies. Hopefully, both those themes and, indeed, the others will be agreed as part of the consultation and find their way on to the final INTERREG V programme.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement to the House today. Minister, through the INTERREG V and Peace

IV programmes, there are many cross-border projects in health and sustainable transport, which you just mentioned. With many councils and organisations going into summer recess, will the Minister give assurances that work through the SEUPB will be ongoing to ensure full cross-border cooperation on those important projects?

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure whether the Member is aware of a particular problem perhaps in her constituency. If she is, I am happy for her to raise that with me, and we will try to deal with it.

We should not fuel the perception that work stops just because this place and councils are perhaps in summer recess; there are people who remain in the country. We are not quite like France yet, where everything seems to be abandoned in August. Work is ongoing, and I hope that there will not be any issues with the continued work on some of the very good projects that are happening across Northern Ireland. If the Member is aware of particular issues, I am happy to investigate them and to do what we can to iron out any problems.

Mr I McCrea: The statement refers to the reallocation of funding for the peace centre at the Maze. He will be aware that the reason behind that reallocation was our party's withdrawal of support, because the requirement for buy-in from the unionist community had not been met. Until that is the case, it will not be built. Will the Minister give us an idea of what that reallocation has meant and how it has been redistributed?

Mr Hamilton: Much like the Narrow Water bridge issue, which was mentioned by Mr Bradley, this presented a significant challenge in terms of the quantum of funding that could not be spent by the end of 2015. Given the time frame that was available to the SEUPB, it was decided — I think, rightly — that it was not possible to conduct an open call for new bids to come in for the reallocation of the Peace III funding that could not be spent on the peace-building and conflict resolution centre. What the SEUPB did — I think that it was right to do it — was to revisit projects that had been on a sort of waiting list. I am very pleased that projects like the Voices from the Valley project in Newtownabbey, which I am familiar with, having had a meeting with council officials from that area, and the EARLS project in Dungannon, as well as extensions for activity to local authority peace partnerships, have mopped up that funding and will now ensure that none of that money, albeit on the basis that all those projects spend all their money, is now lost back to Europe.

Mrs McKevitt: I thank the Minister for his statement. I will touch on the Narrow Water bridge project, as Mr Bradley did. I welcome the comments that the Ministers are behind the project, but does the Minister agree that the Narrow Water bridge project would fit well into the theme of sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks and key infrastructure networks?

Mr Hamilton: I am cautious about getting into assessing the relative merits of projects against a funding programme that has not been agreed. I do not disagree that the project that the Member talks about may well fit into the broad concept of a theme around sustainable transport. However, it would be foolish of me — indeed, it would be foolish of any of us — as we stand at the minute with the scheme out for consultation, nothing agreed and no indicative budget allocation to each of the themes in the

programme, to say, "That it is a good scheme, and we should go in there. That is another good scheme that should go into something else" and start to pre-commit funding to certain projects without also knowing the merits or otherwise of other projects that might come forward. There might be a raft of sustainable transport or other projects that come forward through a call as part of INTERREG V that might be even better for meeting those achievements than, say, the Narrow Water bridge or some other project. It is a little too early to start saying, "That is a good scheme, and it fits in there. Therefore, it should get funding". We need to be incredibly cautious about taking that approach.

Mr Allister: Since its inception, SEUPB has been quite a bloated bureaucracy. Whereas I welcome the indication of some reductions in staffing, are those reductions not much less than was anticipated at an earlier stage? Given that the budget for it to handle is falling so dramatically, surely they should be more substantial? Has any progress been made on bringing balance in community background to the staffing of SEUPB, where, notoriously, the Protestant community has been grossly underrepresented in the complement?

Mr Hamilton: On the first point that the Member raised, we should all welcome the fact that staffing levels in SEUPB are heading in the right direction. I agree that they are not as low as I think they should be, and I would like to see them falling further. There is agreement to get them down to 57 this year. The report that was carried out and conducted by my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the Irish Republic identified scope even beyond that 57 for a further 10% reduction in staffing numbers. We are also investigating the situation where this organisation has three offices across Ireland, two in this jurisdiction. That is also excessive and unnecessary moving forward, given the reduction in the organisation's budget or the budget that it manages on behalf of both Governments. That is something that I hope to report some positive news on after our next sectoral meeting.

Figures from 1 January 2013 show the community breakdown of staff as 21 from the Protestant community, 34 from the Catholic community and four non-determined. That was slightly up on the Protestant side, but it was slightly up on the Catholic side as well. When you look at the April 2014 figures, you will see that it has fallen back again on the Protestant side. I take a view on this sort of issue — it does not matter whether it is SEUPB, parts of my Department or, indeed, parts of anybody's Department, as I look at them in my role as being responsible for HR and personnel issues in the whole of the Civil Service — that I do not care what an official's religion is, as long as their work is up to scratch and up to standard and their advice is good. If there are issues, however, and individuals from a particular community background are being deterred from applying, work needs to be carried out to encourage people from that community to apply for work, as we have done across Departments, agencies, arm's-length bodies and grade levels in the Civil Service. If there are certain barriers, work needs to be undertaken to remove those barriers. I have no concern whether the staff are Catholic or Protestant, as long as their work is up to scratch.

Mr Dallat: I concur with the Minister's last remarks. Recently, however, we have talked a great deal about scaling back the staff and about reduced budgets. Does anyone in the House seriously believe and does the Minister believe that we have reached a stage of integration, cohesion, peace and infrastructure at which we can seriously engage in a conversation of that type, rather than looking for increased budgets and for more work that could be done to rebuild what was destroyed in the past?

Mr Hamilton: As the Member was so nice to me at the start, I do not like to be nasty back to him — it is not my style, anyway — but this is not a matter of seeking to increase the budgets at the disposal of, in this case, the SEUPB. The budgets that it administers are set by Europe, and the match funding is set by this Executive and the Government of the Irish Republic. It is not a matter, therefore, of increasing its budget; the reality is that the budget that it has been administering has been going down and down and down. The budget for the programmes that it will administer in the future is much lower than it was in the past. That is a reflection of tight times across the whole of Europe. In those circumstances, it is completely unjustifiable for us to have less money to administer but to keep the same staffing in place. That is not how any business in Northern Ireland or, indeed, the Republic of Ireland would do business. If they were doing less, they would have fewer staff. It is absolutely sensible, prudent and right for myself and Brendan Howlin to look at what the right quantum of staff is to do the job that we require them to do — not a person more than that should be in place.

Whilst I have doubts over the merits of many parts of our North/South apparatus, one thing that it absolutely is not — everybody in the House should agree — is a job creation agency. It is there to do a particular job, and, if it does not require the staff who are there to do that job, they should be reduced. That is the plain and simple way in which business should be done.

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests

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 in which 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 in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Elliott: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes, in the absence of a formal agreement on a new way forward for contested parades and associated protests, that it is essential that everyone involved, whether participants, spectators or protestors, demonstrates respect, restraint and tolerance for those of differing opinions.

12.30 pm

Thank you very much, Principal Deputy Speaker. I trust that, given the current circumstances here in Northern Ireland, the motion will be debated in a calm and respectful manner and that comments will be helpful to the situation as opposed to being unhelpful. It is unfortunate that, during the multi-party talks, we could not find agreement on the issue of parades and related protests. We came reasonably close to getting an overarching agreement. However, even if we had reached that agreement, it would not have dealt with a number of the contentious parades. That is a major difficulty that we will have, even if we find the resolution that we are looking for.

While we accept that the vast majority of people are content to have respect and tolerance for a culture or event that they do not have any affinity with, do not agree with or do not support, it is clear that there is a section of people who will not tolerate an opposing culture or opinion. That is not new: intolerance has been ongoing for decades and, indeed, centuries. Many citizens have been murdered by terrorists due to the intolerance of the terrorist community, who could not accept them for what they were, whether that was because of their religion, their basic principle of wanting to serve the community as a member of the security forces, their culture or because of some twisted or vindictive reason. Even in recent decades, it has been an ongoing problem. In the mid-1980s, republicans opposed parades in the Obins Street area of Portadown. An agreement was eventually reached that the Orange Order would not use that route; instead, it would use the Garvaghy Road route. However, of course, as we are aware, just 10 years later, republicans opposed that route, and they have stopped the parade for many years.

Around the same time, we had similar problems in places such as the Ormeau Road in Belfast, Bellaghy, Pomeroy and Newtownbutler to name but a few. We have seen another upsurge in more recent times, particularly in parts of Belfast. Ardoyne and Twaddell is an example of how republicans have increased tensions in the area and put a wedge between communities and community relations

in general. Of course, that is a means to an end for republicans. Anything they can do to create problems for the unionist and British culture, they will do.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: I am happy to give way.

Mr Lyttle: I am conscious that the Member has quite a time to go. I do not dispute the rightful condemnation of violence, but is the Member going to address any offences committed by people participating in parades that have contributed to community tension?

Mr Elliott: Of course. The point that I was going to make, had the Member waited, was that, sometimes, those on parade and those supporting parades have questions to answer. Not every action that they carry out is appropriate or acceptable. However, small numbers on both sides of the argument are determined.

I may not support, appreciate or accept every part of society here; I may not like some events or the organisations that participate in them. I highlight one example, as I quite often do: the GAA. I do not have an affinity with GAA culture or sport at all. Some people from that organisation have given me personal abuse in the past. However, I do not link the organisation to that; I have respect and tolerance for that organisation, what it does and how it plays its games. I do not point out that a small number of people in that organisation do not give me respect. I do not lump them all in as one, just as I ask others not to lump in all those in the parading organisations who do not behave in the way that most would expect them to behave. I hope, in fairness to Mr Lyttle, that that goes some way to addressing his query.

The point about republicans is that nothing will ever be enough. If they do not get what they want, they will increase tensions and, what is more worrying, increase violence. That is what happened in recent years in the Ardoyne/Twaddell area. I have here a number of police reports going back to 2009. If you analyse them, you will establish that a small amount of the violence and tensions came from the loyal orders and the Protestant/unionist community, whereas the vast majority of the trouble, tensions and violence came from the republican/nationalist sections. I believe that that is what prompted the Parades Commission to make its decisions in recent times. Why else, if it had read those reports, would it have banned last year's return parade past Ardoyne and through Twaddell? In my opinion, it was for no other reason than the fact that the threat of violence from the nationalist/republican community was greater. In recent weeks, the same attitude has been adopted by the Parades Commission. It gives in to the greatest opportunity for violence.

I will refer to my more localised situation in Newtownbutler. For many years, parades in Newtownbutler were banned or restricted. Indeed, they are still restricted. If you ever want to watch an inoffensive parade, go to Newtownbutler in County Fermanagh, where you will see one small band leading a group of loyal orders, whether Orangemen or Royal Black Preceptory members, up the street. One of the most disgraceful decisions that the Parades Commission made was when it stopped the Orange Order parade at the bottom of the lane that goes on to the main road and did not allow people to go back to their hall. What do you do when you stop a parade? Loyal orders normally play the national anthem. They were stopped right outside

a home that people would term nationalist. Out of respect, the Orange Order members moved away from that home so that they would not be playing the national anthem outside it. If they had have been allowed to go back to their hall, they would have gone inside to play the national anthem, away from any prospective trouble that it might have brought about. That was a Parades Commission nonsense, and we still witness that to this day.

Where will we develop the respect and tolerance that I referred to? Over recent years, even Members of the Assembly have inhibited the Police Service in its role. I hope that people take cognisance of this debate, but, most importantly, I hope that the Parades Commission takes cognisance of it. At this stage, I warn that nothing will ever be enough. The Parades Commission has insisted in recent years that dialogue take place. We have read many of its determinations that dialogue must take place. I can tell you that, for the last 10 months, and others will be able to relate this much better than I can, dialogue has taken place with all sections of the community in the Ardoyne/Twaddell area. At least, I understand from the community that I represent that dialogue has taken place. Some from the nationalist/republican community may be sore that they have not been involved in that dialogue, but that is not the fault of the loyal orders; that is for others to answer.

The talks have taken place. We have heard that, for the last number of years, talks were offered by the Orange Order in Portadown but rejected by the nationalist/republican community. The loyal orders have done what they can.

Mr Anderson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: My time is nearly up, I am sorry.

They keep moving forward, they want to progress and they want tolerance and respect, but that is not being reciprocated.

Mr Lyttle: I beg to move the following amendment: At end insert

“; and calls on all organisations and parties involved, particularly elected representatives, to demonstrate unambiguous adherence to the rule of law.”.

I rise to support the motion and to propose the amendment. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the issue. I welcome the motion and agree that, in the absence of new arrangements to adjudicate on parades and protests, principles such as respect, restraint and tolerance should govern our approach to parades and protests in Northern Ireland. However, the Alliance Party believes that the motion could be strengthened by an explicit reference to the need for the principle of an unambiguous adherence to the rule of law as well. We have put that forward, and we hope that the motion as amended will receive the united support of the House today.

I do, however, hope that these words will be followed by positive actions. On a number of occasions, we have seen statements put forward by the Executive and the Assembly but the actions following that have not met the high standards of the statement. We have seen members of the proposing party, the Ulster Unionist Party, frankly, whip up tension by telling international mediators to go home when their party leader was in negotiation with that international mediator around these difficult issues.

We have seen people paint the Alliance Party as anti-British in relation to some of these issues, which is a disgrace and is false, not least considering the members of our party who have given service to Britain and British values in most important ways. Those people have talked cultural war and community tension into existence, the consequence of which is sustained dereliction and deprivation in areas that need redevelopment the most, relocation of business and reduced foreign direct investment. It is putting our Police Service in the position of being a shock absorber for failed political leadership. Although I do not agree with every PSNI approach, I would like to put on record my thanks to every PSNI officer who has served our community by upholding the law in some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. I encourage them to maintain their restraint and professionalism in those situations that they find themselves in.

I hope that the motion that has been put forward today is a departure from some of that difficult behaviour that we have seen in recent times, and I hope that we will see more leadership. I hope that we will see more reference to the positive aspects of cultural expression in Northern Ireland. Queen's University research has shown that the number of parades in Northern Ireland has doubled since 2005. We now have around 4,600 parades, the vast majority of which pass without restriction in a peaceful, enjoyable manner for those involved. Indeed, our marching bands are at an all-time high. Some would say that loyalist culture has never been better represented.

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: I am happy to give way.

Mr Campbell: The Member alluded to the Queen's University research. Does he agree with me that a considerable amount of the increase can be vouched for by applications that are put in by people who have their legitimate parades thwarted and who go through the motions of reapplying on hundreds of occasions to try to get the one parade, which, if it had been granted, would have meant that that increase would be nothing like what it has been perceived by the research, and also that many of the parades that he has alluded to are not loyal order parades but are ordinary annual band parades that occur on a regular basis?

Mr Lyttle: There is obviously a mixture of parades. I do not think that anybody should object to following the proper procedure in order to have a peaceful, democratic right to exercise their parade. I will also reference the positive work that goes on in community development with many of the people involved in that cultural expression and, indeed, the fact that, in any democratic society, parading, festivals and those types of organisations should be regarded as positive and as making a positive contribution to society.

It is remiss, however, in an unfortunately still deeply divided society like Northern Ireland not to realise that there are real issues and that it will require fine human rights balances at times. We must ensure that all cultural expression is done within the rule of law and in an inclusive manner. Indeed, the OFMDFM community relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC), clearly suggests that all public space is shared space. It is not an aspiration, but a principle that is set out in the strategy. It is not, as I have heard many people falsely say, neutral or anaemic space, but is about the behaviour

that takes place while you are in that space. It should be based on dignity and respect and should not be about triumphalism or intimidation.

12.45 pm

From the point of view of the Alliance Party, the approach to parades and protests must be based on human rights, take account of responsibilities and be about improving relationships. There are, of course, rights to assemble and rights to a private life, key principles in the Good Friday Agreement about freedom from sectarian harassment and, indeed, the aspiration of our Executive to see all public space as shared space. As MLAs, we should make it absolutely clear that violence never pays. It has always been counterproductive and self-destructive and it has always divided rather than united this community.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: Who to? I will take here and then here. Go for it.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. Can you tell me, as someone who has spent his entire adult life working with young people in north Belfast, how I tell people, particularly young people, that violence does not pay, when the Parades Commission rewarded the violence of republicans in 2012 and when the House, only a few weeks ago, refused to sanction a Member who willfully broke the law? How do I tell people — how do you tell people — that violence and lawbreaking does not pay?

Mr Lyttle: I want to make it very clear that I supported the sanction. I think that it was a missed opportunity for the Assembly to make clear what type of behaviour is unacceptable. Unfortunately, we missed those opportunities on other occasions with MLAs from other parties.

I say that violence does not pay. You tell me the state of community relations in the area where you are having to work extremely hard to repair them? Violence and the threat of violence is not productive, and because other people behave in a violent manner should not lead you to encourage anyone else to meet that violence with violent behaviour.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: Yes.

Mr Allister: The Member rightly says that violence should not pay. However, how can anyone analyse the Parades Commission's decisions on the Ardoyne and not conclude that violence most certainly has paid for those who have used and threatened it. It has shaped the determinations of the Parades Commission, which simply bowed to the biggest stick. Is that not the story of Ardoyne?

Mr Lyttle: I am sure that the Parades Commission would robustly disagree with that analysis. I do not think it is helpful. The Parades Commission has to consider a number of things, and once a determination is made it is incumbent on all elected representatives to uphold that lawful determination.

Frankly, words are not enough. There have been opportunities. We had the shared future strategy in 2005, a draft cohesion, sharing and integration strategy in 2010, Together: Building a United Community in 2013, the Haass process and now another opportunity with party talks.

Tuesday 1 July 2014

Elected leaders need to get their heads out of the sand, and we need to deal with these issues. If people want an alternative way to deal with parades and protests they should show leadership and create it, but, in the absence of any new arrangements, as the motion suggests, Parades Commission rulings must be respected and adhered to as the rule of law.

There can be no equivocation or cherry-picking of what the rule of law is. That equivocation and cherry-picking is heard by people across our community, who take their lead from elected representatives, and it is wholly unacceptable.

A statement was released by the leaders of the DUP, UUP, Sinn Féin, SDLP and Alliance last year. In it, they said:

“violence is not acceptable in a democratic society, nor is it inevitable”.

They also called for:

“the law to be respected and upheld at all times.”

They continued:

“Whatever any of the parties may believe about the wisdom of any Parades Commission determinations, it is the lawful authority dealing with these matters and its decisions must be observed.”

I appeal to all elected representatives to make their actions in the coming season match those words that were set out last year.

Mr Humphrey: The context for the Ardoyne situation is that, in July 2012, 2,000 republicans came onto the Crumlin Road. They attacked Twaddell Avenue, they set fire to a car and pushed it into the police ranks, and they attempted to murder police officers with automatic gunfire. Contrast that with how the Orange institution behaved when it returned on that same day from the field, adhering to an appallingly discredited determination. A token number of them returned at 4.00 pm, and they passed without incident, as they had always done in the interests of peace and community relations.

All violence is wrong and should be condemned from whatever quarter it comes. The former Parades Commission, however, clearly rewarded violence, and it rewarded wrongdoing. It is important to remember that it also rewarded the threat of potential violence.

For republicans at Ardoyne, there is no shared space and there is no shared future. The current Parades Commission, of course, has followed sadly along those same lines of continuing to reward the threat of violence and enshrine a nationalist veto. Rewarding violence, evil and wrongdoing is wrong. It undermines democracy, and it undermines the rule of law. For some 125 years, lodges from Ligoniel have processed down the Crumlin Road. I have to say to nationalists, if they do not come down the Crumlin Road — and nationalists are happy for them to come down the Crumlin Road; they are just not happy for them to return along the Crumlin Road, even at 8.00 am or 9.00 am. Where do they process, then, for their human rights and civil rights to be recognised? Do they go down the Oldpark Road or the Cavehill Road, or do they go down the Cliftonville Road? It is strange that nationalists are prepared to tolerate morning parades but that they

absolutely reject an evening parade on 12 July. Six minutes of intolerance.

I believe in civil and religious liberty. I am a proud unionist, and I am confident of my history, tradition, culture, heritage and politics. I am confident, and I accept others' traditions and their right to celebrate their culture, and I respect their right to do so. “Tolerance”, “respect”, “accommodation” and “dialogue” are words that we have heard much of from nationalists, and I hear constantly from nationalist and republican politicians about dialogue and the need for dialogue to resolve issues.

Around the issue of Ligoniel lodges, there has been dialogue now for over 10 years. The current process started before Christmas, when nationalists failed to turn up. There were intensive talks in March and April, and, unfortunately, they led to no resolution. I have to say that when nationalists talk about dialogue, they are being completely disingenuous. Sinn Féin, the SDLP, the Crumlin Ardoyne Residents Association (CARA) and the Greater Ardoyne Residents Collective (GARC) have opposed an evening parade. Their starting point is no evening parade, and that veto is continuing to be protected.

The opposition to a traditional Orange parade was not simply a policy that was thought of on the hoof. It was hatched by Sinn Féin and the IRA, going back to a speech when Gerry Adams revealed it all in Athboy, when his mask slipped. People like Mac Cionnaith, Nelis and Rice were deliberately put in place.

How can unionism and loyalism reach accommodation with those who talk of dialogue and want local solutions when these parties campaign against parades, lobby the police against parades, lobby the Parades Commission against parades and, in the case of the SDLP and Sinn Féin, protest at those same parades, including church parades? Gerry Kelly said last year in relation to the Orange brethren at Twaddell and the Crumlin Road:

“They can stand there all they like. They won't be getting up.”

Paul Carson recently said on 'Spotlight':

“We will mobilise thousands to come to Ardoyne if a parade is allowed up.”

His words were echoed by Dee Fennell, another dissident spokesperson from Ardoyne in the 'Belfast Telegraph' last week. I was recently part of a joint delegation to the Parades Commission, when the chair of the commission said in relation to Ardoyne:

“There is absolute rejection from what we have heard from all nationalist parties to an evening parade.”

So, accommodation, shared space, shared future, dialogue, tolerance, respect — there is not any. There is absolute rejection from all sides.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Humphrey: Last week, Gemma McKenna of Sinn Féin said:

“We maintain the view that there is no rationale for any loyal order parade in this area”.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. I call Daithí McKay.

Mr Humphrey: There is no tolerance for the Orange tradition in this place.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. We will be supporting the motion and the amendment. It is important that the motion highlights the absence of agreement, because that is the real issue here — the absence of agreement on parades, flags and the past. When I looked at the research paper and at the speech that I made the last time that we discussed parades, it seemed like Groundhog Day; we are going over the same issues again and again. The only way that we are going to resolve that is by engaging with the talks process that is being put in place, following on from the developments of the Haass proposals, engaging positively, and not having an eye on the next election down the road but thinking about how this will secure better outcomes for the future of all society.

Indeed, I wish the new Chief Constable well in his role over the summer period. The proposer of the amendment was right to say that the police, in recent years, have become the shock absorbers because there has been an absence of agreement around all these issues.

Many parades take place that are respectful and where participants do not wish to cause offence. They are dignified and pass off peacefully. There are good examples, and we look to Crumlin and Derry, where accommodation and agreements can be made if there is a willingness on all sides.

But this is not an issue that cropped up only in the past number of years; it is not something that was conjured up by Gerry Adams, Gerry Kelly or anybody else. This has been going on for hundreds of years. This is part of our history. If you go back to the 1800s or back to the early 20th century, you will see that there were always issues around parades, and they have never been resolved. This is an opportunity to resolve these issues once and for all.

We need to learn from last year's mistakes. We cannot afford to see a repeat of any Grand Old Duke of York act up to Ardoyne, whether that is at the behest of the Orange Order leadership or elsewhere, because that is not good for police officers and their safety, it is not good for business or the image of Belfast, and it is not good for young unionists who get involved at the interface and end up having to go into the criminal justice system, the process and the slippery slope that leads to unfortunate social outcomes. Those are the consequences of a lack of leadership on parades in Belfast and elsewhere.

The Parades Commission should be allowed to get on with its job without being threatened by the DUP, the Orange Order and others, and without pressure being exerted by the NIO and other parties. We need to ensure that the role of the Parades Commission is respected, because we have not come to an agreement on the way forward on parades, flags and the past. Until we reach that agreement, I cannot see how anybody can complain about the Parades Commission, given that they did not follow through on previous negotiations.

The public want these issues dealt with. I spoke to a taxi driver in Belfast the other day, and he was fearful because of some of the rumours that he had heard about what

might happen over the coming days and weeks. That will obviously permeate throughout the city and the business community, and it will affect tourists as well. The economic and social consequences of this are not a price that I feel is worth paying.

We need to move this issue forward. People do not want to see the policing budget spent on camps and parades and being taken away from community policing in rural and urban communities. They want to see that money put on the front line where it belongs.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mr McKay: Yes.

Ms Ruane: Does the Member agree with me that the money spent currently on Twaddell Avenue would be far better spent on welfare and protecting the most vulnerable?

Mr McKay: I absolutely agree.

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

Mr McKay: Some of the areas and interfaces that are affected as a result of parades are some of our most deprived societies. The proposer of the amendment —

Mr McCausland: Will the Member give way?

1.00 pm

Mr McKay: I will not take another intervention, sorry.

The proposer of the amendment referred to that as well. So, those who end up being involved at the behest of some politicians' words end up entering the criminal justice system and a vicious cycle of deprivation. We need to break that cycle. We need to ensure that there is agreement on parades, flags and the past — issues that dog our society every summer. People are sick and tired of it; the police are sick and tired of it; we are sick and tired of it. It is about time that unionist parties in the House showed some leadership, first and foremost for the benefit of their community.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next Member to speak, I remind Members of two things: first, the actual language and text of the motion; and, secondly, to be mindful that words spoken here resonate in our community. The mover of the motion was wise enough to remind us of that.

Mr Attwood: The SDLP will support the amendment and the motion. However, when you cut through all of this, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker — this may touch on the point that you have just made — in the times and weeks in which we are living and in the debate that we are having, does it not come down to whether people in every party are prepared to say today that, whatever may happen over the next two weeks, their parties will advise people, wherever they may be in Northern Ireland, to accept the decision of the Parades Commission?

I make that point for a number of reasons. First, more than any other party, last autumn the SDLP was publicly and privately profoundly critical of the Secretary of State's decision to stand down the previous Parades Commission, to reduce the membership of the current commission to five, to reduce the number of days that it works and so

on and so forth. That was because we saw, in doing that, the potential for bad outcomes. Despite our concerns about how the British Government, and the Secretary of State in particular, conducted themselves at that time, and whatever about the democratic right to peaceful protest, we are telling people, unambiguously, to accept the decisions of the Parades Commission. Save for the Alliance Party, we can say that with more integrity and authority than any other party in the Chamber.

Not very long ago, the party on the Benches to my right referred to the Parades Commission as “cheerleaders for sectarianism” and “obsolete”. Those words have been echoed by other parties in the Chamber too often and in too many disputes over too many years. In doing so, they undermined the rule of law. Whether you like it or love it, the Parades Commission, as an institution over all these years, is the expression of the rule of law in our society. So the question is this: is every party prepared to say, during and at the end of this debate that — whatever transpires over the next days; whatever our misgivings about the Secretary of State and her conduct; whatever our views might be about the Parades Commission and the democratic right to peaceful protest — we accept the determinations?

Mr Elliott: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will. We in the SDLP have found certain Parades Commission determinations over the years difficult, but we told people to accept them. That is the standard of this debate; that is the standard of these days; that is the standard that we have to live up to on 12 July.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he reflect back to — I need to check the date, but I think that it was 1998 — when their elected representatives in Portadown strongly opposed the decision to allow a parade down Garvaghy Road and, as far as I recall, protested very strongly, [*Interruption.*] maybe legally.

Secondly, will he reflect on supporting the petition of concern that stopped the Assembly bringing sanctions against Mr Gerry Kelly, who broke the law in north Belfast recently?

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

Mr Attwood: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. On the first point, I was with Bríd Rodgers on the Garvaghy Road when the decision was made at a political and policing level to send a parade down it. It was the first Parades Commission that then laid down the principles at the heart of disputes in this society. In the year that it was established, and in making the first decision about the Garvaghy Road, it said that, at the heart of disputes about parades, were relationships and that relationships needed to be resolved in order to resolve parading disputes. It said that to resolve relationship disputes, you needed sustained, direct and meaningful dialogue.

Mr Anderson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will in a second.

That is what the Parades Commission said. So, yes, there were times when even I was on the Garvaghy Road, objecting to what the police and the political authorities had decided, but the Parades Commission then laid down principles. If our society, our communities, our protesters

and our Orange lodges had lived up to the standards of sustained, direct and meaningful dialogue in every year since, we would be in a better place.

In the next number of days, the political parties will have to challenge themselves again to engage in direct, sustained and meaningful dialogue. We do not need the appearance of talks, which is what we have; we need direct, sustained and meaningful dialogue. In that space, we can create the paradigm shift that we need to resolve the multiple expressions of conflict and division that are all around us in the Chamber and in our society.

Mr McCausland: The motion refers to the need for “respect, restraint and tolerance”. Is it too much to ask, then, that nationalists and republicans show sufficient respect, restraint and tolerance to enable them to get to the point at which they do not oppose and object to three small lodges and one band returning home on the Twelfth night along the main Crumlin Road to their starting point at Ligoniel? Is it too much to ask? Is there sufficient respect, restraint and tolerance on that side of the Chamber to allow them to do that?

They may vote for a motion that speaks about those things, but the reality is that there is no respect or tolerance. Five minutes — 10 minutes at the most — is all that it would take for the brethren and the band to return home. However, 10 minutes of tolerance is too much for the SDLP and too much for Sinn Féin. They could not even find it in their hearts to show 10 minutes of tolerance.

My colleague William Humphrey referred to the speech by Gerry Adams in 1995, in which he pointed back to 1992 and said:

“Three years of work went into creating that situation and fair play to those people who put the work in.”

On the Ormeau Road and in Portadown, Fermanagh, Newry, Armagh, Bellaghy and Londonderry, the work was put in by Sinn Féin to create that situation. Daithí McKay took us on a journey back through the centuries. However, in the years since 1992, when the Sinn Féin machine went into operation on this, there has been a sustained attack by republicans on Orange culture and tradition, and not just on parades. Alongside and linked in some way to it, as pointed out earlier this year by the Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge, has been the burning down of Orange halls. In the 25 years before the Sinn Féin campaign, 39 Orange halls were burned down; in the 10 years after it began, 192 were burned down. Between 2010 and 2012, some 114 attacks on Orange halls were reported to the police. If burning down that number of Orange halls is not a cultural war — and I noted that Mr Lyttle said that he does not like the term “cultural war” — I do not know what it is.

As regards the parade at Ligoniel up the Crumlin Road, the first Orange lodge was formed there in 1865. They have been parading there for 150 years. That road is generally seen as a shared road. It has on it a car wash, a public library, an ambulance station, a health centre and shops. Those are, or should be, used by people from both traditions. Is it too much to ask that Orange brethren are allowed to return along that road?

What republicans want to do is sectarianise the road. They want to claim control of it. The reality, in the case of Ardoyne, is that it is people who are not in the Chamber,

the dissident republicans and GARC, who are the tail wagging the nationalist and republican dog. They are scared to face them down. Two years ago, GARC brought 1,000, 2,000 or whatever number of people — a howling mob — out onto the front of the Crumlin Road. That was a shambles that was authorised and approved by the Parades Commission. At the very point where Orange brethren should have been having a peaceful, dignified parade up the road, the road was occupied by a howling mob of people going down, throwing missiles and howling abuse. Is that the sort of society that we want?

I noted that Alex Atwood spoke about the principles of the Parades Commission. The principle of the Parades Commission is to reward violence. Dee Fennell said in the 'Belfast Telegraph' the other day:

"We told the Parades Commission that in the past we have shown our willingness and ability to use radical means to stop parades taking place. We said we would do so again ... We would have mobilised people and we would have blocked the road".

We have seen what "radical means" actually means on the streets of north Belfast. Talk about dialogue. There have been 10 years of dialogue.

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

Mr McCausland: What is there left for brethren there to talk about with republicans and nationalists? Are we down to discussing the colour of the laces on their shoes? That must be about the only thing that has not been talked about after 10 years of dialogue, and still there is no tolerance.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion and the amendment. The motion rightly calls for the principles of respect, restraint and tolerance to be upheld. The motion and the amendment highlight the responsibility that is placed on elected representatives. The Assembly should, and must, endorse these principles. Equality should not be simply a buzzword; it must be actioned.

My constituency in Derry has done that. Derry has very clearly sent out the message that we can negotiate, take risks and accommodate. Increasingly, in Belfast, the lack of engagement with residents' groups, the illegal protests, the cost of policing these protests set alongside —

Mr McCausland: Will the Member give way?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: No, I will not.

All that, set alongside the continuing work in Derry, means, as the deputy First Minister said recently, that it has become a tale of two cities.

If we are genuinely serious about inward investment, tourism, job creation and the ensuing economic growth, we also need to be serious about resolving the parades issue. We, in the House, must all ask ourselves this question: why is there not dialogue or negotiation with a view to finding agreement? Negotiation should not take away from anyone's culture. We can work collectively towards marches that are not contentious. Equally, residents who have problems or issues should be listened to.

We should effectively take on what are our responsibilities. After all, we are the elected representatives. We are the

people who are supposed to give leadership, come up with the initiatives, programmes or projects, and sit down in a calm, rational and mature way. We do not have to do it in this Chamber. We were able to do it in the city of Derry, in a process very much accommodated by the DUP's own Willie Hay.

1.15 pm

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: No, I will not.

It was a process very much facilitated through the Speaker of the House. It was greatly encouraged by, and did indeed greatly encourage, the process of negotiation and accommodation. It was a process that involved dialogue and risks, but it also involved accommodation based on the principles of respect and equality. The question before us is this: if that process can work in Derry, why can it not work in Belfast?

Mr Anderson: I must declare an interest: I am proud to say that I am a member of the Orange Institution, the Royal Black Institution and the Apprentice Boys. As a representative of Upper Bann, I come from a constituency that has experienced more than its fair share of difficulties over parades. Despite what some would have us believe, the parading issue in Portadown has not been resolved; far from it. We have just had another example of it in the last few days, and I will return to that in a few minutes.

The motion speaks of "respect, restraint and tolerance". I agree that those things would go a long way towards resolving the problems surrounding parades. For many decades, there was little or no difficulty over parades simply because there was that mutual respect, restraint and tolerance. For many years, traditional loyal order parades passed off in a peaceful manner, and I believe that the vast majority of the nationalist community is still quite prepared to let the Orangemen have their day.

The parading issue has been hijacked by republicans determined to create a range of contentious parades, conveniently selected to cause maximum tension and disruption. Sinn Féin and the SDLP lecture us about civil rights, equality and parity of esteem, but this is nothing but hypocrisy, for it is quite clear that those parties are determined to do all in their power to deny the Protestant/unionist community its civil and religious liberties. I go further: to me, Sinn Féin and the SDLP are guilty of bigotry and sectarianism. Loyal order parades are Protestant parades. Nationalists demand the rerouting of sectarian marches, but this really means Protestant parades and often Protestant Church parades. The real sectarianism is to be found among those who oppose these loyal order parades.

All that is well illustrated by the parade planned for last Saturday in Portadown. That one-off parade and service was simply to rededicate an arch in memory of a member of the Parkmount arch committee who sadly passed away a few months ago. It was along a short stretch of road known locally as Victoria Terrace, which is not part of the Garvaghy Road; neither is it part of the impasse over the Church parade returning from Drumcree Parish Church along Garvaghy Road. False assertions about the whole issue are part of the propaganda and war waged by Breandán Mac Cionnaith, who was once trained by Sinn Féin, and today is still supported by Dolores Kelly, who

is not in the Chamber, and John O'Dowd, who is in the Chamber.

Victoria Terrace contains 22 houses occupied by ethnic minorities, Protestants and those of mixed religion. I surveyed most of those homes last week and not one of the residents had any objection to the parade. In fact, they saw it as part of our culture and they said that they had enjoyed the recent junior Orange parade at the end of May. Some residents felt that they were being used by those opposed to the parade and no one had sought their views. Residents also felt that they were being placed in danger because of this particular campaign.

What we are now witnessing in Portadown is another illustration of republicans and nationalists seeking to further exclude and alienate Protestants and to take control of another area, which is adjacent to and within yards of a public park, which is undergoing a shared space programme to the tune of over £5 million of EU funding. That park has been a no-go area to the Protestant/unionist people for over 40 years, and now we have these same people trying to further extend the alienation of the Protestant/unionist people by denying them their right to walk along Victoria Terrace.

The hard-line attitude being taken by Mrs Kelly and Mr O'Dowd in supporting Breandán Mac Cionnaith sends out a very alarming signal to the Protestant/unionist people of Portadown and beyond. It is a case of "not a Protestant about the place" and marking out more territory.

I was part of a delegation led by David Simpson MP that recently met the Parades Commission about last week's parade. We presented new evidence and were left with a clear impression that it would consider the issue again. Of course, that was a forlorn hope.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Anderson: OK.

Mr Givan: Having met the Parades Commission, does the Member agree that, given the way it handled that decision by doing that U-turn, it has, some would say, lost any credibility that it ever had, if it had credibility in the first place to lose?

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

Mr Anderson: I certainly agree with my colleague. We put forward an argument on that occasion and thought that the issues were being addressed. We thought that we had put forward a very robust argument as to why this should be overturned, but the decision that was originally taken and then overturned shows that the Parades Commission was prepared to listen to untruths, because that is what they were. As I have already said, the Parades Commission was told untruths about the people along Victoria Terrace.

There are those on Garvaghy Road who state that the parading issue in Portadown is a dead duck. Let me assure those people that it is still very much a live issue and will continue to be so until nationalists and republicans display respect, restraint and tolerance towards their Protestant and unionist fellow citizens. That way, Portadown and other areas can move forward with genuine hope.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. It is very regrettable that we are even here in

the Chamber this afternoon discussing this matter. As both my colleagues have said, our party will support the motion and the amendment, and why would we not? When you consider what the motion suggests and says and what the amendment calls on all of us to do, why would we not subscribe to all of that? Quite clearly, we are more than happy to support the motion and the amendment.

The remarks from Tom Elliott, who proposed and spoke to the motion, really added nothing to the discussion. With all due respect to Tom, it added nothing to the debate. It gave us no new information and nothing additional to consider; it merely rehearsed a number of the arguments that we hear frequently. I do not believe that the vast majority of the public out there, if they tune into this debate this afternoon, would, first of all, be at all surprised. I think that they are likely to be disappointed and more likely to be bemused that we are having this discussion in the Chamber today despite the fact that talks are starting tomorrow. So, within 24 hours, all the parties at senior levels will have dedicated discussions/negotiations around this and other very important matters that are left over from the Haass discussions. I think that most people will be scratching their heads and wondering, since we are going into negotiations, why we are having this debate in the Chamber today at all. I would have liked Members either not to have moved the debate this afternoon at all, which I think would have been the sensible thing to do, or, in the absence of that, if we are to have a discussion, I would have liked us at least to address how we might conduct ourselves in the negotiations that are starting tomorrow.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

It is very late in the day. This is already 1 July, and the Haass talks ended six months ago. Notwithstanding that, they recommence tomorrow, and we have had a period of party leaders' discussions on and off for the past couple of months. Tomorrow commences a set of negotiations, and none of us knows where they will go. Our party is very committed to making sure that they are successful and that we conclude the business laid out by the Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan final paper because, quite clearly, the way to resolve these issues is through dialogue, respect and, unfortunately, regulation and enforcement, if that has to be the end result. We have many examples — Members have addressed this already in the debate — of where parades have been more successfully conducted because there has been some local dialogue. We have heard how the situation in Derry was addressed. We have heard what happened in Crumlin and other places. Even in my city, Belfast, there have been some examples of, where there have been discussions, some understanding being reached locally to minimise a lot of the problems. However, we still have a small number —

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr Maskey: Yes.

Mr Campbell: The Member referred to a number of locations where dialogue has occurred but he did not mention Portadown. Portadown Members are here on all sides, but my understanding is that repeated attempts have been made to get dialogue in Portadown, but that those who say they represent people on the Garvaghy Road will not have that dialogue.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Maskey: Thank you, a Cheann Comhairle. The fact is that, when people want dialogue, it is like everything else: if people are invited in to dialogue, they have to have an understanding that it will be meaningful and respectful. It is up to people to decide — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Allow the Member to continue. The Member has the Floor.

Mr Maskey: I am doing my level best to be very patient and generous. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Maskey: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am trying not to rile Members opposite because I know that, getting into this period of the year, it is quite difficult for them to keep settled. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member has the Floor.

Mr Maskey: That is my direct personal experience of growing up in the city of Belfast, which I will never leave, by the way, because I love my city. I do not like aspects of it, but that is par for the course.

I am determined to send the message that, tomorrow, an opportunity will commence for all parties to enter negotiations with an absolute commitment to resolve the problems. That is what we need to do. That is what people out there want to hear. They do not want to hear a meaningless debate in the Chamber that only facilitates some people rehearsing the arguments.

Daithí McKay and other Members referred to other situations. Ardoyne is not just a current problem. Many would cite Ardoyne, 1969, as a milestone in this phase of the conflict. But Portadown, 150 years ago, was a problem. I am not even going to say where the problem emanated from, but the problem was there. Parades in that part of the world were universally banned for quite some time because of difficulties. For me, the legacy of what we have learned over the years has to be that, where people are committed to respectful dialogue and serious engagement, we can get a positive outcome for those who want to parade or those who feel offended by certain aspects of some parades. Where we have tolerance, respect and a dignified celebration of our culture, rather than people going to the toilet outside chapel gates —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Maskey: — we can get a resolution that meets everybody's needs in a respectful manner. Tomorrow, the clock starts ticking for all the parties to do that.

Mr Eastwood: It is very difficult, as has already been said, to play any part in the debate and, at the same time, try to keep tensions reduced and things calm. Everybody has their own perspective on the issue. There is not just one issue but a number of issues, across the North. People have different feelings about all those issues and difficulties. I will do my best to try to heed Mr Elliott's advice. Whatever the content of his speech, his plea for calmness and tolerance is the right one.

We need to acknowledge, as the Principal Deputy Speaker said, that what happens in here is heard out there and that we are in a very difficult time. Every year, we come to this time of year, and, unfortunately, it is difficult. Whatever people say, a lot of the issues that have already been

talked about have not just arrived in anybody's in tray; they have been there for a long time. Parading is a historic issue in Ireland and one that we have never really got to grips with. Luckily, parades can pass off peacefully in many areas, but there are many reasons why they do not in other areas and why people feel that parades should not go through particular areas. The bottom line in all this is that, whatever we come up with in these talks, we have a process for dealing with parades right now. I cannot honestly see a very different process coming out of any negotiation.

1.30 pm

The process at the moment is that we have an independent commission that decides on controversial parades. That is as good as we are going to get. We go to negotiations, as we do in all negotiations, with a will to try to solve things, and I hope that everybody else does the same. However, we need some sort of independent arbiter to decide on these issues. If people cannot decide on them themselves through negotiation, respect and long, hard slog, somebody will have to make the call. Many times, I will not like the call and, many times, other people will not like it either, but we have to be prepared, as Mr Attwood said, to live with those decisions. It does not mean that we cannot protest them, but it means that we have to do so in a peaceful, dignified and respectful way. That goes for everybody, whatever the decision may be.

Members talked about the PSNI. Over the last 18 months to two years, we have put members of the PSNI in the firing line from people from different sections of our community, and that is not good enough. We have all, thankfully, signed up to the justice system, to policing and to the rule of law, and we need to do everything that we can to protect those PSNI officers whom we put in harm's way but also to protect the communities that have to suffer this, year in, year out.

Derry was mentioned. I am not going to stand here and lecture anybody, because Derry is not Ardoyne, Portadown or a whole lot of other places. However, the principle that underpins what has happened in Derry — you know it very well, Mr Speaker — is one of constant conversation, where people will get round the table when difficult issues are on the horizon and talk things through. That is not always easy; we do not always come to it

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. You are quite right; I do not know the situation in Londonderry, but, clearly, both sides in Londonderry were willing to reach an accommodation and to show tolerance and respect. Given what other unionist representatives and I were faced with when we went to the Parades Commission, if you are confronted with a situation where it is said that there is absolute rejection of a parade from all nationalist parties — including yours — what exactly do people who want to parade do in that context?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Eastwood: Sometimes, we are all very good at talking about our rights, but with rights come responsibilities. Sometimes, you have to step back and say, "I do not want to exercise that right today", because you think that it will cause mayhem on the streets of Belfast, Portadown, Derry or somewhere else. We all have responsibilities to ensure that everything that we do is done in a respectful way

and in a way that understands that we have to appreciate everybody else's opinion. I encourage everybody in north Belfast and Portadown to get round the table to try to resolve these issues. My party will not be found wanting when it comes to that; it never has been before.

Someone on the other side of the Chamber said that we were scared to face dissidents down. I can tell you that we are not afraid to face dissidents down; we face them down every day. I just hope that the same spirit of facing down the dissidents in our community and those who are determined to cause mayhem in the streets of Belfast or anywhere else is carried through by Members on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr Allister: Parading is, above all, an expression of culture and, particularly in our historic situation, that is how it has evolved. Of course it is right that for centuries, perhaps, there have been instances of conflict in that regard. However, it is indisputably clear that, in recent times, there has been an accentuation of the difficulties over parades, not by accident but by design. That design has already been identified in this debate by the quoting of the remarks of Gerry Adams in the mid-90s, when he pointed out that what was now happening with parades, stopping and protesting about parades, was, indeed, no accident but was the design of Sinn Féin.

That is what we have seen ever since.

This year, the focus is, of course, on Ardoyne. That is because it epitomises much of the issue at the heart of this. If parading is an expression of culture, it comes down to a question of the capacity for toleration of others not of that culture to abide and permit the expression of pursuit of that culture. The very fact that Sinn Féin had a hand in orchestrating opposition to that indicates where it is coming from. That is why unionists, and I include myself, see all of that as part of that orchestrated cultural war in which Sinn Féin is engaged. You can reduce that to a number of quite compelling factors. One is that Sinn Féin is a party that demands shared government but is not prepared to share the public road. It has the audacity to say, "We demand, as of right, to share in government, but we will not tolerate, permit or allow the sharing of public space." That attitude persists. Maybe the lesson should be learned that it is a quid pro quo in some respects.

It was pointed out that what is asked for at Ardoyne is for public space to be processed for a few minutes. Those who say no demonstrate their deep belligerence and bigotry in so doing. Then, of course, they are helped on by the pernicious, perverse Parades Commission. I say "perverse" because — take the Ardoyne decision — it decides, quite rightly, that it is appropriate for the Orangemen to leave their hall, but, perversely, that they cannot return. Why is that being said by the residents of the area, who put themselves in the way of being annoyed by that parade? It is another way of their saying to the Orangemen that, "There is no home for you here. You are not coming home here. This is not your area. This is our exclusive, 'Ourselves Alone' area." That is why they argue that, "You can leave it in the morning, but you shall never return to it because it is not your home."

That is the message that Sinn Féin and the SDLP, by their belligerence, convey to those of the Protestant and unionist tradition about what should be that shared space up the Crumlin Road. We had some sanctimonious

lectures from Mr Maskey about all of those things. They should look in the mirror and see why it is that they are so belligerent and bigoted in their inability to show the modicum of tolerance required for a resolution to the situation.

Mr Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Allister: They have been told, "No talk, no walk".

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Allister: Maybe, if there is no walk, there should be no talk.

Mr Lyttle: Some Members have questioned the purpose of the debate. I think that the opportunity to endorse the important principles of respect, restraint, tolerance and upholding the rule of law is an important one. I thank the Members who took that opportunity and responded in the spirit of the motion. I regret that some used the type of inflammatory language that does not help these extremely sensitive situations.

Tom Elliott rightly condemned extreme violent intolerance from some people who call themselves republicans, and I agree with that condemnation.

William Humphrey said that, for republicans in Ardoyne, there is no shared future. Whilst today's debate was about principles rather than individual areas or decisions, I regret that the challenge was not taken up by some of the Members and parties that it was aimed at to try to explain what their vision of a shared future actually is. I agree with Mr Humphrey about comments from Gerry Kelly like:

"They can stand there all they like."

That is some of the unhelpful, inflammatory language that I referred to earlier. To say that there is absolutely no rationale for loyal order parades in that area challenges some of the principles set out in *Together: Building a United Community*, including that all public space should be shared space. I think that there are challenges for all Members of the House to respond to some of those types of comments.

We have to get away from labelling areas as nationalist or unionist. That flies in the face of the OFMDFM Executive target of building one united community in this region, where all public space is shared space. I think that Members, especially those in the DUP and Sinn Féin, which hold the positions of First Minister and deputy First Minister, should respond to the contradiction that lies within that.

William Humphrey asked me what he should say to young people in his area about violence. I encourage him to tell them that violence has done absolutely nothing for this community, other than achieve criminal records, injury and loss, destroy community cohesion and prevent community development across our community. To engage in violence also does a great disservice to the many responsible people involved in the organisations that he said he represents and engages with. Peaceful, lawful and democratic action is key to responding to these issues, and I am willing to represent and meet anybody who has legitimate concerns within that context.

Alex Attwood rightly said that a core concept that must come out of today is that, regardless of disagreements, we must accept the determination of the Parades Commission

as the rule of law. He also helpfully said that, whilst rights and responsibility are important, relationships are key, and I agree with that. If Mr Attwood were in the Chamber, I would ask him — I am sure that he can respond to this on another occasion — whether he therefore agrees that to deal with parades in isolation will not get the job done and that, although we can change the architecture for parading, we must have robust good relations strategies in place that encourage equality, good relations and mutual respect across our community.

Nelson McCausland —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: Yes, briefly.

Mr A Maginness: On the contentious parade in Ardoyne, does the Member agree that it is vital that local resolution not only be tried but be successful to resolve that continuing situation?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Lyttle: I wholeheartedly agree. Strong leadership from the Assembly and from elected representatives is obviously key, but, ultimately, local dialogue has to take place to reach a resolution to what is now an extremely entrenched issue, unfortunately.

We again had accusations of a “cultural war”, which I regard as an astoundingly dangerous and unhelpful phrase. Nelson McCausland and Jim Allister both mentioned that. Burning down Orange halls, attacking Catholic churches and other sectarian crimes are heinous, counterproductive and violent sectarianism, but to talk of wars against entire cultures is astoundingly dangerous, and, to be frank, to associate the Alliance Party with that at times is an absolute disgrace. We need to get away from that type of language and get back to building the united community that we want to see.

Maeve McLaughlin said that this was an opportunity for the Assembly to endorse the principles set out by the motion, and I wholeheartedly agree with that.

Paul Givan again questioned the credibility of the Parades Commission. This is a Member who, during an OFMDFM Committee meeting, called the Parades Commission “anti-Protestant” and was suitably rebutted by a parades commissioner whose family holds Orange Order membership. So the credibility of that accusation towards the Parades Commission is wholly unfounded, and it is unhelpful in the spirit of today’s debate.

1.45 pm

In conclusion, an increasing number of people in our community are fed up with our inability to address these types of issues and move on from them. Derry/Londonderry has shown leadership on these issues, and, indeed, people want to hear about other issues, such as the increasing number of jobs and apprenticeships that are being created. People want to hear about and focus on those issues. So I hope that is the message that we send from this Chamber today.

Mr Speaker: I call Michael Copeland to wind on the motion. The Member has 10 minutes.

Mr Copeland: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I may not even need the 10 minutes on this occasion, which, I am

sure, will be very welcome. This portion of a debate is traditionally called “winding up”, and I would say that there have been a good deal of useful contributions from pretty much all quarters, and I found something of merit in some of the things that were said by most people. I did note a degree of winding up, which could be expected in a debate of this nature, even when it is not the winder-up who is winding up.

The truth is, if we aspire to live in a democracy, incumbent on that is the notion that you will hear things that you do not like. Incumbent on that notion is the reality that you will see things that you do not like, and the truth is, when you take it upon yourself to restrict someone else’s freedom to say things and do things, you actually challenge your rights in that society.

Parading, walking and demonstrating were the terms that I always heard used in connection with Orange, Black and Apprentice Boys’ parades in the past. Marching — and I know something about marching, having once been a soldier — does not equate to a lot of what goes on at Orange, Black and Apprentice Boys’ demonstrations. They are walks and parades, and they were not designed to give offence, following the routes that they traditionally followed. Then, some years ago, for whatever reason, there was talk of marching, which gave, in my view, a militaristic and aggressive resonance to the parades that was not there originally.

Tolerance, respect and restraint should not only be confined to contested parades. Those values should be present in every relationship that every citizen has with every other citizen in this country. We can talk in this place until we are blue in the face, and the truth is that on a particular night, at an interface or at a protest or demonstration, our society will be reduced to the lowest common denominator by he who throws the first stone.

There is much myth about the content, even of the music, which, on occasions, is contested. I well remember Michael Fisher of RTÉ pursuing me up Templemore Avenue, wanting to know why one of the better-known flute bands in east Belfast had just passed by playing ‘The Patriot Game’, which is a well-known tune in Irish nationalism and, indeed, republicanism. The truth is that the band was not playing ‘The Patriot Game’; it was playing a tune called ‘Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!’, which grew from the American civil war, came to Ireland with the Fenian movement and became ‘The Patriot Game’. It then came north of the border with the words, “No Priest, Pope or Holy Water”, set to the same piece of music. The same piece of music.

The people for whom I feel most sorry are those who have been made to feel that their sense of being is in some way unfit to be seen by their neighbours. The people who feel that the colours that they wear render them a lesser human being and that their expression of who they are should be subject to regulation by a body such as the Parades Commission. I am sure that body is well intentioned, but some of the decisions that it has made down the years have, on occasion, made things worse because, once you surrender the principle of citizenship in a democracy, all else — all else — comes onto the table.

God knows, the United States is an example of many good things, but it is also an example of many bad things. Some years ago, protected by the constitution of the United

States, an awful grouping of people — neo-fascist white supremacists — paraded through the Jewish district of one of the major cities, the notion being that if the constitution protected scum like them, it protected everyone. We need to create the notion that a person's liberties and rights are not restricted by law, but defended by law. That, at some stage, I am sure, will give a very major difficulty when the coin flips on to its other side.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Copeland: Chris, not today. There is an angst felt by members of loyalist flute bands. They are viewed in disparaging terms by many, yet they are extremely democratic organisations. They raise their own money. Their leadership is only as good as the first vote of no confidence. They teach young people music, and they take them off the streets, but they are castigated because of initials on a drum or because of a symbolism on a uniform. Then they see those who castigate them for those things perambulating around with children armed with AK47 rifles, and they see sporting clubs being named after people who would be adjudicated by them as being dead terrorists. The thing does not seem fair. It may well be — I may be stupid — but it does not seem fair.

It is that growing sense of resentment and feeling of being under pressure, coupled with economic decline and the removal of the great things that were once there when people were proud to go to work and make things and stamp "Made in Belfast" or "Made in Northern Ireland" on them. They now find that education prepares them for a life of being dependent on others.

Culture is a very valued thing. Aberrations of culture can be dangerous. This is the ninety-eighth anniversary, I think, of the commencement of the Somme offensive. It is coming close to 2:00 pm here. In our time, it began at 7:00 am. There are famous pictures of soldiers of Irish, Catholic, Ulster and Protestant heritage performing deeds that I can only stand in awe of. Tonight, in my constituency, there will be one of the oldest Somme anniversary parades. It will be accompanied by tension and by screens to separate the citizens of the Short Strand from the citizens of the Albertbridge Road, for their mutual safety. There will be young people there with Union flags tied round their waists — they are young. There will be alcohol consumed on the streets from blue bags. All the ingredients are there in preparation for the first stone. They do it because they do not know what it is about. They do not know the magnitude of what took place over 100 years ago in France, yet an aberration of history drives them to express themselves in ways that will cause them no good. The answer to this lies not in those who wish to parade, but with those who wish to restrict the basic freedoms that should be available in every democracy.

The amendment includes the word "law". I thought that the aspiration inculcated in the initial motion made respect for law quite clear. I served the law. Sixty three thousand people served the law with me, and many hundreds of them were killed. To this day, many thousands are affected by the injuries that they received, and many thousands more are affected by the mental trauma of what they witnessed.

My wife was 18 years of age when a bullet passed through the constable beside her on the Springfield Road before hitting her. No one can tell me about the price of defending

law. I have tried to explain my thoughts to those in the Chamber as best I can. I hope that, as this place settles down and begins to discharge its obligation towards people to defend them from the real ravages of poverty, unemployment and educational underachievement, which affect all our people, regardless of race, religion, colour, creed or gender, the sacrifice on the Somme may well have been worth something.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes, in the absence of a formal agreement on a new way forward for contested parades and associated protests, that it is essential that everyone involved, whether participants, spectators or protestors, demonstrate respect, restraint and tolerance for those of differing opinions; and calls on all organisations and parties involved, particularly elected representatives, to demonstrate unambiguous adherence to the rule of law.

Mr Speaker: As we move to Question Time, I propose, 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 1.55 pm.

On resuming —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, we have to wait for the Health Minister. That disadvantages Members who are in the House for Question Time.

Question No 3 has been withdrawn.

GP Out-of-hours Framework

Mr Boylan: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I would like to take the opportunity to apologise to you for missing a recent Question Time.

1. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the GP out-of-hours framework. (AQO 6476/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I approved the GP out-of-hours framework in January 2014. A project board chaired by the Regional Health and Social Care Board is in place to take the work forward. Implementation of the GP out-of-hours framework is necessarily dependent on alignment with a number of health and social care projects, including the 111 telephone number and the development of a directory of service and web portal. It is therefore not possible at this stage to give a definitive timetable for the business case process and the overall implementation of the framework.

Mr Boylan: With the Minister being late, I thought that this was out-of-hours Question Time. Can the Minister clarify that GP out-of-hours activity has increased by 18% whilst activity through emergency departments has decreased by 2%?

Mr Poots: GP out-of-hours centres are busy places. In 2012-13, providers dealt with 606,000 patients. Of those, 220,000 received telephone advice; 174,000 visited an out-of-hours centre for treatment; and 31,000 received home visits. There is a considerable amount of work going on, and we understand that GPs who work in out-of-hours services feel considerable pressure in the service that they provide. It is a challenging environment for them.

Mr G Robinson: What is the Minister's assessment of the out-of-hours service in the Limavady area? My understanding is that the out-of-hours doctors are being diverted to Altnagelvin Hospital several nights a week.

Mr Poots: I suspect that the Member could better tell me what the service is like in the Limavady area. Nonetheless, there have been occasions when out-of-hours centres have been unable to provide face-to-face consultations due to trusts being unable to secure full medical cover. Patients requiring face-to-face consultations were directed to other out-of-hours centres in the trust area, and it should be emphasised that telephone advice and home visits were provided as normal.

The issue is not unique to the Western Trust area. Over the past five years, there has been an 18% increase in demand for GP out-of-hours services, which is particularly high during bank holidays and at weekends. That places significant pressure on the system. The board, as commissioner of the service, is acutely aware of the ongoing challenges faced by trusts, including difficulties in recruiting and retaining GPs and other clinical staff, and is working with all providers, including Western Urgent Care, to address them. Measures include the new way of working with GPs and out-of-hours staff and the use of skill mix. The board remains focused on providing safe and effective GP out-of-hours services while working with staff, the public and stakeholders to develop and shape the future provision of out-of-hours services. I encourage the Member to continue discussions with senior trust representatives to secure the service that the people of Limavady expect.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his answers thus far. Minister, what is your assessment of the recent report citing the concerns of out-of-hours GPs in the Southern Trust area?

Mr Poots: We requested that report, and it is important that we did so that we could establish the level of job satisfaction and where the concerns and problems are. The report gives us the ability to address those issues. It was a tad unfortunate that some parts of the report were leaked in a way that sought to undermine the service. It is important that we work closely with the providers — the people on the front line — to ensure that it is a service that they want to be involved in, one that they are delivering to the best of their ability and one of which the general public are the beneficiaries.

Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions

2. **Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what savings he plans to make in order to accommodate his Department's share of the cuts in the block grant, which will result from the failure to implement welfare reform. (AQO 6477/11-15)

Mr Poots: As I have previously outlined to the House, my Department faces a considerable challenge in 2014-15, with some £160 million of additional resources estimated to be required in order to balance the books. The deficit remains despite my commitment to deliver some £170 million of savings. I have therefore requested further resources in the June monitoring round. If they are not forthcoming, the Executive will, effectively, be agreeing to a number of serious implications, such as a pay constraint on hard-working staff, a reduction in the range or standard of services offered, the introduction of additional charges or co-payments for services and longer waiting times for scheduled care.

Let me be clear: I have not taken and will not take actions by myself that impact on front line care for patients and clients. Equally, I will not plan or make cuts in vital health and social care services to pay for the current refusal of some Members to take the necessary decisions on welfare reform. Doing nothing on welfare reform is not an option for the Executive. The failure to agree welfare reform is unforgivable, as the financial penalties being imposed by the Treasury are surely better directed at meeting the real

and pressing health and social care needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr Wells: The Minister paints quite a bleak picture for the present financial year. If welfare reform is not settled and settled soon, what are the implications for the Department's future budgets of having to continue to pay penalties to Westminster because of our inability to deal with the issue?

Mr Poots: The pressures will increase. Every Department will feel the pinch, and the Department of Health, as the largest recipient of funding, will feel the pinch more than anyone else. The things that we have put in bids for — Members will, rightly, challenge me on them — include £13 million for safety and quality of services, and we will see whether we get that. People are always shouting about emergency departments: we have put in a bid for £22 million for unscheduled care. If some people think that that is better spent on welfare, that is a matter for them. We have also bid for £6.2 million for family health services; £10.5 million for public health; £9 million for children's services, protecting our youngest and most vulnerable; £8.5 million for supported home, largely domiciliary care for vulnerable elderly people; £20 million for specialist services; £0.5 million for the historical institutional abuse inquiry; £10 million for clinical negligence; £30 million for elective care, dealing with hip replacements, knee replacements and all of that; £21.3 million for TYC transitional funding; and £9 million for mental health and learning disability. Perhaps other Members would like to tell me which bids I should not make.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I do not want to steal Mr Beggs's thunder by asking about budgets and the previous Health Minister, but would the Minister be better served by not wasting money on following his own ideological campaigns against delivering equality for people, as opposed to blaming every mess that he has overseen in the health service since taking office three years ago on welfare reform and fines that have not even started to be implemented by the Executive?

Mr Poots: I really despair at the lack of knowledge demonstrated by the Member who has just spoken. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Allow the Minister to answer.

Mr Poots: Members close their eyes to the fact. If you take a decision, that is fine, but stand by your decision. Come to the House and say, "We believe that we are better spending that money on welfare than on health". Stand up and say it, and do not be such a coward. People need to be very clear: money is being taken from the Northern Ireland budgets. The consequence of that money being taken from the Northern Ireland Budget is impacting on Health, Education and Justice, and the Members opposite are the people who are doing it. Let us stand up and be counted. If you are going to do it, tell the public why you are doing it and quit hiding behind the point that the money is not really being taken when we all know that it is.

Mr Beggs: The Minister has indicated that he has bid for £160 million in the June monitoring round, but such a deficit to maintain existing services did not suddenly develop. Will he confirm the level of debt that existed in our health service in the last financial year, despite the £100 million in-year monitoring round allocation? Will he

also confirm that that exists despite or even aside from the welfare reform issue?

Mr Poots: Over the last three years, we have received an increase of around 2% each year, and I suppose that demand has increased by around 6% each year. We have been able to absorb £500 million of savings whilst increasing the number of nurses, doctors and allied health professionals. We have been able to reduce waiting times for most of the scheduled care and 12-hour waits in our emergency departments. Against the backdrop of the budget that we have been given, we have been able to make savings and deliver a better service.

In all those things, we had our cycle, and we have come to the end of that. Another year has been added on, and, at this time, there is a £160 million gap. We are making £170 million of savings, but there is a further £160 million of a gap that I cannot deliver on. That is why I have come to the House over the past number of months and consistently told it that that gap exists. It remains to be seen whether we can drive another £20 million or £30 million out of it, but the reality is that the figure will not move fundamentally. I will not find £160 million of further savings without hugely negative impacts on the health service, and that is a message that needs to be got out.

If people think that they are better spending that money on welfare, that is fine; get out there and tell the public that you would rather spend the money on welfare than on health and that, consequently, people will wait longer for operations, we will not be able to deliver to the same standards of safety and we will not be able to make the changes in unscheduled care that everybody has been demanding. If you want to say that, get out there and tell the public that. I am telling the public that I want to improve the health service and I want to deliver, but, if you are going to cash-strap me in key areas, that will make it extremely difficult to carry out that delivery.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. Would his arguments not have greater weight and credibility, not just in the House but in the wider public mind, if he was able to demonstrate some measurability in his Transforming Your Care plan against the 99 targets that he has set in place? People would understand not just that he needs the money but what the money is being spent on. Would that not achieve a greater understanding in the public mind and maybe an understanding of his position?

Mr Poots: I do not think that I have any problem explaining the position to the public. I also do not think that I can add much weight to the argument. The trusts identified a problem and brought it to the Department. That problem was identified around the middle of last year, and consequently we overran our budget by £15 million last year. We were not able to live within our means, even last year, as a consequence of rising demand, and we anticipate that that demand will continue to increase because of the demography of our population. Mr McKinney may not have realised that our population has been getting older over the last number of years, and we have far more frail elderly people to deal with. We also have far more issues out there with childcare services and ensuring that we protect vulnerable children, particularly on the back of the BBC revelations.

In all of that, we have a pressing demand. Mr McKinney may want to ignore the pressing demand and say, "Oh

yes, we support the current welfare procedures. We don't mind that someone gets £26,000 on benefits, which is the equivalent of £35,000 before tax — that cap should not be there — or that the low-paid workers in the health service, who are maybe earning half of that, are not getting a pay rise”.

That is OK for the SDLP and Sinn Féin. It is not OK. It is not right. We should not be doing it, and it is time that the SDLP and Sinn Féin came into the real world, came into government and did things right and ensured that we deliver for the public, instead of delivering to agendas.

2.15 pm

Armed Forces: Healthcare Providers

4. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to recognise the people who provide healthcare to the armed forces. (AQO 6479/11-15)

Mr Poots: On Monday 16 June, I was delighted to launch in Northern Ireland the annual Military and Civilian Health Partnership Awards for 2014. These prestigious awards aim to promote and publicly recognise the efforts of health professionals in providing care to service personnel, their families and veterans throughout the United Kingdom.

This is an opportunity for us to celebrate their work, which often goes unseen but is vital to ensuring that the armed forces community receives the care and support that it deserves. Last year, we had two finalists from Northern Ireland, 204 Field Hospital and 253 Medical Regiment, who were quite rightly recognised for their exceptional work. I am sure that they are not alone, and I encourage nominations from Northern Ireland to ensure that the skill, dedication and commitment of those who work in this field is recognised.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. It is appropriate, especially today on this 1 July, that we pay tribute to those who gave their lives for our freedom and, indeed, those who have served this nation well over the past years, and respect them and the fact that many of them will have physical and health needs. Minister, will you comment on how the individual serviceman or servicewoman might access the health provision?

Mr Poots: It is very important that we do recognise that and that we also recognise that the army is moving to be more reliant on reserves and less reliant on regular soldiers and that Northern Ireland, in spite of its make-up, is contributing twice as many reserve soldiers to the army per head of population than any other part of the United Kingdom. That is a very clear recognition of the support that there is for the British Army here in Northern Ireland and the work that it is doing.

My Department has taken a number of actions to support access to healthcare services by the armed forces, such as the armed forces liaison forum. Engagement in mental health services and prosthetics is working well, and I recognise that there will be new challenges for us to address. Through the armed forces liaison forum, we are alerted to innovations elsewhere that could be of use here, and my Department is currently working with the Royal College of General Practitioners to obtain access to the e-learning package for military personnel,

which is available to GPs in England, to assist in dealing with former military personnel who may access primary medical services from their local GP practice.

Accident Prevention Initiatives

5. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what initiatives his Department is taking to reduce the number of accidents in the home. (AQO 6480/11-15)

Mr Poots: On 17 June 2014, my Department launched a draft 10-year home accident prevention strategy for consultation. I expect to publish the final strategy by the end of the year. My Department also provides core funding for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) in Northern Ireland. In addition, the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, is leading a UK group to look at how we can prevent further tragic deaths in children and injuries caused by blind cord strangulation. Finally, my Department continues to work with the Health and Safety Executive to promote awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. DHSSPS has produced a public information leaflet entitled 'Carbon monoxide: Are you at risk?' This is available online.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he advise the House of any further initiatives that his Department is taking forward in this regard?

Mr Poots: As I indicated, Dr McBride is working with ROSPA, UK health agencies and the British Blind and Shutter Association on that particular issue. Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has been working in partnership with the PSNI and a broad range of public, private, voluntary and community-based organisations on Northern Ireland's first interactive learning education centre, which is called RADAR, standing for risk avoidance danger awareness resource. When opened, the centre will provide a safety-focused learning experience for children and young people throughout Northern Ireland. Children and young people who visit the centre will develop their own personalised radar, and these radars will help them to manage everyday risk and guide them in making better decisions.

It may surprise people that, in Northern Ireland, when I left the DOE we were looking at around 50 people being killed on our roads — although that has gone up during the last couple of years — but twice as many are being killed in the home. There are two deaths a week in the home, similar to what we are finding with drug abuse. We need to be aware that our homes can be dangerous places for many people and that we need to take steps to make them safer. The more we get that message out, the better it will be for everyone.

Mrs McKevitt: I want to pick up on the Minister's point that twice as many people die as a result of accidents in the home than in the like of driving a car or on a farm, even. Given that there has been a hard-hitting advertising campaign on TV delivering that message, has the Minister any plans to initiate a similar campaign that would help to raise awareness of accidents in the home?

Mr Poots: Obviously, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has taken over the issue of advertising, and that is now dealt with at the centre, as opposed to individual Departments. DOE made the case that it should be able to maintain the same level of funding.

I made the argument that we should actually focus on some other things, including home safety.

We have our home accident prevention strategy that was launched for consultation on 17 June, which is aimed at the entire population of Northern Ireland but focuses on the most vulnerable groups in our society — the under-fives, the over-65s and the most socially deprived. The vision of the strategy is that the population of Northern Ireland will have the best chance of living safely in the home environment. The partners in the strategy will seek to deliver the vision and aims through the following objectives: to empower people to better understand the risks and make safe choices to ensure a safe home with negligible risk of unintentional injury; to promote a safer home environment; to promote and facilitate effective training, skills and knowledge in home accident prevention across all relevant organisations and groups; and to improve the evidence base.

In all of that, we will be making bids to carry out advertising as appropriate and get the key messages out there as the more simple steps that people can take to ensure that their home is a safer place.

Early Intervention Transformation Programme

6. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the early intervention transformation programme. (AQO 6481/11-15)

Mr Poots: The early intervention transformation programme (EITP) is one of three strands being developed under the Delivering Social Change framework. The EITP, which will be launched formally in the near future, seeks to transform mainstream children's services through embedding early intervention approaches in order to deliver sustained improvements in outcomes for children that continue beyond the lifespan of the programme. With contributions from five Departments, including my own, Justice, Education, Employment and Learning, and Social Development, the EITP represents a commitment across Government to work together to break the intergenerational cycle of poor outcomes that some children and families experience throughout Northern Ireland. The programme is being led by my Department. A programme manager is now in place, and the preparatory work to identify the first wave of projects that we intend to take forward under this initiative is under way.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will the fund be targeted at areas of rural deprivation and high social need?

Mr Poots: The fund is aimed at areas of high social need. A course of work has been done across the trusts to ensure that we set up the hubs in the appropriate places. We all need to recognise that many children have poor outcomes because they do not get the right start in life and, very often, parents lack the skills to give those children the right start in life. The more support that we can provide to those parents and the more that we sustain and help them and help those children in those early years, whether it be through nurturing, nutrition, education — all of those things — the more substantial difference we will make in the very earliest years for children to progress and do well. If they start school behind the rest, they tend to fall further behind. Poor educational outcomes very

often deliver poor health outcomes and poor employment outcomes and, therefore, a much higher level of people will end up in the justice system. We want to challenge and change all of those things.

Mr Weir: It is important for these sorts of programmes to get buy-in from local people. What community engagement has taken place about the programme?

Mr Poots: Considerable engagement is under way, including via the five children's outcomes groups and locality planning groups to help shape the development of the IT project proposals. Outcomes groups comprise the local community, voluntary and statutory sectors, and organisations involved in delivering services to children, young people and families. We are slightly behind in establishing the project in north and west Belfast, largely because the engagement there has not been as good as we would have liked. We will catch up and deliver on that programme, but we are absolutely certain that we need the buy-in of the community sector. Therefore, we will want to ensure that it is on board before we move ahead.

Mr Dallat: I fully support what the Minister has said. However, does he agree with me that, in a modern western European society, the gap between the health and education of the haves and the have-nots is embarrassingly wide? Will he continue to strive for additional resources to engage with local communities and ensure that this programme really impacts on the people who need it most?

Mr Poots: I agree. That is why we need to look at the problem and the issue. I believe that the main problem is that where people have poor educational outcomes, they have poor health outcomes. So, they do not get the right start in life, they do not get the opportunities at school and they do not get delivery on health and, indeed, job opportunities. We need to give children brought into this world the best start in life. That is why we want to provide support where the capacity does not exist.

A lot of social change took place, particularly in the 1970s. Many urban villages in Belfast were broken up. Families did not have the support structure that had been in place for generations, and, consequently, we are looking at people who are second-, third- or fourth-generation unemployed. All of that has a trickle-down effect that is damaging to young people. We need to change that, and that is why I am very supportive of this programme.

Mr Agnew: I welcome the Minister's announcement that five Departments are working together on this. How is the programme funded? Has there been a pooling of budgets by the Departments involved?

Mr Poots: The programme is funded through Atlantic Philanthropies providing £15 million and the five Departments providing the other £15 million.

Cancer Drugs

7. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on access to cancer drugs in Northern Ireland. (AQO 6482/11-15)

Mr Poots: All cancer drugs approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence that are available in England are either recurrently funded or available via a cost-per-case mechanism in Northern Ireland. The

Health and Social Care Board also has a clear process by which unapproved cancer drugs can be made available to patients in Northern Ireland. The board has informed me that 98% of the applications for unapproved drugs are accepted.

I have therefore instructed my Department to evaluate whether the individual funding request (IFR) process is meeting its objectives and taking account of measures that other devolved Administrations are considering in their approach to access to specialist drugs. That evaluation will get under way shortly, and I will report the findings to the Assembly later this year.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he clarify how much is spent annually on cancer drugs? Will he also clarify how effective individual funding requests are? Certainly, during our recent visits to the cancer centre at the City Hospital, the evidence was that individual funding requests are not being honoured. May we have clarification on that, please?

Mr Poots: The 2013-14 expenditure on cancer drugs was around £26.7 million, and that does not include the cost of other cancer treatments, such as radiotherapy. Other costs related to cancer are also difficult to determine, such as voluntary and community care. From April 2013 to 31 January 2014, £1.14 million was spent on individual funding requests for cancer drugs, and 98% of those were given out. Oncologists will be circumspect in what they apply for. They will apply where they believe that it makes a real and fundamental difference. That is something that oncologists support and buy into.

So, it is very important that we recognise that, where oncologists make the case, those cases are largely found to be acceptable.

2.30 pm

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for his responses so far. Given the debate around the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme (PPRS), has there been an increase in the use of branded medicines in the last three months of this year? If so, by how much?

Mr Poots: There certainly has been a considerable increase in the use of branded medicines across Northern Ireland, not just in the last three months but in the last three years. The Assembly pressed for and endorsed that, because it means that, in terms of drugs and the health budget, we are not giving as much to pharmaceutical companies and we are delivering more on the ground. So, moving from generic to branded drugs has the support of the Assembly.

A lot of that money has been used in various elements of the budget. For example, we are spending more on domiciliary care than we were last year, the year before and the year before that. We are also spending more on protecting children than last year, the year before and the year before that. There is a series of things that we are spending more money on. We are spending considerably more on cancer drugs than we were three years ago.

Individuals may think that it is as easy as saying, "We will take money from this bit of health and apply it there, but we will ignore the fact that there are more older people and they need more domiciliary care, and there are more children who are vulnerable, so we will not bother doing

that bit this year." We cannot do that. We have to look at it in a holistic way. We have £160 million of a gap, and we do not have the money to buy the additional drugs.

PPRS has been around for some 50 years; it is not something new. We anticipated the savings that would be coming in from it: they will not buy the cancer drugs that England's cancer fund is paying for. Let us get those facts out into the domain and debate them rationally.

Mr Speaker: We now move on to topical questions. Question 2 has been withdrawn.

ITH Pharma: Contaminated Products

1. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail which health trust has purchased paediatric parental nutritional products from ITH Pharma. (AQT 1361/11-15)

Mr Poots: I did not pick up the question right. I am not aware of what we have purchased from ITH Pharma. I can endeavour to find the answer for the Member, although I suspect that he already knows it. I will see what I can find out on his behalf.

Mr Elliott: I do not know the answer; that is why I asked. There was a contaminated batch of one of that company's products. I was just looking for assurances that none of the contaminated batch, which had significant consequences and resulted in deaths in England, has come to Northern Ireland.

Mr Poots: I usually tried to ask questions that I knew the answers to, because that was an easier way to catch the Minister out when I was a Back-Bencher. Nonetheless, it is a good question. We will identify what we have been sourcing from that organisation, and, if there has been any risk posed, we will make that clear to the Member in due course.

Legal Highs

3. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what contact he has had with the Westminster Government about so-called legal highs. (AQT 1363/11-15)

Mr Poots: The issue of legal highs is one that we have been challenging on. The British-Irish Council met in Dublin, at which Norman Baker represented the Westminster Government. Again, the issue was high on the agenda.

Legal highs have contributed to many deaths across Northern Ireland. Many of the psychoactive substances in them are not legal, so the definition probably needs to be changed, because these are not things that people should be taking.

Westminster have almost completed the course of work that I had asked them to do about six months ago. That is being brought forward over the next two to three weeks, and recommendations will flow from it. They have been looking at what is being done in the United States of America, the Republic of Ireland and New Zealand, where stronger actions have been taken. It will be very difficult to stay ahead of the curve on legal highs. I very much want to do so, but, if we cannot stay ahead of it, we need to be right up there in ensuring that we stop people who peddle

these legal highs and get in quickly to ensure that they are banned straightaway.

Mr Hilditch: I welcome the Minister's comments. Minister, what was your assessment of last week's British-Irish Council meeting?

Mr Poots: I thought that it was very useful. Everybody was very impressed by the actions that Belfast City Council took against legal high shops on the back of a proposal by Councillor Gavin Robinson. The council has been able to close down a number of facilities as a result of its actions. Other countries are looking at doing the same thing, so they were very interested in that.

There has to be a UK-wide response. We need actions from Westminster, which has the legislative powers to move this forward. It must be legislation that enables us to respond very swiftly, within hours or a few days of discovering something, to close down these shops. The pharmacists producing these drugs in many parts of the world need make only a slight alteration, and, all of a sudden, something that had been deemed illegal could be legal. We need to be very quick to respond to that.

Prescription Charges

4. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the administration costs of reintroducing prescription charges. (AQT 1364/11-15)

Mr Poots: It all depends on how they were introduced. Under the previous system, the costs would be higher because you would have to identify the 11% who would pay and the 89% who would not. Let us be very clear that, under the old system, 89% of prescriptions were free in any event; only 11% of prescriptions were paid for. One consequence, perhaps unenvisaged, of introducing free prescriptions was that it drove up the number of people who went to their doctor requesting prescriptions for things such as paracetamol, which costs 40p in a local supermarket. That was an unintended consequence.

If you introduced a very small charge for every prescription with a maximum yearly payment for each person — I suggested a maximum yearly payment of £25, which is less than 50p a week — the administration costs for that type of system would be very modest indeed.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the Minister outline the extent of prescription charge fraud in the past? Who was the most likely to partake and what was the most common source?

Mr Poots: There were greater levels of fraud in particular areas. I will not name areas today; nonetheless, it was higher in particular areas. Many people were quite happy to pay for their prescription. In fact, many people, including me, feel quite guilty about getting a free prescription when we know that others could be receiving and benefiting from drugs that are currently unaffordable. They may not be life-saving drugs, but they could prolong your life for two or three months, and there may be special family events coming up. You want to see your child's birthday or a particular wedding, yet someone like me does not have to pay for a prescription. Everybody in here can well afford to pay, but we do not have to, while others who need the drugs cannot get them.

I think that a good socialist would support what I am doing. A good socialist would not say, "Give the rich and everybody else free prescriptions and deny people who have cancer the opportunity of living a little longer." I do not think that that is right.

Public Health Framework

5. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact he anticipates the new public health framework will have. (AQT 1365/11-15)

Mr Poots: With the public health framework, it is critical that we respond to the needs of the public, and unless we actually challenge and get people into a better place — because public health has been declining — we are going to have to live with the difficult consequence. The generation that we are currently bringing up in Northern Ireland is likely not to live as long as the people who are around now. This is the first time for years that that is going to happen. For years, life expectancy has been increasing, but for those born now, life expectancy will be shorter. So, it is vital that the public health framework is out there and that we support it financially and get the messages out to the public of what is beneficial to them.

Mr Douglas: What is the Minister's assessment of the potential benefits of new technology for diabetes care, such as the d-Nav?

Mr Poots: This is a fantastic opportunity. I am delighted that the South Eastern Trust is doing that work. Incidence of type 2 diabetes is growing. We can be at the forefront of the world with this d-Nav technology. The device allows people with diabetes to easily regulate their own insulin dosage by using a small device around the size of a mobile phone. I have called it "the doc in the poc", because it is the equivalent of going to a consultant and getting a check-up. By having this in your pocket, you can get a check-up every day. Consequently, your dosage can be adjusted upwards or downwards to meet your true needs. Generally, we are finding that people's dosages are coming down. So, this is very positive. I believe that it will become commonplace over the course of the next decade, and Northern Ireland will have led the way in delivering that.

Mr Speaker: Robin Newton is not in his place for question 6.

Cancer Drugs: Trials

7. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he sees the Connected Health initiative being a driver for improving drugs trials at the Belfast cancer centre. (AQT 1367/11-15)

Mr Poots: We have been hugely successful with drugs trials. Most people will not know that around one fifth of people in Northern Ireland who have cancer are engaging in trials. The opportunity for many hundreds of people to avail themselves of the most modern drugs has been created because we are engaged in that way. We have been developing a Connected Health integration platform, which will help us to optimise our delivery of Connected Health in the establishment of an international analytics centre in Northern Ireland. That will ensure that we have a network that is amongst the smartest and most capable of linking people who have illnesses with the potential opportunities to cure those illnesses. Stratified medicine

and all those things create for us wonderful opportunities to identify the right resources for individuals, so that we can provide the right courses of treatment to them.

Mr Dunne: Does the Minister recognise that the Queen's University Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology has the potential to become a world leader in drugs trials and research?

Mr Poots: Absolutely. I met the new vice chancellor of Queen's recently about what the opportunities are. At the moment, significant elements of Queen's University are world-class in clinical and medical research. We can make that university's clinical research truly world class throughout. I think that we should. It is something that Minister Farry, Minister Foster and I need to take to the Executive. Northern Ireland can be up there as a place that is of the highest standards anywhere in the world in the medical research that it is carrying out in cancer and a number of other fields. That is something that I am totally up for, and I am sure that my ministerial colleagues will want to do that as well. It will deliver huge health benefits. It will also deliver benefits for jobs, and it will advance the academic institutions in Northern Ireland.

RQIA: Unscheduled Care Review

Dr McDonnell: I thought that the Minister was going to talk me out there.

8. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) review of unscheduled care, which was published today. (AQT 1368/11-15)

2.45 pm

Mr Poots: Yes. I think that the Member would have a great interest in what I was previously talking about, I might add.

I can talk a little more about the RQIA review now. It is saying that the trusts need to have stronger escalation plans in place. It is looking at the Belfast Trust and using the City Hospital as a route for the frail elderly to go there directly instead of going to the emergency department. I embrace that because I do not believe that our frail elderly people belong in emergency departments, with all the other mayhem that goes with that. We are looking at using the City Hospital as a route for most respiratory patients and at enhancing the services provided for emergency care at the Mater Hospital. So, there are a lot of very useful recommendations there. I spoke to the chair of the Belfast Trust, and we will work on delivering those in the near future, including elements this autumn.

Dr McDonnell: Does the Minister believe that there is any benefit in going further up the demand chain and looking into unscheduled care and perhaps looking at what is leading to the pressures that are causing the problems?

Mr Poots: Things are fundamentally different than they were years ago, and far more people are being admitted to hospitals through emergency departments than was previously the case. A better relationship needs to be developed between general practitioners and hospitals on the admissions process. Flows are a big problem, and that is one of the areas that is recommended there. It will be very challenging for us, but we need to get the flows right so that when people are leaving the hospital we are

getting them out more quickly, that we do not have delayed discharges, and that those beds become available for more people who are in emergency departments. So, there is a considerable amount of work to be done there.

In my opinion, the recommendations from the RQIA are sound, and I will press the Belfast Trust and all trusts to implement them as early as possible. I indicated that we had bid for £22 million or £26 million to deliver that and said that it will better spent on emergency departments than on welfare. I would welcome the support of others to ensure that we spend that money on emergency departments as opposed to complaining about the outcomes but not giving us the resource to do the job.

Mr Speaker: That concludes questions to the Health Minister.

Justice

Magilligan: Newbuild Prison

1. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Justice when work will begin on the new prison at Magilligan. (AQO 6491/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): As I announced to the House on 19 March last year and in a further statement on 21 October, I am committed to the redevelopment of Magilligan prison. I noted in my response at Question Time on 10 June that Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) officials are nearing completion of the outline business case (OBC) for the redevelopment, which will be submitted for approval within the next month. I said at that time that the completed outline business case will be submitted to DFP and it will be DFP's decision as to whether the business case will be approved for the rebuild. Any approval will advise the availability of capital funding for the project. The prison must remain operational during the redevelopment, and a combination of operational need and capital availability will determine the timeline for the work. If approval is given and funding is made available, NIPS would plan to commence work at Magilligan in 2016.

Mr Campbell: I welcome the Minister's recommitment to the Magilligan project. Given that the outline estate strategy was released in June 2012 and that the strategic outline case was released in June 2013, does the Minister think that the outline business case should be with the Department of Finance and Personnel immediately in order for it to respond to it, rather than him saying that he could not guarantee anything without the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel?

Mr Ford: I am sure that Mr Campbell's colleague Mr Hamilton would take it ill if I were to suggest that it should be entirely up to the DOJ to approve its own outline business cases. The reality is that procedures have to be gone through. As I said, the OBC will be with DFP within the next month, and the challenge will be to ensure that we have the kind of funding that has just been spoken about by the Minister of Health to deal with some very urgent priorities in justice as well as in health.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answers to this point. Can he give us an update on the work of the stakeholder group aimed at

bringing Magilligan closer to the local community and on greater opportunities for prisoners on release schemes?

Mr Ford: While I appreciate Mr Ó hOisín's question about what was, of course, one of the key factors that led to the decision to redevelop Magilligan on-site, I have not been directly involved with the stakeholder group recently and am not quite sure what the state of meetings is. However, there is absolutely no doubt that the commitment from local businesses and councils will be a continuing necessity to ensure that we make the most of the opportunity to redevelop Magilligan on-site and provide the opportunities that we need, particularly for things like work placements, over the coming months. I will certainly check the record and see whether there is anything that I am not aware of, and will report to the Member if that is the case.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer, but question every word that he said. He will understand why. Will the Minister put on record, once and for all, that he acknowledges that Magilligan prison is not just a place that creates employment but a place that gives prisoners a special chance of repatriating? Will he ensure that that is not lost by some centralisation programme worked out by economists?

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether Mr Dallat has ever accused me of misleading the House before, but he appeared to come perilously close to it just then. I am very happy to give the commitment of the Prison Service and the Department of Justice, working with the partners that I have just identified to Mr Ó hOisín, to follow through on the commitments that I have just given to Mr Campbell. I do not know whether that is enough to satisfy people, but the reality is that decisions on capital funding are not decisions for my Department alone. They are decisions that require funding to be committed by DFP, which is why I stated specifically that that issue has to be followed through.

The commitment is absolute from my Department that Magilligan is where the redevelopment will be, which is contrary to the original recommendations from the prison review team. However, I cannot give a commitment to capital. I am very happy to recommend that Mr Dallat ask the same question of Mr Hamilton in September.

Parading

2. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Justice how he plans to engage with the Parades Commission in advance of the parading season. (AQO 6492/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Parades Commission is an independent body appointed by the Secretary of State and therefore not accountable to me. I have said before, however, that I will engage with the commission on general issues but not individual cases, and have already done so this year. Parading remains a contentious issue and I am ready to engage with any renewed political talks, which I trust will achieve success, this week and next, on the issue.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. I certainly would be the last person to try to deflect him towards any specific case. However, the Minister will be aware that, among the inhabitants of these Benches, the Parades Commission has never received full applause, if I can put it that way. The Parades Commission that we are currently working under, more than any — given that its members say one thing in private and then do something

different in public — is causing huge frustration in the Protestant/unionist community. Bearing in mind that it is police officers, prison officers —

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to come to a question.

Mr D McIlveen: — and obviously the constituents of each and every one of us who are affected by poor decisions on the part of the Parades Commission, will the Minister be suggesting that, in the absence of there being another show in town, we have to make sure that this Parades Commission is dealt with effectively in the way that it makes its decisions?

Mr Ford: There are clearly two points in what Mr McIlveen said. One is that, at the moment, the Parades Commission is the only show in town, and the other is that it might become not the only show in town, if the five-party talks achieve something over the next couple of weeks, looking to the future. However, while it is the only show in town, there is no alternative but for those of us who support the rule of law to accept that the determinations of the commission, whether appreciated or not, have the force of the rule of law. Those who parade and those who protest should do so lawfully and peacefully in all circumstances.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. Has the Minister taken any proactive measures to remind those who might engage in violent or disruptive actions that such behaviour will not be tolerated, so that we can avoid the scenes — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms McCorley: — that we witnessed last year, when great damage and great cost were involved?

Mr Ford: Whilst I appreciate Ms McCorley's question, I am not sure that many of those who engage in that violent and disruptive behaviour listen to me. I thought, in the comments I made in the Great Hall a few moments ago alongside the Chief Constable and in the comments I just made in the Chamber, I made absolutely clear my belief that everybody has a duty to act lawfully and peacefully, and all those in a position of leadership should see that they use their influence as best they can.

Mr Attwood: I want to touch on something the Minister said. Whether we like or do not like the Parades Commission, or whether we agree or do not agree with its determinations, do you accept that the only sure path over the next couple of weeks is that all parties, organisations and communities should accept Parades Commission determinations and that if anybody errs from that pathway and that approach, they will be on the wrong side of democracy in Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: I entirely agree with the points that Mr Attwood has just made. Not only would anybody in those circumstances be on the wrong side of democracy, they would be on the wrong side of the law as well.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for those answers. I appreciate that the Parades Commission does not come under his jurisdiction, but we have gone into some detail here today. Would he support having the Parades Commission attend the multiparty talks that he has just mentioned to try to resolve the parading issues in those specific difficult areas?

Mr Ford: Mr Elliott is inventive, as ever. I am not sure that the Minister of Justice has any opinion on who should attend particular talks, but it seems to me that the Parades Commission is willing to meet anybody and everybody. The key issue, frankly, is whether those who have responsibility in those talks are prepared to engage in finding a better way, without reservation and without some of the qualifications we have seen so far.

Mr Allister: If the Parades Commission, in respect of Ardoyne, again rewards violence, does the Minister, as Minister of Justice, not think he might have a role in encouraging it to review such a rewarding of violence?

Mr Ford: Mr Allister's question is based on what I regard as a false premise of rewarding violence.

Victims of Crime

3. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the impact that the Justice Bill (NIA 37/11-15) will have on the experience of the victims of crime. (AQO 6493/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Justice Bill, which was introduced in the Assembly on 16 June, marks an important new stage in an ambitious programme of work to create a faster, fairer justice system. The main purpose of the Bill is to reshape the system to improve victims' experiences and the general effectiveness of the justice process. The Bill responds directly to a number of key recommendations in the Justice Committee's report of its inquiry into the criminal justice services available to victims and witnesses of crime.

Some of the key provisions in the Bill include statutory victim and witness charters, setting out clearly the standards of service victims and witnesses can expect to receive and how they can expect to be treated by criminal justice agencies; a legal entitlement for a victim to make a statement about the impact that a crime has had on them; reform of the committal process to avoid victims having to undergo the ordeal of giving evidence twice; and the introduction of statutory case management and a number of other measures to speed up the progress of cases.

I believe that these provisions, combined with other measures in the Bill to enhance public protection and safeguard vulnerable groups, should lead to a measurable difference in victims and witnesses' experience of the criminal justice system.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer and for his acknowledgement of the Justice Committee's inquiry into victims and witnesses. Is he satisfied that, given, perhaps, that demands will be made on resources, he has enough resources to ensure that, when the Bill is passed by the Assembly, we will have the proper structures for a victims' charter in place?

Mr Ford: In current circumstances, there is a very real question there from Mr McCartney about resources. I believe that, in line with our commitments under the new European directive, we are well on the way to having the necessary measures in place. Clearly, all these things cost a degree of money, but some of the proposals that we have had recently, such as the registered intermediary scheme, are in a position to be expanded because they are proving so successful, and the costs of that are being

absorbed in the Department's budget. We will continue to make progress, but we cannot give guarantees as to what the finances will be over the next few years.

3.00 pm

Mr McCarthy: I welcome the Bill and congratulate the Minister and his staff. I commend him for his ongoing commitment to improving the experience of victims and witnesses during their contact with the criminal justice system. Can he outline any steps that he has taken, or further steps that he will take, to improve the lot for victims?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr McCarthy for that question. The two key things that immediately come to mind are the work that is being done to inform victims post-crime of the work that is being done by the single point of contact through the joined-up information scheme, which is having significantly positive effects, and the work that is being done to provide alternatives to appearing in court for vulnerable victims and witnesses. Just this morning, I visited a new arrangement in Lisburn that will allow children and vulnerable adults to give evidence by video link from outside the court building, as is already in place for Laganside courts and Londonderry courthouse and is in the process of being provided for Ballymena courthouse. Those are key issues that show that a relatively modest investment is significantly enhancing the opportunities for vulnerable victims and witnesses in both those cases.

Juvenile Justice: Education

4. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Justice how his Department records the educational status of young people entering Youth Justice Agency services in the community and in the juvenile justice system. (AQO 6494/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Youth Justice Agency undertakes a full assessment of all young people on referral, and their education, training and employment status is recorded and assessed as part of that process.

For those who are remanded or sentenced to custody, education staff in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre carry out a detailed assessment during the first three days following admission to assess levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Throughout the young person's time in custody, the centre will record levels of attainment in those subjects, as well as vocational studies and programmes.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answer. What proportion of young people who are engaged with youth justice services is regarded as being not in education, employment or training? How does his Department support those vulnerable young people?

Mr Ford: Mr Douglas has asked a very pertinent supplementary question. I understand that, at the moment, something like 45% of young people in the juvenile justice centre would be regarded as coming under not in education, employment or training status. A key part of the work that is being done to address that is looking at the provision of learning and skills in Woodlands. Obviously, a number of those in Woodlands will move on to Hydebank Wood at the age of 18, or shortly thereafter, where the proposals for a secure college are premised on running courses through providers from the general further

education sector, which can be continued when people are discharged. I note, for example, that, of the relatively small sample of the first five who went through the social enterprise scheme Mugshots in Hydebank Wood, four found either employment or training when they left. That is a significantly higher proportion than we expected. So, good work is being done. However, I acknowledge, as Mr Douglas hinted, that a lot more needs to be done.

Mr Eastwood: Given the fact that the oversight body talked about progress on Hydebank Wood being limited, what work are he and his Department doing to ensure that progress is no longer limited but real and substantive?

Mr Ford: We are now expanding slightly beyond the subject of the Youth Justice Agency. However, since Mr Eastwood is in more or less the same area, I will happily give some indications on that.

A lot of work has been done to join up the provision of education services in Hydebank Wood. Belfast Metropolitan College is providing the courses, which, and this is the point that I made to Mr Douglas, enables them to continue them afterwards. Work is also being done around the social enterprise area, where we will shortly see a full-scale operation in catering services alongside the Mugshots enterprise. I have recently approved a further proposal that will see an ongoing social enterprise for young men as they leave Hydebank Wood. They will be engaged in continuing activity as they go out into the community. All those are steps in the right direction, but, given the numbers that we have in custody and their previous status, as I have just said to Mr Douglas, there is a lot more still to be done.

PSNI: Complaints

5. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the protocol between the PSNI and the Police Ombudsman to facilitate the ombudsman's office in carrying out its duties in relation to complaints against the PSNI. (AQO 6495/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI and the Police Ombudsman have a number of protocols in place to facilitate the conduct of investigations by the ombudsman's office. The development and outworkings of such protocols are for the bodies concerned, as each has operational independence.

If the Member is referring to the protocol on the sharing of sensitive information, that was shared with the Committee for Justice and noted without comment in January 2014. The issue is the subject of legal proceedings, and it would not be appropriate, therefore, for me to comment, except to say that I understand that discussions are ongoing and hope that an agreement can be reached as soon as possible.

Mrs D Kelly: Minister, I am sure that you will join me in wishing the new Chief Constable, George Hamilton, the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job in his new role; he will certainly need it. I welcome the fact that he has already met the ombudsman to try to avert legal action. Minister, hopefully you are of the view that the ombudsman's office should have full accountability mechanisms in place for the PSNI for all actions of the police, past or present.

Mr Ford: Mrs Kelly is very inventive, but having just said that it would not be appropriate for me to comment, I will repeat the point. I certainly will endorse her good wishes

for George Hamilton as Chief Constable, which I conveyed a short while ago, as I have previously done informally and by telephone on the day that he was appointed. I certainly believe, from the reports that I am getting from officials and, indeed, from a brief part of a meeting with George Hamilton this afternoon, that there is a strong chance that an agreement will be reached before the issue comes back to court in September. I hope that we all see that as a sign of good progress and a better relationship, which dealt with the very difficult issues that both agencies have to resolve.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that, when the ombudsman states publicly that he is being prevented from carrying out his duties, confidence in justice and policing and their relationship with the rule of law is being undermined?

Mr Ford: I agree that there was a danger of that some weeks ago. The fact that significant progress has been made recently suggests that that need not be the case.

Mr Elliott: Will the Minister indicate whether he has any intention of putting in place an appeal mechanism for any of the Police Ombudsman's reports?

Mr Ford: I must say that that is a long way from the original question. The simple position is that ombudsmen in the United Kingdom are largely seen as the final point of referral. The logic of what is suggested by that question is that we would have an ombudsman of ombudsmen, but then we would also have to have an appeal mechanism against the ombudsman of ombudsmen's decisions. I do not think that it is possible to work in our current system beyond the point that an ombudsman's decision is final.

PSNI: Districts

6. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Justice whether he has spoken to the Chief Constable with regard to introducing more coterminous boundaries between PSNI districts and the new council areas. (AQO 6496/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials continue to discuss the implications of local government reform with the PSNI, the Policing Board, the Department of the Environment, the shadow councils and other stakeholders. From a very recent informal discussion with the Chief Constable, I am aware that the PSNI is considering options for restructuring, and it will continue to brief the Policing Board on the matter.

Mr Beggs: Does the Minister acknowledge that a level of accountability, which was designed in our system, will be difficult under the current arrangements? I think specifically of the Carrickfergus area, which will join the new Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus super-council, yet its response officers are tasked from the Newtownabbey area. Does he agree that it would be much more beneficial if response officers did not have to be tasked from Ballymena but were perhaps based locally in Carrickfergus police station?

Mr Ford: Though Mr Beggs may tempt me into those operational issues, I cannot give a response to the latter part of his question about what would be appropriate. I can, however, indicate — I am sure that he will be pleased to know this — that the specific issue of Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus as one current police area being split between two councils was one of the issues mentioned about an hour or so ago when I spoke to the Chief Constable.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. If new boundaries were to be established, when might we expect that to happen?

Mr Ford: That is a very good question, and the answer is this: ask the Chief Constable. We are living with eight police districts, which are based on a split Belfast area and seven other council areas, as originally designed in a plan shortly after Noah came out of the ark. That is the reality of where the police are. Now that they know what the council pattern will be from 1 April 2015, they are fully aware of the composition of districts and of some of the immediate border issues that will affect, for example, Magherafelt and Limavady, which have a shared area command, as well as Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus. The answer to the timing question is this: ask the Chief Constable.

RUC GC Widows' Association

7. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on funding for the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Widows' Association. (AQO 6497/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department stands ready to consider grant funding of the RUC GC Widows' Association on receipt of an appropriate application from the association. My officials have sought to engage with the association on a number of occasions to assist in the development of their application and remain willing and available to continue to offer such support. The application for funding must, however, come from the association.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he give us an assurance that all reasonable efforts will be made to facilitate such funding for what is a very worthy cause — the RUC widows.

Mr Ford: I can give Mr Dunne and everybody else an assurance that all reasonable efforts have been made to make that position clear. However, because of a reclassification exercise carried out on devolution by DFP, the RUC GC Widows' Association is regarded as being in the private sector. The only way the association can be funded is by grant application rather than by the previous method where it was simply regarded as if it had been an arm's-length body of the Department. Frankly, it would be more beneficial if the widows' association would fill in the form rather than merely lobby MLAs because nothing can be done if the association does not fill in an application form.

Mr Cree: Minister, do you recognise that the decision to change the status of the widows' association was discriminatory and unnecessary?

Mr Ford: No, I do not regard it as discriminatory. It was clearly necessary because it was a DFP decision on how policies are formulated. Moreover, it was not discriminatory since the Department has offered to continue funding on the basis of a grant application just as is the case for every other body outside the justice system.

Mr Allister: How many times have the Department's officials knocked back an application from the widows' association? How many times have they sat down with them to explain what the officials say is wrong with the applications that they have made?

Mr Ford: I am not aware that officials have knocked back an application, but officials have referred back applications

that were not complete and which did not convey all the necessary information. I am aware that, on a significant number of times, there has been contact in person or by phone between my officials and officers of the association. I repeat the point that it has been offered. It is not a matter of its being offered in the future; it has been offered on a large number of occasions but has not been taken up by the widows' association.

Prison Service: Chaplaincy

8. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the provision of chaplaincy services within the Northern Ireland Prison Service. (AQO 6498/11-15)

Mr Ford: Discussions between the Prison Service and senior Church representatives are ongoing in relation to implementing a review of chaplaincy services. On 7 April 2014, in response to concerns raised, NIPS identified an alternative model to the one originally proposed. It was circulated for discussion, and responses have now been received from all the Church bodies. It is anticipated that the new model will be implemented this summer. I fully appreciate the contribution that chaplains make to supporting prisoners in custody. Any changes brought about by the review of chaplaincy will aim to deliver the maximum benefit to prisoners within the resources available.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for that very helpful reply. It is very helpful for resolving this problem. I hope that the new model, which has been agreed, will be up and running soon. Will the Minister assure the House that there will be sufficient funding to maintain the new model?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Maginness for his compliments. I assure him that the funding proposed for this financial year is exactly the same as in the last financial year. Given the number of cuts that have had to be made elsewhere, I think that it is a fair commitment to chaplaincy services.

Firearms: Certificate Renewal

9. **Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the average cost of processing an individual application for a new or renewal firearms certificate. (AQO 6499/11-15)

Mr Ford: This issue has been the subject of a lean efficiency review of the firearms licensing branch by a DFP consultant and a different DFP consultant regarding the fee itself. It was then subject to a public consultation exercise. That work identified the cost of processing a firearms certificate or regranting a firearms certificate as £121 for five years. That figure of £24 per annum is based on the process time for applications and the hourly staff costs. I have proposed an interim fee, agreed with the PSNI and DFP, of £100.

3.15 pm

Therefore, the PSNI has a shortfall of some £1.8 million per annum at the present fee of £50, which was set over 10 years ago, before the concept of full-cost recovery was introduced. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) said that £196 would achieve full-cost recovery in England and Wales, where the cost is being reviewed. The figure in the Republic of Ireland is €80 per firearm for a three-year certificate.

Mr Wells: Apologies to the Minister that, for the first time in my life, he could not hear what I had to say. He will

certainly get my supplementary, loud and clear. He gave us the price based on the cost to the police, but what would the price be if it were done in the private sector, for instance? Are those who use firearms paying for the bloated bureaucracy of Lisnasharragh? Could it not be done an awful lot more cheaply and with more efficiency?

Mr Ford: I know that the review was done on the basis of ensuring the most efficient process but with necessary procedures. Is Mr Wells seriously suggesting that an issue such as firearms licensing — the control of lethal weapons — be handed over to the private sector? That is what I heard. I cannot understand the concept that something so vital to maintaining the safety of the people of Northern Ireland would be privatised.

Mr Speaker: That concludes the listed questions to the Justice Minister. We move now to topical questions.

Prison Service: Staff Entitlements

1. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Justice whether all Prison Service staff who left under the voluntary early retirement scheme have received their excess holiday entitlement and will receive the same payment for excess leave as those who have remained in service, given that he may well be aware that some of those former staff are experiencing some difficulties in relation to their holiday entitlement. (AQT 1371/11-15)

Mr Ford: I cannot give Mrs Hale the detail of that personnel issue. I am aware that matters were being addressed, but I am not sure that I can confirm that everything is entirely clarified at the moment. If she has specific issues that she wants to highlight now, or later by letter, I will certainly follow them up.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his answer. I have specific issues, and I will probably speak to you outside the Chamber about them. I am looking for confirmation that you will ensure that any staff member who took early retirement will not be unjustly penalised in the payment of holiday entitlement.

Mr Ford: I can give a commitment. It is my understanding that a number of people left with some holiday entitlement. Whatever the Civil Service handbook prescribes for staff should be provided to them. If it has not been, I will do my best to ensure that it is done rapidly. I will take the details later.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

2. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the new policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) for the 11 new councils. (AQT 1372/11-15)

Mr Ford: The legislation provides that there will be a PCSP for each district council. It does not prescribe that there will be 26 PCSPs; it prescribes one per council and four subgroups for Belfast. The legislation also prescribes that PCSPs have the opportunity to set up subgroups to which they may co-opt others, be they councillors who are not members of the principal partnership or members of the public. If there are issues on which people feel that there is a need for local representation, I trust that, after 1 April next year, the new PCSPs will address them by using the legislation that exists for that purpose.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. The Minister talked about subgroups, but, given that we are going into larger council areas, has he considered changing the legislation to increase the number of people who sit on the PCSPs, which is 19 for the existing councils?

Mr Ford: No, at this stage, consideration has not been given to that point, given that there is an issue about ensuring that bodies do not become excessively large, and especially when you think that the number is not actually 19. By the time that you add the other members — up to 10 or 12 in some cases — there is the potential for the overall membership of a new district partnership to be in the region of 30. If Members wish to suggest that as part of the review, we can certainly look at that, but, at this stage, I believe that the numbers are probably right. If we had looked at this, we might have had slightly bigger numbers, but I doubt whether we would have wanted them to be significantly so.

Another issue being raised, with some concerns, is the local subgroups, but that can be addressed in the existing legislation.

Joe Campbell

3. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Justice, in regard to the Police Ombudsman's report into the murder of RUC Sergeant Joe Campbell, whether he is concerned about attempts to frustrate that office's investigation through the systematic destruction of evidence. (AQT 1373/11-15)

Mr Ford: I need to be very careful, especially as Sergeant Campbell was murdered long before I came into office and in very different circumstances, about exactly what I say. I record my sympathy with Sergeant Campbell's family for what they are currently having to go through because of the re-publicity. It would be a matter of concern if, in any circumstances, evidence was being destroyed that could lead to an investigation. However, there is a division in the House about other factors, such as the compellability of witnesses. The possibility of making progress in that area would be an issue of concern for some people.

Mr D Bradley: Just on that point, does the Minister agree that there is a need for legislation to ensure that retired members of the RUC cooperate with the ombudsman's investigations?

Mr Ford: I have a paper before the Executive looking at a number of matters relating to the ombudsman's work, including the issue of the compellability of retired police officers. It is fairly clear that, as yet, there is no political consensus. Therefore, it is unlikely that any such legislation would pass the House. I certainly see why Members or families like the Campbell family would wish to see full compellability. We also have to acknowledge that, when we are going back so far, there might be no valid evidence forthcoming in many cases, but it is entirely understandable why people would wish to explore that.

Police Ombudsman: Funding Request

4. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice to explain why, as reported recently in the newspapers, he turned down a request from the Police Ombudsman for £1.1 million to deal with conflict-related complaints, especially

given that the Minister and others are going into talks to try to deal with the legacy issue in a comprehensive way. (AQT 1374/11-15)

Mr Ford: I certainly agree with Mr Kelly that there is a need to look at those issues in a comprehensive way, but the reality is that we also have to look at the budget available. There is no point in promising money that cannot be delivered. Part of the issue needs to be to see whether we can get a coherent, joined-up way of dealing with all the issues of the past. It is quite clear that there are issues that could be better done by something like a legacy unit than by the historical enquiries of the ombudsman's office, some elements of the legacy inquests and the work of the Historical Enquiries Team (HET). Let us see what we can get from those five-party talks in the first place.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer so far. Alongside that, with respect, he is the Minister. The requests have been done before we have come to the conclusion of the talks. He mentioned the inquests; is he happy that resources are available? There are also reports in the papers that not enough resources are being given for proper disclosure to a number of the inquests.

Mr Ford: Again, Mr Kelly highlights significant issues relating to resources. The Department of Justice has a budget for dealing with the present and has responsibilities for dealing with the past. No other Department is in that position. That is the challenge we face. Particularly in the difficult financial circumstances that are looming because of the inability to agree welfare reform, it is impossible to make commitments to fund some of the services from the past.

Parades: Criminal Justice Issues

5. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Justice whether he agrees that the only way to avoid some of the criminal justice issues around controversial parades is to bring people round a table, as happened in Derry, to talk the issue out and to ensure respect and tolerance across the board. (AQT 1375/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am certainly very happy, with an MLA for Foyle asking the question and an MLA for Foyle sitting in the Speaker's Chair, to agree that there are clearly positive examples that have come from people from Derry/Londonderry getting together and discussing those issues. The challenge is to get that kind of mood into areas like north Belfast, where it is sadly lacking. I certainly hope that the leadership available in the House will provide some of that joining up.

Mr Eastwood: Further to that, was the Minister glad today to see that the House unanimously supported a motion calling for unambiguous adherence to the rule of law around these issues?

Mr Ford: Yes, indeed. I am not sure whether Mr Eastwood was in the Chamber at an earlier stage of Question Time when I repeated the point that I have made on a number of occasions: it is absolutely necessary that everybody in the community accepts the determinations of the Parades Commission as having the force of the rule of law, which they do. It is important that those who wish to parade and those who wish to protest both do so entirely lawfully and peacefully.

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Ian McCrea is not in his place to ask a question.

Capital Works: Business Cases

7. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Justice how long would it normally take for an outline business case to be transferred to the Department of Finance and Personnel when progressing a major capital works scheme, such as for a prison. (AQT 1377/11-15)

Mr Ford: That depends on the complexity of the capital scheme in question.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Minister for the vagueness of that reply. Maybe we could get it down to a more precise nature now. The Minister caused some uncertainty three weeks ago when he answered a question from my honourable friend by saying that there was no guarantee that the prison at Magilligan would proceed. At that point, he did not mention that his Department had not put an outline business case to the Department of Finance and Personnel. Thankfully, he has done so today, but can he explain why he did not mention it three weeks ago?

Mr Ford: Maybe it was easier to get the full detail in the context of a prepared answer to a question. Mr Campbell seems to suggest that I have somehow been covering up what is happening. There is a lengthy and complex process, which he outlined in a non-topical question a few moments ago, around strategic business cases, outline business cases and all the details that have to be worked through. I did not think that that was any secret to Members in the House, especially not to those who have themselves been a Minister.

Legal Criticism: DOJ

8. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Justice how he responds to criticism levelled against his Department by solicitors for the most senior coroner, who have said that the lack of resources allocated to legacy issues is an enormous embarrassment to the state. (AQT 1378/11-15)

Mr Ford: As I have said to other Members of the House, it is absolutely clear that there are fundamental issues of resources. Issues such as obtaining all the necessary information for inquests are enormously complex and demanding of time and skilled personnel, of whom there are a limited number. The reality is that there have been difficulties encountered in doing that. That has never been denied. What is an issue is to ensure that we provide the system in as joined-up a way as possible. That would best be done if we could agree on some of the outstanding issues of the past and find some ways that we could deal with them collectively without using the existing inquest system. Those legacy matters are more complex and are not easily carried through by implementing the standard system of today.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. Minister, to ensure that families get to the truth, how do you explain the shocking lack of resources to families such as that of Roseann Mallon, an elderly lady from my county who was shot dead 20 years ago and whose family is still waiting for answers around her death?

Mr Ford: I do not accept that there is a "shocking lack of resources". Significant resources are being put into dealing with legacy inquests, but, given the complexity,

the work required and the limited number of people with the capacity to do it, these things are taking time at the moment. Unless we find some better way of dealing with this or find experts to whom we do not currently have access, it will continue to be a major issue. We are well aware of the difficulties that arise from that.

I am aware of the recent court decisions in the context of those who believe that they suffered as a result of delays. We are doing what we can to address that, but I would be foolish to stand here and promise that things could be done when we simply do not have the resources and the expertise in the numbers that we need to deal with everything as fast as we would wish.

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr David McIlveen is not in his place.

3.30 pm

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill

10. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Justice whether, given recent public concerns over the SAI process and health service investigations, he feels that an amendment to the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, to allow for independent investigation, would be within the scope of the Bill. (AQT 1380/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether it would be within the scope of the Bill. Mr McKinney makes an interesting point, but the reality is that the scope of that Bill is extremely narrow. There is certainly an issue of the wider reform of coronial law, which is being looked at in the Department, and I believe that that is where it would best sit.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for his answer. By what mechanism could that be introduced?

Mr Ford: That would be on the basis of a wider Bill looking at coronial law in general. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into account. I know it has been suggested by the Attorney General that we should look at that particular point, but the difficulty is in dealing with matters piecemeal rather than looking at a single piece of legislation that would deal with a number of outstanding issues around coronial law. However, it is an issue that is being actively explored in the Department at present.

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

Ministerial Statement

Tourism: Public Consultation

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a statement to update Members regarding the review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and wider tourism structures.

On 14 November last year, I announced that an independent review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and wider tourism structures was to be undertaken. The overall aim of the review is to ensure that current organisational structures are the optimum necessary to deliver the targets and actions set out in the Programme for Government and the economic strategy and that they are effectively aligned with the work of Invest Northern Ireland. Mr John Hunter CB was appointed to undertake the review, and, following extensive stakeholder engagement with 90 representatives from some 54 organisations, a final draft report is now available.

The executive summary of the report highlights 10 key recommendations, which are as follows: the Northern Ireland Executive should publish an updated strategy for tourism; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board should continue its work with Invest Northern Ireland to develop an economic development brand for Northern Ireland; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board should clarify roles and responsibilities with key partner organisations, including the new district councils, through memoranda of understanding; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland should deepen their relationship through improved communication and enhanced collaboration, with robust targets for increasing tourism numbers based on the updated strategy for tourism; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board should appoint pillar managers for each of its five experience pillars, working alongside destination managers; Invest Northern Ireland and DEL/People 1st should continue to provide business support services and training services respectively to the tourism industry; DEL should initiate a review of the skills needs of the tourism sector; NITB's organisational structure should be built around support for its new destination managers and proposed pillar managers in a new directorate for destination areas and experiential pillars; NITB should engage in an organisation development and culture change programme to embed a renewed focus on the client; and, finally, NITB's name should be changed in order to signal the scale of its envisaged transformation.

In the main body of the report there are a total of 33 recommendations, which include the 10 key recommendations I have mentioned. It will be important that all the recommendations contained in the report are given full consideration. Given the importance of tourism to the local economy, my priority is to ensure that we have the right structures in place to maximise the benefits that this crucial sector can bring right across Northern Ireland. I have therefore decided that the review report will go out for public consultation to provide the many stakeholders involved in the tourism sector with an opportunity to comment on the report's recommendations. The public consultation exercise will commence later this month and

will run until late September to allow plenty of time for responses, given that the summer period is very busy for the tourism industry. I will update the Assembly again in the autumn when the consultation period has ended and my officials have analysed the responses received.

I am certain that all Members will join me in thanking Mr Hunter for his work in carrying out the review, which will help to inform and underpin any future changes required to ensure that organisational structures in DETI are the optimum necessary to achieve our long-term goal of making tourism in Northern Ireland a £1 billion industry by 2020. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Mr McGlone (The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas ar an phróiseas comhairliúcháin. I thank the Minister for her statement on the consultation process.

I want to raise a couple of points. One of the bullet points in the statement states:

“DEL should initiate a review of the skills needs of the tourism sector”.

Obviously, that is an ongoing requirement. Will the Minister outline what skills she or her Department see as being necessary as part of that review? Secondly, I note that, on the draft tourism strategy, the consultation document says:

“The NI Executive should publish an updated Strategy for Tourism”.

Given that the draft strategy for tourism came before the Assembly in 2010 and then disappeared into the black hole of the Executive, does the Minister rate the chances of success of a fresh strategy for tourism any higher than the previous one?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for those two points. He is right about the last strategy, which came about after an industry-led panel brought forward recommendations. We then brought it to the Executive. Unfortunately, that was just before the last Assembly elections, and it never came out again. Therefore, the reviewer, John Hunter, has indicated that we need an updated tourism strategy.

I have to say that the fact that we have not had an officially endorsed tourism strategy has certainly not prevented the tourism industry from growing, and I pay tribute to the industry for the way in which it has continued to grow, particularly during that very important year of 2012. When Members have a chance to look at the review report, they will see that 2012 was pointed out by Mr Hunter as a hugely important year for the industry. Indeed, he has suggested that we should perhaps look at another year of a similar type so that we can again coalesce around that branding for Northern Ireland.

It will be an updated strategy. It will take into account the fact that business tourism here has grown, particularly in and around Belfast. Mr Hunter pointed to the success of Visit Belfast in that regard. It will also take into account the experience brand and the five pillars that he has pointed to, and, again, those need to be reflected in the updated strategy. Finally, the review of public administration will also have to be factored in to any new tourism strategy because roles and responsibilities have changed in that regard.

We have been working very well with DEL on skills throughout a number of sectors. The hospitality sector has been important in that regard, and People 1st has provided a lot of training for the sector. Londonderry was also very recently named as the first city to have WorldHost city status.

This means sitting down with the industry and finding out what its needs are in particular destinations. It could be welcoming skills, skills in the kitchen or skills at front of house. It is really what the industry needs to move forward. Mr Hunter has suggested that DEL needs to have a close look at the skills required by the industry and have that sectoral review. I know that my officials have been speaking to officials in DEL, and I hope that the Minister will also recognise that there is a need to do that. We will discuss that during the consultation period.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her statement, and I trust that we will see progress made on the development of tourism. Can the Minister advise on what plans there are to replace the chief executive, Alan Clarke, who, I understand, is retiring later this year?

Mrs Foster: Indeed, Mr Clarke has indicated that he wishes to retire. He has been in post whilst tourism has grown in Northern Ireland, and we thank Alan for all that he has done for the tourism industry here. I hope that the consultation responses will be looked at by the end of September or the beginning of October. I do not think that we are in a position to appoint a new chief executive until that consultation is finished and we decide once and for all on the way forward for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. So, I will be speaking to the chair of the Tourist Board, Dr Howard Hastings, to make sure that we have the appropriate cover in place. Once the decisions are taken, we will, of course, move very swiftly to appoint a new chief executive.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a ráitis. I thank the Minister for her statement and look forward to reading the detailed report over the summer months.

Will she accept that a single body charged with promoting tourism across all of Ireland, which could promote attractions such as the Ring of Kerry, the Marble Arch Caves and the Cliffs of Moher as a single and more enhanced product, as opposed to two separate products, would encourage more holidaymakers to visit this part of Ireland and that that has been a problem for the Tourist Board in recent times?

Mrs Foster: No, I do not accept that. I accept that the Member has not had an opportunity to look at the report, which will be up on the website after I leave the Chamber. In his report, Mr Hunter talks about the fact that:

“A homogenised approach fails to capture the diversity that is on offer across the island”

— he is talking not just about Northern Ireland but about parts of the Republic of Ireland —

“as a whole and its attractiveness to a wide range of tourist audiences as illustrated by the market segmentation in GB proposed by the Tourism Recovery Task Force.”

The Tourism Recovery Task Force was something that a number of the industry bodies and NITB and

Tourism Ireland brought together to look at the fact that they were concerned about the GB market. One of the recommendations that came back was the fact that, because that is our closest and nearest market, we need to have a standout approach for the different destinations. That is true for the Republic of Ireland, and it is certainly true for Northern Ireland. We need to have that standout and consider how we best achieve it. The review report is saying that we must work together in the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, or whatever its name will be in the future, along with Tourism Ireland to make sure that Northern Ireland gets that standout, particularly in the GB market, because that is where we feel that the biggest market is for us. That has been the case historically, and it will be the case in the future as well.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her statement. From my time in the Assembly, it seems to me that we are not particularly good at how we do consultations. Will the Minister ensure that, when the actual wording to the consultation is built on, it will be done in such a way that the tourism industry has a say. We need to get the right answers, and the right questions into it, and then get everything in place to have a strategy for tourism that we can all work on together and that is in place in a year or two.

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his question. The whole point of the consultation is that we have stakeholder involvement in the answers. Regardless of what the questions are, knowing the tourism industry, it will tell me what it thinks. It will come forward and make sure that I am aware of what it believes is the best way forward for what is currently the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

We are having quite a long consultation period to allow the tourism industry to respond. We recognise that the summer months are very busy, so we have left the closing date to 22 September, which gives a lot of time for people to have a look at this. Hopefully, they will come forward. Indeed, I know that they will come forward with their suggestions on and responses to the report.

Mr Lunn: I note the long-term goal to make Northern Ireland tourism a £1 billion industry by 2020. I do not know what the current figure is, but I am sure that that goal is quite challenging. Can the Minister tell us whether there has been, or will be, any further discussion about the VAT rate on the hospitality industry in Northern Ireland compared with that in the Republic?

3.45 pm

Mrs Foster: The tourism industry in Northern Ireland feels very strongly about VAT rates. Of course, it is a UK issue as a whole, and the industry has made representation to the Treasury. We do not have the power to vary VAT rates here in the Assembly, and I support the tourism industry on that because I believe that it leaves us in an uncompetitive situation.

The £1 billion figure is taken from the Programme for Government. I am delighted to say that our key Programme for Government targets for visitor numbers and tourism revenue have been achieved for 2013, and we are well on our way to achieving the 2014 targets and have, in fact, already exceeded our 2014 visitor spend targets. Therefore, we are very much on track to make this a £1 billion industry by 2020. I pay tribute to the Tourist Board, to Tourism Ireland and to everybody in the tourism industry

for really driving the industry forward. It has been a very bright part of the new Northern Ireland, and I am very proud of the way in which they drive forward the industry.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for her statement. She revealed today that the consultation exercise will start next month, so will she ensure that local community organisations that are involved in tourism, such as the East Belfast Partnership, which is organising another C S Lewis event later this year, will also be consulted?

Mrs Foster: I very much hope that it will take part in the consultation. It is an opt-in process as opposed to my having to go out to people; they should opt in to the consultation, and I hope that community groups do that. An interesting point about engagement during the Giro d'Italia was the fact that so many community organisations got involved with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Some 800 organisations from across Northern Ireland went along to hear about the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's toolkit for getting involved in the Giro d'Italia.

The success of the Giro d'Italia was down to community organisations coming out and getting involved and, of course, embracing the pink. I hope that it is a good model and that other community organisations will do the same in the future, because tourism is everybody's business, from the taxi driver, to the person who meets you at your hotel or B&B, to the person who cleans your room: everybody has a stake in the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. I hope that community organisations will see this as important and respond accordingly.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for her statement. I want to touch on the relationship between Tourism Ireland and the NITB and what appears to be a criticism of diminished communication and collaboration. I noted her earlier answer on the UK market. Would enhanced collaboration and communication lead to the North being sold as part of an island-wide package to avoid confusion among overseas visitors?

Mrs Foster: That is exactly what happens in our faraway destinations at the moment. Tourism Ireland has a remit to promote the whole of the island of Ireland across the world, but its terms of reference state that it has to give Northern Ireland standout, so Tourism Ireland does that at present. My difficulty is that the standout piece does not seem to be working as well for us as it is for the rest of the island because the Republic of Ireland is moving ahead on visitor numbers, which is, of course, to do with direct access. I am encouraging Tourism Ireland to work with the Northern Ireland airports to improve our direct access with the rest of the world. The Member will know about the importance of that access to North America, having been there just last week. It is vital that we continue not only to have direct access there but to look at new markets.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for her statement. I also express our appreciation to Mr Hunter for the way in which he engaged and the opportunity that we had to put our views to him. As someone who represents the North Antrim constituency, which has many of the premier tourist attractions in Northern Ireland, you will not be surprised that I want to ask the Minister about the engagement that she has had with key partners such as the Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Partnership to ensure that it plays a part in getting the maximum benefit from a new policy and a new focus on tourism.

Mrs Foster: With the updated strategy, it is important that the nine destination areas that have been identified are taken forward. Under RPA, we have 11 new local government structures. There are nine new destinations. Therefore, there will be some overlap. That is why Mr Hunter states in his report that there is a need for clarity and certainty about the different roles that each of the organisations will have, and to make sure that we do not have duplication. In other words, that a council or partnership does not decide to do marketing that is the responsibility of Tourism Ireland or the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Some work is to be carried out on that over the summer. It will be interesting to hear from the different organisations how they view those relationships because decisions will have to be taken about that in September/October.

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment

Mr Deputy 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 in which 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 in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr McKinney: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the prevalence of cancer in Northern Ireland and the efforts made by front line staff and professionals to counteract the disease; notes the advances in cancer treatment being made here and the achievements of the cancer centre in South Belfast, which, in collaboration with the pharmaceutical sector, has made significant and unique strides in biomedical diagnostic research; applauds the global and local economic and health benefits of such research; acknowledges that the predicted increased rates of cancer dictate that more needs to be done in terms of furthering research and treatment; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to support this work to develop Northern Ireland as a world-class centre for cancer research and treatment.

I welcome the opportunity to bring this debate to the House, and I support the motion, as amended. The amendment is welcome, but it must be followed by action. The encouragement towards a biomedical research centre is a step on the road to fully capturing the health and economic benefits, but it is only that: we really need to be looking at an innovative, academic-led hospital to drive innovation. Invest NI will have learned that during its recent trip to San Diego where it was illustrated that countries such as Austria are making strides in that regard.

This issue is very important, and I first wish to highlight the positive work in cancer treatment and research that is going on across the North. I brought a similar motion to the House as the topic of an Adjournment debate, and it is worth re-noting the strides in cancer treatment advances that I outlined then.

One of the seminal reports dictating the nature of cancer services here was the Campbell report of 1996. It made a number of key recommendations, including the establishment of a cancer centre, as noted in the motion today. The advances made in cancer treatment and research here in the last 15 years are huge. Staff in our hospitals and universities have played their role in that and continue to deliver high-quality care to cancer patients.

Let us look again at some of the strides that have been made. In 1993, breast cancer screening was established throughout Northern Ireland. In 1994, the first cancer registry was established. In 1999, the first cancer incidence data was compiled. In 2004, the Northern Ireland Cancer Network was established. In 2006, the cancer centre was opened. On top of that, in 2011, we created a cancer services framework.

The progression has taken us an enormous distance, but that is, unfortunately, tainted by current health policies. The cancer drugs issue has been brought up by the SDLP on numerous occasions. The current system for access — the individual funding request (IFR) — is unjustly prohibitive. The Minister has previously come to the House and cited a 95% uptake for non-National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) approved drugs. What he did not say, though, was that only 5% apply in the first place. So if, for example, we have 100 people in need of a drug, the Minister's 95% uptake figure equates to only four or five of those 100.

The Minister's response to the public outcry over this inequality was to instantly tout as an answer prescription charges and welfare reform. However, the SDLP has found an answer that the Minister has not told us about: the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme (PPRS). The pharmaceutical industry said that the Minister could use that to open access at the stroke of a pen. Why has he not done that? Why has he sought to waste time by reviewing an IFR process that almost everyone in the healthcare sphere agrees is defunct? Why has he dragged welfare reform and prescription charges into the debate when the arguments for a cancer drugs fund model have already been won? The money is there.

In Scotland, the peer-approved clinical system (PACS) has replaced the individual patient treatment request. It is estimated that the new system, which incorporates increased patient-clinician engagement, will help up to 1,500 people in the first year. The Minister has said that he is taken by that model, but what is he doing to replicate it?

Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in 28 of 53 European countries, and it is projected that, by 2035, someone will die from cancer every 10 seconds in Europe. That is a startling forecast. The European Cancer Patient's Bill of Rights has sought to bring equal access, and the work done by Queen's — Paddy Johnston and Mark Lawler in particular — has been integral to that progression.

Here, nearly 13,000 people are diagnosed with cancer every year, and just over 4,000 lose their battle with the illness. At this point, I acknowledge the death of Noleen Adair, who was buried yesterday. She led a charity that did enormously good work.

It is against that backdrop that the improvements in research and innovative treatment in the North are heartily welcomed. From a clinical perspective, the cancer centre, which is located in the City Hospital and opened in 2006, has made a huge difference to cancer provision here. It offers an extensive range of specialist treatment, including radiotherapy, in a modern and professional setting. The centre for cancer research at Queen's University has also played a pivotal role. The centre has an array of core competencies and is filled with the expertise of over 300 cancer, clinical and basic researchers. We saw recently how the research taking place here can have a very positive effect: the work of Almac has produced information that will improve ovarian cancer diagnosis, and I commend the role of Invest NI in providing capital for that work.

All of that is inconsistent with the current cancer drugs access policy and the red herring that prescription charges are needed to pay for greater access. That is a more significant red herring when we consider the amount

given yesterday to the whole of the UK through the PPRS: £74 million per quarter. We get around 3% of that, which could translate into something like £9 a million year. The money is there. Furthermore, it is projected that we will get 9% next year, which equates to £27 million. Prescription charges are simply not needed to fund cancer drugs.

I would like to talk about the work of clinicians. I know, through discussions with them and cancer patients, that doctors are being placed in an invidious position — a moral conundrum, if you like — when it comes to prescribing treatment for cancer. They know the gravity of any potential diagnosis, the chances of survival and, most importantly, that treatment available elsewhere is not available here. That means that, often, the treatment path recommended may not be the most effective one.

Clinicians here know that, due to the flawed nature of the IFR system currently in operation, most patients will not qualify for the latest and most effective drugs. That is unacceptable: it is unacceptable for the patients and unacceptable to put clinicians in that position. I have written to the Royal College of Physicians to ask whether knowing that presents its members with any moral or ethical dilemmas. Without breaching the private nature of any correspondence, I can tell you that the college is treating the matter very seriously and will debate it thoroughly.

The Minister may wish to use the welfare reform argument, as he has done, and he echoed it today on several occasions, but let us look at welfare reform in relation to this topic. There has been substantial work done by Macmillan Cancer and others, and research has shown the financial impact of receiving a cancer diagnosis, with some almost £300 a month worse off on average. What will welfare reform do to them? The reforms to our welfare system will only hurt those people further.

4.00 pm

The role of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in the attempt to make Northern Ireland a world leader in cancer research and treatment should not be underestimated. Last week, I accompanied Minister Foster and other members of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to the United States and talked at length about cancer research and drugs development. We have to put cancer drugs into perspective. In reality, they are the conclusion of a process that is often started here through research and medical trials. For that reason, it is almost logical that those patients should get the drugs. Many are developed and trialled here but, in a cruel irony, not available here.

My experience in America tells me that there are significant jobs and many other economic benefits in the development of drugs infrastructure. We have one here, but, if the experience of San Diego is anything to go by, it could grow far more. Here, too, was a city that was facing potential economic downturn. Here, too, was a city that had the beginning of a biotech future and decided that it wanted to build on it. It is now sitting on a multibillion-pound industry that employs thousands and brings wealth, prosperity and improvements, not just to the people of San Diego but globally. This should be the vision for here, too.

What are our barriers to this? We are taking a very narrow focus on cancer drugs, seeing them as a cost and not a

benefit. We are not seizing the day in promoting our drugs industry. That is why our motion calls not just on the Health Minister to do something but for joined-up government, in this case linking with the Enterprise Minister in developing this place as a global centre of excellence. Good work has already been completed. As I have noted, the role of Invest NI in helping with R&D moneys has resulted, for example, in the good work of Almac on breakthrough treatment, but that is only the tip of the iceberg.

We can approach this argument from a number of different angles, whether cancer, drugs development or jobs. However, we will not achieve the full ambition and vision unless we see this as a journey that will develop all of them equally, with cancer patients benefiting from the latest diagnostic treatment and drugs, and drugs that are developed and trialled here through well-paid jobs that are based here, bringing income that stays here —

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

Mr McKinney: — as part of Northern Ireland plc, a global centre of excellence.

Mr Dunne: I beg to move the following amendment: After first "research and treatment;" insert

"supports efforts to broaden access for local patients to innovative treatments and clinical trials; encourages the establishment of a university-linked biomedical research centre,".

I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate on what remains a terrible disease in our society that affects virtually every family in Northern Ireland. I thank Mr Fearghal McKinney for bringing the motion. I commend the amendment to the House and trust that Members will see fit to support it as it complements the original motion.

Cancer continues to be a serious health risk to all our population, with 13,000 patients affected in Northern Ireland every year. The treatment of cancer is carried out through our hospital services, with multi-professional hospital teams, and support from a number of charities, including Marie Curie and NI Hospice, which all do an excellent job and to which we must pay tribute. During a recent visit to the Marie Curie Hospice at Beaconsfield, a number of us saw at first hand the excellent work that is being carried out for patients and their families at an extremely challenging time in their lives.

In relation to cancer research, the Health Committee recently visited the Northern Ireland Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology to see the excellent work led by Professor David Waugh and Professor Manuel Salto-Tellez. Professor Waugh is a very committed and enthusiastic professional who is very keen to promote the development of cancer treatment and research through locally based research and trials. Last week, he spoke at an event in San Diego prior to the large bio-conference, highlighting the opportunities that exist for the development of cancer drugs and treatments in Northern Ireland.

At the international bio-conference, which was supported by Invest NI, we had on display the work of our two largest universities, Queen's and the University of Ulster, highlighting that skills are available to do such research involving partnership working between industry and academia. We also had on display local firms like Almac, which is involved in extensive research and development

of new drugs with financial support from Invest NI. It is important that we showcase our skills to the world as we seek to attract new investors to work alongside our top medical researchers. Some of the best in the world are here as they seek to find solutions through bio-research into cancer. Bio-research includes work on biological molecules, cell tissues and processes to turn research knowledge into new diagnostics. The real focus for the future treatment of patients is in the need for a focus on the individual needs of such patients. One treatment — such as is carried out at the moment — does not suit all. There are many patients out there, getting standard treatments that are having a negative effect on them.

There is a clear need for more focus-specific treatments in relation to cancer, and we have the professional skills and enthusiasm to make it happen. The recent Connected Health initiative, which involves a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Health and DETI for developing new methods of working, could lead to support for such initiatives and help gain commercial support for further clinical trials and drug development. We need to do more to see the development of a world-class centre of excellence in cancer research and the development of drugs here in Northern Ireland.

In relation to cancer drugs, there is a real need for access to the 38 drugs that are available in the rest of the UK. There is a strong lobby for such treatments, and I know that the Minister has a lot of sympathy for the provision of such drugs. I think we all recognise the strong lobby that has come from our local charities. As MLAs, we have all received the emails, and we appreciate the concern out there.

Again, during our recent visit to the Belfast cancer centre, the consultants there were very clear that it was virtually impossible to get access to the rare cancer drugs under the existing individual funding request (IFR) system. We are advised that the system is so difficult that the professionals are not putting in such applications as it is virtually impossible to get approval.

I look forward to the Minister's response in relation to how successful the IFR system is in getting patients access to the rare cancer drugs that are available in the rest of the UK. I commend the amendment to the House.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the proposer of the motion. I support the motion and the amendment. I believe that cancer, its treatment and research, must be of concern to us all. It is very clear that cancer does not recognise age, gender or borders and, therefore, it is proper that we strive to position, if you like, the North of Ireland as a world-class centre for cancer research and development.

As the proposer of the motion outlined, much has been done and much achieved. I acknowledge and pay tribute to all professional front line staff who commit their daily lives to those endeavours. Our recent visit to the centre for cancer research very clearly showed the professionalism and, indeed, the developments that have been taking place, even over a short number of years. It is certainly very impressive to be a part of that.

The reality is that more than one in three of us will develop some form of cancer during our lifetime. Around 7,000 cases are diagnosed each year. I have referred to the

significant developments in research and treatments but, as the proposer of the motion quite rightly stated, we have equality issues when it comes to accessing the type of drugs that are required. It should be very clear to us all that access to drugs and treatment should not be by dint of postcode.

It is worth noting that the recent Active Citizenship Network conference in Brussels heard calls for a review of access to cancer drugs. I look forward to the Minister's response to that, and further, to his actions on it. It is also very clear that empowering patients has a clear resonance with the 'European Cancer Patient's Bill of Rights', and that is something that the Assembly should support and endeavour to develop.

Cancer research over the last number of years has led to a significant increase in cancer survival rates in the North, and that is very much to be welcomed, but, as the proposer of the motion said, much more needs to be done. In this debate today, people need to get a sense of actions and outcomes flowing from the discussion. Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in 28 out of 53 European countries, and it is projected that, by 2035, someone will die from cancer every 10 seconds in Europe. It is also worth acknowledging that cancer is the single largest cause of death from disease in children and young people. Treatment normally starts immediately, but it is quite often given many miles from home and lasts up to a number of years.

In welcoming developments, I want to single out the progress on the radiotherapy unit in my constituency in Altnagelvin, and I hope that that will allow for further improvement of capacity in the regional cancer centre in Belfast. In welcoming today's motion and supporting the motion and the amendment, I believe that the real ambition for a centre for global health innovation can be supported and developed and is very much welcome.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Member for bringing the motion forward and indicate the support of the Ulster Unionist Party for it.

The prevalence of cancer has been increasing, with some 8,700 patients a year being diagnosed locally and, sadly, some 4,000 passing away, with cancer attributed as contributing to the cause of death. A third of us can expect to suffer from some form of cancer in our lives. Life expectancy is increasing and, with an older population, the prevalence of cancer also increases, so this will be an increasing problem.

In 1997, Northern Ireland was at the bottom of the survival tables. Thankfully, as a result of a number of developments, we are nearer the top today. We are fortunate to have benefited from a number of developments at the Belfast City Hospital site in south Belfast that are collectively contributing to that improved outcome for patients. We have the new cancer treatment centre, where modern treatment facilities are provided at Belfast City Hospital, and I pay tribute to the doctors, the specialist nurses and the support staff who are enabling those better outcomes.

We also have the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, and I acknowledge that, in particular, the work of Professor Paddy Johnston over many years has allowed the development of research here in Belfast. Cutting-edge research has occurred, along with state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment being provided and collaboration

between the private sector and the public sector, and that has enabled direction towards appropriate treatment to suit the needs of individuals and close monitoring of progress of any particular cancer and its treatment.

The close working and support of Cancer Research UK has also enabled significant research in Belfast; that must be acknowledged. I also wish to indicate our thanks to Professor Manuel Salto-Tellez and his colleagues. The close working and integration between our health service and the cancer centre is a significant advantage that we have here and enables us to link the treatment and the testing and, ultimately, the trials. That has not been able to be replicated in many other parts of the world and is a significant advantage that we have, and I believe that that integrated working has been a significant factor in driving up our outcomes.

The other significant feature is the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre. I recently met the clinical director, Dr Richard Wilson, along with the Health Committee, and he highlighted the fact that clinical trials allow the development of personalised medicines that are specifically targeted to each individual and their cancer.

No longer does one treatment suit all. Scientific research and development has enabled particular treatment for particular people to be identified and developed.

4.15 pm

The support of a number of charities in allowing the development of cancer treatment in Belfast must be recognised. So, too, must the support of companies such as Almac, as has been mentioned, which carried out clinical trials for ovarian cancer patients following a local discovery in collaboration with Queen's University. Again, we must recognise that the close working of the Department of Health with DETI, the charities and the private sector — the pharmaceutical industry — has been to the benefit of local patients. A virtuous circle has been created between the cancer treatment centre, the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology and the Cancer Trials Centre. However, the question I have, Minister, is this: why are the 38 specialist cancer drugs available in England not able to be used and trialled in Belfast, as that is inhibiting the progress that can be made? Clearly, we need to move forward.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he acknowledge that there is considerable appetite in the public mind for this, as reflected through the online petition organised by Cancer Focus NI, which has now cleared its 10,000 signature target and doubled it to 20,000?

Mr Beggs: Clearly, the public are questioning why the drugs that are available in England are not available in Northern Ireland, particularly, as I understand it, when all 38 drugs — the Minister can confirm this — would be covered by the UK-wide PPRS and could be provided in Northern Ireland without any significant additional costs. Indeed, I understand that the scheme would guarantee no increases in the provision of branded and specialist medicines until 2015 and limits the potential increase for a number of years thereafter. Given that, why are those drugs not available in Belfast? Why are we putting the trials that could be available at risk? Why are we not allowing the Northern Ireland public to benefit from those specialist drugs —

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

Mr Beggs: — which have been proven to enhance life and the quality of life for those who suffer from cancer?

Mr McCarthy: I thank Mr Fearghal McKinney and Mr Seán Rogers for bringing to the Assembly such an important motion on an issue that affects every family in Northern Ireland.

On behalf of the Alliance Party, I wish to put on record our total support for all our front line staff and professional people who work tirelessly to counteract and overcome this terrible scourge on the life of far too many of our friends and neighbours. A few days ago, as a member of the Health Committee, I had the pleasure, along with others, of visiting the biomedical diagnostic research unit sited on the City hospital complex. I want to sincerely thank our hosts on that day for their hospitality and the important information we received on the work that they are engaged in. I pay tribute to them and the passionate and dedicated manner in which they go about that work on our behalf. Indeed, it is such a shame that, with all the innovation and new medicine, cancer patients here cannot benefit from that success, as other Members have indicated, simply because our Health Department, to date, has not funded those vital cancer drugs. I understand that there are some 38 or 39 such drugs. If you reside in England, you can access those life-saving drugs. Surely, that cannot be right.

On 24 June — only last week — in the Assembly, in answer to a question from me on cancer drug funding, the Minister, who is with us today in the Chamber, replied:

"I am firmly of that view. I need the support of the House to deliver cancer drugs, and I implore the House to give me that support to buy the cancer drugs instead of putting me in some sort of chained-up position where I cannot do it and then condemning me for not doing it. Give me the support to do it, and I will certainly buy the cancer drugs. I will buy them straight away if the House gives me the support to do it."
[Official Report, This Bound Volume, p279, col 2].

Today, I am certain that the House will, by voting to support the motion and the amendment, give our Health Minister the OK to go out and buy those drugs without delay.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: Wait until I am finished if you will, please, Jim.

The First Minister said clearly and openly recently that, if Edwin needs more money for our health service, he will get it. To all Ministers in the Executive I say this: do the decent thing now, and put your money where your mouth is. There should be no more excuses or pontificating and no more unnecessary suffering for many of our constituents. Give the Health Minister your approval today for him to carry out his commitment to purchase these cancer drugs straight away. Too much time has already been wasted.

On further research and treatment, I have no doubt that, given all that is going on in the centre that we visited last week, we have the ability to innovate further and produce world-class medicines and drugs. We can be world leaders; in fact, I believe that we already are. At present, as Fearghal said, Cancer Focus is rightly engaged in a massive publicity campaign to get equality in Northern

Ireland for all cancer patients. We must give 100% support to that campaign. It is also supported by the local press, and the stories in recent times — certainly in the 'Belfast Telegraph' — have been heart-rending. So many good people have been cut down by this disease that it must surely make us all totally determined to provide medicines to ease pain and prolong life for every sufferer.

The Minister recently suggested the reintroduction of prescription charges to fund cancer drugs. That is something that the Alliance Party is prepared to consider, provided that safeguards for vulnerable patients are put in place.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: No, not at the moment, Roy.

Devolution gives the Assembly the power to provide for our own people. Surely being able to access life-saving drugs must be paramount to every Member of the Assembly. We do not want to see headlines such as these I have in my hand:

"I may have to leave my family for England to get cancer drug that I need".

There is a story about Una Crudden with the headline:

"Terminally ill Una Crudden fights on: I'm now in palliative care, no chemotherapy left".

We are all ashamed that that has to be the case for so many people. Can we give Mr Poots the support he needs to buy the life-saving drugs?

I will give way to Jim Wells first.

Mr Wells: The honourable Member suggested that we as an Assembly can wave a magic wand, and, by giving our support to him, the Minister could introduce the cancer drugs. It is a wee bit more fundamental than that. It is about finding the cash to do so, not the political will. It is about finding the money to meet all the competing demands on the health budget.

Mr McCarthy: I fully appreciate what Mr Wells says, but the Minister made an impassioned plea in the Assembly last week for Members to give him support. We give him that support today by supporting the motion and the amendment, and Mr Poots can go out and buy the drugs straight away.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: Go ahead.

Mr Beggs: I understand that the 38 specialist drugs available through English cancer drugs funds are included in the PPRS. Therefore, their inclusion and availability in a specialist scheme in Northern Ireland would be at no extra cost. Does the Member not think that it is rather strange that they are not available in Northern Ireland, given that background?

Mr McCarthy: I totally agree with Mr Beggs.

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

Mr McCarthy: I plead with the Assembly to support the motion and the amendment. It is over to the Minister to go and do what he told us last week he would do: buy them immediately.

Mrs Cameron: I am happy to support the motion and the amendment. It is well documented that one in three of us

will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in our life, which, to put it in perspective, is a staggering 36 out of the Assembly's 108 MLAs. With an increasingly ageing population, the need to do everything possible to raise awareness, provide effective treatments and provide long-term outcomes has never been greater.

Around 10,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer in Northern Ireland each year, a figure that has increased by approximately 3.2% year on year, putting an even greater pressure on our healthcare system and the professionals employed in it. Northern Ireland is at the forefront of advances in cancer management, with academics such as Professor Patrick Johnston and Professor Mark Lawler from Queen's University leading the way in the development and innovation of new drugs and treatment methods. Working in an interdisciplinary manner, scientists, doctors and nurses at the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology are aiming to provide an internationally competitive centre of the highest quality to improve patient care and develop new treatments.

Having recently visited the centre and seen at first hand the work that is being carried out, I take this opportunity to thank the staff and Cancer Research UK for the groundbreaking achievements at the facility.

Since the publication of the Campbell report, the establishment of five cancer units and a regional cancer centre has greatly changed the way in which patients are looked after in the healthcare system. In my constituency, the unit at Antrim Area Hospital provides excellent care for people with more common cancers such as lung, breast and colorectal cancer. It also provides chemotherapy services, which enables patients to be treated closer to home. The health service, working closely with charities such as Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care, Action Cancer and Cancer Focus Northern Ireland, is able to provide a holistic approach to cancer services, including screening, prevention, support and palliative care.

A recent announcement by Almac highlighted the importance of capital investment and research, and its £8 million project resulted in information that will significantly benefit the treatment of ovarian cancer. The scheme, which was part-funded by Invest NI, will provide vast improvements to cancer treatment and will also make significant financial savings to the health service.

The advances in the treatment of cancer are evident in the increasing survival rates, but we cannot rest on our laurels. Prevention and education must remain at the heart of those advances in the future. With around half of all cancers being attributable to lifestyle choices, we need to encourage people to give up smoking, reduce their alcohol intake, eat a balanced diet, exercise more and protect their skin in the sun. A multi-agency approach must be adopted to reduce the ever-increasing trend of cancer diagnosis. Of course, there are many cases of fit, seemingly healthy individuals who will also be diagnosed with some form of cancer.

We must ensure that the specialist drugs that can enhance or extend life are made available. It is unfair that some drugs are available in other parts of the UK but not in Northern Ireland. I encourage the Health Minister to continue to work towards finding the funding solution to make that happen. We owe it to cancer sufferers and campaigners such as Una Crudden, who have given

selflessly of their own limited time and displayed incredible courage to fight for awareness and equality of treatment for those who will come after them. We must do all in our power in the Assembly, leaving political posturing aside, to do the right thing and find solutions that will be a fitting legacy to those who have campaigned so passionately.

In Northern Ireland, we are extremely fortunate to have a fantastic health service that is free at the point of use. We must channel our efforts into ensuring that we continue to provide that world-class service to all through investment and in research and development. We have made enormous inroads into the treatment and prevention of cancer. I look forward to that continuing for future generations.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I also support the motion and the amendment. The motion is a positive endorsement of those who deal with patients and those who further research. The amendment refers to the encouragement of a university-linked research centre, and that should also be supported.

We have dealt with the statistics relating to cancer. It is the main cause of death of one in three people here. Obviously, incidence is likely to increase alongside the ageing population. It continues to put increasing demands on the services provided. The costs associated with the treatment of cancer are substantial.

Cancer results in costs not only to patients but to their families. As someone who lost my spouse to cancer a number of years ago, I am well aware of the situation that it puts families in. It can place families in financial difficulty. Treatment often means that patients have to take sick leave and, in some cases, give up their jobs. There are other financial costs such as those associated with childcare etc. After treatment, people need more heat in their homes. There are travel costs associated with medical appointments, and patients often have to be accompanied by relatives, who also have to take time off work.

Specialist cancer drugs are expensive. Trusts tend to work on the principle that, if NICE recommends that a drug should not be used in the NHS, it is unlikely to be used or funded here. In England, as was stated, 38 life-extending cancer drugs are available to patients through the cancer drugs fund. Certainly, here in the North, we have contributed significantly to the field of cancer research, clinical trials and new treatments. Ironically, some of the medicines available on the cancer drug fund list were developed and trialled here but are still not available to patients living here. That simply means that, in some cases, our cancer patients are unable to access treatments with proven clinical benefits.

4.30 pm

It is important to recognise the imperative driving patients and their families to seek and secure access to treatment that may extend life. We have to understand that patients whose prognosis for recovery through conventional treatments is poor may wish to participate in trials, and those trials should be made available.

As for the provision of treatment and the availability of drugs, the PPRS can be looked at by the Minister, and I am sure that he is already doing that.

I support the motion, and I thank the Members who proposed the motion and the amendment. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr D McIlveen: I, too, support the motion and the amendment. First, it is worth mentioning the problem that we have in Northern Ireland with diagnosing cancer. Mr McKinney made the point that, in a very short space of time, over 10,000 people signed a petition asking for a cancer drugs fund to be implemented in Northern Ireland. Those figures are hardly surprising, given that, on average, 13,000 people every year are diagnosed with cancer in Northern Ireland. That is 13,000 people — our constituents — who go to their doctor and get that news. I think that all of us would dread the thought of ever having to have that conversation with our doctor. We are, therefore, constantly reminded by family, constituents and friends just how serious an issue this is. I believe that we should spend our time on it and put our shoulder to the wheel to try to ensure that the provision of diagnoses and the search for a cure continue to be funded. I know that the Minister is committed to doing that.

One group of people omitted from today's debate are those who help and are crucial in the development of new cancer treatments and new treatments in general by taking part in clinical trials. We have to commend those who volunteer to take part in such trials. I know that there have been campaigns about that even in this Building. In May, we had the OK To Ask campaign, which encouraged patients to ask their doctors about which trials are available at any given time, because those could be used to help to find a cure and to develop drugs that are coming to market.

Cancer research is a major driver for investment as well. Mr Dunne mentioned that in his opening remarks. Of course the investment side in this context is secondary, and quite rightly so. However, if we were to develop a world-leading product here, we would be very proud of it.

The argument about England and —

Mr McKinney: I thank the Member for giving way. I would like to extend the thought on that. If we were to develop that in a holistic way, either for tertiary or secondary, would it not be possible to attract more trials and even more innovative drugs, which our cancer patients could avail themselves of?

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Member for his intervention. When we deal with something that is for many people a ticking time bomb once they get a diagnosis, we have to deal with people for whom things can never happen fast enough, and I take the point that there will always be a time pressure. However, with the memorandum of understanding that has been signed between DETI and the Department of Health, which, in many ways, is very innovative thinking on the part of both Departments, I believe that we are getting to a point now where that can and will be the case. I am sure that the Minister will be able to update us on how that relationship with DETI is going.

We are hearing a lot about the 38 cancer drugs that are available. We would all support absolute equality for patients in Northern Ireland with patients in the rest of Great Britain, but we have to be conscious of the fact that, in many ways, we are comparing apples with pears: there are 38 cancer drugs available in the rest of the United Kingdom, but there are also drugs that we fund here that

are not available over there, so we have to accept that there are differences.

In many ways, that has also led to confusion, particularly about the PPRS. The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding of the PPRS is that it does not bring new money into the system; it is a scheme designed to mitigate the price rises in branded medicines. My interpretation is that the rest of the United Kingdom receives considerable income from prescription charges, which we do not have to pay, so we do not have that income. So the Department in Great Britain has the flexibility to divert the PPRS money, which we cannot do because we would leave ourselves financially exposed to any price hike in a brand of medicine already approved. Balancing the funds has to be taken into account, and Mr Wells made that point very well.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: I am sorry, Mr Beggs, I am running very short of time. The Minister made it clear to the Assembly that he would support the reintroduction of a small prescription charge in Northern Ireland. Whilst I know that there were caveats attached, and I would not expect anything different, I take encouragement from Mr McCarthy saying that the Alliance Party is at least open-minded. So, hopefully, we can get buy-in from the other parties as well.

We have to deal with not just the cure but the prevention. There is a lot of work going on in the Department on prevention, including the use of alcohol and tobacco. I thank the Deputy Speaker for the opportunity to contribute.

Mr McCallister: Like colleagues, I support the motion and the amendment. Like huge numbers of our constituents, there is not, sadly, anyone in the House who has not been affected in some shape or form by cancer or had a relative or loved one who, at some point, has had that diagnosis. That gives us some idea of the scale of the problem that we face in tackling cancer.

As Mrs Cameron said, there are many preventative things, and we have a duty to start a drive on those. The Minister, in conjunction with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and other agencies, right through from our education system, needs a much more coherent and joined-up approach to tackling the very issues that Mrs Cameron talked about: dealing with the effects of poor diet, alcohol abuse, or misuse, and looking at the number of units that individuals consume. All are contributory factors. The glorious weather over the last few days can also be a contributory factor. There are many preventative things that we have to do.

Mr Brady talked about the financial impact. Over a number of years, the work of groups such as Macmillan has highlighted not only the turmoil of dealing with a cancer diagnosis but the impact that it can have on a family.

When it comes to developing new drugs, Northern Ireland has, over the past few years, developed a certain reputation and expertise. We want to continue to build on that.

We want to encourage as much of that innovation as possible, and partnerships between Queen's University and the cancer centre are welcome and build on that. That is something that we must do all that we can do to encourage.

Many Members have talked about the statistics and some of the welcomed improvements that there have been in

survival rates. We are still not doing as well as many other comparative parts of Europe. That is something that we need to keep a focus on. I commend the work that the health service is doing in being much better at addressing the patient's journey from diagnosis to treatment. It is an example of where we could provide a much quicker, faster response from the health service for other conditions. Thankfully, we are doing better in some of those measures in cancer treatment, but we need to keep the focus on research and development and on bringing in new partners to develop clinical trials, as Mr McIlveen talked about. We need to focus on how we can encourage that and on how we can make sure that those treatments are being developed.

There is also the important point about new and approved drugs being accessible to members of society — our constituents. It is of enormous regret, and, I am sure, very disturbing to Members, that we seem to be lagging behind other parts of the country in respect of the number and range of approved drugs that are available in Northern Ireland. I support some of what the Minister has talked about with regard to looking at a modest prescription charge and directing it to that. That would be important, if he could guarantee that the money would go to that, as I would hope he could.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close, please.

Mr McCallister: That is something that is certainly worth having a debate on.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: Yes.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member explain why he would want to introduce prescription charges if there is a backstop on the pharmaceutical budget?

Mr McCallister: If money was available in the pharmaceutical budget, you would, of course, go there first. You would not introduce a prescription charge when you are not using all of the moneys available in the pharmacy budget. I have heard the Minister talk about how we might develop a dedicated cancer drugs fund that would be used to fund the very high cost, sometimes experimental drugs that are very, very expensive to use. That is something that I want to see people across Northern Ireland having access to. It is vital that they have access to those drugs; I want to see that.

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

Mr McCallister: We are lagging behind the rest of the country in doing that, and that is something that the Assembly and the Minister should be aiming to put right.

Mr Agnew: My election to the House was filled with mixed emotions. The day before I was elected, I buried a good friend of mine, Conor Shaw, who unfortunately lost his life at age 31 as a result of cancer. As many Members have mentioned, it is a disease that will affect almost all of us in some way, directly or indirectly, so prevalent is it in society. Pam Cameron gave the statistic that one third of people will likely die from the disease. Indeed, our former colleague David McClarty, unfortunately, was lost to the illness.

A number of Members have made mention of the impressive campaign from Cancer Focus NI calling for equal access to cancer drugs. I think that it has been so

successful in getting support because it is something that all our constituents will have had some degree of experience of.

4.45 pm

The Minister took questions on access to cancer drugs during Question Time earlier, and I regret that he chose to turn it into a debate about welfare reform. Access to drugs for many illnesses, but for cancer in particular, was a problem for the health service before the debate about welfare reform came up; one did not cause the other. Whilst we need to have mature conversations around Budget allocation, it is a shame to turn such an important and emotive issue for people into a political squabble.

Conversely, I welcome the fact that the Minister has brought forward proposals, such as an annual charge for prescriptions. It is certainly something that we can look at as a possible option although, as has been stated, we need transparency around finances. Would a charge go directly to providing funds for cancer drugs? What would the line of financial accountability be? What other options can and are being considered? I know many people who feel strongly that there should be no prescription charges, but there could be a voluntary payment scheme whereby people could choose to pay for prescriptions if they believe they can afford to. I prefer that approach, but let us look at the evidence and research on what approaches have been taken elsewhere and let us present proposals rather than simply a take-it-or-leave-it proposal. That would be the best way forward.

My intention, on behalf of the Green Party, and, seemingly, the intention of all parties in the House, is to support the motion and the amendment. The Minister can see that when he is willing to work with his ministerial colleagues, his Committee and the Assembly the political will is there. I think we can agree on the destination of getting equal access to cancer drugs for people in Northern Ireland. Let us have a reasoned and sensitive debate about how we get to that destination, what steps are required and what steps we are willing to take to achieve that because, whilst financial issues are, of course, a consideration, people feel that they are part of the National Health Service and that there is an injustice when treatment is available to people in GB that is not available in Northern Ireland. I think that we would get much more understanding from our constituents if we were seen to work together on this issue.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I welcome today's motion. I am grateful to the honourable Members for raising the important issue of cancer research and treatment. A reduction in the number of people who develop cancer and in the number whose lives are ended prematurely are goals that we all desire.

We are in the midst of demographic change. Every day brings new statistics on how our ageing population will change our future society. One change is that, with higher numbers of older people, we may see more people with cancer. Other things are changing, too. Through research and the clinical application of research findings, we have improved how we diagnose and treat cancer, so we should not resign ourselves to a future with more cancer. We can do something about that.

Prevention reduces the impact of cancer on our services, and, of course, on people. Our Public Health Agency

has campaigns in place and in development to raise awareness and provide advice to minimise the risks through our lifestyles — it is always worth repeating — whether it is tobacco and the absolute necessity to stop smoking altogether; alcohol consumption and making it very clear that you should not consume alcohol or consume it in moderate quantities; taking exercise, which is abundantly important; weight management, or sunlight exposure.

These programmes are based on the best available evidence from research on how to prevent cancer. Our screening programmes raise awareness of symptoms of early cancer and opportunities for early intervention. Excellence in cancer diagnosis is essential to support the best outcomes for patients. Our cancer diagnostic services include one of the UK's most advanced in molecular pathology, deploying cutting-edge technologies to serve both research and cancer services.

On that particular front, I think that it is absolutely critical — Mr McCarthy is here — that DEL, my Department and DETI engage with Queen's University in developing a programme for them to advance further. That will involve a capital investment, and it will involve a recurrent investment, but it will put Northern Ireland in an even more advanced place when it comes to cancer research. I do not have much time for people who suggest that we are in danger of losing cancer research. People are here because of the quality of the research that is carried out, the quality of the people who are carrying out that research and the availability of people who are willing to participate. The fact that we have an electronic care record puts us in an advantageous position. Northern Ireland has worked hard to get to that point with key research people.

We have also more recently, just last year, started contributing to a national fund of some £2 million, which reaps around £4.50 for every £1 that we spend on research. Research is well placed in Northern Ireland. For one in five cancer patients in Northern Ireland who participate in such research, those tests enable patients to receive the most appropriate treatment specific to their tumours — the treatment to which they are most likely to respond. The staff and facilities that enable the development of the most advanced, personalised treatment are supported in part through funding from Cancer Research UK and our own regional Health and Social Care R&D funds. That is something that we should not discount when we are having this discussion. That is something that many people in other parts of the United Kingdom are not benefiting from and will not benefit from, but we in Northern Ireland are delivering right here. One in five cancer sufferers are probably at the cutting edge of technology and of research in the services that they are receiving.

Radiotherapy services and research have been boosted significantly in recent years, and our capacity for effective and efficient treatment of patients will be enhanced when our regional radiotherapy facility at Altnagelvin Hospital is completed. I know that the Ulster Unionist Party did not think that we should do that project. I know that it wanted to pull that project. It was patently obvious to me, within the first week that I took office, having visited Altnagelvin, having met the Pink Ladies, having discussed the matter with my Chief Medical Officer, my permanent secretary and key people in cancer research, and having

been to the cancer centre at Belfast City Hospital, that it was something that was absolutely necessary, and not just for the people of the north-west — although it is a good enough reason that people who are suffering from cancer and need 15 minutes of radiotherapy should not have a four-hour round journey to receive that treatment. However, it was necessary not just for the people in the north-west, but because of the rising number of people with cancer. Belfast City Hospital would not have been able to cope with the numbers. It was an absolute necessity.

So I will tell you something, Mr Deputy Speaker: I will not be playing politics with cancer. It is far too important. We are looking at about one in three of our population developing cancer at some stage in their lives. Look around this Room; it will probably affect every family in this Building. This is not something to play politics with; it is something to get real about, and we must be absolutely serious about how we respond to it.

Radiotherapy services and research have been boosted recently, and that is something that we are proud of. I am proud of the improvements in cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment that are deriving from research undertaken in Northern Ireland. For example, the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry has shown that we now have the best breast cancer survival rate of any part of the UK, yet I read a headline in a newspaper scaring people about breast cancer, when we are actually delivering the best results in breast cancer in the United Kingdom. Cancer is not something to scare people about. It is scary enough if you have breast cancer, without reading newspaper headlines that compound that.

We are committed to minimising the number of people whose lives are impacted by cancer, and research is one of the surest ways of achieving that. In addition to the evident benefits for people's health, investing in cancer research also makes sense for economic development. Locally, we have seen initiatives that began as straightforward research projects being translated into commercial developments and products that are destined for the global markets, with the support of local and global industry and Invest Northern Ireland, to provide better care for people across the world, with Northern Ireland being a place that people are looking to for doing things that are significantly better and carrying out improvements that can help others advance in their treatments.

According to a report published two weeks ago, on June 16, each pound invested in cancer research generates a continuous stream of benefits equal to 40p a year thereafter. The report was commissioned by the Academy of Medical Sciences, Cancer Research UK, the Wellcome Trust and the Department of Health in England.

On all of those things, I have heard Members says that all they want is equality. Really? Is that what you want? At this moment in time, England is the only place with the cancer fund in place. Scotland introduced a rare conditions medicine fund in 2013 to cover its orphan drugs — medicines for illnesses that affect fewer than one in 2,000 people. Not all will be cancer, but some will be. It has also replaced its IFR process with a new peer approval process, and the first decisions under that approach are expected this autumn. So, it is not doing the same as England, but you are asking me to do the same as England at this moment in time, and I am listening

to that. I am saying that I would like to do the same as England. Scotland's processes will be considered under the evaluation of our IFR system along with systems in England and Wales in reaching our judgements.

One of the Members said that he wants equality with England. England charges £8 a head for prescriptions. I am not proposing that we do that. I want to do something considerably less. The Member said it. I will take an intervention from that Member who wanted equality with England. Does he want an £8-a-head prescription charge? It would be equality with England to do that. I want to do something considerably less to ensure that we have the funds.

The truth is that the PPRS, which has been mentioned by quite a few Members today, delivers around £3 million a year for us. We are in the PPRS. Let us not be in any doubt about that. We are in it, and that is what it benefits us each year.

Last year, for example, in terms of introducing new drugs, Queen's had a breakthrough on cystic fibrosis, and a drug was identified that impacted people who have the Celtic gene of cystic fibrosis. Such was the breakthrough and the quality of the drug that was produced that people who have cystic fibrosis and have the Celtic gene can now, if they receive that drug, expect to live a full life. They do not die at 20 or at 40; they live a natural life. They can expect to live to 70 or 80 years of age, the same as everybody else, and not die from cystic fibrosis. They may die from something else earlier, but cystic fibrosis is not something that will take them earlier. For those 23 people, those drugs cost us £3.7 million. That is more than the PPRS delivers.

The Assembly can make itself into a talking shop — I think you are about to speak for 10 minutes, Mr McKinney — or it can be absolutely serious about the job in hand. I am absolutely serious when I come to the Assembly and say that I am £160 million short this year. I did not come and tell you that last year or the year before, because that was not the case. My permanent secretary has just taken up a new role in DETI today. I was with him last week. He is also the accounting officer.

I said to him, "I want you, as accounting officer, to tell me this: do you believe that the £160 million is for real, or can we make significant reductions in the requirement?". His response, as someone who is going to be an accounting officer in another Department, was that any savings that could be made would be on the margins. I have a new accounting officer/permanent secretary coming in, and one of his first jobs will be to try to drill through that £160 million and see whether we can make savings that will not have that negative impact.

5.00 pm

If Members want equality with England, do they want me to apply charges on domiciliary care? We spend £40 million providing domiciliary care, mainly to elderly people and vulnerable adults, that you have to pay for in England. Does the Member who wants equality with England want that? Does the Member who wants equality with England want to charge the over-60s for using public transport, because free transport is not available to them in England. Does the Member who wants equality with England want us to charge our students £9,000 a year for fees instead of £3,200? Does the Member who wants equality with

England want to have water rates? Does he also want to increase our rates, which would mean that every member of the public pays twice as much for household rates? Those are the real decisions of government, and we have to take responsibility on occasions. Being in government and delivering governance involves taking difficult decisions on occasions. I am glad —

Mr McKinney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Poots: I am not giving way, Mr McKinney, because you will be speaking for 10 minutes shortly.

I am glad that we are in a situation in which we have been able to do so much for our public. I am also glad that we have that £3 million coming in from the PPRS, because it will help us. However, the truth is that, if we have not got it in us to put our hand in our pocket and produce a few pence for a prescription to enable people who are dying from cancer to have that support for longer and have the potential to live that bit longer and have a greater chance, there is something inherently wrong. I honestly think that, morally, we cannot continue to do what we are doing, which is saying that we would rather spend money on welfare than on health and we would rather give everything out for free, ignore our responsibilities and just keep demanding that others contribute. On some occasions, we have to step back and say, "Do you know what? This will involve a small margin of pain". It will be a few pence, and a maximum of 50p a week for any individual in Northern Ireland. We will have to bear that pain to enable others to enjoy the benefits and the good.

The arguments to me are clear, simple and absolutely valid. Do you know what? I do not blame the previous Minister for taking away prescription charges. He made a decision, and it was absolutely fair at the time. We are in different circumstances today, and I want a ring-fenced amount of money —

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

Mr Poots: — for specialist drugs. That will include drugs for cancer but will also include drugs for other illnesses, such as multiple sclerosis, through which people's health has been greatly inhibited as a consequence. A specialist drugs fund that is ring-fenced.

Mr Wells: The Minister has stolen much of my thunder, because I was going to make exactly the same points as him. I assure honourable Members that there has been no collusion. I will sum up on behalf of those of us who tabled the amendment.

Mr McKinney started his comments in a surprisingly reasonable way. He paid tribute to the huge advances that have been made: the start of the breast screening campaign in 1993; the publication of the cancer services framework in 2011; and, five years earlier, the opening of the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre. He was absolutely right to pay tribute. Two weeks ago, we passed a very important milestone in the history of cancer treatment in the United Kingdom. For the first time ever, there are more people who will be alive 10 years after a diagnosis of cancer than will have passed on. That is a remarkable achievement.

When I was young — a very long time ago — a child who was diagnosed with leukaemia had a death sentence. It was a dreadful thing to happen, and in school at the time

I remember hearing about children who had leukaemia. Today, almost 90% of those children will live. That is a huge advance, and the Minister has already outlined the huge success that we have had in breast cancer, where the survival rate is over 80% in five years. Northern Ireland has played a leading role. We have punched way above our weight as a society in the research that has brought about those dramatic developments. Unfortunately, we are running very hard to stay still because, as a result of demographics, we will inevitably have more cancer because cancer is often linked to age. As we get older as a society, there will be more individuals with cancer, so we will have to continue to work hard. However, success has been achieved.

Apart from the Minister's contribution, I was disappointed by the debate because so many Members homed in on one issue. Indeed, some of us might suggest that the motion was deliberately tabled to continue the debate on the cancer drugs fund. The Minister has been able to explain the situation that he is in quite clearly. There is no new money. There is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The drug companies are not trying to force-feed the Minister with extra cash to buy these drugs. Whatever is saved on the PPRS is eaten up by other vital services in the health budget. There is no money —

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: Yes, I will.

Mr McKinney: I appreciate that the Minister did not take an intervention because he thought that I was making a winding-up speech whereas I had moved the motion. Will the Member accept that we are trying to address inequality and transparency, particularly of funding? You pointed out that the Minister is trying to fill another hole. The PPRS, however, is supposed to be about price regulation and innovative drugs, not filling the other hole. When the Minister talks about prescription charges — by the way, we do not see the costings for those — we think that that is about addressing his wider financial problems and not cancer drugs treatment and provision.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will be glad to know that he has an extra minute.

Mr Wells: I have been on the Health Committee for a lot longer than the Member. I have been on the Committee for five years today, and, if truth be known, it feels like 50 years. The Member fails to understand the huge conflicting demands that are also inherent in the Minister's budget at the moment. It is not a question of £3 million or £4 million sitting gathering dust with nowhere to go. There are hundreds of competing demands that the Minister has to answer.

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: Yes.

Mr McKinney: The agreement is that that money should be spent on innovative drugs. The House has also learned that, under the new deal, with a 10% share of the overall money, we could receive £27 million this year.

Mr Wells: That £27 million could be spent 10 times over, given the present financial situation. I do not think that Members have really grasped the situation. Have they not noticed that, for the first three years, the Minister has made it clear that he could live within his budget? It was going to require a lot of belt tightening —

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: No, I think that I have been very fair.

It involved a lot of belt tightening and a lot of very hard work. He was not crying wolf, unlike the previous Minister, who said almost daily that he did not have enough money in much more benign financial circumstances than we are in today.

This time round, the Department means business. The Department has a monitoring round budget request of £161 million. Last year, the same June monitoring round yielded £80 million, so it does not take a genius to see that, on this occasion, it is unlikely that the Minister will get all that he needs to balance the books. We are in great difficulties, Members of the Assembly, and we have to be realistic and realise that the good times are over as far as large increases for health services are concerned. The demands continue to rise inexorably by between 5.9% and 6.1%, and resources are increasing at 1.9%. We must have the courage of our convictions. I have had a few health problems recently, and, unfortunately, I have visited the pharmacist quite a lot. It makes me feel guilty to get a bagful of material and not have to pay for it. Why should I, on my salary, not pay for my prescriptions? It is madness.

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

Mr Wells: The Minister is asking only for a small contribution to try to balance the books, yet we are running away. Remember, equality works both ways, and the Minister has outlined —

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

Mr Wells: — some very difficult decisions if you want equality.

Mr Rogers: I support the motion and the amendment. On a personal level, I know only too well the devastating impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on an individual and on a family. However, access to screening and early detection mean that there are more cancer survivors and more positive stories like my own. The Chamber needs to send out a clear message to the public today that we need to encourage our people to come forward and get tested, because early diagnosis saves lives.

As elected Members, we must ensure that the medical profession can conduct and access the necessary research that many Members have spoken of today. That research is required to deliver the best possible outcomes. The present inequity of access to innovative cancer drugs in Northern Ireland is not only impacting on patients; it is inhibiting researchers' ability to attract trials. Despite the Minister's statistics in a recent statement, when he said that 1,200 patients were participating in clinical research, only about one sixth of them are involved in clinical trials.

We must always be mindful and thankful for the expert care and medical treatment that many people have spoken about today and which I and my family members received in our hospitals and specialist centres across the North. The dedicated and well-trained staff in our hospitals play a major role in the successful outcome of the treatment of our citizens.

It is time to tackle the cancer drugs inequality in Northern Ireland. Patients here must be able to avail themselves of the necessary medical help. My SDLP colleague has repeatedly raised the issue in Committee, and we in the

SDLP are appalled that, in Northern Ireland, citizens are denied access to treatments that could make a positive impact on their health outcomes. Why should that be? Surely we in the House are tasked with safeguarding the health and well-being of our constituents; therefore, we are obligated to ensure that all available resources are used to promote good health in our population. Access to cancer drugs has been raised with the Health Minister on many occasions, and we have called on the Minister to address the inequalities concerning cancer drug treatment here.

The principal question is this: why should 38 cancer drugs be available in England but not in Northern Ireland? Many Members mentioned that. As we heard from Mr McKinney, the situation is even more troubling when you learn that some of those drugs are being developed and trialled here but are ultimately not available here, even to some of those who helped in the trials. We call on the Minister to say clearly that he will address the fundamental cancer drugs inequality. The lack of action on the provision and accessibility of cancer drugs is similar to the inaction that we have witnessed on the need to adequately review the wider health service. We must recognise the substantial work that has been done on cancer research and treatment.

I now come to Members' comments. Mr Dunne talked about the importance of high-quality research and the fact that there must be more focused and targeted treatment and said that we really needed to do more. He outlined the good work carried out by cancer charities, particularly the lobbying by Cancer Focus. The Chair of the Committee, Ms McLaughlin, made the interesting comment that cancer does not recognise age, gender or borders and that a third of us will develop cancer. She also talked about the positive developments in the radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin. Mr Beggs highlighted the fact that the 38 drugs that we are talking about are part of the PPRS and do not need more money. He praised the work of the cancer centre, Paddy Johnston and many others. Mr McCallister said that we needed to drive on preventative health and that we needed a joined-up approach. He also commended the work of the National Health Service.

Like many of us, Mr Agnew has lost good friends through cancer. We need better access to these drugs, and there needs to be a reasonable and sensible debate for us to get to the desired place. Mr McCarthy said that we needed to give the Minister all the support that he needs to ensure that this unnecessary suffering is reduced. Mrs Cameron made a very positive contribution and said that she had visited the cancer centre. I have visited it too, but I did not visit it until I had to visit it on 35 occasions. However, it was a positive outcome for me. She talked about the holistic approach, as did other Members — the preventative side, education, early intervention, reducing or giving up smoking, reducing the intake of alcohol, a balanced diet, etc. As a House, we need to leave the political posturing aside.

5.15 pm

Mr Brady, too, has personal experience of losing a loved one through cancer. He talked about the financial impact on the family and of living with cancer in the home. Mr McIlveen acknowledged those who help by taking part in clinical trials, and he supported equality for patients in Northern Ireland. We need to have the same opportunities as those in the rest of the UK. It is not just about caring;

it is also about the preventative side. Mr Wells, who will make a very good Health Minister, brought home to me how cancer treatment has changed. My experience is that, 20 years ago, my daughter had leukaemia, and I remember the quality of the care that she got. She has lived to tell the tale. Most Members talked about how research has come on over those years.

Minister, we need to keep working. There are positive stories: the Minister mentioned that cancer survival rates have doubled over the last 40 years, and Mr Wells talked about more people living through than dying from cancer. That is testament to the good work being carried out by committed doctors and nurses across the North.

As legislators and public figures, we must ensure that our communities receive positive public health messages. However, the message that came across from everybody was that more must be done to address the more than 4,000 deaths here every year as a direct result of cancer. The key to dealing with this is investment in early diagnosis and screening. Early diagnosis can make that big difference, and I urge anyone who notices any unusual or persistent changes in their body to attend their GP to get them checked.

The cost of healthcare must not fall on the most vulnerable. It is important that, while facing up to the challenge of caring for our ageing population, we do not place the cost burden on the most vulnerable. Areas of health and social care policy will present us with real and deep financial challenges in the future, not least the cost of social care. Given that we have an integrated health and social care system in Northern Ireland, we cannot and should not have to ask people of limited means to contribute to social care for elderly people, particularly those for whom doing so is well beyond their means.

The Minister talked a lot about equality. Minister, equality is the equality of treatment. I will finish by saying that, 10 years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer. I was given treatment and the right drugs. Are you really saying no to people like me today, to the hundreds of people out there who need these drugs? As an Assembly, we must unite behind our Minister and ensure that the 38 drugs are made available here.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the prevalence of cancer in Northern Ireland and the efforts made by front line staff and professionals to counteract the disease; notes the advances in cancer treatment being made here and the achievements of the cancer centre in South Belfast, which, in collaboration with the pharmaceutical sector, has made significant and unique strides in biomedical diagnostic research; applauds the global and local economic and health benefits of such research; acknowledges that the predicted increased rates of cancer dictate that more needs to be done in terms of furthering research and treatment; supports efforts to broaden access for local patients to innovative treatments and clinical trials; encourages the establishment of a university-linked biomedical research centre; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to support this work to develop Northern Ireland as a world-class centre for cancer research and treatment.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The House will take its ease for a moment while we change the top Table.

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

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes. All other Members who wish to speak will have approximately eight minutes.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé an-bhuíoch as an seans an cheist seo a ardú sa Tionól inniu. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this issue in the Assembly.

Integrated Services has been an extremely positive programme for west Belfast and has provided much-needed support at many levels for a number of years. It has been a model of good practice in the partnership work that it does with local community groups, schools and statutory agencies to provide the best service available for families that are in the greatest need.

It has often been the case that families with complex needs have been sitting on the edge but have managed to stay on track because of their ability to avail themselves of services provided by early intervention. In such cases, it can be detrimental if that support is suddenly withdrawn, and, ultimately, that causes them to go into the statutory services environment, where the route back can often be difficult and not always straightforward.

It is readily accepted that where a family can be prevented from entering the social services arena, action should be taken to ensure that that happens. Integrated Services carried out very positive and meaningful work, which filled that gap. As a result, families have been assisted in turning their lives around and moving onto a more positive, independent path.

Quotes from users of the services are the best indicators of what Integrated Services has done best. As one young mother put it:

“Without the family support I received, my mental health would have got worse rapidly. I want to thank Integrated Services for helping me to be the mum I used to be.”

Similarly, a father of two young children who had challenging behaviour and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) struggled to deal with those issues whilst trying to cope with an eating disorder and dealing with trauma. He stated clearly:

“Integrated Services was able to provide a full service for me and my son, dealing with everything we had going on. I wouldn’t have known where else to go. We were at our wits end.”

What exactly happened at the end of March this year? Funding for Integrated Services came to an end, and the tender was awarded to Extern to provide services at tiers

3 and 4. That meant that there was a gap in tier 2 early intervention services.

Under Integrated Services, 265 families were supported between April 2013 and March 2014. That number reduced by 128 over that period due to cases being closed for various reasons. In some of those cases, families were ready to move on due to the progress that had been made. The remaining families were reviewed and were found to be in need of different types of support, including statutory involvement. However, several families have been left unsupported as they only qualified for tier 2 services, which are no longer available.

Given that west Belfast is an area of high deprivation that has some very complicated social needs, it is reasonable to expect that families will continue to emerge that require the type of support services that were provided by Integrated Services. We need to ensure that the services required to provide those families with the appropriate interventions, capable of supporting them out of their difficult circumstances, are made available. We also need to find a way to ensure that the families who have most recently had their integrated services terminated will be supported in all of their needs.

Not only did Integrated Services provide support at the most appropriate level, it averted families from the likelihood of becoming known to the statutory agencies at a later date, as problems and issues tend to escalate due to a lack of support services.

There are processes in place to implement the early intervention transformation programme (EITP), but I am concerned about what exactly that will mean for west Belfast. I seek assurance that the EITP will be appropriately resourced and hope that any transitional family support services will also be supported.

Ultimately, it would be wrong to stop the vital service provision, and I urge that appropriate resources are put in place to ensure that the vulnerable families that are in the greatest need are not let down due to a failure to continue to provide them with the services that are appropriate to their needs.

Mr Attwood: I thank Ms McCorley for bringing this matter to the attention of the Assembly.

I concur with her that the best voices to rely upon when it comes to dealing intensively with individual, family and community difficulties — multiple difficulties — are those of the people who, under Integrated Services, were being supported. It is curious what they say, because any of us who have met the individuals and families who have been supported through Integrated Services, have been impressed by their conviction that the model has worked for them and needs to be sustained to continue to work for them. Ms McCorley relied on what they said. One woman said:

“Some mothers are frightened by social workers; they take power away from parents. The staff and family support had a more rounded approach and empowered us.”

Another said:

“Integrated Services and the staff were so valuable to my family. They gave me and my family a glimmer of hope. Why is the rug being pulled from underneath the project?”

Similarly, one person said:

“We have not felt this good in years. Our new family members, as we call Integrated Services, have been a rock and life saviours to our family.”

As I said, anybody who heard those families speak up here earlier this year or who has met any of them over the lifetime of Integrated Services would corroborate what they say. Therefore, this question arises: if it is a model of good practice that you work intensively with individuals and families who have multiple areas of need and requirement, why would you put that in jeopardy?

Since 2008, the life of Integrated Services has been a turbulent one. I remember, in March 2011, when I was the Social Development Minister, putting £500,000 on the table in order to try to sustain Integrated Services beyond 2011 and up to 2015. Difficult thought it was, other Ministers eventually came to the table and, over a period of time, even if it were in an ad hoc manner, funding was secured to sustain it.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will, yes.

Mr Poots: Does the Member recognise that it was the Department of Health that came to the table whilst the Department of Education, under a Sinn Féin Minister, ran away from the people of the Falls Road, the Shankill and the most deprived areas and took the money away from Integrated Services in the first instance?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Attwood: I certainly recall that when people were sitting on the fence — to put it at its least — some of us got off the fence in order to ensure, in the spring of 2011, that Integrated Services was sustained and to try to work up the full funding package. There is more than a grain of truth in what the Health Minister has just said about the conduct of other Ministers at the Executive table.

This question now arises: why was the rug pulled from under people's feet earlier this year? In March 2014, funding for this scheme came to an end. As Ms McCorley rightly indicated, as a consequence, those with lesser needs, even though they are significant needs, are left with nowhere to turn, and those with greater needs, which are very significant indeed, have to rely on the new project, around which there is still some need for certainty and definition.

So, I have some questions for the Health Minister, who is responding to this debate and who I welcome to the debate. First, why was it that a programme that had such an impact on the lives of many people across west Belfast, the Shankill and the Falls, and had such advocates at a community and political level, not continued?

Secondly, why was the tender for the new scheme only for specialist services and not also for general services in order to ensure that those who have “so-called” lesser needs are not left in the lurch? Thirdly, what is now going to be done in order to ensure that those who are outwith the capture of the new tender being awarded to Extern will get the support required?

Fourthly, where are we precisely in respect of the Extern scheme?

It was meant to commence on 1 April, and we are now three months later to the day after it was meant to be up and operational. Where is it, what is its practice and what is its impact?

5.30 pm

Question six: why were good community representatives and activists on the Shankill left to dip into their reserves in order to maintain Integrated Services since March of this year, whilst a new project gets up and running, given its limitations? Why were they required to dip into reserves which are now running out, as I speak, and which would see the end of the support programme that they put in place beyond the end of Integrated Services — would see that secondary scheme itself run out of space, time and money? If a project has such a good impact — in the way that Ms McCorley and I have tried to articulate through the voices of women who have spoken to us and who have reduced to writing what they believe — why would you ever want to put that in jeopardy? Why was there not certainty, throughout the period of Integrated Services, to see that scheme continue beyond 1 April?

Ms J McCann: I, too, thank my colleague Rosie McCorley for bringing this debate to the Floor. It is a very important debate, and I hope that people will not use it for point scoring. That said, most of us — whatever work we are involved in in the Assembly and Executive — are interested in trying to make life better for people, particularly children, young people and families out there.

As has already been said, not just today but in other debates in the Chamber, of all the constituencies right across the North, West Belfast has the highest proportion of people in poverty and child poverty. It has poor health outcomes; indeed, it has the lowest life expectancy for both women and men, and the highest number of post-primary pupils on the special educational needs register. Those are just some of the statistics: I do not want to stand here quoting statistics, because there are Members present from all parties who know too well the difficulties that people, and families in particular, face in that constituency.

Unfortunately, we see that a lot of our children do not have the same equal start in life as some other children. That is no fault of their own; it is because of the family circumstances that they are born into, or the social and economic situation of the family. There is a duty and responsibility on us, as a Government, to ensure that any support mechanisms or help that those families need are given to them.

In terms of Integrated Services, I was involved the last time, as Mr Attwood pointed out, when the first funding became unavailable. I, Paul Maskey MP and my other colleagues here — MLAs, some of whom are here today — went to a range of Ministers and Departments to ensure that everybody was aware of the difficulties and also put money there from their Departments to carry it forward.

My colleague Rosie McCorley pointed out that, unfortunately, in the situation that we are in today, a number of families that were involved in the Integrated Services programme have not been picked up by the new programme. We have to be concerned about those families. It is very important that we provide services for families with complex needs, particularly for children and young people who have those social needs. We also

need to ensure that we intervene early with those families to give them the support and services that they need, to ensure that they do not become a family that actually has more complex needs. That is important. I just want to concentrate on —

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way, and I appreciate all that she has said. I pay tribute to the staff of the Integrated Services programme in west Belfast and greater Shankill. Along with Members across the Chamber, I have had the experience of dealing with those staff, when they were dealing with our constituents and troubled families in the most difficult circumstances.

I welcome what the Member said and her clarification about her party's support, but that has not always been the case. It has to be said that, previously, when there was a gathering of people from west Belfast and Shankill outside this Building in March 2011, this Minister came down to speak to the people, but the Education Minister could not be found and would not come out and speak to the people. I appreciate that Sinn Féin is now in a different place on this, and that is to be welcomed. We will see what potential funding will come from the Department of Health now.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Ms J McCann: I want to say again that I hope people do not use this debate for political reasons and point scoring. We are talking about vulnerable families, about need and about trying to help people. The new early intervention transformation programme will be rolled out, and we need to ensure that the commissioning of those services and engagement with community organisations that already have skills and expertise in delivering those services continues, because, at the end of the day, we do not want to throw the baby out with bath water. We want to be able to ensure that models of best practice are continued. I worked as family support worker across west Belfast before I came into the Assembly, and there is good working engagement between people and organisations in west Belfast and greater Shankill, and I would like to see that continuing.

As I said, a number of families are out of the loop now because integrated services have stopped. I and some of my party colleagues have had a number of meetings with people from the Health Department and other Departments. I see it as a joined-up project, not primarily just an issue around health. I think that it includes Education, Health, Justice and the Department for Social Development. This is part of the Executive's Delivering Social Change framework, and we need to be working in that integrated way and in that capacity. I want any proposals that are brought forward not simply to be driven by the family support hubs, because, again, this work is ongoing. We talk about this all the time in the Assembly, and it is unseen work that goes on in communities every day. Those community organisations and groups deliver those services and the valuable way that they do that is sometimes not recognised. It is about the services for the families. I want to reiterate that. That is what we are talking about here. We are talking about vulnerable families who need the continuation of those services. I hope that the Minister takes that on board. Other programmes are getting rolled out. It will be targeted at specific families, and I think that is a good thing, but we should not lose sight of the fact that other families are maybe not just at

the level of need that some families with more complex needs are, and we should not overlook them.

I thank my colleague for bringing this important debate forward, and I hope that we can all work together — all the Ministers and all the Departments in the Executive — to ensure the continuation of this project.

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for tabling this debate and the Members who have contributed. In my role as Health Minister, I have been actively engaged in seeking to address the issues outlined by the Members in the west Belfast and greater Shankill areas following the cessation of funding for integrated services for children and young people. Whilst Ministers McCausland, O'Dowd, Farry, Ford and I have worked together to fund a new £5 million intensive family support service across Belfast, which will benefit some of the families previously supported by Integrated Services, I am aware that both partnerships between them have identified 99 families with lower-level needs who will not benefit from that new service and who may not have been able to transfer to other local family support services available in the area. It is my understanding that those families do not meet the threshold for statutory social work involvement.

Before addressing the transitional needs of those families, I would first like to say a few words about the new intensive family support service being funded by me and my fellow Ministers. The service seeks to intervene with families with very complex needs across Belfast. Those families often experience very poor outcomes across generations, including long-term unemployment, addiction, poor health, poor school attendance or exclusion, involvement with the justice system and homelessness. The new service, modelled on the Troubled Families initiative in England, seeks to break the cycle of poor outcomes for the most socially complex families in Belfast. The families that will benefit from the service are engaged with a range of statutory services, including youth justice, social services and educational welfare. As well as providing additional support to those families, the new service will seek to improve the level of coordination between the various statutory agencies that are often involved with the families on a single-issue basis. The new service is being delivered by Extern, following an open procurement process. That is something that I cannot involve myself in. Procurement has to be fully above board, and that is how it was done.

I recognise the importance of the 99 families with lower-level needs who are not eligible for the new intensive service, and who have not been able to be transferred to other local services, receiving the support that they need to effectively transition from the integrated services for children and young people project. That said, the support offered should be transitional in nature. It needs to be time-limited and focused either on helping those families engage with other tier 2 services in the area or on successfully addressing the issues that they face in the period of transition. The establishment of family support hubs in Belfast, which I will say more about, should help with that process.

Having recognised that a need exists, as verified by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, I have been working with Minister McCausland, given his neighbourhood renewal responsibilities, to agree a transitional funding package. Some transitional funding has already been provided by the Health and Social Care Board and the

Public Health Agency to facilitate the transfer of those families who meet the criteria for entry to the new intensive family support service.

From a longer-term perspective, I am aware that, in addition to the large number of existing services already in place for those types of families, a number of new services are being planned that will enhance the level of family support provision across Northern Ireland, including a number of initiatives being developed under the social investment fund and Delivering Social Change programmes that will benefit children, young people and families. For example, under Delivering Social Change, and with the support of private philanthropy, we have established an early intervention programme, underpinned by a £30 million fund. Between five Departments, we have contributed £10 million to the fund over three years. One of the principal aims of the transformation programme is to embed early intervention approaches across all mainstream children's services.

There is a proposal to develop a new early intervention service across Northern Ireland. The proposed service will aim to provide a consistent level of support to families with problems at an early stage, before those problems become embedded. If we are successful, that will prevent the need for future statutory involvement in the lives of many children and families across Northern Ireland. The design and development of the proposed service is currently being undertaken in partnership with the five outcomes groups and locality planning groups, which are part of the children and young people's strategic partnership arrangements, to ensure robust engagement with the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. The proposed development of the early intervention service, along with other proposed developments by way of initiatives such as the social investment fund, will seek to complement and integrate with existing family support services in areas such as west Belfast and the Shankill.

As I have referred to briefly already, my Department is developing a network of family support hubs across Northern Ireland. There will be 25 hubs in total, seven of which will be created in the Belfast area, across all parts of Belfast. The family support hub for Upper Springfield and Whiterock is already up and running, and other hubs will be coming on stream over the next weeks and months. It should be noted that the hubs do not deliver services directly but will play a vital role in coordinating the activities of local providers that will jointly identify appropriate tier 2 services for specific families.

As for integrated services, I pose a question to Mr Attwood. I welcome the fact that, when he was Social Development Minister, he put his money where his mouth was when other Ministers, in the Department of Health and the Department of Education, were not supportive. Subsequent to me becoming the Minister of Health, I have put my money, or my Department's money, where my mouth is. I recognise the vulnerability of the families involved. I recognise the need for children in those areas to receive additional support to give them an opportunity in life that they would not otherwise be able to avail themselves of.

In doing that, I gave ministerial direction to make this happen whilst Minister O'Dowd and the Department of Education walked away. That is not playing politics; that is telling the facts. When it came to west Belfast and the

Shankill, the Sinn Féin Minister walked away, and he has to answer for himself why that was the case.

5.45 pm

Work has been ongoing in the last two months to deal with the issue. The MP for North Belfast has been in with me on three or four occasions to discuss the issues, pressing for the people in the Shankill and west Belfast whilst I have not yet had a request for a meeting from the MP for West Belfast. I am pleased that I have been able to clear a paper that was received this week, which will allow up to £270,000 to go to Integrated Services to ensure that it can continue until the hubs are fully established.

To summarise, I am pleased to be able to announce the additional support for the West Belfast Partnership Board and the Greater Shankill Partnership Board in meeting the transitional needs of the families identified. I also outlined a range of new developments, some of which are aimed at supporting families with complex needs while others are targeted at families who require earlier interventions. These new developments are intended to complement and improve coordination between existing services across Northern Ireland, including west Belfast. Our aim is to ensure that families who need a range of supports are able to access them locally and earlier.

It is time that people stepped up to the mark as opposed to complaining a lot about equality, poverty and everything that is happening. When it was within their gift as Ministers to deliver for people in circumstances such as this, they were nowhere to be seen, whereas people such as us carry out actions to ensure that we can help people in the worst possible circumstances.

Adjourned at 5.47 pm.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

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Education

Capital Investment Advancing New Schools in Planning

Published at 10.00 am on Thursday 3 July 2014

Mr John O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): On 24 June I made an Announcement to the Assembly on Capital Investment for Schools to be advanced in planning. This announcement included major works projects for 8 primary and 7 post primary schools.

One project that had passed the gateway checks, achieved a high score as a result of the protocol process and qualified to be listed had to be held back from the announcement as it was the subject of a judicial review. This judicial review has since been dismissed by the Judge, Mr Justice Treacy, on 25 June 2014.

The project is for a new build school to house pupils following the amalgamation of Knockbreda and Newtownbreda High Schools. This amalgamation is to be carried out in September 2014 or as soon thereafter as possible. As a result of the Judge's decision the project can now be appended to those that I announced to the Assembly on the morning of 24 June.

Environment

Taxis Act (NI) 2008: Implementation

Published at 10.15 on Thursday 19 June 2014

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Members of the Assembly will, I am sure, share my view that taxis are a vital and valuable part of our economy. Every year they greet many of the million plus visitors who come to Northern Ireland. They make tens of thousands of trips to bring people to and from work or safely home after a night out. They also help some of our most vulnerable people, young and old, travel in the way the majority of us take for granted.

The majority of our taxi legislation, however, dates back to the early 1980s – in fact, in Belfast it goes back to by-laws devised in the early 1950s. The problem is, quite simply, that it not up to the task of effectively regulating taxis in the 21st century.

For this reason the Taxis Act was debated and approved by this House and received Royal Assent in April 2008. It is a piece of enabling legislation, designed to create a new legislative framework for the operation and regulation of taxis here.

The aims of the Taxis Act are to raise the standard of taxi services, reduce illegal taxiing and improve compliance. Its objectives are to promote road safety, improve accessibility for older people and people with disabilities, and facilitate fairer competition for taxi services. In short, it is about creating a safe, fair and fit for purpose industry that allows those involved in it to make a living from it.

For the last six years my Department has been working to implement the Act by way of subordinate regulations. To date, the only part of the Act that has been commenced is the introduction of Taxi Operator Licensing, which came into force in 2012. This, for the first time, made operators accountable for the operation of their business and the actions of their drivers. High levels of compliance with these provisions have already been achieved, and improvements to the accountability of the industry delivered.

The purpose of this statement is to set out my intentions for the implementation of the remaining aspects of the Act. These include new arrangements for taxi vehicle licensing (including new plating and roof sign requirements), taxi driver licensing (including the introduction of a taxi driver test for new drivers and periodic training for all drivers) and other elements including provisions for a maximum fare and the use of taximeters and receipt printers, new powers

of seizure, and a revised specification for Wheelchair Accessible taxis.

There has been much debate, going back some years, about the need for these changes. Since taking office, I have listened carefully to many representations and have considered many points made in favour and against implementing the remaining provisions of the Taxis Act. After careful consideration, I have decided that it is essential we implement these changes now, to give full effect to this legislation and to deliver improvements to the industry for the benefit of users and suppliers alike.

A key element of the taxi reform programme is the arrangements for taxi vehicle licensing and the classes of taxis that will be recognised across Northern Ireland.

The Act's provisions, one of which is introducing a single tier licensing regime, have been well-known and much debated for many years, and has been the subject of consultation on more than one occasion. Indeed, I have lost count of the number of Assembly questions that I have received on this one issue.

I believe that the current dual tier system in place in Belfast, with some taxis able to be hailed and others only available through prior bookings, cannot adequately address a number of problems that the Act was designed to tackle. The public (residents and visitors alike) are confused as to which taxis they can use in different circumstances. There are insufficient numbers of taxis which can pick up on the street in Belfast, particularly at peak periods, to meet demand and ensure public order. Furthermore, there is too much enforcement activity addressing relatively minor licensing offences, which reduces the resources available to address the illegal and dangerous taxis which are out there.

I have listened to, considered and reconsidered the concerns expressed that the change would adversely impact on Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, and that enforcement difficulties around illegal picking up in Belfast have given cause for concern about the Department's ability to enforce a new licensing regime. I must advise members that I am not persuaded by these arguments.

The changes that are proposed will, I believe, enhance the reputation of the taxi industry as a whole, increasing the confidence of the public in Northern Ireland to use taxis because we will have a professional and fit for purpose service. The demand for the services of Belfast Public Hire, which represent around 5% of taxis in Northern Ireland and around 10% of taxis in Belfast, should be determined by the service they provide and the price at which it is provided. I am convinced that any sector of the industry that provides a good quality and price-competitive service will be able to thrive in the improved regulatory regime that the Taxis Act provides for.

Further, consumers will, and should, be able to exercise choice and their preferences in terms of how and when to secure the services of a taxi and which type of taxi they wish to use. It is the responsibility of my Department, as regulator, to set the minimum standards which all operators, vehicles and drivers must meet, so that taxi users can receive the service they expect; and then to ensure compliance with those standards.

Picture the scene when on a Saturday night a member of the public wants to hail a fully compliant, licensed

taxi, licensed driver and licensed operator in any part of the North. I don't believe that there is justification for my Department to deny such a transaction.

I feel that my Department has given very great consideration to the concerns of the Belfast Public Hire drivers and has gone a long way to help them prepare for change. The measures that we have put in place include that all taxi drivers currently in possession of a taxi driver's licence will be unaffected by plans to introduce a new taxi driver test. Belfast Public Hire taxis will be granted grandfather rights in respect of any changes to the specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis. Furthermore only Wheelchair Accessible Taxis will be permitted to stand at ranks in Belfast, securing to some degree the status quo for the current Belfast Public Hire fleet in relation to ranks.

My officials have engaged extensively with Belfast Public Hire representatives to help them arrange meetings with other parts of government on a range of issues including, training, taxi ranks and access to bus lanes. We have also delayed the reform programme to provide all taxi operators – not least Belfast Public Hire – additional time to prepare for the reforms. So while I am aware of the concerns of the Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, I must balance these with the requirements, clearly set out by consumer and disability groups, to improve regulation for a safe, fair and fit for purpose taxi industry. It is high time the remaining elements of the Act were implemented.

The alternative is to continue to operate a dual tier regime, limited to Belfast, and to prevent taxi users in Belfast from exercising the same choice available in all other parts of the North, in order to continue to protect the commercial interests of Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers.

I have a number of serious concerns in respect of such a system. A dual tier approach provides more confusion, not less, to Belfast consumers in terms of which taxis they can legally hail in the street or access at ranks. It provides less choice, not more, to Belfast consumers – they are constrained in the choice that is extended in every other part of the North, in terms of which type of taxi they want – instead they are limited to using the small Belfast Public Hire fleet unless they pre-book a taxi.

I am concerned that the dual tier model is unable to cope with the need to empty the city of people in a timely manner in the evenings, particularly at weekends. Suspension of the regime for these high peak periods could be considered, but would create even further confusion for users and would prove difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.

The Taxis Act is based on a single tier licensing regime. During the development of the then Bill, two options were consulted on – single tier; or a clearer distinction between public hire and private hire taxis (along the lines of the London model of 'black cabs' and 'mini-cabs'). A public consultation at that time showed a preference for single tier, and this was included in the Bill and passed by this Assembly, without division, as part of the Act.

Since enactment, a 2011 public consultation showed 84% support for single tier licensing. Those in favour included the Consumer Council (who stated that single tier would remove public confusion and free up enforcement resource), Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and Disability Action.

Recently, I have received explicit support for single tier licensing from Disability Action, IMTAC, the Consumer Council, Women's Aid, Victim Support, Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce, the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation, Pubs of Ulster and Visit Belfast, all of whom see the clear benefits to consumers, tourists and the industry itself. I have also received 913 letters from Belfast private hire taxi drivers in support of single tier. And that is in addition to the 4,200 postcards the Committee received from private hire taxi passengers of a similar mind.

I therefore remain of the view that a single tier model should be introduced throughout the North. I am aware that the Law Commission has recently recommended the retention of two tier licensing for taxis in England and Wales, and that the Department for Transport is currently considering those proposals. With respect to those that say that we should do the same here, I would point out that exactly this point was debated in the development of the Taxis Act, with decisions made to progress a single tier regime. I would point out that the two tiers of taxis here are less differentiated than those in England and Wales have traditionally been. It is also worth noting that a Comparative Study on Regulation in Europe concluded that taxi licensing regimes differ based on local circumstances. Devolution has been designed to allow local solutions to local issues. We have debated this issue for far too long and should now implement our intent.

Understandably, given the delays and changes in the timings for the various elements of taxi reform, the industry has expressed concerns and has sought clarity about my intentions. I intend to provide this clarity today.

I am, therefore, today giving notice that I intend to make Taxi Vehicle Licensing regulations introducing single tier licensing in October 2014 with the provisions coming into force at the end of January 2015. Alongside this, I intend to commence the new Powers of Seizure regulations in January 2015 so that, from day one, these powers are available to enforcement officers to take action against illegal taxis.

This delay in the implementation date for the new arrangements is a result of the time needed to consider the different options put forward; and to avoid changes for the industry in its busiest period of the year in the run up the Christmas and New Year.

In advance of that, in October 2014, a new taxi driver test will be introduced for new taxi drivers only. This will be followed in September 2015 with the start of periodic training requirements for all taxi drivers.

In relation to taximeters and printers, I intend to make regulations before the end of the year, with the requirements coming into force in September 2015.

Finally, in respect of the new specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, I intend to make these regulations in April 2015, coming into force in May 2015. Importantly, this new specification will ensure that users with disabilities will be better served by the taxi industry.

I look forward to continuing to work with the industry, the Environment Committee and other consumer and disability groups in the coming months as we introduce the relevant legislation to deliver on the aims of the Act in relation to this vital industry.

Northern Area Plan 2016: Planning Appeals Commission Report

Published on Thursday 3 July 2014

Mr Mark Durkan (The Minister of the Environment):

Development plans inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework and land use proposals that will be used to guide development decisions in their area. They provide a basis for rational and consistent decisions and provide a measure of certainty about which types of development will and will not be permitted.

The Northern Area Plan 2016 (NAP) is one of the last two plans due to be adopted before planning functions transfer to local councils in April 2015. The Plan covers the council districts of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle. This area also comprises the new Causeway Coast and Glens District. The adoption of the Plan will ensure an adequate supply of development land to meet needs beyond the notional end-by date of the Plan in December 2016. As such, it will provide a sound basis for the new Council to prepare future plans under the reformed system provided for under the Planning (NI) Act 2011.

The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) has recently completed its Report on the Examination in Public into objections to the Draft Northern Area Plan 2016. The final reports were delivered to the Department on 30th May and 5th June 2014. These reports contain the PAC's recommendations to the Department on the objections which were made to Draft NAP.

It had been normal practice for my Department to consider the contents of the PAC Report on a development plan, and then release the PAC recommendations at the same time as the Plan is adopted. This approach allowed an adoption statement, which contains my Department's decision on each of the recommendations, to be published along with the PAC Report.

However, during 2012 in the case of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and also the Banbridge, Newry & Mourne Area Plan (BNMP), a decision was made to release the PAC Report at an early stage in advance of Plan adoption. This was done because of the considerable length of time since the draft Plan, the complexity of objections received, the forthcoming changes to local councils and to the planning system, and primarily to introduce further certainty about potential development opportunities in the area before the final Plans were adopted.

With similar circumstances pertaining to the Northern Area Plan, I have decided to follow the precedent of BMAP and BNMP and consequently I am now releasing the PAC Report relating to the Northern Area Plan. I believe it is the right thing for the Department to do in terms of openness and transparency. In many cases, it will help to remove uncertainty for the local community, the development industry, the Councils and other elected representatives.

It is important, however, to clarify the status of the PAC Report. As I have already stated, this Report only contains the recommendations of the Planning Appeals Commission, on objections received and they do not give the final position with regard to the objections that were made to the draft Plan. My Department is in the course

of preparing NAP for adoption, and will be assessing the PAC recommendations before reaching final decisions, and these decisions will only be known when the Plan is adopted early next year.

One advantage that I envisage arising from my decision to publish the PAC Reports is that in instances where the PAC state that they 'recommend no change to the draft plan as a result of the objections, it is more likely, although not guaranteed, that these recommendations will be accepted by my Department. Consequently, if a planning application is submitted on a site where it is likely the proposals in the draft plan will not be changed as a result of PAC recommendations, the application will be decided on basis of the Plan, but also with regard to all other material considerations. However, in other cases, where the PAC recommendation will require further consideration by my Department, the public cannot make any assumptions as to the development status of sites until such times as the final report is issued and the Plan adopted.

The PAC Report on the Plan will be published on the planning website www.planningni.gov.uk today, Thursday 3rd July 2014.

To conclude, I must emphasise, this is not re-opening the debate about the issues in the Plan. In order to allow resources to be focused on the adoption of Plan, neither I nor my officials will be entering into correspondence or discussions on any matters relating to the recommendations contained in the PAC Report for NAP.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On

Published at 12.00 noon on Thursday 3 July 2014

Mr P Robinson and Mr Martin McGuinness (The First Minister and the deputy First Minister): We are today announcing the publication of the annual progress report, *Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On*, following our meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday.

Background

It is one year after the publication of the 'economic pact', *Building a Prosperous and United Community*. In that pact, we agreed a series of measures consistent with our joint aim to rebalance the economy and build a shared future. Twelve months on we can now reflect on the progress made in areas such as job promotion, research and development, investment and infrastructure, and consider the further challenges that lie ahead.

The annual report which we have published shows that the Government and the Executive remain committed to our shared objective of rebalancing the economy. We have been working together on a range of issues, for example, through the Ministerial Taskforce on Banking and Access to Finance, to address the economic issues faced by our local economy.

Summary of Progress

Improving Economic Outlook

The local economy has gained significant momentum over the last year with signs of improvement across a wide range of indicators. Economic activity expanded in three successive quarters and increased by 2.6 per cent across 2013. The number of employee jobs has also increased by 16,000 over the last year with the vast majority of these new jobs being in the private sector.

Government schemes have continued to have a direct impact with £34 million of investment from the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme and the recent introduction of the Business Finance Partnership (£2.4 million) and Start-up Loans scheme (£400,000) here. The Green Investment Bank will now also make two separate investments of £1.5 million and £1.7 million to help increase the efficiency of the local agri-food sector.

Business and consumer confidence has been buoyant over the last year, with local surveys from both Ulster Bank and Danske Bank regularly registering record highs. The Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP) now anticipates growth of 2.8 per cent in 2014, a higher growth rate than that expected for most advanced economies around the world. NICEP also expects an additional 23,000 jobs to be created in the economy across 2014 and 2015.

Investment being delivered

The Government and the Executive have continued to work together to maximise the opportunity provided by the G8 summit to present Northern Ireland as a great place to

do business. These efforts mean that we remain the most attractive region for inward investment outside of London.

Invest NI recently published its results for 2013-14 which show it had a record year. They promoted almost 11,000 jobs with associated wages and salaries of £190 million. Invest NI also provided support to nearly 3,000 businesses making combined investments of £239 million.

The International Investment Conference held in October and attended by the Prime Minister had an important role in supporting this success. As a direct result of the Conference, including roundtable discussions with the Prime Minister, projects by Convergys in Derry-Londonderry and EY in Belfast promoting over 800 jobs have now been announced.

The ability to attract inward investment is supported by continued efforts to provide a stable, long-term platform to promote investment.

Projects Building a Shared Future

The Executive's wide ranging strategy to improve good relations, *Together: Building a United Community (TBUC)*, was published in May 2013. It is an ambitious framework that includes commitments on education, housing, regeneration, sports, youth development, community interaction and interfaces.

The Executive has brought forward shared education and shared housing proposals to use the £100 million additional borrowing available as part of Building a Prosperous and United Community. This will allow the prioritisation of spending on a package of measures including integrated primary schools in Omagh, Portadown and Corran, shared neighbourhood schemes such as Ravenhill Road and further education facilities at Craigavon.

The Government has agreed to reprofile this borrowing to help accommodate these and the Executive is committed to funding the remainder of the capital required.

Together these projects will help increase the availability and quality of shared education places and increase the opportunities for people across different communities to live together.

The additional borrowing made available has made it possible to prioritise this investment in a shared future. A number of these projects have been accelerated and will be delivered earlier than would be the case under the usual approach to funding.

The Executive has established a pilot for the United Youth Programme with further pilots being developed to engage with around 300 young people from September. These will inform the design and content of the 10,000 one-year placements committed to in TBUC which will make use of the €50 million added to the PEACE IV Programme by the Government from its European Territorial Co-operation allocation.

Further progress to be made

There are a number of commitments in Building a Prosperous and United Community that continue to be developed. This update represents progress so far but also an opportunity to continue the important work helping to rebalance the local economy and build a shared future.

Before the end of the year, five of the shared housing schemes are expected to be under construction. The pilot reciprocal visa arrangements between the UK and Ireland should also be in operation by the end of the year, boosting tourism. This represents visible progress that will help deliver better outcomes for us.

A number of further commitments will also be met by the end of 2014 including: a final report from the Executive's Red Tape Review; proposals will be made to Government and Executive Ministers about the scope for further fiscal devolution; and consideration of the Implementation Panel's interim report on access to finance.

The Government and the Executive will also work together to deliver three Ambassador-led trade missions to Northern Ireland to reinforce the opportunities for investment available.

The Government remains committed to making a final decision on the potential devolution of corporation tax no later than this year's Autumn Statement. If a decision to proceed with devolution is made then the Government remains on track to introduce a stand-alone Bill with the aim of it becoming law in this Parliament.

The Government and the Executive will continue to work together on our commitments on the economy and to make sure that the announcements made today are successfully delivered and implemented.

Together we remain committed to our ambition of a genuinely shared society that can fulfil its economic potential and strengthen the foundations for continued peace, stability and prosperity.

A copy of the report is published on the Government website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-a-prosperous-and-united-community-one-year-on>

Social Development

Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government: 2014 Annual Report

Published at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 2 July 2014

Mr Nelson McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): As you are aware, the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government included an undertaking to report annually to the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly on issues impacting on the Sector. In accordance with the principles contained within the Concordat, I wish to present Assembly colleagues with the third report on the implementation of the Concordat. This report includes detail on issues impacting the Voluntary and Community Sector, the progress made against selected commitments contained within the Concordat and progress made against recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee in their report 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector'.

The Concordat, which is the formal agreement between this Assembly and the Voluntary and Community Sector, is the means by which we work together as social partners with the Sector to create more responsive and people-centred public services and since its launch in 2011, work has been ongoing to create the circumstances where these outcomes can be realised.

This pledge by government and the sector committing to work together is underpinned by the establishment and implementation of an agreed set of commitments. The report presented today demonstrates how serious this commitment has been taken and how much can be achieved when we work together.

This government has long recognised and valued the contribution the Voluntary and Community Sector makes to the social, economic, environmental, political, and cultural life of Northern Ireland and recognises and supports the independence of the Sector and its right to campaign within the law and to comment on and, where appropriate, challenge government policy.

This is where the Concordat agreement has been pivotal: placing the Sector on an equal footing with the public sector bodies it interacts with on a daily basis and giving the Sector a voice that can now be clearly heard. The Concordat, as a written agreement, has been transformed into a living document with the power to build capacity and the capability to make more responsive and people-centred public services by harnessing the expertise available to us.

This is the third report on the Concordat from the Joint Forum and this is what makes the progress on the commitments all the more significant. The report demonstrates that the Joint Forum has tackled what have previously been considered difficult issues. Last year I reported to my Ministerial colleagues, the tangible progress made on reducing bureaucracy in the administration of funding to voluntary and community organisations. This work has since moved on to develop a Code of Practice which is due to become standard

operating practice across Executive Departments later this year. This will make a significant impact on reducing the bureaucratic burden on the Sector.

Significant progress has also been made in the area of policy development with the Joint Forum gaining recognition as a vital link in the machinery of government in stakeholder engagement in the policy development process. The Joint Forum has also provided a platform for Government Departments to communicate with the sector on key issues. Recent meetings have included presentations on the Reform of Local Government, the Welfare Reform programme, the Financial Capability Strategy and the consultation on the framework for the Economic Inactivity Strategy.

The Joint Forum has evolved as an effective, operational body for the implementation of the shared values and principles of the Concordat agreement.

I am very pleased to commend this report to my Executive and Assembly colleagues and to endorse the progress made over the past year. The implementation of the Concordat commitments and the identification and resolution of issues affecting the Voluntary and Community Sector can only assist Government and Voluntary and Community Sector partnership working, which aims to better serve the people of Northern Ireland.

A copy of the report has been published on the DSD website and can be accessed from http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary_and_community/vc-publications.htm

Committee Stages

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

10 June 2014

Reservoirs Bill [NIA 31/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Frew (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan
Mrs Judith Cochrane
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
Mr William Irwin
Mr Declan McAleer
Miss Michelle McLivene
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Ian Milne
Mr Robin Swann

Witnesses:

Mr Kieran Brazier
Mr David Porter

*Department of Agriculture
and Rural Development*

The Chairperson: This session will be split into two parts. The first part will deal with further amendments, and then we will move to formal clause-by-clause consideration. Last week, the Committee expressed its discontent with the risk designation clauses — clauses 17 to 23. We did that by voting “not content” with clauses 17 to 20; by indicating that the Committee would recommend that, at Consideration Stage, the Assembly votes that clauses 17 to 23 not stand part of the Bill; and by agreeing to write to the Minister outlining our concerns with those clauses. We stopped at clause 21 because there is another, separate amendment here regarding the regulations for fees for appeals and awarding of costs that we had not received at that point. That is why we stopped.

The amendments for the provisions to make regulations in connection with the Water Appeals Commission for fees and awarding of costs were received and sent out to you on Friday, as were the amendments on the cost recovery issues. All of those, and all the other amendments previously received, are in your tabled papers. They are in order.

OK, subsequent to the decisions taken last week on risk designation, Rivers Agency has come forward with a set of amendments to address the Committee's concerns. We had an informal meeting yesterday, at which we got an opportunity to discuss this. The actual amendments are being tabled today and are in your tabled papers.

I ask the Committee to note that I intend to deal with the various sets of amendments in two different ways. First, the amendments to the regulations for fees etc, for the Water Appeals Commission and on cost recovery have

been discussed in Committee on numerous occasions, both in oral presentations and written briefings. I am therefore content that the Committee has had sufficient time to consider those. The Committee will vote on the clauses, as amended by these two sets of amendments.

On the amendments dealing with risk designation, I intend to take a different approach. These have been seen by members only today. They represent a substantial policy change, and, in my opinion, we need time to consider them. Whilst we will discuss them today, we will not have had sufficient time to decide whether the amendments address the concerns of the Committee. I do not propose that the Committee take a position today on whether they are acceptable. We will put that discussion on the agenda for next week, so that the Committee report can be finalised.

Are members content with this approach?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: As always, I welcome David Porter and Kieran Brazier to the Committee. We have had previous written and oral briefings on the amendments to do with the provision to make the regulation for the appeals and costs awarded to parties being moved from DARD to OFMDFM and on the cost recovery and new appeals aspects. The amendments were emailed to members on Friday and are in your tabled papers.

David and Kieran, given the time constraints that we face, will you quickly explain those amendments once again? That is, basically, the amendments to do with the provision of making the regulation for the appeals, the costs awarded to parties moving from DARD to OFMDFM, and the costs recovery and appeals aspects.

Mr Kieran Brazier (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development): Shall I do that now?

The Chairperson: Yes please.

Mr Brazier: The power to charge fees and award costs is an issue that was identified by the Examiner of Statutory Rules. The Bill as currently drafted gives the Department the power, by regulation, to make provision for determining a fee and for the charging of that fee in relation to appeals under clauses 21, 73, 74, 77, 79, 82, 84 and 86. The Bill as currently drafted also gives the Department the power, by regulation, to make provision for the awarding of costs of the parties to such appeals under those clauses.

The Examiner of Statutory Rules suggested that it may be preferable to confer that power on the Office of the First and deputy First Minister rather than on this Department, as OFMDFM has similar functions in respect of the Water Appeals Commission and the Planning Appeals Commission. The Department has accepted the suggestion and proposes to address it as follows. First, in all the clauses that I referred to, we propose to remove all reference to determining a fee, the charging of a fee and the awarding of costs. Secondly, to confer that responsibility on the Water Appeals Commission and OFMDFM, we propose three new clauses: clauses 103A, 103B and 103C.

Clause 103A gives power to the Water Appeals Commission to award costs for all appeals that it hears under the Reservoirs Bill. Clause 103B is a bit technical in that it allows the Water Appeals Commission the power to award costs if it has invited people to a hearing in the appeal, even if those people have not attended. Clause 103C allows OFMDFM the power, by regulation, to specify fees that may be paid to the Water Appeals Commission by appellants under the Reservoirs Bill. This approach is now entirely consistent with the approach being taken in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which the Examiner of Statutory Rules referred to in his suggestion.

The Chairperson: OK. We will move on to the risk designations, but do members have any comments or questions on those specific amendments?

Mr McMullan: Under clause 103B, costs can be awarded if you are not there. Can you give an example of that?

Mr Brazier: In hearing an appeal, the commission may invite people to come along and give evidence verbally. However, if they do not accept that invitation or do not turn up, the Water Appeals Commission can still award costs to the appellants without the hearing having taken place. It allows costs to be awarded even if the people they have invited or who have expressed an interest in appearing before the commission have not done so.

The Chairperson: OK. If there are no further questions on those amendments, we will move on. I will ask David and Kieran to explain the proposed amendments to the risk designation process and the content from yesterday's informal meeting; I know that not all members were there.

Mr David Porter (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development): I will lead on this one. I am going to do two things. I will refer to the clauses — there are two clauses in particular to which I wish to draw your attention — and I will also explain the risk matrix that we have developed. This is operational; it is about trying to put the Bill into some sort of context to explain how this would work in practice.

In essence, the issues that the Committee have are, first, around the definition or the issue of risk designation and living below something that is high risk. That is an issue of terminology and the consequential reaction to that. Secondly, there is an issue where a reservoir manager could do some works but cannot influence either the probability of release or the consequence of it. We are trying to grapple with those two issues and, hopefully, you will see those through our proposed amendments to the Bill.

First, I will turn your attention to the changes to clause 17. You will see quite clearly in the amendments that we propose to remove the word "risk" from the Bill to

make it absolutely crystal clear that the Bill is based on consequence. We have said that consistently throughout. When we were drafting the Bill, we were trying to make it future-proof, because risk is a function of two things: impact and likelihood. There continues to be no agreed methodology to determine the likelihood or probability of failure. We were trying to write a Bill that was future-proof, but because of that we were, potentially, tying ourselves in knots. In light of the Committee's concerns, we decided to take a step back and strip that word out and put in "consequence". Then we needed to make sure that there is provision in the Bill to allow us, if there is an agreed methodology, to revert to that. That is the first thing that will give some comfort to people that they no longer live below something that is, in statute, considered to be high risk. It is now going to be known as "high consequence". People will understand the consequence of failure, because of what is below it, as opposed to associating risk with something like the high risk of failure, which is not really what we are trying to describe. So that is the "consequence of failure" and the use of the word "risk".

That, then, got us to a point where we had to work out how a reservoir manager can influence what the risk designation is. How can they influence the consequence and the probability? They are going to be required to do some works by the inspecting engineer. If they carry those out, what is the tangible benefit that they can see? That is set out in the table: turn to that now. Where a structure is high consequence — ie the failure will impact on many people and potentially cause death — we have a range of boxes. Each one steps up as the probability of failure increases. We start on the left, where the reservoir has no outstanding matters in the interests of public safety, so the reservoir manager is fully compliant and has carried out their works. To the right of that is where matters have been identified, and that case we classify as a higher risk. What we are suggesting is that, operationally, we would know that as a high-risk structure. And then comes the case where the reservoir manager fails in their duty and does not carry out those matters in the interests of the public safety, and the Department has to step in. In that case, operationally, we would know that as a very high-risk structure.

There still remains an issue about whether the reservoir manager can influence the consequence. Can they move from a high consequence to a medium consequence? That is where I want to take you in this final moment or two: to clause 22. There is a very important point here that, I think, will tackle some of the concerns of the Committee. The Bill as originally drafted only enabled us to take a range of factors, such as the purpose for which a reservoir is being used, materials, the way it has been constructed and how it has been maintained into consideration in determining the probability of failure. We are proposing a very significant amendment here.

The Chairperson: Sorry for interrupting you, David. Members, this is on page 44 of your tabled papers. Clause 17 is on page 41, and clause 22 is on page 44.

Mr Porter: You will see in clause 22(3) that we have taken out the provision that we can only use those matters in determining, as it says in paragraph 22(1)(b), the probability of failure, and we have changed that to:

"the potential adverse consequences".

That is very significant, because it allows us first, as I have said before, to determine those reservoirs which could cause harm, ie where there is some dwelling, person or economic activity at risk. So then we know that those are not low; we know that they are either medium or high. In the past, we have described how, to differentiate those, we would use detailed flood inundation maps to determine the speed, velocity and depth of water. That was like an on/off switch. There was very little that you could really do to influence whether you were high consequence or medium consequence. The change to clause 22 allows the Department to take into account more factors in determining whether you are high consequence or medium consequence. So the use of the reservoir, and how it has been maintained — there are now factors whereby a reservoir manager can influence whether it is high consequence or medium consequence, and not just by knocking down buildings. Previously, that was what you would have had to do. Now, there may well be certain works that a reservoir manager could do that could then change the reservoir's consequence designation.

To summarise that, there are two things that we have done to the Bill. First, we have removed the word "risk" and entirely focused on "consequence". Secondly, by drawing in other matters that we can take into consideration in determining the consequence of failure, we have significant room to determine between high and medium consequence, and it also allows a reservoir manager to undertake works that could influence that and, therefore, the designation of a reservoir could potentially change.

The Chairperson: OK. Any questions on the risk designation amendment? Again, it is in clause 17 but its affects go right up to clause 22 and is, of course, entwined right throughout the Bill.

Mr Porter: That is correct.

The Chairperson: Any questions on that?

In the absence of members' questions, I will ask a question. We referred to your colour chart. Again, I appreciate and see the gains in what you have done here through the amendment by bringing into play factors that could be used to measure probability. So I understand that, and I see it as a gain. The fact that you have moved the labelling — the designation — from "risk" to "consequence" is, again, common sense to me; it is a gain. Having the consequence of reservoir failure mixed in with the probability to give you this part designation and the actions therein can change that.

However, I still have a problem with the actions within. The whole motive for me in this — and why I was not content — was that I thought that it was unfair that a reservoir owner could not change from the current rigours of the legislation to a better place with regard to regulation. From what I see here in front of me, the only differential now is that, whilst things may remain the same, if a reservoir owner initially does capital works at the start, his reservoir could well move from a high to a medium consequence. However, the actual risk probability does not really go to a better place because of his actions. In fact, if anything, it seems as if we have a new segment, which is very high risk. That does not mean anything different, because it was always there. It basically means that, where interests of safety are identified, a reservoir manager needs to do it, and if he does not do it, his reservoir goes straight into the very

high risk category, which basically means that there will be enforcement.

Mr Porter: That is correct.

The Chairperson: Can you explain to me where the gain is? I can understand that you are starting to bring in a bit of fairness by the fact that you can change your consequence designation, but the probability which is now in has been given teeth by the fact that you are adding conditions by which you measure it. That is still the same as before, and we are still left with a regulatory burden because, under clauses 25 and 23, there is still at least one supervising engineer visit a year, and so on. So, if anything, we have not seen a gain in that regard. We have just seen a redesignation of the enforcement issue.

Mr Porter: There has been a gain in that that has moved from two per year to one per year. So, in essence, that gain has already been achieved. As I have said before, if the Committee wishes to push that out further, I have no objection to it. However, I do not believe that, contractually, anybody will be able to negotiate any better than what is written there, because we are exposing an engineer's professional indemnity (PI) insurance, and they will not take on a risk that they think is unreasonable. What is in the Bill is very reflective of what a reservoir manager who has a structure that is in good condition could expect to achieve. Irrespective of how pristine it is, I genuinely do not believe that they will be able to negotiate a better deal than what is shown. That is why I am absolutely comfortable with those as minimum standards. If the Committee wishes to push it out further, we can do so. We would be doing that to satisfy ourselves; there will not, as I explained, be any real gain on the ground.

The big difference is that the reservoir manager can now control two different things. First, he controls the probability of failure: by not having measures required in the interests of public safety, he brings his structure into a reasonable condition. In the event of failure, that is his defence: he has done everything that the law asked of him.

Secondly, and more importantly, there may well be measures that he could undertake to reduce the risk from high to medium. That will make a difference to the regulatory burden because it is now based on consequence. If he could take some measure to divert the water, move the property or improve the structure, there is the potential to change from high consequence to medium consequence and therefore gain the benefit of not being required to have an inspecting engineer's report other than initially and not going from one inspection a year to two. That is now possible in the Bill; it was not when I spoke to you last week. That was the sticking point when the Committee voted on it. That has fundamentally changed. A reservoir manager can influence the consequence because of the range of factors that we can now take into consideration.

The Chairperson: OK. Are there any further questions on that amendment? No.

Thank you, David and Kieran, for that explanation of the amendments. Members, as I proposed earlier, given that we have not had sufficient time to consider all the policy implications, I propose that any decision made by the Committee on whether it feels that an amendment addresses its concerns be deferred until next week. I remind members that we retain the right to register formal

opposition by the Committee to the Question that the clause stand part of the Bill at Consideration Stage.

Before we begin the formal clause-by-clause scrutiny, I refer members to the draft letter to the Minister. The Committee agreed last week that it be drafted for approval. I suggest that we defer a decision on issuing the letter until next week. I invite members to read it. It may well need to be amended, but that can be done next week, if we defer sending it until the discussion on the risk designation amendments. Are members content that we defer making a decision on the letter until next week?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members should refer to their formal clause-by-clause matrix. It contains comments, responses and clarification from Rivers Agency on various clauses. Members will also find all the proposed amendments in sequence. These should enable members to follow the text of the amendments. Members should also have their copy of the Bill in front of them.

I will advise members of the options available to the Committee. We will take a formal vote on each clause and schedule. The options available to the Committee are to agree that it is content with the clause; agree that it is content with the clause as amended; agree that it is content with the new clause; or agree that it is not content with the clause or new clause. It can vote that it is not content with the clause or agree that a Committee amendment is required.

If we decide that we are not content with a clause, I remind members that, in advance of Consideration Stage, we also have the option to register our formal opposition to the Question that a clause stand part of the Bill. That will ensure that the clause is debated at Consideration Stage. If a member is not happy with something and wants to vote against a clause or propose an amendment, they will need Committee agreement. For a Committee amendment, they need to be very clear what they do not like about the current clause and what the policy objective is of an amendment or what they want the amendment to do. Please remember that, given the complexity and technical nature of the Bill, it is likely that only relatively simple amendments could be tackled in the time available. Members will know that they always have the option as individuals to table their own amendments, and Bill Office staff will assist with that.

I also want to inform members that I intend to group clauses about which there has been no query during the informal clause-by-clause scrutiny and no proposed amendment. If that is clear, we can start the formal part of the proceedings. Are there any questions at this point?

OK. Members will recall that, at last week's meeting, we considered up to clause 20. We will commence formal clause-by-clause consideration at clause 21. Finally, please be aware that it is my intention to finish the formal clause-by-clause consideration today. That will mean getting through some 100 clauses and four schedules. If we do not get that done today, there will be an additional meeting.

Clause 21 (Appeal against Department's decision in a review under section 20)

The Chairperson: Two decisions need to be made today. The first relates to the regulation or fees for

appeals and the awarding of costs by the Water Appeals Commission. The second decision will be on the risk designation process. I will, therefore, put two Questions. The first will relate to the Water Appeals Commission and is a technical amendment. The Examiner of Statutory Rules recommended that the responsibility for making regulations in clause 21(9) rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest. An amendment is, therefore, required to clause 21(9). For clarity, 21(9) deals with the regulations to make provisions for the fee for the appeal and the awarding of costs of the parties to an appeal. There are also amendments to clauses 73(6), 74(2), 77(2), 79(7), 82(8), 84(6), 86(4) and 118(1) and to schedules 2 and 3. Those amendments are of a technical nature. The proposed amendment is at page 3 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content to amend clause 21 in line with the departmental amendment, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: I will now put the Question on the clause as amended. The Committee has serious concerns about the risk designation mechanism. Although it is content to amend the clause in line with the recommendation of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, it is not content with the clause as amended in so far as it relates to risk designation.

Is the Committee content with clause 21 as amended? I have to say that I am not. Are members agreed that we are not content?

Mr McMullan: Chair, can you state why you are not content?

The Chairperson: The crux is risk designation. We will talk about it next week, but we must push through the formal consideration.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 21, subject to the proposed amendment, put and negatived.

The Chairperson: I formally acknowledge receipt of the amendments on risk designation from the Department. Unfortunately, the Committee has already started its clause-by-clause decision-making on the Bill. We are therefore content to consider the amendments proposed by the Department once the Committee has had adequate time to consider their text and impact on what is a complex and interconnected Bill.

Clause 22 (Matters to be taken into account under sections 17(3), 18(2), 20(3)(b)(ii) and 21(5)(a))

The Chairperson: As with clause 21, two decisions need to be made today. The first decision is on a recommendation from the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the number of regulations in the clause and its technical nature. The second decision will be on the risk designation process. I will therefore put two Questions. The first Question will be on the technical amendment. The Examiner of Statutory Rules said that there were two distinct rules at 22(4) when there should perhaps be one. The Department has suggested an amendment, which was considered at the meeting on 27 May. There is a consequential amendment to clause 117 as a result of the amendment to clause 22. The amendment is at page 4 of your tabled papers. The Committee has also requested

clarification on the definition of cultural heritage, and the response is in the matrix.

Question, That the Committee is content to amend clause 22 in line with the departmental amendment, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: We will now ask the Question on the clause as amended. The Committee has serious concerns about the risk designation mechanism and, although content to amend the clause in line with the Examiner of Statutory Rules' recommendations, is not content with the clause as amended in so far as it relates to risk designation.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 22, subject to the proposed amendment, put and negatived.

The Chairperson: I wish to state the following, which can be added to the minutes. I formally acknowledge receipt of the amendments on risk designation from the Department. Unfortunately, the Committee has already started its clause-by-clause decision-making on the Bill. We are therefore content to consider the amendments proposed by the Department once the Committee has had adequate time to consider the text of the amendments and their impact on what is a complex and interconnected Bill.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 23 put and agreed to.

Clause 24 (Supervision requirement and commissioning of supervising engineer etc.)

The Chairperson: The Committee has expressed concern about whether the level of penalties is commensurate with the offence. There was also concern about the responsibilities of a supervising engineer. The responses from the Department are in the matrix.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 24, put and agreed to.

Clause 25 (Duties etc. in relation to supervision)

The Chairperson: The Committee has received an amendment to the clause to take account of the number of supervising engineer visits to high-risk and medium-risk reservoirs. The amendment is at pages 4 to 6 of the tabled papers. There is a consequential amendment at clause 33(4)(i).

Before I put the Question, I will say my piece. I am not yet content with clause 25(2)(k), which deals with the visits to a high-risk reservoir. The number of visits will change with the amendment to at least once in every 12-month period for a high-risk reservoir and at least once in every 24-month period for a medium-risk reservoir.

Again, there are two factors to my concerns. One is the words "at least". More could have been done on the minimum and maximum number of inspections in any given time. I am not content with the periods, namely 12 months and 24 months. I revert to my MOT analogy. A car goes through an MOT once a year. Is that comparable with a reservoir that has been in existence for a long time? Those are my concerns and the reasons why I am not content with the clause.

Members may well ask me whether we should amend the clause. The problem is that I do not see that I, and maybe even the Committee, are informed enough technically to

put a time on it. We could push it out, but how far? You have heard the arguments from David and Kieran on what engineers are saying about their PI protection. So where would it be suitable for the Committee to draw the line? Again, I put the onus back on the Department. Really, the onus on setting a period should be placed there and not with the Committee.

My issues are with the words "at least" for a minimum; the absence of a maximum period; and with the intervals specified. I acknowledge that amendments were made and that the number of inspections was pushed out from twice every 12 months to once every 12 months for high-risk reservoirs and from at least once in every 12 months to at least once in every 24 months for medium-risk reservoirs. However, I am not content that that is enough. That is my spoke. Do members have any comments or questions?

Mr McMullan: How many times is a high-risk reservoir inspected before it is downgraded to medium risk? It will not always stay as a high-risk reservoir. Therefore, if it comes down to medium consequence, it will have a 24-monthly inspection. Are you looking for one inspection in every 36-month period?

The Chairperson: I am not content with the periods as they sit. This is all very much wrapped up with clause 17 and the risk designation and probability issue. That is where I sit. I see that gains have been made, and we now have the amendment, which we will discuss and debate next week. In the amendment, factors come into play that change the designation.

Mr McMullan: At the same time, you cannot let a reservoir go too long without inspection. I know that you may want to have a three-, four- or five-year inspection period, but you could be letting it go too far.

The Chairperson: It is about finding the balance. I do not know whether the Committee has the technical information to be able to make that informed judgement. That is why I am not proposing an amendment, but I am not content with the clause.

Mr McMullan: These decisions are all predicated on cost. Without the cost, we could, I think, take the decisions much more easily. However, we know that there is a cost to the inspections, so we are trying to find a suitable inspection period to cover that cost. That is what is really driving —

The Chairperson: It is the regulatory burden and then making sure that it is effective.

Mr McMullan: Yes, so we are keeping in our head the costs to the people who own the reservoirs. If a high-risk reservoir is inspected once a year, after three years, it should be ready for downgrading to medium risk. It cannot remain high risk every year if it complies with the regulations; it has to be downgraded at some stage.

The Chairperson: Yes, that is one of the points that I made before. A reservoir might have been there for 100 years without any movement. The new regime means visits by supervising engineers and inspection engineers' reports. If nothing has changed over that initial period, there could be a way to relax that regime. Given that it is time framed, I do not know how you would ever write that into a Bill. Do we have to do the same thing over and over again? Does a supervising engineer need to see the same thing over and over again? Rivers Agency would say

that you would start with more visits in a 12-month period and a 24-month period, and then you get to the point at which you have one a year and one every 24 months. That is, I think, just too burdensome, and that is why I am not content.

Any other questions or queries?

Mr McMullan: How long does an inspection take? If you have an inspection once a year and write up your report, you are no sooner finished than you are into the following year.

The Chairperson: Every reservoir will be different.

Mr McMullan: It is about cost. We have cost in our head rather than the period of inspection. Costs are driving this decision.

The Chairperson: If you have an engineer supervising a reservoir every month —

Mr McMullan: If we are not content, we may leave that and come back to it next week.

The Chairperson: We have to do it formally. This has always been a fundamental issue. I am not content with it as it is. I do not have enough technical information to make an amendment.

Before I put the Question, do members have any other comments? No.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 25, put and negated.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 26 to 28 put and agreed to.

Clause 29 (Inspection timing: reservoir subject to pre-commencement inspection report)

The Chairperson: Whilst no comments were received in relation to the clause, there is a consequential amendment in clause 120. The amendment is at pages 6 and 7 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 29, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 30 to 32 put and agreed to.

Clause 33 (Duties etc. in relation to inspection)

The Chairperson: No comments were raised in relation to the clause. However, it is consequential to the proposed amendment to 25(2)(k), which was considered at the meeting on 27 May. The amendment can be found at pages 7 and 8 of the tabled papers. Clause 33 is linked to clause 25(2)(k). I am not going to rehearse the issues, but I have a problem with the minimum time and the period between inspections. It is exactly the same issue.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 33, subject to the proposed amendment, put and negated.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 34 and 35, put and agreed to.

Clause 36 (Offences: supervision, inspection, record keeping)

The Chairperson: The Department is considering an amendment to the clause to ensure that, where a reservoir manager is required by other legislation to

obtain consents, sufficient time is allowed to obtain such consents before enforcement action is considered. The amendment can be found at pages 8 and 9 of the tabled papers and includes a new clause 36A. There is a consequential amendment to clauses 37 and 70.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 36, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 36A is entitled:

“Offence in connection with inspection: failure to secure compliance with safety direction or recommendation”

The new clause 36A is at page 9 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with the new clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 37 (Defences: offence under section 36(1)(f))

The Chairperson: There is now a consequential amendment to clause 37 due to the amendment to clause 36. The amendment is at page 10 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 37, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 38 to 48 put and agreed to.

Clause 49 (Offences: construction or alteration)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to this clause, which can be found at pages 10 and 11 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 49, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 49A is entitled:

“Offences: failure to comply with safety direction in safety report, preliminary certificate or final certificate”

The new clause 49A is at pages 10 and 11 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with the new clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 50 (Defences: offences under section 49(1)(b) or (c))

The Chairperson: There is a consequential amendment due to the new clause 49A. It amends the title to “Defences: offences under section 49A(1)(a) or (b)”, and it is at page 11 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 50, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 51 and 52, put and agreed to.

Clause 53 (Flood plans)

The Chairperson: An amendment is proposed to this clause, and it can be found at pages 11 to 13 of the tabled papers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 53, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 54 to 64 put and agreed to.

Clause 65 (Commissioning of engineer by Department)

The Chairperson: We now come to the first of a number of clauses that deal with the issue of cost recovery. These are clauses 65(4), 67(6), 69(6), 71(7), 71(8), 86(1) and 92(8) and the new clauses 103A, 103B and 103C.

The Committee in its deliberations noted that, when the reservoir manager fails to comply with certain requirements of the Bill, the Department has provided itself with the powers to meet those requirements. This covers areas such as commissioning of an engineer, carrying out safety works etc. In most of these instances, the Department must recoup or recover the full costs. The Department seems to be working on the assumption that, in such cases, it would be because the reservoir manager was refusing to comply. The Committee understood that, in fact, in many cases, it could be because the reservoir manager would be financially unable to comply. This was a fundamental issue for the Committee. It did not want the Department having to pursue a community-based club or farmer when there was no likelihood of the reservoir manager being able to pay.

The Department agreed that it would amend a number of clauses to enable it to have discretion on cost recovery. Thus in cases where there was no possibility of a reservoir manager being able to pay or where payment would cause severe financial difficulties or even bankruptcy or, indeed, where it did make economic sense to seek to recover costs, the Department will have some discretion. However, as the Department will be making a decision on whether to recover costs, that has necessitated the provision of an appeal system in the Bill. The appeal system will be managed by the Water Appeals Commission for Northern Ireland. OFMDFM is the sponsor Department for the Water Appeals Commission, and its approval is therefore required for that new function and the relevant amendments. The amendments have been received, and we will come across them individually as we go through the clauses.

The first amendment is to clause 65, and it is on page 13 of the tabled papers. This was a major issue for many members of the Committee, and so the amendment is, if you like, a gain for the Committee.

I will put the Question: is the Committee content with clause 65 as amended?

Mr McMullan: Would the word "reasonable" not be better on the other side of the word "costs", rather than "costs reasonably incurred"?

The Chairperson: This is at clause 65.

The Committee Clerk: It is just the way that it is drafted.

Mr McMullan: Yes, but if you were reading it, what would you think?

The Chairperson: I can bring the officials forward if you wish, but they will probably say that that is the way that it is drafted.

Mr McMullan: OK. I will go with that.

The Chairperson: Are you happy enough?

Mr McMullan: Yes.

Mr Buchanan: On that, the amendment states that the Department:

"may by notice served ... require the manager to pay".

Therefore, the Department will have the flexibility to seek to restore any moneys that it has spent. However, the word "may" is used. How far can the Department go? It is still somewhat open-ended. If the Department moves in, does a bit of work and is looking to recover its money, is there a possibility that the reservoir manager could lose his house or part of a holding that he has? If he does not have the money to pay, is it possible that he is going to lose part of a business, a farm, a house or whatever?

The Chairperson: I ask the officials to come to the table. Did you hear all of that?

Mr Porter: Yes. The fundamental point is that those are the responsibilities of the reservoir manager. They are responsible for the structure. We have passed the point in the Bill of establishing that it is their responsibility as is the cost associated with that. When the reservoir manager does not fulfil their duty, which is established in law, the flexibility is there for the Department to step in and carry out the works. The question is then what costs we will recover.

The word "may" is there to give us some flexibility. We will not pursue when there is no prospect of cost recovery. That is the element that is in there. However, where there is a prospect of cost recovery and somebody is quite capable of carrying out that duty but chooses not to, we need the legislation to be quite strict. It is their responsibility. They own the structure, and if it fails, they are liable for the harm that is caused. We are regulating that function. It is highly important that that is made clear and that we do not write in a legal loophole whereby people who are quite capable of carrying out their duty just sit on their hands and wait for the Department to do it and have wriggle room to get out of it. It needs to be quite tight to make sure that we do not leave that prospect of people playing out legal arguments with us.

The Chairperson: OK. Are there any further questions for the officials, David and Kieran?

Mr Buchanan: It is still not overly clear. Somebody may not have the money to do what is required of them, but they have a holding or property, something like that. For example, if they have property, is there the possibility that that property could be seized to make up for the money that the Department is looking for?

Mr Porter: It would be exactly the same as if you owed the taxman money. In law, it says that you owe that money and, if you have the ability to pay that, it is right and proper that you are pursued for it. Just because you are going to lose something is not a good enough argument. If you dodge your tax, and you have assets, it is entirely right and proper, in law, for that to be pursued because you owe that money. That principle needs to be maintained. We recognise that there are people who hold this in a charity trust or who have been left a reservoir or a body of water in a will and they have no other assets. We need the discretion in a genuine case like that, so that the Department can put a case — internally to the Department

and potentially to the Minister — to say that there is no reasonable prospect of cost recovery and it is not mischievousness by an individual or clever management of their assets. We need a little bit of wriggle room for those cases. However, if somebody is just avoiding their responsibility — in the same way as they might avoid paying tax or any other bill — and they have the ability to pay, they should pay in law. Just because you do not like paying is not a good enough defence. We have to be careful that we do not write that in.

The Chairperson: Various members want to speak. We have covered this, week in and week out. It is one of the fundamentals. We are going over ground that we have already covered. You used the example of tax, David, but you pay tax because you have made money. That is not the case if you are a reservoir owner. In most cases, the person has inherited it, and it may be a millstone round their neck.

Mr Porter: It applies irrespective of how you got it. If you were willed a house, not a reservoir, and it had a leaking roof, unfortunately it comes as a package, and you cannot separate out the bits that you would like to be left to you and give up the bits that you do not like. Unfortunately in life, that is what happens. You get good bits, and there are risks and responsibilities. We have established through history that, in common law, the owner of the land is responsible for this hazard; we have established that they are not managing it in a way that means that we can give an assurance to people, particularly those living downstream, that it is being managed in a reasonable way; and we have established that something needs to be done. Unfortunately, we cannot just say that we will let them off the pain bit of owning it because of the circumstances. However, we have put in a little bit of wriggle room so that we do not see people being made destitute over this. It is difficult in law to write that in, and this is as good as we can get it.

The Chairperson: I understand.

Mr Swann: I am looking for some clarity. If a reservoir owner has assets, the Department will pursue them for those assets.

Mr Porter: The Department would have to consider whether it was right and proper to pursue them. We are establishing the powers in law. The difficulty is the individual cases that you have to deal with. We cannot go through and say that there are 40 individual cases and that we will pursue this one because of this circumstance, but that we might not pursue that one. We have to take it on a case-by-case basis when it arises. That is where we need it to be tight, so that we do not leave a loophole. However, we need a little bit of discretion for the Department, so that, when we are presented with the facts of an individual case, we have the ability to apply a little bit of discretion.

Mr Brazier: As currently drafted, the Bill says that we “must” recover; the Department will pursue in any circumstances. The amendment gives the Department discretion and more accurately reflects its policy on cost recovery. We cannot write into the primary legislation all the scenarios that might come up around this. If the Department has incurred costs that should otherwise have been incurred by a reservoir manager, it has a responsibility to consider recovering those costs. That is what this is doing. That might lead to full-cost recovery

in certain circumstances and no-cost recovery in others because of the circumstances of the individual reservoir manager. As drafted and introduced in the Assembly, there was no discretion around that. In addition, we have brought in, in the amendment, that if we decide to recover costs, the reservoir manager will have the right to appeal to the Water Appeals Commission as to the amount and the decision to recover.

Mr Swann: As far as I am aware, the Department’s policy on cost recovery is full-cost recovery.

Mr Brazier: We checked that and that is not the case. This Bill accurately reflects the policy, and we checked that with our policymakers. We showed this proposed amendment to our policymakers, and they agreed that it accurately reflected the position.

Mr Porter: Maybe the example is better not to think of the extremes but the very small cases. For instance, if the Department had to step in and spend a few hundred pounds to do something, and it is going to cost us £10,000 to recover that cost, clearly we would put a case that it is not value for money to spend £10,000 to pursue and recover a few hundred pounds. In that case, irrespective of whether it was in the Reservoirs Bill or any other bit of the Department, there would have to be a judgement made on whether cost recovery was the correct thing to do.

Mr Swann: David, we pass SRs here quite regularly where we go for the cost recovery of the price of plastic shoes. So, when you are talking about the Department going after a few hundred pounds, they go after a few pence in certain cases. This example is purely theoretical: if somebody has been bequeathed a reservoir that then needs money, which they do not have, spent on it, and the Department moves in to seize the asset, the only asset they have is the reservoir. Will the Department take the reservoir or is that too big a risk for the Department?

Mr Porter: Again, I am not sure. We would need to consider that.

Mr Swann: But if he had a house, you would take the house.

Mr Porter: No, we would not say that.

Mr Brazier: Not necessarily.

Mr Swann: Not necessarily, but you may.

Mr Brazier: Yes, it is a possibility. It needs to be considered. The Department has incurred costs that would otherwise have been incurred by the reservoir manager, and it needs to consider the recovery of those costs. Whether it does or not —

Mr Porter: — is a different matter.

Mr Brazier: — depends on the circumstances.

Mr Swann: The flexibility may be in the legislation, but I think that it will be a different matter in practice.

Mr Brazier: The way the Bill is written, we would be in breach of the legislation if we did not apply how it is written.

Mr Irwin: I have issues similar to Robin’s whereby someone can inherit a reservoir and quite possibly be asset-rich, but they do not have the funds. It would be a travesty if those people had to sell property.

Mr Porter: Unfortunately, that is a hazard associated with getting willed something. I am not sure how, in legislation, we can deal with that.

Mr Irwin: I know that. Put it this way: those who cannot afford it, you do not go after them; those who have assets, you do go after them. It is not fair either way.

Mr Porter: We are happy to revert to the previous one that says that we will just go after everybody, if that is what you want. That is the alternative.

Mr Irwin: Most of the time, you would be wasting your time.

Mr Swann: Put it this way, going back to that would make our decision an awful lot easier. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Porter: At least that is equally unfair on everybody. I do not know what to do here.

Mr Brazier: We brought that forward because that is what we thought the Committee was looking for: discretion. If we are hearing otherwise, we can revert.

Mr Irwin: Discretion is good, but —

Mr Brazier: We cannot give guarantees, if that is what the Committee is looking for. We just cannot.

Mr Porter: We cannot because we are bringing in a power in order to do something. We cannot write in, “In this particular case, we will do this, and in that particular case, we will do that”. It is then how we deal with individual cases after that. The flexibility is good because at least it means that we do not have to recover costs. At least it requires us to pose that question to ourselves. Will we recover costs? Is it reasonable? At least that flexibility is a movement.

The Chairperson: We have opened up this debate again. We have had this countless times, and I know that the Department has moved and the Committee has made gains. I am happy to go into a five-minute closed session if members want to discuss the issue further. Otherwise, I will put the Question. It is completely up to members. A five-minute informal?

Members indicated assent.

The Committee went into closed session from 3.31 pm until 3.43 pm.

The Chairperson: I remind members that we are back in open session. We have discussed clause 65 in open and closed sessions.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 65, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with Clause 66, put and agreed to.

Clause 67 (Enforcement notice: safety measures)

The Chairperson: An amendment is proposed to clause 67(6) to take account of the Committee position on discretion in seeking full cost recovery.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 67, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with Clause 68, put and agreed to.

Clause 69 (Department’s power to arrange taking of safety measures)

The Chairperson: An amendment is proposed to clause 69(6) to take account of the Committee’s position on discretion over full cost recovery.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 69, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 70 (Offence under section 36(1)(f) or 49(1)(b): further remedies)

The Chairperson: There is a new consequential amendment to clause 70, due to the amendment of clause 36.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 70, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 71 (Emergency powers)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 71(7) and (8) to take account of the Committee position on discretion on full cost recovery. The amendment is at page 15 of tabled papers, and there is a new clause at 71A.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause 71, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 71A is entitled “Recovery of costs under section 65, 67, 69 or 71: appeal”. It is a new clause due to the amendment to clause 71.

Question, That the Committee is content with new clause 71A, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 72 agreed to.

Clause 73 (Stop Notices: content and procedure)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment at 73(6) regarding the change in the responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 73, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 74 (Stop notices: compensation)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment at clause 74(2) regarding the change in the responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 74, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 75 and 76, put and agreed to.

Clause 77 (Regulations as to enforcement undertakings: further provision)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 77(2) regarding the change in the responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather

than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 77, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 78, put and agreed to.

Clause 79 (Fixed monetary penalties: procedure etc)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 79(7) regarding the change in the responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 79, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 80 and 81, put and agreed to.

Clause 82 (Variable monetary penalties: procedure etc)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 82(8) regarding the change in responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 82, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 83, put and agreed to.

Clause 84 (Undertaking referred to in section 82(5): enforcement)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 84(6) regarding the change in responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 84, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 85, put and agreed to.

Clause 86 (Recovery by the Department of certain costs)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 86(1) to take account of the Committee position on full cost recovery. There is also an amendment to clause 86(4) regarding the change in responsibility for making regulations to clause 21(9); that is, it should rest with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister rather than with the Department in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 86, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Clause 87 (Publication of enforcement action)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification of why enforcement actions were required to be published, and the response is on page 20 of the matrix.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 87, put and agreed to.

Clause 88 (Powers of entry)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification on exemptions for powers of entry or the differences between this clause and what is accepted as normal standard operating procedures.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 88, put and agreed to.

Clause 89 (Warrants authorising entry)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification on the use of the force element in the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 89, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 90 to 91, put and agreed to.

Clause 92 (Compensation)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 92(8) to take account of the Committee position on full cost recovery.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 92, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 93 to 95, put and agreed to.

Clause 96 (Power to require information and assistance from others)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification on what was meant by "other body" and whether that covered the Secretary of State.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 96, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 97 to 102, put and agreed to.

Clause 103 (Reimbursement of costs incurred by Institution of Civil Engineers)

The Chairperson: No issues were identified with clause 103. However, there are new clauses 103A, 103B and 103C to take account of the amendments to clause 65.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 103, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 103A is entitled "Power of Water Appeals Commission to award cost in an appeal".

Question, That the Committee is content with new clause 103A, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 103B is entitled "Orders as to costs: supplementary".

Question, That the Committee is content with new clause 103B, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 103C is entitled "Fees in relations to appeals".

Question, That the Committee is content with new clause 103C, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 104, put and agreed to.

Clause 105 (Grants)

The Chairperson: Members will recall that the Minister has advised that she is proposing a grant scheme, and this was discussed at last week's meeting.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 105, put and agreed to.

Clause 106 (Assessment of engineers' reports etc.)

The Chairperson: The Committee expressed concern regarding the possibility of overengineering by engineers and the lack of checks and balances on engineers in the Bill. The Department has proposed an amendment and a new clause 106A. A briefing was given on this amendment at the meeting last week. Members should refer to the Hansard report of that briefing.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 106, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

New Clause

The Chairperson: New clause 106A is entitled "Publication of information as regards ranges of costs of engineers' services". It is directly related to the issues raised by the Committee on some sort of checks and balances on the engineers, as well as dealing with the information vacuum around the cost of hiring the various types of engineer.

Question, That the Committee is content with new clause 106A, put and agreed to.

Clause 107 (Notice to the Department of revocation of commissioning, or resignation, of engineer)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification on the defence at clause 107(6).

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 107, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 108 to 112, put and agreed to.

Clause 113 (Enforcement in relation to the Crown)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification as to the reason why this clause was included in the Bill.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 113, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 114, put and agreed to.

Clause 115 (Offences by bodies corporate and partnerships)

The Chairperson: The Committee sought clarification on who would be liable in a partnership or merger when an act of sabotage or vandalism took place.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 115, put and agreed to.

Clause 116 (Supplementary, incidental, consequential etc. provision)

Question put, That the Committee is content with clause 116.

Mr McMullan: Are we dealing here with limited companies?

The Chairperson: This is clause 116. We have just voted on clause 115. Do you want to come in on clause 116?

Mr McMullan: No, it's OK.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 117 (Orders and regulations)

The Chairperson: There is a consequential amendment to clause 117(3)(a)(ii) due to an amendment to clause 22.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 117, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 118 (Definitions)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to clause 118. This is directly related to the technical amendment around who makes regulations to provide for appeals fees and awarding of costs in relation to the Water Appeals Commission.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 118, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 119, put and agreed to.

Clause 120 (Commencement)

The Chairperson: The Committee considered a proposed amendment to clause 120 at the meeting on 27 May. This is an amendment to allow for the two-phase approach as defined in discussions and the letter from the Minister that was considered last week. There is a further amendment to clause 120. The Committee was very much of this mind with regard to the two phases of the Bill, given the fact that we did not have all the information that we should have had with regards to initial audit and the information that would flow from that. Pardon the pun.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 120, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 121, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 1, put and agreed to.

Schedule 2 (Index of Defined Expressions)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to schedule 2. It adds the words "the Water Appeals Commission" and "Section 118(1)".

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 2, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Schedule 3 (Minor and Consequential Amendments)

The Chairperson: There is an amendment to schedule 3.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 3, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 4, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the long title, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: That concludes clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Reservoirs Bill. The Committee staff will now draft the Committee report for consideration and approval by the Committee on 17 June.

Mrs Dobson: You will do that tonight.

The Chairperson: You would probably need to do it tonight to keep everything in your head.

We can have a discussion next week on the amendments that we have received today. Having said that, we have already completed formal clause-by-clause scrutiny. Everything else will go into the Committee report that the staff will compile for our approval. The letter to the Minister will also need to be amended next week. I had better not be counting out numbers in my sleep. *[Laughter.]*

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Justice

11 June 2014

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill [NIA 33/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Seán Lynch
Mr Alban Maginness
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Patsy McGlone

The Chairperson: We now move to the formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill. A paper outlining the Committee's position on each of the clauses and the Hansard report of the Committee's deliberations at last week's meeting were circulated to members yesterday and copies are in your information packs.

As the Attorney General's proposed amendment is not currently part of the Bill, it will not be covered in the formal clause-by-clause consideration. However, the Committee deliberations on the proposed amendment will be reflected in the report on the Bill. If members are clear, I will work through each clause and schedule. I will then put formally the Question on each. Where there are proposed amendments, I will put the Question on the proposed amendment first and then the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 1, put and agreed to.

Clause 2 (Designation of Director of Legal Aid Casework)

The Chairperson: Some members expressed the view that clause 2(1) could be better drafted and they may wish to consider this further at a later stage. The views will be reflected in the Committee report.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 2, put and agreed to.

Clause 3 (Exercise of functions by Director)

The Chairperson: Some members expressed reservations about the framework in place to ensure the independence of the director regarding decisions in individual cases, whether policy constraints could impact negatively on the exercise of that independence because a category of cases could be excluded from consideration by the director and whether proper safeguards are in place.

Some members indicated that they may wish to consider this further at a later stage.

Other members were satisfied that any direction issued by the Department could not override the provisions of the relevant primary or secondary legislation and noted that the requirement to follow directions and guidance issued by the Minister already exists. The different views of the Committee will be reflected in the Committee report.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 3, put and agreed to.

Clause 4 (Delegation of functions of Director)

The Chairperson: Some comments were made regarding the make-up of the appeals panels, which are covered under schedule 2. No other issues were raised by members in relation to clause 4.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 4, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 5, put and agreed to.

Clause 6 (Amendment of law relating to legal aid, civil legal services and criminal defence services)

The Chairperson: No issues were raised by members in relation to clause 6, but the Committee agreed to support two amendments to schedule 2, which we will come to in due course.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 6, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 7, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 8, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 9, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 10, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 11, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 12, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 13, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 1, put and agreed to.

Schedule 2 (Amendments)

The Chairperson: One member expressed some reservations about the proposed make-up of the appeals panel and the intention to include laypersons as well as legally qualified persons. It was noted that the detail of the appeals mechanism, including the make-up and procedures of the panels, will be set out in subordinate legislation, which will be scrutinised by the Committee and the Assembly, with the first set of regulations being subject to the affirmative resolution procedure and subsequent regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure. The Committee discussed the advice provided by the Assembly Examiner of Statutory Rules indicating that the regulation-making power is of some great significance to the Bill and therefore should be subject to draft affirmative procedure on the first and subsequent occasions. The Committee agreed with that assessment and indicated that we would support an amendment to make that change.

The Committee also noted the advice provided by the Examiner of Statutory Rules that the rules in respect of the assignment of solicitor and counsel where a criminal aid certificate has been granted should also be subject to the draft affirmative procedure on the first and subsequent occasions given the significance of the powers. The Committee again agreed with that assessment and indicated that we would support an amendment to make that change.

The Department has now written indicating that, in light of the Committee's decision, it will instruct Legislative Counsel to draft the necessary amendments. A copy of the letter has been circulated to members. That saves the Committee from having to draft the amendments, but they will do what we wanted.

Is the Committee content with the proposed amendments to be brought forward by the Department of Justice to ensure that all rules made under the provisions in respect of the new article 36A, 36B and 38A provisions in the 1981 Order and article 20A provision in the 2003 Order in respect of appeal panels should be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure on the first and subsequent occasions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 2, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Mr Elliott: Subject to us being agreed to them.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 3, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: As this is the end of the clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, the Committee now needs to consider the long title of the Bill.

Question, That the Committee is content with the long title, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: OK; thank you. The draft Committee report on the Bill will be prepared for consideration and agreement at next week's meeting.

Written Answers

This section contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 13 June 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Colliers International

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the cost of the Colliers International report into the peace building and reconciliation centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site, broken down by (i) visitors assessment; (ii) marketing strategy and plan; and (iii) other costs.

(AQW 33503/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Strategic Investment Board costs for the Colliers International Visitor Assessment report and the Marketing Strategy and Plan are detailed in the table below:

Strategic Investment Board – Colliers International Report Costs

Visitors Assessment £28,950+VAT	Marketing Strategy and Plan £29,179.56+VAT	Other costs £N/A
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Strategic Investment Board

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the agreed work programme for the Strategic Investment Board for each of the last five years.

(AQW 33506/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Details of the agreed work programme for the Strategic Investment Board for each of the last five years are available as part of the Strategic Investment Board's annual Corporate and Business Plan, copies of which are published on the SIB website (www.sibni.org) at http://www.sibni.org/index/about_sib/available_information/who_we_are_information.htm.

Information on SIB business activities for any given year is also published in the Annual Review and Accounts/Financial Report, copies of which are also available at http://www.sibni.org/index/about_sib/available_information/what_we_spend.htm.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Single Farm Payment: Submission

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has submitted proposals to the Executive on the distribution of Single Farm Payments; and if not, to detail when they will be submitted.

(AQW 33750/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I have already announced a significant number of important CAP reform decisions relating to payment entitlements, eligible land, active farmers, greening, the Regional Reserve, the Young Farmers' Scheme, the Redistributive Payment, the Small Farmers' Scheme and capping. However, a small number of key decisions remain to be taken.

As I have stated on several occasions, the allocation of almost €2 billion of taxpayers' money over the remainder of this decade has to be done carefully, wisely and fairly. We need to be mindful not just of the distribution of CAP support, but of the potential bureaucratic burdens and risks we create in whatever choices we make.

Given the importance of these remaining decisions, it is right that they be agreed by the Executive. Political discussions are ongoing in relation to the remaining key issues and it is my intention to bring my final proposals on these issues to the Executive in the coming weeks.

I am, of course, mindful of the 1 August 2014 deadline to notify the EU Commission of our implementation plans and it is my intention that we will have an agreed CAP Pillar I structure before that date.

Single Farm Payment: Unpaid

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total Single Farm Payment that remains unpaid; and the amount that has been denied in the current year.

(AQW 33757/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total amount of Single Farm Payment that remains unpaid for the 2013 scheme year is £1,048,684. Claims can remain unpaid due to probate proceedings, businesses failing to supply required information such as bank account details and disputes between businesses. In most cases, payments can be made when businesses supply the necessary information.

The amount that has been denied, due to penalties applied under scheme rules, in the 2013 year is £1,205,990 from a total budget of £265.25m.

Single Farm Payment: Impact Assessment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the impact assessment completed on farm incomes and viability in the event of the default position becoming operative in respect of Single Farm Payments on 1 August 2014.

(AQW 33758/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The default position for implementation of CAP reform from 1 January 2015 is a single region model with a uniform payment per hectare under both the Basic Payment and Greening Payment Schemes. Any deviation from this default position needs to be notified to the EU Commission by 1 August 2014.

During the public consultation on 'Policy Options Arising from the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar I Direct Payments)', my officials undertook and published significant analysis on the potential impacts of a redistribution of direct payments on farm income.

The data in Tables 1 and 2 (Annex A) show the impact on farm incomes of a flat rate payment regime. The analysis is based on information from the annual Farm Business Survey, which is used to assess Farm Business Income (a measure of the return to unpaid labour and the capital invested in a farm business) for businesses above 0.5 standard labour units across a range of farm types.

A move to flat rate support regime from 2015 would significantly reduce incomes on all farm types except for sheep (SDA) and mixed cattle and sheep (SDA) when compared with the status quo. The risk of significant adverse consequences arising from the immediate adoption of a flat rate payment regime is highest in the beef sector, where incomes tend to be lowest. However, difficulties could also arise in the inherently more profitable dairy sector, especially if it were to coincide with a period of falling producer milk prices.

There would be other impacts on farm businesses, such as a sudden change in cash flow, which are not fully articulated by an analysis of farm incomes. It should also be noted that the analysis does not allow for any offsetting actions and adjustments at individual farmer or aggregate level (i.e. it is a static analysis rather than a dynamic analysis). Of course, the possible extent of such adjustments in the very short term would probably be very limited.

I have stated previously that I am very mindful of the deadline of 1 August 2014 for decisions to be notified to the EU Commission and it is my intention to seek Executive agreement on an appropriate CAP Pillar I payment regime in advance of that date.

ANNEX A

Table 1: Impact of moving towards flat rate payments (single region) on average Farm Business Income by Farm Type (2011/12 data)

Farm Type	2011/12 Farm Business Incomes (£)	Single Region Flat rate from 2015 (£)	% Change
Dairy (SDA)	43,000	40,500	-5.8%
Dairy (DA)	54,100	48,500	-10.4%
Dairy (lowland)	70,900	60,000	-15.4%
Sheep (SDA)	26,200	41,300	57.6%
Beef (SDA)	18,800	13,700	-27.1%
Mixed Cattle & Sheep (SDA)	28,900	32,200	11.4%
Cattle & Sheep (DA)	24,400	15,000	-38.5%
Cattle & Sheep (lowland)	19,400	11,100	-42.8%
Mixed	53,000	45,800	-13.6%
General Cropping	48,000	43,500	-9.4%

Farm Type	2011/12 Farm Business Incomes (£)	Single Region Flat rate from 2015 (£)	% Change
Pigs & Poultry	37,500	35,300	-5.9%
Cereals	27,300	23,100	-15.4%
All Types	35,000	30,000	-14.3%

Table 2: Impact of moving towards flat rate payments (single region) on average Farm Business Income by Farm Type (2012/13 data)

Farm Type	2012/13 Farm Business Incomes (£)	Single Region Flat rate from 2015 (£)	% Change
Dairy (SDA)	24,200	21,800	-9.9%
Dairy (DA)	24,000	19,000	-20.8%
Dairy (lowland)	34,300	24,400	-28.9%
Sheep (SDA)	18,300	31,800	73.8%
Beef (SDA)	12,200	7,500	-38.5%
Mixed Cattle & Sheep (SDA)	15,100	18,100	19.9%
Cattle & Sheep (DA)	12,600	5,000	-60.3%
Cattle & Sheep (Lowland)	12,200	4,800	-60.7%
Mixed	44,700	37,600	-15.9%
General Cropping	66,800	64,000	-4.2%
Pigs & Poultry	31,900	29,000	-9.1%
Cereals	38,900	33,500	-13.9%
All Types	20,100	15,600	-22.4%

Data from Farm Business Survey for all farms > 0.5 standard labour units.

Poultry Beak Trimming

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has any plans to outlaw the practice of the beak trimming of poultry.

(AQW 33817/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Beak trimming of poultry here is permitted in The Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations 2012. It can only be performed on chicks under 10 days old in order to prevent feather pecking or cannibalism, and can only be carried out by a person who has been provided with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training so that they are qualified to perform the procedure.

My Department is working with the Beak Trimming Action Group, which includes representatives from industry, welfare groups and scientists, to find ways to manage flocks of birds without the need to beak trim. Defra is currently funding a peer reviewed research study on this issue and the results of this pilot study will feed into their evidence review in 2015, with a view to banning beak trimming of laying hens in 2016. Other similar research is also being undertaken in Scotland.

I will consider what action is appropriate here in light of developments in Britain and elsewhere.

Broadband Services: West Tyrone

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the steps her Department is taking to extend and strengthen broadband services in West Tyrone.

(AQW 33858/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Within the overall list of 7,539 broadband 'not spots' there are a number of West Tyrone post codes included. Details of the proposed intervention area for the NI Broadband Improvement Project (NIBIP) were published on the DETI website for both basic (2Megabits per second) and superfast (24 Megabits per second or more) at the commencement of the procurement process.

http://www.detini.gov.uk/nibip_postcodes_-_basic__3_oct_2013__.pdf

(http://www.detini.gov.uk/nibip_postcodes_-_superfast__3_oct_2013___-_copy.pdf)

Responsibility for broadband provision within the north of Ireland and the publication of information relating to the BDUK project comes under the remit of DETI.

BT is presently undertaking a detailed survey and design exercise based on this intervention area which utilises an engineering model employed in other areas of Britain and accepted by BDUK as a credible and practical methodology.

This exercise is complex, taking account of a number of factors including technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc.

DETI is working with BT and BDUK to make the outcomes of the survey and design process available as soon as possible and while there has been progress, due to the complexity involved, it is taking longer than anticipated to complete.

As I'm sure you are aware I am mindful of the public interest in this project and what areas are likely to benefit and I will continue to request this information from DETI and BT as a matter of urgency. However, it is important that the material published is as accurate as possible.

Livestock Carcasses: Illegally Dumped

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what financial assistance her Department is offering to councils that remove illegally dumped livestock carcasses.

(AQW 33859/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Disposal of animal carcasses is required under Regulation EC 1069/2009 Articles 13 & 21 and subsequently the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations (NI) 2001. DARD is the Competent Authority for the implementation of these regulations.

The responsibility for the disposal of fallen animals lies with the occupier of the premises or the person considered by DARD to be in charge of the premises.

Where a carcass is dumped on private land, wherever possible the owner of the animal will be identified and held responsible. If ownership cannot be proven, responsibility for disposal rests with the landowner.

Where a carcass is dumped elsewhere, including on public land or highways, and ownership of the carcass cannot be ascertained, responsibility for disposal rests with the local authority. DARD, through the local Divisional Veterinary Office, can assist the district council wherever possible to try and establish ownership of the carcass on a case by case basis, but no financial assistance is offered.

Single Farm Payment: Claims

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for a breakdown of the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of Single Farm Payment claims that were submitted online, broken down by council area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33880/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The numbers of Single Applications submitted online to my Department, by District Council area, for each of the last three years are provided in the table below.

District Council Area	2012 all	2012 online	Online %	2013 all	2013 online	Online %	2014 all	2014 online	Online %
Antrim	1021	233	22.82	1009	251	24.88	809	409	50.56
Ards	1033	208	20.14	1035	194	18.74	798	312	39.1
Armagh	2606	711	27.28	2597	290	11.17	2095	767	36.61
Ballymena	1937	440	22.72	1910	492	25.76	1473	642	43.58
Ballymoney	1068	562	52.62	1050	530	50.48	866	555	64.09
Banbridge	1717	432	25.16	1697	432	25.46	1340	492	36.72
Belfast	51	14	27.45	46	10	21.74	26	11	42.31
Carrickfergus	179	19	10.61	176	19	10.8	128	21	16.41
Castlereagh	100	24	24	98	19	19.39	60	22	36.67
Coleraine	1122	257	22.91	1108	262	23.65	896	392	43.75
Cookstown	1829	337	18.43	1827	246	13.46	1555	829	53.31
Craigavon	958	263	27.45	951	204	21.45	707	296	41.87
Derry	700	138	19.71	696	179	25.72	577	213	36.92
Down	1818	290	15.95	1817	342	18.82	1487	530	35.64

District Council Area	2012 all	2012 online	Online %	2013 all	2013 online	Online %	2014 all	2014 online	Online %
Dungannon	2467	199	8.07	2451	183	7.47	2055	457	22.24
Fermanagh	4157	367	8.83	4134	378	9.14	3480	687	19.74
Larne	739	70	9.47	733	97	13.23	625	145	23.2
Limavady	876	147	16.78	887	176	19.84	762	321	42.13
Lisburn	1402	388	27.67	1369	411	30.02	1028	469	45.62
Magherafelt	1950	278	14.26	1943	290	14.93	1612	658	40.82
Moyle	798	458	57.39	799	462	57.82	711	469	65.96
Newry & Mourne	3310	854	25.8	3283	733	22.33	2865	1064	37.14
Newtownabbey	422	40	9.48	406	52	12.81	293	60	20.48
North Down	141	18	12.77	140	21	15	107	27	25.23
Omagh	2881	623	21.62	2866	693	24.18	2448	1002	40.93
Strabane	1590	479	30.13	1586	499	31.46	1351	662	49
None Associated	1064	210	19.74	1026	215	20.96	705	246	34.89
Grand Total	37936	8059	21.24	37640	7680	20.4	30859	11758	38.1

Wind Farm Development Project

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the wind farm development project. (AQW 33894/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Previously the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) supported Forest Service to examine opportunities for obtaining better value for money from the forest estate. As part of a 2009 "Market Sounding" exercise carried out by Forest Service it asked industry for "innovative and optimal suggestions on how to best sweat the existing asset base ... assisting in delivering value for money to NIFS". This exercise helped identify and prioritise the opportunities to be considered in a Commercialisation Plan and this work was taken forward in a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) in June 2010. A conceptual Outline Business Case (OBC) followed. This document remains in draft format.

In January 2014 Forest Service appointed a Wind Energy Development Manager (seconded from SIB). He is presently revising and taking forward this previous work. This involves a range of multi-disciplinary issues from looking at how best to address community benefits and engagement to technical site assessments and financial analysis. As this analysis is ongoing I am not in a position to say which sites, if any, my Department propose to take forward.

In the 2014-15 Forest Service Business Plan my Department has said it will publish a procurement strategy for the exploitation of opportunities for wind farm development on the Forest Service estate. At that point there will be more clarity regarding the nature of Forest Service involvement in wind energy.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on how she is addressing the Common Agricultural Policy issue which could impact low land farmers in North Down. (AQW 33914/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current reform of the Common Agricultural Policy will have a significant impact not just in North Down, but on farmers right across the north. I continue to work towards delivering a fair outcome that will balance the needs of all farmers.

I have already announced a significant number of important CAP reform decisions relating to payment entitlements, eligible land, active farmers, greening, the Regional Reserve, the Young Farmers' Scheme, the Redistributive Payment, the Small Farmers' Scheme and capping. However, a small number of key decisions remain to be taken.

As I have stated in response to similar Assembly Questions, the allocation of almost €2 billion of taxpayers' money over the remainder of this decade has to be done carefully, wisely and fairly for all farmers. We need to be mindful not just of the distribution of CAP support, but of the potential bureaucratic burdens and risks we create in whatever choices we make.

Given the importance of these remaining decisions and the impact on local farmers, it is right that they be agreed by the Executive. Political discussions are ongoing in relation to the remaining key issues and it is my intention to bring my final proposals on these issues to the Executive in the coming weeks.

Common Agricultural Policy: Reform Decisions

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she plans to progress the final Common Agriculture Policy reform decisions, including the transition period, by urgent procedure; and if so, to detail how the procedure will be conducted.

(AQW 34007/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have already announced a significant number of important CAP reform decisions relating to payment entitlements, eligible land, active farmers, greening, the Regional Reserve, the Young Farmers' Scheme, the Redistributive Payment, the Small Farmers' Scheme and capping. A small number of key decisions remain to be taken.

As I have stated in response to similar Assembly Questions, the allocation of almost €2 billion of taxpayers' money over the remainder of this decade has to be done carefully, wisely and fairly for all farmers. We need to be mindful not just of the distribution of CAP support, but of the potential bureaucratic burdens and risks we create in whatever choices we make.

Given the importance of these remaining decisions and the impact on local farmers, it is right that they be agreed by the Executive. Political discussions are ongoing in relation to the remaining key issues and it is my intention to bring my final proposals on these issues to the Executive in the coming weeks. I shall seek Executive agreement by the most appropriate means available to me at that point in time.

Lough Neagh: Ownership and Control

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the report on the ownership and control of Lough Neagh will be published.

(AQW 34016/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Report of the Cross Departmental Working Group on Lough Neagh was published on 5 June 2014 and can be viewed on the Department's web site at:

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/potential-for-bringing-lough-neagh-into-public-ownership.doc>

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Elver Kill: Cathaleen's Fall Dam

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether a substantial elver kill took place at Cathaleen's Fall Dam on the River Erne recently; and if so, for assessment of why this happened and what action is being taken to rectify the situation.

(AQW 33391/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): During an inspection by Electricity Supply Board (ESB) staff of eel collection boxes at the Cathaleen's Falls facility at Ballyshannon on 22nd April 2014, approximately 100kgs of dead elvers were discovered.

When my officials were made aware of this matter, they immediately contacted Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and investigations are ongoing into how the incident occurred. My Department is working closely with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), IFI and ESB, to formalise protocols to ensure that this situation does not arise in future.

I am most concerned at this incident and have written to Mr Fergus O'Dowd TD, Minister of State at the Department of Energy, Communications and Natural Resources, to express my concerns and for the appropriate action to be taken against ESB.

Eel Management Plans: European Council Regulation

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the amount of funding her Department will draw down to implement the 2007 European Council Regulation establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel and associated eel management plans; and (ii) how the funding has been allocated.

(AQW 33394/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) Since 2009, the Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative Society Ltd. (LNFCS) has invested a total of £1,796,000 in elver restocking, of which they have successfully claimed £1,078,000 under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) programme (£539,000 from EFF and £539,000 from DCAL).
- (ii) The restocking of elvers into Lough Neagh is a critical element of the Neagh/Bann Eel Management Plan and DCAL has agreed to provide assisted funding to the LNFCS to help ensure elver recruitment is maintained at an acceptable level. DCAL successfully applied to DARD for assistance from the EFF. The maximum amount of grant aid payable under EFF is £750,000 which represents up to 30% of total eligible project costs (£2,500,000). DCAL will endeavour to match-fund EFF funding. The maximum grant payment in any one financial year therefore will be 60% of eligible project costs up to £500,000 and the period of grant aid will not exceed 5 years.

Elver Kill: Ballyshannon

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the extent and cause of the elver kill at Ballyshannon in April 2014; and (ii) when the elver trap boxes had last been checked before the kill was discovered.

(AQW 33518/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) An incident occurred at the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) facility at Ballyshannon on 22 April 2014 in which approximately 100kg of elvers were reported dead. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is currently investigating the matter and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the possible cause at this time.
- (ii) The IFI investigation will establish the facts of the matter and this will be made public in due course.

Department of Education

Uniforms and Sports Gear: Stock

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what action he is taking to ensure that clothes retailers are able to stock uniforms and sports gear for all types of schools.

(AQW 33529/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The wearing of a school uniform in the north of Ireland, as in the south of Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, is not governed by legislation but falls to schools to determine. The Department of Education issued guidance on school uniforms to all schools here in March 2011 which advises that schools should ensure that their school uniform policy is fair and reasonable, in practical and financial terms, and should have regard to their duties under relevant equality and other legislation.

The guidance makes it clear that the Department expects Boards of Governors (BoGs) to give a high priority to cost considerations when designing their uniforms. Schools were further advised to ensure that their uniform is widely available in High Street shops and other retail outlets, and internet suppliers rather than from an expensive sole supplier.

Whilst I recognise that the day-to-day management of schools, including school uniform policy, is a matter for school Principals, subject to any directions that might be given by the BoGs, I consider that it is of particular importance that schools adhere to the guidance on school uniforms so that pupils or their families do not feel excluded from being able to apply to or attend a particular school due to the cost of a uniform.

Consequently, I wrote to all schools on 27 September 2012, reminding BoGs of their responsibilities in relation to the guidance, with particular reference to the core considerations outlined in paragraph 2.1 of the Circular, emphasising that Governors should ensure that regard is given to the guidance when drawing up their school uniform policy.

I also wrote to the Office of Fair Trading in January 2014 to register my concern about the continued use of restrictive practices in the supply of school uniforms and to enquire about the OFT's plans to take action to address this matter or to undertake further research on such arrangements. Whilst the OFT advised that there were no plans at that time to carry out further work in this sector I understand that a copy of my correspondence has been passed by the OFT to the recently established Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA).

You may also wish to note that I have asked my officials to review potential further actions which might be taken forward to address the high cost of some school uniforms and I will be giving further consideration to this matter over the coming months.

Drumragh Integrated College: Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether he will publish the guidance he received from departmental officials following the court ruling on his approach to the development proposal by Drumragh Integrated College, on the application of his duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

(AQW 33733/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Court has provided a ruling in this case. Legal opinion provided in relation to the case is privileged and will not be published.

Drumragh Integrated College: Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the guidance issued to departmental officials on the application of his duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, to detail who, apart from his officials, has had access to this guidance, given his statement of 15 May 2014 in response to the court ruling on his approach to the development proposal by Drumragh Integrated College that no objections to the guidance had been received.

(AQW 33734/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The guidance formed part of the evidence put before the Court, and could be accessed by all the parties involved in the Judicial Review.

No objections to the guidance were received from Drumragh Integrated College, or their Counsel.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what has been the cost to date of the Education and Skills Authority.
(AQW 33754/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) has not yet been established therefore it has incurred no cost. The member may be referring to the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) and associated costs within my Department.

The total cost of expenditure from 2005 to 31 March 2014 is £18.145m. Since the 31st March, 2014, the ESA Implementation Team has been reduced to a core team and retained as an integral part of DE. The team has been redirected largely onto work necessary to make education administration compatible with local government reform. Work on ESA has ceased.

Controlled Sector Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many new controlled sector schools have been built over the last five years.
(AQW 33782/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table lists those controlled schools that have been built over the last five years.

Controlled	Completed
Ashfield Girls, Belfast	2009
Ballinderry Primary School	2009
Glendhu Nursery	2009
Orangefield Primary School, Belfast	2009
Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn	2009
Ravenscroft Nursery	2009
Templepatrick Primary School	2009
Towerview Primary School	2009
Boys Model Belfast	2010
Girls Model Belfast	2010
Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast	2010
Lisbellaw Primary School	2010
Lisnagelvin Primary School	2010
Banbridge Academy	2011
Whitehouse Primary School, Newtownabbey	2011
Magherafelt Primary School & Nursery School	2012
Magherafelt High School	2012
Taughmonagh Primary School	2012
Tor Bank School, Belfast	2012

Maintained Sector Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many new maintained sector schools have been built over the last five years.
(AQW 33783/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table lists those maintained schools that have been built over the last five years.

Maintained Schools	Completed
De La Salle College Belfast	2009
Drumragh Integrated College Omagh	2009
St Catherine's College Armagh	2009
St Peter's Primary School Cloughreagh	2009

Maintained Schools	Completed
St Joseph's Primary School Carryduff	2010
St Patricks & St Brigids Primary School Ballycastle	2010
St Mary's Primary School Portglenone	2010
Scoil na Fuiseoige	2012
St Oliver Plunkett Forkhill	2012
St Mary's Primary School Newcastle	2012
St Joseph's Primary School Madden	2012
St Columba's Primary School Straw	2012
St Colman's Primary School Lambeg	2012
Dromintee Primary School	2012
Coranny/ Cornagogue Primary School	2012
Carrick Primary School Warrenpoint	2012

Civics: Teaching

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what provision is made for teaching Civics in the school curriculum.
(AQW 33786/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education has no plans to increase the teaching provision of Civics in schools.

Civics is embedded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in primary schools, and Local and Global Citizenship in post-primary schools. Both subjects contribute to the curriculum objective of developing the young person as a contributor to society and have been statutory elements of the revised curriculum since 2007.

At Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and 2 there is a focus on building relationships in the school and community, respect for diversity and how to respond to conflict. Pupils' learning experience of PDMU at primary school provides a foundation for developing their skills, knowledge and deeper understanding of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4.

At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Local and Global Citizenship aims to prepare pupils for playing an active role in society. Knowledge and understanding are covered under four key concepts: Diversity and Inclusion; Equality and Social Justice; Democracy and Participation; and Human Rights and Social Responsibility.

A GCSE qualification is available at Key Stage 4 in Learning for Life and Work and Local and Global Citizenship is a GCSE component module.

Civics: Teaching

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to increase the teaching provision of Civics in schools.
(AQW 33787/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education has no plans to increase the teaching provision of Civics in schools.

Civics is embedded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in primary schools, and Local and Global Citizenship in post-primary schools. Both subjects contribute to the curriculum objective of developing the young person as a contributor to society and have been statutory elements of the revised curriculum since 2007.

At Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and 2 there is a focus on building relationships in the school and community, respect for diversity and how to respond to conflict. Pupils' learning experience of PDMU at primary school provides a foundation for developing their skills, knowledge and deeper understanding of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4.

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A GCSE qualification is available at Key Stage 4 in Learning for Life and Work and Local and Global Citizenship is a GCSE component module.

Pupils: Expenditure

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail the current ratio of per pupil expenditure in each education sector.
(AQW 33795/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Schools are not funded on a ratio basis. The Department does not hold information on costs per pupil at individual school or school sector levels.

Pupils: Year One, North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many children in North Down have yet to receive a primary one place. (AQW 33837/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South-Eastern Education and Library Board advises that as at 4 June 2014, there are three children in the North Down area who remain unplaced, one from Donaghadee, and two from Bangor (one of whom was a late applicant).

Elective Home Education: Policy

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education whether any consultation events for the draft Elective Education Policy have been advertised (i) in the local press; (ii) on radio; and (iii) television. (AQW 33839/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have prepared guidance which reflects their legislative responsibilities in the area of the education of children other than at school including those who are educated at home and they are currently consulting on this guidance.

The Boards have advised that they did not advertise consultation events for the draft home education guidance document in local press, on radio or on television but have adopted a range of methods to facilitate engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in home education. For example, each Board has written to the parents of all children who have notified them that they are presently electing to home educate their children and also to other key stakeholders to advise of the consultation exercise.

Each Board's Consultation Strategy document details the range of activities through which the Boards will actively seek to engage with those who have an interest in home education. This is published on each Board's website alongside their draft guidance and the Boards will also make this available in various formats upon request.

I would note that as part of that Board's consultation I have made clear that I expect the Boards to ensure engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible including young people and their families and to ensure also that the feedback they receive is considered very carefully in reviewing the draft guidance.

I will wish to review each Board's guidance once it has been subject to consultation and reviewed and refined in response to the engagement that has taken place.

Primary Schools: Admission Criteria

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has to standardise admission criteria for enrolment into primary schools. (AQW 33852/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Statutory responsibility for setting admissions criteria rests with the Board of Governors of the primary school concerned and reflects the particular priorities they wish to use when considering applications for admission to their school. My Department does not have a role in this other than to offer guidance.

Working in close collaboration with the five Education and Library Boards, my Department conducted a series of workshops during September 2013 for representatives of primary schools and their Boards of Governors, to provide advice on best practice when formulating their admissions criteria for the 2014/15 school year.

This training was scheduled to assist schools in reviewing the criteria they wished to be included in booklets for parents, which are published by the ELBs in November each year. All primary schools were invited to attend. School feedback on the events was positive and attendance of oversubscribed primary schools was good.

The guidance given to primary schools at the workshops, and the training materials, was published on the Department's website and a link sent to all primary schools by the end of September 2013.

Any move to standardise admissions criteria would require consultation, legislative amendment and the agreement of the Assembly. There are no current plans to introduce such legislation.

Dunclug High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education whether the North Eastern Education and Library Board has approached him in relation to the possibility of Dunclug High School operating on a split site basis following permission being given for it to increase its numbers. (AQW 33854/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have not been approached by the North Eastern Education and Library Board in relation to the possibility of Dunclug High School operating on a split site basis following permission being given for it to increase its numbers.

Enniskillen Collegiate and Portora Royal School

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to review the process for developing the proposals for Enniskillen Collegiate and Portora Royal School, given the concerns raised in the local community.

(AQW 33890/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Western Education & Library Board and the Fermanagh Protestant Board of Education, the bodies responsible for planning for Enniskillen Collegiate and Portora Royal School, brought forward the proposals to amalgamate the schools through the Development Proposal (DP) process.

This process is statutory and governs any and all proposals involving significant change to a school or schools. The process involves consultation before a decision is taken on whether or not to proceed with publication of a proposal and a further two-month public consultation following publication of a DP. It is only after this consultation is complete that I take my decision on the proposal, taking account of all relevant issues and the comments received.

This affords all interested parties the opportunity to offer their views on the proposal before any decision is taken.

The DPs for amalgamation of Enniskillen Collegiate and Portora Royal School were published on 14 May 2014 and the consultation period ends on 14 July.

Ballee Community High School: Suitable Alternative for Pupils

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education what measures have been put in place to ensure that all the current pupils from Ballee Community High School are placed in a suitable alternative by September 2014.

(AQW 33891/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I would refer the Member to my answer to AQW 33732/11-15, tabled by Paul Frew MLA and published in the Official Report on Friday 6 June 2014.

School Closures: New School Uniforms

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education what financial assistance is available to parents who have to buy new school uniforms because their children's school has been closed.

(AQW 33892/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Financial assistance is available through the Education and Library Boards' (the Boards) Clothing Allowance Scheme (the Scheme) to support families on low incomes with the costs of school uniforms. Parents may apply through their Board for assistance under the Scheme provided they meet the relevant eligibility criteria. My Department has allocated £5.4 million to fund the Clothing Allowance Scheme in 2014/15.

My predecessor, Caitríona Ruane, extended the scheme here to cover primary school uniforms with effect from the 2009/10 academic year and introduced the Working Tax Credit criterion in 2010/11 for primary age pupils to help address the pressures felt by low income families. I also announced last year that the Working Tax Credit criterion will be extended from September 2014 so that the same eligibility criteria for uniform grants applies to primary and post-primary pupils. This means that from September 2014 post-primary pupils from lower income families will be supported with access to this benefit in the same way as primary pupils.

The current levels of assistance are as follows:

Primary School	£35.75
Post-Primary/Special School under 15	£51
Post-Primary/Special School over 15	£56
Post-Primary/Special School PE	£22

Elective Home Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education how his expectation of engagement with stakeholders by the Education and Library Boards on Elective Home Education will be obtained if the said consultation has not been advertised in local newspapers.

(AQW 33907/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have prepared guidance which reflects their legislative responsibilities in the area of the education of children other than at school including those who are educated at home and they are currently consulting on this guidance.

The Boards have advised that they did not advertise consultation events for the draft home education guidance document in local press, on radio or on television but have adopted a range of methods to facilitate engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in home education. For example, each Board has written to the parents of all children who have notified them that they are presently electing to home educate their children and also to other key stakeholders to advise of the consultation exercise.

Each Board's Consultation Strategy document details the range of activities through which the Boards will actively seek to engage with those who have an interest in home education. This is published on each Board's website alongside their draft guidance and the Boards will also make this available in various formats upon request.

I would note that as part of that Board's consultation I have made clear that I expect the Boards to ensure engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible including young people and their families and to ensure also that the feedback they receive is considered very carefully in reviewing the draft guidance.

I will wish to review each Board's guidance once it has been subject to consultation and reviewed and refined in response to the engagement that has taken place.

Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education when his Department will approve or reject the voluntary redundancy package offered to teachers in voluntary grammar schools.
(AQW 33911/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is not offering a voluntary redundancy package to teachers in schools.

Ballee Community High School: Pupils' Alternatives

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the admission criteria for pupils attending Ballee High School who have been informed that (i) Cullybacky High School; (ii) Dunclug High School; (iii) Parkhall High School; and (iv) Cambridge House Grammar School are alternative options.
(AQW 33918/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Admissions criteria of schools are formulated by the Board of Governors of the individual school concerned. These are published by the relevant Education and Library Board for schools in their area in booklets for parents and can be viewed on their websites. The admissions criteria of the schools you refer to can be viewed on the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's website at <http://www.neelb.org.uk/parents/enrolment-transfer/> (then select "Post Primary School Booklet 2014").

Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education when his Department approved or rejected the voluntary package offered to teachers in each (i) maintained sector; and (ii) controlled sector school in 2014.
(AQW 33934/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is not offering a voluntary redundancy package to teachers in schools.

Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact on school timetables of the delay in approving or rejecting the voluntary redundancy package offered to teachers in voluntary grammar schools.
(AQW 33935/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is not offering a voluntary redundancy package to teachers in schools.

Home Tuition

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what requirements are placed on Education and Library Boards to provide home tuition for children who are unable to attend school due to long term illness.
(AQW 33955/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Education and Library Boards (ELBs) operate their Home Tuition services as part of their legal responsibility under Article 86 (1) of the Education (NI) Order 1998, to provide 'education otherwise than at school' (EOTAS) for 'those children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness, expulsion or suspension from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them'.

Article 86 (2) of the Education (NI) Order 1998 provides a similar enabling power permitting, but not requiring, the extension of EOTAS services to children above compulsory school age.

It is an operational issue for each ELB to decide how it meets its legal obligations, and exercises its powers, in this matter.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
(AQW 33989/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The numbers of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received in the Department of Education for each of the last three financial years are as follows:

11/12 Financial Year	213
12/13 Financial Year	183
13/14 Financial Year	229

During this period, no cases were considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulation 2004.

Department for Employment and Learning

Youth Employment Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 33212/11-15, to confirm if Youth Employment Scheme placements who were in place prior to the revised guidance being issued on the 8 May 2014, utilised for canvassing for a political party.

(AQW 33607/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): In response to your questions above I can confirm that from the launch of the Youth Employment Scheme July 2012 until 6th May 2014, four political parties (DUP, SDLP, Sinn Fein and UUP) have provided a total of six placements under the Work Experience element of the Scheme. I can confirm that none of these employers indicated canvassing as part of the placement activity provided to my Department.

Staff guidance for the Youth Employment Scheme was revised on 8th May 2014 to bring it into line with the Departments Steps to Work programme. This will ensure that staff in Jobs & Benefits offices and Jobcentres who have responsibility for the delivery of the Scheme will advise employers that placements should not involve canvassing for political parties.

Youth Employment Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 33212/11-15, to outline why his Department issued revised guidance to the Youth Employment Scheme program on the 8 May 2014.

(AQW 33608/11-15)

Dr Farry: In response to your questions above I can confirm that from the launch of the Youth Employment Scheme July 2012 until 6th May 2014, four political parties (DUP, SDLP, Sinn Fein and UUP) have provided a total of six placements under the Work Experience element of the Scheme. I can confirm that none of these employers indicated canvassing as part of the placement activity provided to my Department.

Staff guidance for the Youth Employment Scheme was revised on 8th May 2014 to bring it into line with the Departments Steps to Work programme. This will ensure that staff in Jobs & Benefits offices and Jobcentres who have responsibility for the delivery of the Scheme will advise employers that placements should not involve canvassing for political parties.

Condition Management Programme: Benefits

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the benefits of the Condition Management Programme. **(AQW 33710/11-15)**

Dr Farry: The Condition Management Programme (CMP) is a person-centred, work-focused rehabilitation programme. The key aim of the programme is to help and support people with health related barriers to employment to progress towards and make a successful return to work.

Clients referred to CMP present with both physical and mental health difficulties and the vast majority are unemployed. This, in turn, impacts negatively on their confidence, self-esteem and mood. Almost 60% of CMP referrals present with a mental illness as their primary condition.

The programme, which is delivered by healthcare professionals on behalf of the Department for Employment and Learning, is helping many of these individuals to improve their health and well-being, as well as make a positive move towards employment.

On completion of CMP, participants understand more about their health condition and how it can be positively managed. It also actively encourages people to consider work as a means of ongoing health recovery and provides the individual with a number of strategies to help them deal with their own condition.

During the 2013/14 year, of the 1,211 people who participated on CMP, 98% indicated a positive attitude towards work and training as a result. There has also been a number of telephone surveys carried out with participants six months after they completed the programme. On average, 20% had made a successful transition into paid employment, whilst others had progressed into employment programmes or vocational training courses.

Some of the specific feedback from individuals included: greater confidence about seeking work and the prospect of remaining in work; less fear about their illness as they would now recognise the early signs of a relapse or worsening of the condition and therefore would be more able to take appropriate, timely steps to address the problem or seek appropriate help.

Condition Management Programme: Funding

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much funding his Department provided to the Condition Management Programme in each of the last three years; and to detail the budget for this year and proposed budget for next year.

(AQW 33711/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last three years, the Department for Employment and Learning has provided the following level of annual funding to the Condition Management Programme (CMP):

2011/12	£3,964,000
2012/13	£3,750,000
2013/14	£3,500,000

In November 2013, following extensive, but ultimately unsuccessful negotiations with the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) regarding a proposed partnership approach to the funding and management of this health and employment programme, I took the decision to continue my Department's support for the CMP at existing funding levels (£3.5m) for the 2014/15 financial year.

I can confirm that it would be my intention to continue funding the Condition Management Programme beyond this financial year. However, given the many priorities and pressures within the Employment Service at this time, the level of funding available from my Department for the CMP will be reduced to £2.5million for 2015/16.

Officials from my Department's Disability Employment Service will be meeting with each of the CMP teams over the next month to discuss the implications of the reduced funding, as well as proposals to ensure that the programme has a greater focus on measurable employment outcomes.

In the meantime, if the DHSSPS or other interested stakeholders are willing to make a financial contribution to the funding of the programme, my officials, and of course, the respective CMP management staff, would be very happy to discuss the options and potential benefits thereof.

Civics: Teaching

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the provision available to increase the teaching of civics in Further Education Colleges.

(AQW 33775/11-15)

Dr Farry: While my Department sets the strategic direction for the further education sector, individual colleges are responsible for designing a curriculum offer to meet the needs of learners and employers in their areas. Decisions on courses offered are driven by the level of demand locally and it is the responsibility of individual colleges to meet the needs of learners and employers in a cost effective way that ensures best use of public money.

While course availability is a matter for colleges, I can confirm that there is no taught subject available in "Civics". However, colleges are involved in a range of activities related to the area of civic responsibility.

For example, in Belfast Metropolitan College, the Collaboration and Innovation Fund (CIF) 'Threshold Project' within the School of Community Education and Life Skills has delivered the accredited OCN course 'Introduction to Aspects of Citizenship' to a cohort of young people who are disaffected from education and training and who are furthest from the labour market. This project is part of the implementation of the Department's Pathways to Success strategy. The college is also running a new qualification focusing on how students with learning difficulties understand their role as citizens of the City of Belfast.

In 2012/13, across all colleges, there were 250 enrolments on a range of Level 2 and 3 Diploma Courses in Public Services. These courses offer a module in 'Citizenship, Diversity and Public Services', which is part of the students' main programme of learning and an integral part of the course.

Politics Modules

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students in the further education sector have studied politics modules, in the last ten years.

(AQW 33776/11-15)

Dr Farry: From the Further Educational Statistical Record (FESR) it is not possible to determine how many students have studied politics 'modules' within the Further Education sector. However, information is available for those students on accredited courses that have been assigned as 'Politics' as the sector subject area. The data indicates that there were 3,651 students who studied accredited courses in politics between 2003/04 and 2012/13.

Individuals have been calculated within each academic year therefore the same individual may appear in multiple years.

Employment Refusals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what redress or action can be taken by applicants, in the public and private sectors, who have been refused employment due to a health issue or disability.

(AQW 33825/11-15)

Dr Farry: Individuals who believe that they have experienced unlawful discrimination in connection with a recruitment process on the grounds of a disability can seek redress by making a claim to an industrial tribunal.

A health issue, however, does not necessarily legally constitute a disability.

This is a complex area of the law and an individual may wish to seek advice from the Equality Commission or obtain independent legal advice.

Universities: Public Bodies

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department classifies universities as a public sector body.

(AQW 33848/11-15)

Dr Farry: The public sector is defined by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) by reference to the European System of Accounts 1995 in accordance with EU requirements. Classification as public or private sector depends on who controls the general corporate policy of the body concerned. Universities are classified by ONS as private sector bodies.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what departmental support is available to ensure people with a disability who wish to enter the workforce due to welfare reforms are not refused employment posts due to their disability or health issues; and whether guidance on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is issued to all potential employers.

(AQW 33879/11-15)

Dr Farry: Through its Disability Employment Service (DES), the Department for Employment and Learning provides a range of programmes and services to assist people with disabilities find and keep employment. These include:

- Workable (NI)
- Access to Work (NI)
- Work Connect
- Job Introduction Scheme
- Condition Management Programme
- Occupational Psychology Service

The Department also works in close partnership with a range of disability organisations to assist and support people with a disability to gain the skills and experience to help them obtain employment.

Specifically, over the past two years, officials from DES have worked with the local disability sector and a number of employers to secure ring-fenced recruitment and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This partnership support model with employers has resulted in successful job outcomes for the target group.

The programmes and services currently being offered by the Department will not be impacted upon by the introduction of Welfare Reforms, and therefore disabled clients will continue to receive the full range of support available to them.

With respect to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, all employers in Northern Ireland are subject to the statutory obligations and duties as stipulated within this well established and widely accepted piece of legislation. My Department does not issue guidance to all employers regarding DDA as information is readily available from a number of sources, including websites, public bodies, advice centres, and the local disability organisations.

Instead, my Department will continue to work with employers and disability support organisations to go beyond what is required under DDA, and to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with the individual help and support that they require to enter the labour market, and once this has been achieved, to help them remain and progress within their chosen occupation.

Disability Employment Strategy

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 32165/11-15, to detail (i) how the Disability Employment Strategy is being developed; (ii) when public consultation on the Strategy will take place; and (iii) what events have taken place, or are planned, in East Antrim with consultees to develop the Strategy.

(AQW 33925/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Disability Employment Strategy is being developed in close partnership with the local disability sector.

My Department fully recognises the role that the sector have to play in helping to achieve the key objective of this new strategy, which is to assist as many disabled people as possible to find, sustain and retain paid employment.

A strategic working group, including a number of representatives from disability organisations, was established at the outset, and has been working collectively since then. The working group is in the process of finalising the draft consultation document, which is now scheduled for issue in September 2014. This will initiate the period of formal public consultation, during which time, people from throughout Northern Ireland will be invited and encouraged to provide an input.

In order to inform the discussions thus far, a number of engagement events have been facilitated by the Department. Five large regional events were part of this exercise, and the strategic working group deliberately targeted a mix of those people with a disability who have or do use existing services, and those who, up until now, have not done so. One of the events took place at the Action Mental Health premises in Antrim and another took place at NICVA in North Belfast. Travel arrangements were organised through the local disability organisations and both of these locations would have been accessible for people from the East Antrim area.

The feedback from all involved, especially the disabled participants, has been overwhelmingly positive and all of the events were very well attended. The discussion and contributions at the events have been very useful and constructive, and these will be reflected within the consultation document.

Following on from the consultation process, it is intended that the Disability Employment Strategy will be launched in April 2015.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the (i) incoming; and (ii) outgoing correspondence that she, or her officials, have received from organisations in relation to hydraulic fracturing and/or unconventional oil and gas, since the beginning of 2013, including (a) the date of the correspondence; (b) the subject of the correspondence; and (c) the name of the individual in the organisation that made contact.

(AQW 29587/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The following table lists the (i) incoming and (ii) outgoing correspondence that DETI received from organisations in relation to hydraulic fracturing and/or unconventional oil and gas, since the beginning of 2013, including (a) the date of the correspondence and (b) the subject of the correspondence. The name of the organisation is provided in column (c) but in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 the name of the individual in the organisation that made contact is not named.

i) & ii) Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence	(a) Date of Correspondence	(b) Subject	(c) Name of Organisation
Correspondence Cases			
Fermanagh District Council	10 May 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	Fermanagh District Council
Department of the Environment (DOE)	8 August 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	DOE
DOE	8 August 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	DOE
DOE	8 August 2013	Petroleum Exploration near the Giant's Causeway	DOE
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to Department of Agriculture and Regional Development (DARD)	2 September 2013	Petroleum Exploration near the Giant's Causeway	DETI to DARD
DARD	1 October 2013	Fracking	DARD
DETI to DARD	8 October 2013	Fracking	DETI
Enterprise Trade Investment (ETI) Committee Requests			
ETI Committee	6 June 2013	Potential Petroleum Licence for CHx LLC	ETI Committee
Invitations			

i) & ii) Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence	(a) Date of Correspondence	(b) Subject	(c) Name of Organisation
Royal Irish Academy	14 March 2013	Discussion on fracking	Royal Irish Academy
Development Media Workshop	19 April 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	Development Media Workshop
Submissions to the Minister			
Fermanagh District Council	5 April 2013	Shale Gas Regulators' Forum (SGRF)	Fermanagh District Council
Correspondence received by DETI Private Office			
Development Media Workshop	30 March 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	Development Media Workshop
Lagan Valley Greens	3 April 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing Licences	Lagan Valley Greens
South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association	22 April 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association
Loughshore Care Partnership	22 April 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	Loughshore Care Partnership
DETI reply to Lagan Valley Greens	25 April 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing Licences	DETI
Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network	25 April 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network
DETI reply to South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association	26 July 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	DETI
DETI reply to Loughshore Care Partnership	26 July 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	DETI
DETI reply to Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network	26 July 2013	Petroleum Licence PL1/13	DETI
Friends of the Earth	18 December 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	Friends of the Earth
DETI reply to Friends of the Earth	13 January 2014	Hydraulic Fracturing	DETI
General Correspondence			
Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd	11 March 2013	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Ireland programme of research - NB this email was marked "Commercial in Confidence"	Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd
DETI reply to above	11 March 2013	EPA Ireland programme of research - NB this email was marked "Commercial in Confidence"	DETI reply to above
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to DETI	23 August 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DECC to DETI
Minerals and Petroleum Branch (MAPB) reply to above	27 August 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	MAPB reply to above
MAPB follow-up to above	9 September 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	MAPB follow-up to above

i) & ii) Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence	(a) Date of Correspondence	(b) Subject	(c) Name of Organisation
Golder Associates Annual Professional Lecture – invitation issued to Geological Survey Northern Ireland (GSNI) & Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)	22 October 2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	GSNI & HSENI attended the Lecture at the University of Ulster, Belfast Campus on 5 November 2013
DECC to DETI	25 October 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DECC to DETI
MAPB to DOE	30 October 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	MAPB to DOE
DOE reply to above	30 October 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DOE reply to above
Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) email re above	31 October 2013	SGRF - Shale Gas Roadmap	NIEA email re above
HSENI to DECC re above	31 October 2013	SGRF - Shale Gas Roadmap	HSENI to DECC re above
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to DETI re above	4 November 2013	Public Health Impact Shale Gas	DHSSPS to DETI re above
MAPB to SGRF members re above	6 November 2013	Public Health Impact Shale Gas	MAPB to SGRF members re above
DECC to SGRF members re above	28 November 2013	DECC	DECC to SGRF members re above
MAPB to SGRF members re above	5 December 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	MAPB to SGRF members re above
DETI to DECC re above	6 December 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DETI to DECC re above
DECC to DETI re above	9 December 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DECC to DETI re above
DETI to DECC re above	9 December 2013	Shale Gas Roadmap	DETI to DECC re above
MAPB to SGRF members re above	13 January 2014	Shale Gas Conference	MAPB to SGRF members re above
Environmental Information Regulations Requests and Freedom of Information Requests			
Researcher, Green Party	15 February 2013	Minutes of the meeting of the Shale Gas Regulators' Forum	Researcher, Green Party
DETI to Researcher, Green Party re above	30 May 2013	Minutes of the meeting of the Shale Gas Regulators' Forum	DETI
DETI Press Office Media Enquiries			
Name of Organisation	Date Enquiry Received	Subject	Date of Reply
Impartial Reporter	09/01/2013	Financial benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing to local community	11/01/2013
Fermanagh Fracking	31/01/2013	Hydraulic Fracturing	n/a
Financial Times	11/03/2013	Shale drilling permits	14/03/2013
BBC NI Spotlight	18/03/2013	Hydraulic Fracturing licences	19/03/2013
Tyrone Courier	28/03/2013	Hydraulic Fracturing licences	29/03/2013

i) & ii) Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence	(a) Date of Correspondence	(b) Subject	(c) Name of Organisation
BBC NI Newsline	23/04/2013	CHx LLC licence applications	23/04/2013
Community Telegraph	26/04/2013	Response to anti-fracking petition	29/04/2013
Tyrone Courier	26/04/2013	CHx LLC licence applications	29/04/2013
BBC NI Newsline	03/05/2013	CHx LLC licence applications	03/05/2013
Daily Mirror	12/06/2013	Comment on Hydraulic Fracturing content in BBC 'Town' programme	12/06/2013
Irish Independent	10/09/2013	Consent for Tamboran exploration wells	13/09/2013
Impartial Reporter	18/12/2013	Evergreen Resources Hydraulic Fracturing sites	18/12/2013
Mid-Ulster Mail	13/01/2014	Request for details of licences for shale gas exploration in Cookstown District Council or Dungannon District Council area	27/01/2014

Renewable Energy Projects

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether NI Electricity has the capacity to manage the 30 on-farm renewable energy projects as envisioned by Assured Asset Energy Ltd, in terms of connection to the grid and cost. (AQW 33738/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The ability of the grid to accommodate individual renewable electricity projects is a matter for NIE and will be determined by a number of factors including the size and electricity export requirements of the generating station, the amount of renewable energy already connected or committed to connect, and the capacity of the primary substation to which it is connected.

Renewable Energy Projects

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what overview and lead is being taken within government to ensure that renewable energy projects can be commissioned at tenable costs because of the inability of the NI Electricity infrastructure to cope and the resulting connection charges. (AQW 33740/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has put in place the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) to incentivise the generation of renewable electricity through renewable obligation certificates. Support delivered through the NIRO means that we are on target to meet the Executive's Programme for Government target of 20% renewable generation by 2015.

The price paid to obtain connections from NIE are cost reflective and must be met by developers. Departing from this principle, for example, to provide further investment in the distribution network could impact on customers' bills. Determining this balance is a matter for the Utility Regulator, taking into account its statutory duty to work in the interests of all customers.

My Department attends the Regulator-led Renewables Grid Liaison Group which also includes industry and NIE representation. NIE has been exploring options for increasing the grid's ability to accommodate small scale renewable generators without substantial grid investment. This work is ongoing.

Strabane: Visitors

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the target of 4.2 million visitors in 2014 has been achieved; and to detail how many have visited Strabane. (AQW 33760/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The key Programme for Government (PFG) targets on tourism for 2014 relate to the 2014 calendar year and outcomes will not be known until spring 2015.

Interim milestone targets were set for 2013 which were to increase visitor numbers to 4.1 million and visitor revenue to £637million by 31 December 2013. Official Statistics recently released by the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) show that these targets were achieved. Visitor numbers for 2013 were 4.1 million with total visitor expenditure of £723million.

The 2014 targets are to increase visitor numbers to 4.2 million and visitor revenue to £676million. Our focus has been to grow visitor spend faster than visitor numbers and therefore, importantly, increase spend per visitor.

Based on these latest figures we are currently on track to achieve both the PfG targets for 2014 and our long term goal to make tourism in Northern Ireland a £1billion industry by 2020.

Regarding visitor numbers to Strabane, the latest NISRA tourism statistics at Local Government District level relate to average figures for the years 2011 and 2012. These figures which were published on 13 December 2013 estimate that the Strabane District Council Area received a total of 36,000 overnight visits in 2011/12. Further detail on the statistics at Local Government District level can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.detini.gov.uk/tourism_statistics_by_local_government_district_2011-2012.pdf?rev=0

Strabane/Lifford Border Region: Investment

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she is working with her Irish Government counterparts on the North South Ministerial Council to attract investment to the Strabane/Lifford border region through InterTradelreland. (AQW 33761/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a cross border body InterTradelreland's remit is not to attract investment to individual areas but to exchange information, carry out research and enhance the capabilities of companies.

Strabane Area: Commercial Investment

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the lack of commercial investment to the Strabane area. (AQW 33762/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the five year period 2008/09 – 2012/13 Invest NI made 284 offers of support totalling over £5million of assistance. This support has contributed towards approximately £30million of investment in the Strabane District Council area and has promoted 481 new jobs.

Most notably this included an announcement by Allstate to seek to locate 100 jobs at its Strabane site as part of a wider expansion across its Northern Ireland operations.

In addition, during the last financial year Invest NI also offered support to O'Neill's International Sports Company Limited totalling £322 thousand to undertake a £3million expansion project which, when fully implemented, will create a further 61 jobs in the area. Invest NI's Jobs Fund programme has also continued to prove beneficial in the area, helping to support a £2million investment by Frylite Limited which will bring a further 19 jobs to Strabane.

In February 2011 Invest NI acquired 43 acres of land at Melmount Road, Strabane for the purpose of developing a new business park to enhance the economic infrastructure within the Strabane Council area. Upon completion of the first phase of construction work in the development of Strabane Business Park, 16 acres of serviced land was released in support of economic development within the Council area.

There are currently six recorded interests from companies in respect of locating to the Park. Whilst it can take some time for expressions of interest to convert to actual sales and investment, this is a pleasing level of interest so far. Invest NI continues to proactively market this land to potential investors, both indigenous and foreign direct to encourage further investment in the Strabane area. However, ultimately the final location decision rests solely with the investor and they choose their location based on many factors including availability of skills, the location of other businesses operating in a similar industry and infrastructure.

I am keen to ensure the progress demonstrated by these announcements is maintained and would encourage all local stakeholders to work together to maximise opportunities for investment.

Strabane Area: Tourism Jobs

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what share of the 40,000 tourism jobs are based in the Strabane area. (AQW 33763/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The latest Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) tourism statistics at Local Government District level were published on 13 December 2013 and relate to average figures for the years 2011 and 2012. The bulletin includes information on employee jobs within Tourism Characteristic Sectors from the 2011 Northern Ireland Census of Employment. These figures show that there were 553 such jobs in the Strabane District Council Area in 2011.

Further detail on the statistics at Local Government District level can be accessed via the following link: http://www.detini.gov.uk/tourism_statistics_by_local_government_district_2011-2012.pdf?rev=0

Strabane Area: Tourism-generated Revenue

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the revenue generated from tourism in the Strabane area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33764/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The latest Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) tourism statistics at Local Government District level relate to average figures for the years 2011 and 2012. These figures which were published on 13 December 2013 estimated that tourism expenditure in the Strabane District Council Area for 2011/12 was £7 million.

Further detail on the statistics at Local Government District level can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.detini.gov.uk/tourism_statistics_by_local_government_district_2011-2012.pdf?rev=0

Gran Fondo Stage Event

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the work her Department has carried out to secure a Gran Fondo stage event following the success of the Giro d'Italia 2014; and (ii) whether the Mournes will be included in the plans for any future event.

(AQW 33864/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) As an event the 2014 Giro d'Italia Big Start captured the imagination. It is being hailed as a resounding success. As a result of our investment there will also be long term benefits in terms of our economy, tourism and interest in cycling. People will now come to ride the Giro stages in our beautiful countryside, including the Mournes.

My Department, through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), has entered into negotiations with the event organisers to secure Northern Ireland as a venue for an official Giro sportive event currently known as The Gran Fondo. This includes the development of a Full Business Case and Economic Appraisal, which NITB is hoping to complete in the next month.

- (ii) If successful in securing The Gran Fondo, as with The Giro d'Italia Grande Partenza, the final race route will be a matter for the event organisers.

Giro d'Italia: Website Hits

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the number of hits on the Giro d'Italia website when the event was in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 33903/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The official Giro d'Italia website (www.gazetta.it/giroaditalia/2014) is owned and operated by RCS Sport Italy and is not affiliated to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB). NITB does not have access to information regarding their website.

Discovernorthernireland.com hosted a suite of Giro related pages before and during the event. From 8 May 2014 to 11 May 2014, the pages received 136,906 page views. This accounted for 54% of pages viewed on the website during above dates.

From 1 January 2014 to 11 May 2014 the Giro d'Italia pages on discovernorthernireland.com supported 420,054 page views.

In addition, Discover Northern Ireland Giro Start 2014 social media messages were seen by 10,655,455 people across Facebook, Twitter & YouTube, and generated 337,463 engagements.

NITB's Giro related videos received 164,000 views in total.

CHx Industrial LLC: Petroleum Licence

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she plans to bring the decision to issue a petroleum licence to CHx Industrial LLC to the Executive.

(AQW 34005/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I would refer the member to the answer I gave to a previous priority AQW 27613/11-15.

Department of the Environment

Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Unregulated Minerals Extraction

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has awarded any contracts to any of the operators of the unregulated minerals extraction taking place in Lough Neagh Special Protection Area for the supply of sand for use in publicly funded plans or projects.

(AQW 32562/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Department has not awarded any contracts for the supply of sand to any operators who may be extracting minerals from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area.

Poultry Sheds: Planning Approval Delays

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of the frustration felt by the local poultry industry at delays in providing planning approval for new poultry sheds; and whether he has had discussions with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding this issue.

(AQW 33513/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Last year, I created a dedicated planning team to deal specifically with applications for poultry houses in order to support and facilitate developments in the agri-food industry. The aim of this team is to reduce processing times for poultry house planning applications. The team, whilst dealing specifically with applications for Moy Park poultry houses across Northern Ireland, also provides advice and support to Area Offices dealing with other poultry house applications.

In processing applications for poultry houses, expert advice from consultees, including NIEA, must be sought to enable full consideration of any potential environmental impacts. This consultation process can result in requests for additional information which can prolong the application process, and I can understand how this may lead to frustration. However I need to be clear that whilst I support a planning system that engages proactively in delivering timely planning decisions, I must also ensure that this is not at the expense of our environment.

Poultry litter has high phosphorus content and can contribute to the phosphorus surplus of local agriculture. We therefore need to ensure that adequate control measures are in place to mitigate any potential associated environmental impacts before making a decision on a planning application. This includes screening of proposed broiler farms by NIEA prior to the submission of applications to give an indication of any potential environmental impacts and location suitability. During the planning application process the applicant is required to provide information, for consideration, detailing the manner in which the chicken litter resulting from a proposal is to be utilised. This is to satisfy my Department that the proposal will not result in an unacceptable impact on the environment.

I have not met with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development on this matter, but I am aware of engagement at official level.

Community Benefit Summit

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the commitments given by his predecessor at the Community Benefit Summit in June 2013, including agreeing to implement a number of actions and then reconvene again in September 2013, whether he will review what has been achieved to date; and revisit his answer to AQW 33188/11-15.

(AQW 33674/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I will be meeting officials to review the recommended actions and what has been achieved to date in the very near future. Following this, I propose to reconvene a further Summit as and when I consider it appropriate to do so.

Renewable Energy Projects

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of his support for the renewable energy project launched through the Assured Energy Asset Ltd Fund, how delivery can be achieved if NI Electricity does not have the capacity to manage the 30 on-farm renewable energy projects as envisioned by Assured Asset Energy Ltd, in terms of connection to the grid and cost.

(AQW 33739/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As Minister of the Environment, I support and encourage renewable energy projects that can have a positive impact on the environment and the economy, and I encourage the efficient processing of any such planning applications.

I am aware that there can be significant issues in relation to grid connection for renewable energy projects, however, responsibility for grid connection, including capacity and associated costs, rests with NIE and is outside of the planning process and my Department's responsibilities.

Public Service Vehicles (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1985

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33599/11-15, whether his Department will undertake to update the Driver and Vehicle Agency's senior staff's assertion and interpretation of this matter for future reference for their meetings with service providers.

(AQW 33751/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am content that my officials are providing consistent and appropriate guidance as to the Department's interpretation of Article 49 of the 1985 Regulations. A copy of my response to this question and to AQW 33599/11-15 has been copied to officials in the relevant policy and operational teams.

Planning Applications: Information Process

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the process utilised to inform people within the vicinity of a planning application that they can input into a consultation process.

(AQW 33756/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has a statutory requirement to advertise an application for planning permission in at least one local newspaper circulating in the area and on the Department's website. In addition, the Department currently has a non-statutory policy of sending neighbour notification letters to occupiers of premises who are most likely to be affected by a proposed development. I consider neighbour notification an important element of the planning system which should be continued after the transfer of powers to local councils.

I recognise that improvements can be made in this area, which is why I am proposing that neighbour notification be made a statutory requirement once new legislation comes into operation in April 2015, when the majority of planning functions will move to councils.

On 28 May 2014, I launched a 12 week consultation on proposals for planning reform and its transfer to new councils where I am seeking views on the improvements I intend to introduce to planning. The proposals for a statutory neighbour notification process are included in this consultation.

Freedom of Information Response

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33508/11-15, (i) to explain the disparity in this answer with a recent Freedom of Information response on 17 April 2014 which detailed a total of £129,988 spent on research and the report into draft speculation for wheelchair accessible taxis; (ii) what other research or reports of this nature on this matter have been funded by his Department; and (iii) what was the cost to his Department of this research.

(AQW 33766/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The reports completed for my Department by Integrated Transport Planning (ITP) related to, amongst other matters, a revised specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis. They did not relate to the introduction of single tier licensing, which was the subject matter of AQW 33508/11-15. I can confirm that the £129,988 was the cost of the work undertaken by ITP.

No other reports on either single tier licensing or Wheelchair Accessible Taxis specifications have been funded by the Department.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Shared Education: Funding

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has been asked by the Minister of Education to provide additional funding for the facilitation of shared education projects since May 2011.

(AQO 6290/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Shared education funding and projects can take different forms. For example, as well as capital funding for shared education campuses, there can be resource funding aimed at enabling individual, separately located schools to engage in sharing services and facilities.

My Department received several bids from the Department of Education relating to shared education funding. Of course, the provision of any additional funding to a department would be a decision for the Executive to make, subject to a recommendation from me.

A number of shared education bids are currently being considered with the UK Government under the Economic Pact announced in June 2013. These include funding for Lisanelly Shared Education Campus and a number of Integrated Primary Schools.

The Shared Education Campuses Programme is a key commitment under the Together: Building a United Community Strategy which aims to identify up to ten potential shared campus type projects. In January this year the Minister for Education called for expressions of interest in this Programme, and I understand he will make an announcement shortly regarding those selected to proceed in planning. No bids have been made in this regard.

I understand the Department of Education is also planning a programme of enhanced shared education amongst schools to be part-funded under Delivering Social Change. This will need to be considered by the Executive against competing priorities.

Civil Service Estate: Unoccupied Buildings

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel which unoccupied buildings are part of the Civil Service Estate.

(AQO 6297/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: At present the unoccupied buildings in the Northern Ireland Civil Service Office Estate managed by the Department of Finance and Personnel are:

Ballyclare Community Benefits Office, Hillhead Road, Ballyclare; Rosepark Workshop, Newtownards Road, Belfast;

2b Portaferry Road, Newtownards; and
35/39 Bridge Street, Ballymena.

Energy Efficiency

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the success of programmes to improve the energy efficiency of public buildings.

(AQO 6292/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I can only answer the question in relation to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Office Estate for which my Department has responsibility. Energy consumption of this Estate equates to 4% of the total Northern Ireland public sector consumption. Energy efficiency programmes for all other public buildings are the responsibility of the Department which manages those buildings.

A three year Energy Efficiency Plan for 2011-14 for the Office Estate has been completed and an updated Plan covering 2014-17 will be published shortly. Both Plans identify three primary mechanisms by which energy consumption can be reduced:

- reduction in the footprint of the Office Estate;
- capital investments in energy efficiency measures and equipment; and
- behavioural change of staff occupying the Estate.

Steps taken so far to improve energy efficiency include:

- the implementation of recommendations from comprehensive energy surveys;
- the implementation of Display Energy Certificate (DECs) recommendations;
- voltage optimisation pilot projects; and
- providing premises officers with limited access to Building Energy Management System (BEMS).

Energy consumption data has shown that in first year of the 2011-14 Office Estate Energy Efficiency Plan, a 3.5% reduction in energy consumption was achieved and assessment of the following two years indicates that the Department is on track to meet the combined 2011-14 plan target of 10% energy reduction (approximately 9,500 megawatts hours (Mwh)).

Rate Relief: Shop Windows

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to changing the current rate relief for shop windows in vacant retail space.

(AQO 6293/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am currently looking at a proposal put forward by representatives of the Buttercrane Shopping Centre in Newry to allow the commercial use of window displays in otherwise vacant shops, without triggering a liability to pay the occupied rate. This came up at a meeting I held last month.

On the face of it, it strikes me an innovative measure worth trying, if it helps arrest the decline in some of our shopping centres and high streets.

There are practical issues, however, that need to be addressed to ensure it is effective and would not lead to widespread abuse or disadvantage to other businesses in the vicinity. Furthermore, there are issues for Land and Property Services who would be charged with administering and policing such a scheme.

As the Member may be aware, the use of window displays in otherwise vacant shops for non-commercial use is currently disregarded for rating purposes. This was a temporary measure introduced in the 'economic downturn' and the legislative provisions are due to expire on 31st March 2015. Unfortunately, to extend and enlarge this power would require a further bill to be taken through the Assembly.

I have asked my officials, however, to consider the case for including such a measure in a Rates Amendment Bill, which is already scheduled for next year.

Rate Relief: Amateur Sports Clubs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the proposed Private Member's Bill on rate relief for community amateur sports clubs.

(AQO 6294/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I cannot support the proposed Private Member's Bill at this time. I have no objection to the Assembly considering measures to further assist community amateur sports clubs, alongside all the other priorities we face. I am concerned, however, with shortcomings in the Member's research; shortcomings that the DFP Committee has already identified and which the member has agreed to address.

This is about engaging with the business community on the issue because some of these clubs directly compete with pubs, restaurants and even hotels. Indeed, it is worth noting that a State Aid case has been lodged recently with the European Commission regarding the preferential treatment of CASCs in relation to business rates in the rest of the UK.

This being the case, it would be unwise to proceed with such a measure until the outcome of the state aid case is known, as otherwise it would pose a risk of infraction on my Department.

It is also worth mentioning that I would be willing to look at introducing enhanced relief for unlicensed clubs and take this through a Rates Amendment Bill which is scheduled for next year, as a safer alternative to the Private Members Bill proposals. And that would also ensure parity of treatment with community halls.

Reinvestment and Reform Initiative

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the recent Northern Ireland Audit Office report on Reinvest and Reform Initiative borrowing, to outline the Executive's future borrowing strategy.

(AQO 6295/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have written to Executive colleagues setting out my proposals for a future borrowing strategy and these proposals are currently being considered by the Budget Review Group.

The draft strategy sets out the costs of borrowing and highlights two ways in which future borrowing may be capped to ensure that borrowing remains affordable going forward.

If agreement is reached in the Executive on this borrowing strategy, I plan to include details in future Budget documents.

Corporation Tax

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the preparations for the proposed devolution of Corporation Tax powers.

(AQO 6296/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Government will make its decision on whether to devolve responsibility for corporation tax in the autumn - with an announcement to be made no later than the 2014 Autumn Statement.

The Government has previously indicated that if it did decide to devolve responsibility for the rate of corporation tax in the autumn, then a stand-alone Bill would be introduced in the normal way with the aim of it becoming law before the prorogation of Parliament prior to the 2015 General Election.

This is a very tight timescale and the First Minister and deputy First Minister have previously highlighted the need for an early decision to the Secretary of State.

In the meantime, officials continue to engage with their Treasury counterparts on preparatory work with respect to the development of the proposed technical design of a devolved regime.

This will inform the content of the necessary legislation and follows on from the previous work by the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.

Public Sector Reform

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what engagement he has had with his Executive colleagues on public sector reform.

(AQO 6298/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Since February 2014 I have been engaged in a series of bi-lateral meetings with my Executive colleagues. To date I have completed ten of the eleven scheduled meetings.

These meetings have covered a generic agenda on Reform together with separate departmental specific items as appropriate. The generic agenda included:

1. Rationale for public sector reform;
2. The role of Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD);
3. Strategic review of public sector reform in NI; and
4. Proposed governance of public sector reform.

The meetings have provided the opportunity to promote the role and responsibilities of PSRD and highlight the need for PSRD to work collaboratively with departments, business areas and frontline staff, as a catalyst and an enabler for reform.

Ongoing work on reform evident within many departments has been recognised and assurance provided that no additional reform activities will be undertaken without the agreement of the respective Minister(s) and the final outcome of any analysis, including implementation plans, will be subject to the agreement of the relevant Minister(s).

Equal Pay: Outstanding Claims

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on any discussions his Department has had on outstanding equal pay claims.

(AQO 6299/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: With regard to valid claims submitted following the Abdulla ruling on behalf of former staff who have now left the Northern Ireland Civil Service, my Department has had a number of discussions with relevant parties leading up to my agreement to the settlement terms which are now being implemented. At the end of May, 346 former NICS staff have been paid their settlements and others are in progress.

With regard to PSNI/NIO staff, I refer the member to AQO 6287/11-15.

June Monitoring Round

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what bids his Department is making as part of the June Monitoring round.

(AQO 6300/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is submitting a bid for £3.6m current and £40m capital to take forward a number of the recommendations made in the NI Executive's Asset Management Strategy.

Budget 2015-16

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the timeline for producing the Executive's 2015-2016 budget. **(AQO 6301/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: The Executive would ideally need to have a final 2015-16 Budget in place by Christmas this year. To allow for public consultation this means we would need to publish a draft Budget by September.

In December last year I sought the Executive's agreement to formally commence the 2015-16 Budget process. However, my proposals have not been endorsed and time is now pressing. I have therefore asked my officials to prepare a draft Budget position over the summer, which I intend to present to the Executive in early September.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

South West Acute Hospital and Altnagelvin Area Hospital

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultations took place between the Public Health Agency, the Health and Social Care Board and the Western Health and Social Care Trust over the use of the facilities at (i) the South West Acute Hospital; and (ii) Altnagelvin Area Hospital.

(AQW 33658/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I understand that that the facilities to which you refer are maternity facilities. I can confirm that Western Health and Social Care Trust has been engaged in on-going discussions with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) in respect of assuring that the Trust provides safe maternity services in line with the medical staffing infrastructure and is committed to providing safe maternity services in both its acute hospitals in line with my Department's Maternity Strategy 2012-2018.

It is the Trust's intention to maintain its current service model to meet the standards outlined in the Maternity Strategy.

Cancer Patients: Available Services

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the services currently available to cancer patients in (i) West Tyrone; and (ii) the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33703/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is responsible for providing services in West Tyrone. Cancer patients in the West Tyrone area have full access to all of the cancer services in Altnagelvin Area Hospital, which is an acute hospital and one of Northern Ireland's designated cancer units. Outreach chemotherapy is provided for some types of cancer at the Tyrone County Hospital.

At Altnagelvin Hospital cancer services are provided in a purpose built facility within the new South Wing and consist of:

- Inpatient ward - combined haematology and oncology, with 14 beds operational 7 days a week 24 hours a day;
- Chemotherapy suite with 17 chairs and 4 treatment rooms operational Monday to Friday;
- Outpatient clinic with 9 consultation rooms operational Monday to Friday 0800 – 1700.

The unit has seven multidisciplinary tumour teams:

- Lung – Linked to South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) and the regional cancer centre in Belfast;
- Colorectal – Linked to SWAH;
- Upper GI – Linked to SWAH and the regional cancer centre in Belfast;
- Breast – Linked to SWAH;
- Urology – Linked to the Northern HSC Trust and the regional cancer centre in Belfast;
- Gynaecology – Linked to SWAH and the regional cancer centre in Belfast;
- Haematology - Linked to the Northern HSC Trust

In addition the Western HSC Trust continues to make progress on the radiotherapy development project. It is planned that a new radiotherapy unit will be fully operational at Altnagelvin Hospital by summer 2016.

DHSSPS: Post-project Evaluations

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail each post-project evaluation that is currently overdue, including the date on which the evaluation was due and the reasons for the delay.

(AQW 33720/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department completes a large number of Post Project Evaluations. The following post project evaluations relating to DHSSPS projects are currently shown as overdue on DFP's database:

Project Title (Type of Expenditure)	PPE Due	Reason/s for Delay
Provision of Adult Mental Health Crisis Service -Gransha Hospital (Capital)	30/11/2013	Project complexity delayed completion. New date set for mid-June 2014.
Electronic Materials Management System (Capital)	31/03/2012	Responsibility for the administration of this project changed on at least 3 occasions. Now underway.
Additional Medical Bed Capacity at Antrim Area Hospital (Capital)	01/12/2013	Delays in completing this project have impacted on the submission date for the PPE. PPE will be complete no later than July 2014.
Expansion of A&E Department at Antrim Area Hospital (Capital)	01/12/2013	Trust has advised that PPE is in final stages and will be with Department no later than 17 June 2014.
NIFRS – Emergency Services Investment Programme – Fleet OBC 2 (Capital)	31/10/2013	NIFRS has advised that PPE is drafted and awaiting clearance by senior management. PPE now expected no later than July 2014.
Provider Development Programme Phase 3 (Consultancy)	31/03/2012	Not submitted. Follow up initiated.
Agenda for Change (Retrospective) Equal Pay cases (Other)	01/06/2013	Not submitted. Follow up initiated

There is also a number of additional overdue capital PPEs where total expenditure is above the delegated limit of the respective ALB but below that required for submission to DFP. The responsibility for completion and submission to the Department of these PPEs lies with the respective ALB. Reasons for the delay are not yet known and reminders have been issued.

Project Title	PPE Due	Reason/s for Delay
South Eastern Trust - Second MRI Scanner - Ulster Hospital	20/02/14	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
Belfast Trust - Decontamination - CJD	31/10/13	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
Belfast Trust – Neurology Unit at Musgrave Park Hospital	31/10/12	Not submitted to Department. Reminder issued to Trust.
Belfast Trust - Replacement X-Ray Equipment at Belfast City Hospital Endovascular Suite	01/02/14	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
South Eastern Trust – Re-provision of GP and Community Services – Pound Lane Health Centre, Downpatrick	06/05/13	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.

Project Title	PPE Due	Reason/s for Delay
Western Trust - Implementation of Alternative Textiles at Altnagelvin Hospital (Sleepknit)	30/04/14	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
Western Trust - Gamma Camera and Radiology Room 8 – Altnagelvin Hospital	01/05/14	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
ICT – RQIA – Back-Up Communications Link	13/09/12	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
ICT – HSCB – Payment Calculation and Analysis System	31/12/12	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
ICT – Regional ICT – Stroke Information System	31/07/13	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
Belfast Trust – Cardiac Theatre Instruments	24/05/11	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.
Western Trust – Altnagelvin Fire Lift	01/04/13	Not submitted to Department. Reminder letter issued.

The below table indicates overdue post-project evaluation for external consultancy business cases below the DFP delegated limit of £75k:

Title	Date	Status
DHSSPS Review of school of dental hygiene	June 2012	PPE is being sought from relevant branch
DHSSPS Evaluation of NI suicide prevention strategy "Protect Life	Dec 2012	PPE is being sought from relevant branch
DHSSPS Evaluation of transfer of prison healthcare	Dec 2012	PPE is being sought from relevant branch
HSCB - review of interagency working	Sept 2010	PPE being sought from HSCB
HSCB - Birth family support & counselling	Oct 2010	PPE being sought from HSCB
HSCB - VFM of temporary staff	Mar 2013	PPE being sought from HSCB
BSO – architectural review FPS application	Sept 2013	PPE being sought from BSO
BSO – BSTP strategic advisor	Sept 2013	PPE being sought from BSO
BSO - RPA phase 2	Dec 2010	PPE being sought from BSO
NIFRS – wildfire management in the eastern Mournes	Jun 2013	PPE being sought from NIFRS
SHSCT – CAMHS Service overview	July 13	PPE is being sought from SHSCT
WHSCT – PFI Energy Advice	Mar 2014	PPE being sought from WHSCT
NHSCT – Development of volunteer questionnaire for MacMillan unit	May 2014	PPE being sought from NHSCT

Pancreatic Cancer: Early Diagnosis

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that the medical training curriculum promotes the early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.
(AQW 33721/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer you to my earlier response to AQW 33549 regarding medical training. The medical professional bodies are responsible for developing the content of post graduate medical curricula which is then approved by the General Medical Council (GMC). Undergraduate programmes are developed by individual medical schools in line with standards set by the GMC. I understand that pancreatic cancer is included in that training.

Pancreatic Cancer: Raising Awareness

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will consider running a dedicated campaign to raise awareness of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer.
(AQW 33722/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency (PHA) will launch a campaign to raise awareness of cancer signs and symptoms later this year.

Pancreatic Cancer Patients: Treatments

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that treatments proven to benefit pancreatic cancer patients will be made available throughout the Health Service as quickly as possible.

(AQW 33723/11-15)

Mr Poots: In Northern Ireland arrangements are in place through health service commissioning to ensure appropriate and timely access to evidence-based treatments.

The Health and Social Care Board and the health authorities in England are guided by the same appraisal organisation i.e. the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) when considering the introduction of new drug therapies and treatments. When these are assessed and gain approval from NICE the Department seeks to ensure their introduction as soon as is practically possible.

Pancreatic Cancer: Clinical Nurse Specialists

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer will be assigned a clinical nurse specialist.

(AQW 33724/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised that all patients with a confirmed diagnosis of pancreatic cancer are discussed at the Regional Hepato-Pancreatico-Biliary (HPB) Multidisciplinary Team meeting. The HPB clinical nurse specialist is a core member of that team. All patients suitable for surgical intervention are assigned to the HPB Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Pancreatic Cancer: Dieticians

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he will take to ensure that dieticians are made compulsory members of the pancreatic cancer multidisciplinary team that review patients with pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 33725/11-15)

Mr Poots: All patients with a confirmed diagnosis of pancreatic cancer are discussed at the Regional Hepato-Pancreatico-Biliary (HPB) Multidisciplinary Team meeting. Dieticians are currently not core members of that team however in line with current

NHS England guidance for reviewing HPB cancer, dieticians are considered members of the extended HPB Team. Extended team members are required to attend the HPB team meeting for discussion on relevant cases – this is determined on a case by case basis on grounds of clinical need. As such there are currently no plans to change the status of dietetic membership of the HPB team in Northern Ireland - although this will be reviewed with the publication of a NICE Pancreatic Cancer Clinical Guideline due late 2014 or early 2015.

Craigavon Area Hospital: Bluestone Unit

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to inpatients discharged from the Bluestone Unit at Craigavon Area Hospital, to detail (i) the support available in a community setting; (ii) whether a key worker is appointed prior to or after discharge; (iii) how soon after discharge the key worker is expected to make contact with the patient; and (iv) whether arrangements differ if former patients were admitted voluntarily or were detained.

(AQW 33726/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Patients of the Bluestone Unit who are considered by the multi-disciplinary team as suitable for early discharge yet still require acute treatment are discharged into the care of the Home Treatment Crisis Response (HTCR) service who continue to deliver, monitor and review the patient's treatment plan according to their needs. For those patients not discharged to HTCR a pre-discharge meeting is convened at the Bluestone Unit to agree with the patient what support arrangements need to be put in place. Support can include voluntary services input, independent sector input and statutory services input.
- (ii) If the patient was known to the community mental health team prior to his/her admission, they will retain their previous key worker, who will also be participating in the discharge process. Otherwise a key worker will be appointed during the pre-discharge meeting.
- (iii) All patients on discharge from the Bluestone Unit are allocated an appointment with the community mental health team within 7 days of discharge under the Card before You Leave protocol. It is normal to expect a patient to be seen within a fortnight following the Card before You Leave appointment.
- (iv) There is no distinction made regardless of the legal status of the patient at point of admission or throughout their time in hospital.

Organ Donation

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to approaching families and next of kin to discuss potential organ donation, how many approaches were made in each month of the last three years which did not involve a specialist Nurse in Organ Donation; and to detail who made the approach.

(AQW 33727/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below indicates the numbers of approaches to families of all potential deceased donors for each month over the last 3 years, and the numbers and percentages of such approaches involving a Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation (SNOD).

	Number where family were approached	Number of approaches where SNOD present	SNOD Present rate-monthly (%)	Number where family approached – Year To Date	Number of approaches where SNOD present – Year To Date	SNOD Present rate-Year To Date (%)
Apr-11	5	5	100%	5	5	100%
May-11	4	2	50%	9	7	77.8%
Jun-11	11	5	45.5%	20	12	60.0%
Jul-11	5	4	80%	25	16	64%
Aug-11	6	6	100%	31	22	71%
Sep-11	6	3	50%	37	25	67.6%
Oct-11	11	8	72.7%	48	33	68.8%
Nov-11	15	8	53.3%	63	41	65.1%
Dec-11	5	3	60%	68	44	64.7%
Jan-12	9	8	88.9%	77	52	67.5%
Feb-12	2	1	50%	79	53	67.1%
Mar-12	9	8	88.9%	88	61	69.3%
Apr-12	7	6	85.7%	95	67	70.5%
May-12	6	5	83.3%	108	78	72.3%
Jun-12	9	6	66.7%	117	84	71.8%
Jul-12	7	5	71.4%	124	89	71.8%
Aug-12	13	11	84.6%	137	99	72.2%
Sep-12	8	7	87.5%	145	106	73.1%
Oct-12	4	4	100%	149	110	73.8%
Nov-12	13	13	100%	162	123	76.0%
Dec-12	6	6	100%	168	129	76.8%
Jan-13	3	2	66.7%	171	131	76.6%
Feb-13	9	7	77.8%	180	138	76.7%
Mar-13	8	6	75%	188	144	76.6%
Apr-13	7	7	100%	195	151	77.4%
May-13	10	9	90%	205	157	76.6%
Jun-13	10	7	70%	215	164	76.3%
Jul-13	5	3	60%	220	167	76.0%
Aug-13	10	7	70%	230	174	75.7%
Sep-13	6	4	66.7%	236	178	75.4%
Oct-13	8	7	87.5%	244	185	75.8%
Nov-13	8	5	62.5%	252	190	75.4%

	Number where family were approached	Number of approaches where SNOD present	SNOD Present rate-monthly (%)	Number where family approached – Year To Date	Number of approaches where SNOD present – Year To Date	SNOD Present rate-Year To Date (%)
Dec-13	9	7	77.8%	73	56	76.7%
Jan-14	9	6	66.7%	82	62	75.6%
Feb-14	9	8	88.9%	91	70	76.9%
Mar-14	10	9	90%	101	79	78.2%

*The information above was supplied by NHS Blood and Transplant on 5 June 2014.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Senior Managers

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the percentage of Voluntary Early Redundancy (VER) and Early Retirement Packages that were awarded to senior managers in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) whether this was an initiative to only benefit senior members of staff; (iii) how many people within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have left using VER; (iv) the total cost of VER packages; and (v) a breakdown of the pay bands included in VER packages.

(AQW 33731/11-15)

Mr Poots: I understand the information requested relates to the last three years i.e.2011/12 -2013/14.

- (i) The Trust has advised that there were no Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) or Voluntary Redundancy (VR) packages awarded to senior managers during the period 2011/12 to 2013/14.
- (ii) The Trust has advised that this initiative was not confined to senior members of staff.
- (iii) & (iv)

The Table below sets out information on the number of VER / VR packages awarded over the period 2011/12 and 2012/13. There were no such packages for 2013/14. (Information on 2011/12 and 2012/13 VER/ VR packages is available in the Trust's Annual Report 2012/13) http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/pdf/annual_report.pdf)

The Table shows the number of people within the Trust who have left using VER/ VR during the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 the cost of these packages during the period 2011/12 to 2013/14.

VER/VR (exit package cost band)	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<£10,000	4	0	0
£10,000 -£25,000	13	2	0
£25,000 - £50,000	26	9	0
£50,000 - £100,000	15	8	0
£100,000 - £150,000	5	3	0
£150,000 - £200,000	2	2	0
>£200,000	0	2	0
Total number	65	26	0
Total resource cost	£3,455,000	£2,150,000	NIL

- (v) The Table below provides a breakdown of the pay bands included in the VER / VR packages.

Pay Band	2011/12	2012/13
1	2	4
2	22	-
3	1	-
4	21	7
5	1	1
6	8	2
7	2	3

Pay Band	2011/12	2012/13
8A	1	5
8B	2	-
8C	3	1
8D	1	1
9	1	-
Medical	-	2
Total	65	26

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeons

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeons are employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33767/11-15)

Mr Poots: The headcount and whole-time equivalent (WTE) numbers of consultant orthopaedic surgeons employed by each Health and Social Care Trust are shown in the table below.

Trust	Headcount	WTE
Belfast HSC Trust	24	22.7
Northern HSC Trust	0	0.0
South Eastern HSC Trust	8	8.0
Southern HSC Trust	7	7.0
Western HSC Trust	9	9.0

Notes:

- 1 These figures have been provided by the HSC Trusts, and have not been validated by the Department.
- 2 Southern HSC Trust also noted that 1 of the consultants listed above is currently working notice and will vacate his post in August 2014. A further consultant has been appointed and is due to start in August 2014. Three (new) posts remain unfilled at present and recruitment campaigning is ongoing.

Prescription Charges

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to introduce prescription charges for people with long term conditions.

(AQW 33770/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have indicated that I am willing to consider the re-introduction of prescription charges to protect vital front line services and to help expand access to new treatments and specialist drugs. I will have further discussions with Executive colleagues.

However, as I have also indicated any proposal to reintroduce charges for prescriptions, including any proposals as to who would be charged would be subject to full public consultation.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening in the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

(AQW 33789/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening was 72,902; the number of people screened was 55,084; and the number of people who received their first invitation was 554.

The Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP) operates a call / recall system which offers GP Practices the opportunity for their patients with diabetes to be screened. Patients are called by their GP Practice to attend a screening clinic.

In August 2012 it was recognised that the screening interval had extended beyond the 12 months recommended and was up to 20 months for some practices.

In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 approximately 24,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 12 months since they were last screened and approximately 28,500 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a

period of 13-15 months since they were last screened. Around 20,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 16+ months since they were last screened.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced a recovery plan aimed at bringing the screening interval back into line and the screening interval was reduced to 12 months by September 2013.

GP practices are responsible for identifying patients eligible for screening, following agreed criteria, and whilst the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme aims to offer screening at 12 monthly intervals to GP Practices, variables to this do arise including capacity at the Practice to accommodate screening within the period offered for the screening and whether patients can attend.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people screened by the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme in the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

(AQW 33790/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening was 72,902; the number of people screened was 55,084; and the number of people who received their first invitation was 554.

The Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP) operates a call / recall system which offers GP Practices the opportunity for their patients with diabetes to be screened. Patients are called by their GP Practice to attend a screening clinic.

In August 2012 it was recognised that the screening interval had extended beyond the 12 months recommended and was up to 20 months for some practices.

In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 approximately 24,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 12 months since they were last screened and approximately 28,500 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 13-15 months since they were last screened. Around 20,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 16+ months since they were last screened.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced a recovery plan aimed at bringing the screening interval back into line and the screening interval was reduced to 12 months by September 2013.

GP practices are responsible for identifying patients eligible for screening, following agreed criteria, and whilst the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme aims to offer screening at 12 monthly intervals to GP Practices, variables to this do arise including capacity at the Practice to accommodate screening within the period offered for the screening and whether patients can attend.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people who received their first invitation to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening in the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

(AQW 33791/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening was 72,902; the number of people screened was 55,084; and the number of people who received their first invitation was 554.

The Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP) operates a call / recall system which offers GP Practices the opportunity for their patients with diabetes to be screened. Patients are called by their GP Practice to attend a screening clinic.

In August 2012 it was recognised that the screening interval had extended beyond the 12 months recommended and was up to 20 months for some practices.

In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 approximately 24,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 12 months since they were last screened and approximately 28,500 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 13-15 months since they were last screened. Around 20,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 16+ months since they were last screened.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced a recovery plan aimed at bringing the screening interval back into line and the screening interval was reduced to 12 months by September 2013.

GP practices are responsible for identifying patients eligible for screening, following agreed criteria, and whilst the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme aims to offer screening at 12 monthly intervals to GP Practices, variables to this do arise including capacity at the Practice to accommodate screening within the period offered for the screening and whether patients can attend.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the proportion of people attending for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening in the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, whose screening took place within a period of twelve months since they were last screened.

(AQW 33792/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening was 72,902; the number of people screened was 55,084; and the number of people who received their first invitation was 554.

The Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP) operates a call / recall system which offers GP Practices the opportunity for their patients with diabetes to be screened. Patients are called by their GP Practice to attend a screening clinic.

In August 2012 it was recognised that the screening interval had extended beyond the 12 months recommended and was up to 20 months for some practices.

In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 approximately 24,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 12 months since they were last screened and approximately 28,500 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 13-15 months since they were last screened. Around 20,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 16+ months since they were last screened.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced a recovery plan aimed at bringing the screening interval back into line and the screening interval was reduced to 12 months by September 2013.

GP practices are responsible for identifying patients eligible for screening, following agreed criteria, and whilst the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme aims to offer screening at 12 monthly intervals to GP Practices, variables to this do arise including capacity at the Practice to accommodate screening within the period offered for the screening and whether patients can attend.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening.

(AQW 33793/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, the number of people invited to attend for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening was 72,902; the number of people screened was 55,084; and the number of people who received their first invitation was 554.

The Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP) operates a call / recall system which offers GP Practices the opportunity for their patients with diabetes to be screened. Patients are called by their GP Practice to attend a screening clinic.

In August 2012 it was recognised that the screening interval had extended beyond the 12 months recommended and was up to 20 months for some practices.

In the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 approximately 24,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 12 months since they were last screened and approximately 28,500 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 13-15 months since they were last screened. Around 20,000 eligible patients were invited to be screened within a period of 16+ months since they were last screened.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced a recovery plan aimed at bringing the screening interval back into line and the screening interval was reduced to 12 months by September 2013.

GP practices are responsible for identifying patients eligible for screening, following agreed criteria, and whilst the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme aims to offer screening at 12 monthly intervals to GP Practices, variables to this do arise including capacity at the Practice to accommodate screening within the period offered for the screening and whether patients can attend.

Nurses: Recruitment

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the programme of recruitment of nurses in each of the (i) last three years; and (ii) last six months, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33801/11-15)

Mr Poots: Details relating to recruitment competitions for nursing are not held centrally, therefore the information has been provided directly from Health and Social Care Trusts.

To provide details for all grades of nursing would be disproportionate therefore the information provided below refers only to Band 5 nurses, the main entry grade for nursing.

Trust	Competitions run within the last 6 months	Number recruited	Competitions run within the last 3 yrs	Number recruited
Belfast	9	45	44	878
Southern	3	92	38	436
Western	4	22	30	616
Northern	5	15	25	678
South Eastern	11	69	75	436

Fire and Rescue Service: Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has taken to date to measure or survey the level of employee morale and job satisfaction at Lisburn District Headquarters. (AQW 33808/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) conducted a Quick Pulse Employee Survey in 2009. It also operates an Area and District Audit Assurance Programme and, as part of this Programme, Lisburn District Headquarters was visited during 2014. During the Audit, staff are given the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns they may have.

NIFRS is planning to conduct an employee engagement survey in 2014/15. This will include staff from Lisburn District and will be designed to measure the level of job satisfaction and morale.

Safefood Corporate Plan and Business Plan

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Safefood Corporate Plan and Business Plan will be brought before the next North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting in autumn 2014. (AQW 33840/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Food Safety Promotion Board's draft Business Plan 2014 and draft Corporate Plan 2014 – 2016 are progressing through the approval process involving my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel and their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. I hope to have both plans formally approved at the next available NSMC meeting, which will be the Aquaculture & Marine sector format meeting, scheduled for 27 June 2014.

Food Safety Promotion Board: Salary of CEO

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there will be a reduction in annual terms and conditions of the salary of the CEO of the Food Safety Promotion Board; and if so, to what extent. (AQW 33841/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following the retirement of the Chief Executive Officer of the Food Safety Promotion Board in May 2014, it has been agreed that the salary for the post should be reduced by €6,150 per annum. The annual leave allowance for the post is being reduced by two days.

Down's Syndrome: People Aged 40+

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people with Down's syndrome are aged 40 years and over. (AQW 33868/11-15)

Mr Poots: There were 532 people with Down's syndrome aged 40 years or older in Northern Ireland at 4 June 2014. This figure was not centrally available and has been sourced from the Health and Social Care Trusts. It has not been validated by the Department.

Down's Syndrome: Children

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children born with Down's syndrome in each of the last five years, broken down by hospital. (AQW 33869/11-15)

Mr Poots: Table One below details the number of children born with Down Syndrome in each of the last five years. Given the small number of births of children with Down's syndrome, it was not possible to provide these figures broken down by hospital due to issues of personal disclosure. Figures have therefore been provided by Health and Social Care Trust area.

Table 1: Children Born with Down's syndrome (2009/10 – 2013/14)

HSC Trust	No. of Children Born with Down syndrome				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast	7	-	14	13	20
Northern	8	-	11	6	7
South Eastern	11	6	7	6	-
Southern	14	6	12	14	5
Western	16	7	-	10	8

Source: HSC Trust Information Systems

"-" cell counts have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure.

Note: These figures have not been validated by DHSSPS

GP Surgeries: Telephone Numbers

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department can take to eradicate the use of 0844 telephone numbers by GP surgeries in North Down.

(AQW 33870/11-15)

Mr Poots: I do not have the legal authority to ban the use of 0844 telephone numbers by GP Practices who are currently tied into telephone contracts. However, in March 2013 my Department amended the Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contract) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 requiring GP Practices not to enter into, renew or extend a contract or arrangement for telephone services unless they are satisfied that, having regard to the arrangement as a whole, persons will not pay more to make relevant calls to their practice that they would to make equivalent calls to a geographical number. GP Practices were also required to review their telephone contract before 1st April 2014, to ensure that, having regard to the arrangement as a whole, persons will not pay more to make relevant calls to their Practice than they would to make equivalent calls to a geographical number. This amendment brought Northern Ireland into line with the Department of Health's policy on use of non-geographical numbers.

My Department closely monitors the use of 0844 numbers to ensure that they are complying with their statutory obligations not to renew or extend their current 0844 telephone contract. Of the 351 GP Practices in Northern Ireland only 18 use a 0844 number, of which there are 5 Practices in North Down: one Practice's contract is due to expire at the end of June 2014, and the other four contracts will expire in 2015 – two in May, one in August and the last one in December 2015. Two of the Practices in North Down have installed separate geographical numbers which patients can use instead of using the 0844 number.

Eye Clinic

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients who attended the artificial eye clinic provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

(AQW 33871/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have advised that during 2013/14 there were 595 patients who attended the Artificial Eye Clinic. Given that patients can attend more than one appointment during the year, this equates to 1,001 attendances.

Eyes: Enucleation

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients currently waiting to receive a permanent artificial eye following enucleation.

(AQW 33872/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Artificial Eye Clinic is a regional service, provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust advised that, as of week commencing 2nd June 2014, there were 3 patients waiting to receive a permanent artificial eye following enucleation.

Prostate Cancer: Raising Awareness

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department plans to launch a publicity campaign to raise the awareness of prostate cancer as well as promote the assistance available.

(AQW 33927/11-15)

Mr Poots: A campaign to raise awareness of cancer signs and symptoms is planned and expected to be launched late autumn 2014.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has commissioned quantitative research to assess public knowledge, attitudes and actions in relation to cancer and its applicability in informing the prioritisation of specific work areas. The outcome of this research is not expected until July 2014 and the PHA will want to consider the findings of the quantitative research before reaching a decision on which particular cancers will be the initial focus of the campaign.

The Public Health Agency will also take due account of the evidence of effectiveness of campaigns in England and Scotland and the feedback from a stakeholder workshop held on the 8th May in determining the optimum approach for Northern Ireland.

Serotonin: Classification

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what actions have been taken following the advice of the Chief Medical Officer in 2013 regarding the classification of the legal drug containing serotonin. (AQW 33941/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, issued a formal alert to the health and social care system on the potentially fatal substance para-methyl-4-methylaminorex, also known as 4,4-DMAR, once we were made aware of its availability in Northern Ireland in October 2013. This information was circulated to all healthcare professionals providing information on the potential dangers of this substance, advising staff to alert those people they come into contact with who may misuse drugs, and providing advice on treatment options for those who may enter the healthcare system. In addition, the alerts were circulated through our Drug and Alcohol Monitoring and Information System to all key stakeholders, including alcohol and drugs services, those working with at-risk groups and young people, criminal justice services, education, service users, etc. In addition, information was made publicly available through a number of media messages issued at the time.

The Public Health Agency also developed a range of information and harm reduction advice that was circulated to all key groups and was also discussed widely on the media. My Department also tasked the Public Health Agency with the development of a local rapid community response protocol to deal with future clusters of potentially drug-related sudden deaths. This protocol is currently being tested in the Belfast area and should help to improve co-ordination and response.

4,4-DMAR was identified by the Forensic Science Service of Northern Ireland, and we understand it was brought to the attention of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) of which the UK wide Forensic Science Early Warning System is member. The EMCDDA and EUROPOL have just completed a Joint Report on the substance, and across the UK we are supporting the proposal that 4,4-DMAR is taken forward for a risk assessment under the 2005 Council Decision 2005/387/JHA. In addition, the Home Office has informed the Advisory Committee for the Misuse of Drugs – the body that makes recommendations on whether or not substances should be classified under the UK-wide Misuse of Drugs Act – about this substance and its risks.

More generally, new substances are appearing on a regular basis and causing harm to individuals and communities right across Northern Ireland. As the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is a reserved matter, I raised this issue directly with the Home Secretary in August 2013 outlining my concerns about these New Psychoactive Substances and asking for a more robust UK-wide approach. In response, the UK Government announced the establishment of an expert panel to review the current legislation and to make recommendations on how this can be improved to tackle this issue. It is anticipated that the expert panel will report during Summer 2014.

Supported Housing Programme: Greenisland House

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the supported housing programme at Greenisland House, including (i) the transfer of the site; (ii) when work is expected to start; and (iii) when work is expected to finish.

(AQW 33944/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that the transfer of the site at Greenisland is being taken forward through established public sector disposal arrangements involving legal services for both parties and agreement on sale price through Land and Property Services. Once this process is complete, the transfer of land will occur and Trinity Housing Association can commence their work. The Trust is keen that this work commences during early summer.

Upon completion of transfer and prior to work commencing, the Housing Association will confirm a programme of work which will include a completion date. During this period, the Trust will continue to work with the Housing Association over the design, development and delivery of the scheme.

Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to introduce a neuromuscular nurse for adults with Muscular Dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions.

(AQW 33947/11-15)

Mr Poots: My previous answer to AQW 30086/11-15 refers. I am further advised that the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has clarified that in response to Recommendation 3 of the McCollum Report, which relates to the need for care advisor posts rather than nurse specialist posts, it has secured funding to appoint two neurological care advisors during

2014/15. The HSCB has advised that this need was also highlighted during the Board's and Public Health Agency's engagement with service users, carers, and other key stakeholders.

The care advisors will provide advice, support, and information to people living with neurological conditions including Muscular Dystrophy.

Neuromuscular Nurses: Employment

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many neuromuscular nurses are employed in each Health and Social Care Trust to provide specialist care services to children with Muscular Dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions.

(AQW 33948/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast HSC Trust currently provides the regional children's neuromuscular nursing service at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. This service currently employs one (1.0 whole-time equivalent) specialist neuromuscular nurse.

Renal Unit

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been repatriated from consultants at the Renal Unit at the Belfast City Hospital to Renal Consultants in other Health and Social Care Trusts in each month of the last two years; and how many were (i) by patient request; and (ii) at the instigation of the consultant.

(AQW 33961/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of patients who have been repatriated from consultants at the Renal Unit at the Belfast City Hospital is not available.

Belfast Trust has advised that it is possible to identify patients discharged to another hospital. However, if a patient is transferred to a hospital outside the Belfast Trust it is not possible to identify the specialty under which they were subsequently admitted.

Family Support Interventions

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33583/11-15 and regarding the additional funding that has been used to enable a minimum of 1700 additional family support interventions across a two year period, (i) what is the timeframe for its implementation; and (ii) where any of these additional interventions have taken place to date.

(AQW 33964/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Delivering Social Change Family Support Hubs programme is on schedule to be delivered by early 2016. A total of 669 additional family support interventions were delivered in 2013/14. The breakdown by Health and Social Care Trust area was:

Belfast	139
Northern	163
Southern	132
South Eastern	120
Western	115

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money was apportioned to Northern Ireland through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33969/11-15)

Mr Poots: The attached table details how much money Northern Ireland was apportioned through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (2009) in each of the last three years.

Financial Year	£m
2011/2012	3,426
2012/2013	3,003
2013/2014	2,853

ITH Pharma Supplies

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether ITH Pharma supplies either total parenteral nutrition or parenteral nutrition to any Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34015/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have been advised that of the five Health and Social Care Trusts, four purchase adult parenteral nutrition products produced by IPH Pharma either directly from them or indirectly through a third party.

All the Trusts have advised that they do not purchase paediatric or neonatal parenteral nutrition products either directly or indirectly from IPH Pharma.

Urology Nurse: Funding

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Macmillan Cancer Trust business case to fund a specialist urology nurse in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for three years, whether his Department or the Northern Health and Social Care Trust will undertake to fund the specialist nurse when the three year period ends.

(AQW 34032/11-15)

Mr Poots: Macmillan has agreed to support the Northern Health and Social Care Trust with a Macmillan urology nurse specialist post for three years initially, with a possibility of a further two- year extension as a project post. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust plans to work with the Health and Social Care Board in the intervening period on how to take forward this service when Macmillan funding ceases.

Down's Syndrome: Organ Transplants

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) children; and (ii) adults with Down's syndrome have had an organ transplant in each of the last six years, broken down by organ type.

(AQW 34044/11-15)

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

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

Health Service: Staffing

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the overall number of health service staff has changed since May 2011.

(AQO 6311/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information is centrally available at each quarter end only. The most recent information therefore, of directly employed Health & Social Care staffing levels, is at 31 March 2011 in comparison with 31 March 2014 and shows a 5% increase in whole-time equivalent staff or 2,558 wte.

This does not include bank staff, home helps, staff with a whole time equivalent of less than 0.03 or staff on career breaks.

Our healthcare staff are our greatest resource. They are at the centre of the performance and modernisation initiatives and vital to providing safe, effective and high quality services.

Notes:

- Figures were sourced from the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) and the Human Resources, Payroll, Travel & Subsistence system (HRPTS).

Bangor: Proposed Health and Care Centre

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the timescale for the proposed Health and Care Centre in Bangor.

(AQW 34105/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible, at this stage, to outline the timescale for the Bangor or any future health & care centres. The Health and Social Care Board, has developed a high level Strategic Implementation Plan for future investment in primary care infrastructure, such as new health and care centres including one in Bangor. This is currently being considered but future capital investment right across my Department, not just in primary care infrastructure, will be dependent on the outcome of future budget exercises and confirmation of value for money and affordability.

Insulin Pumps

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he is addressing the issue of insulin pumps not being made available to patients across various trust areas.

(AQO 6307/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Trusts are engaged in a programme of allocating insulin pumps to those patients who are suitable for this treatment as recommended by the guidance issued by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). This guidance recommends insulin pump therapy as an option for treating Type 1 diabetes mellitus. I am aware of the potential benefits insulin pump therapy can offer patients with diabetes and I secured additional funding in the 2011/12 financial year to procure 1,100 additional insulin pumps for adults and children to be phased in over the four year period to 2015/16.

Currently there are a total of 690 patients using insulin pump therapy in Northern Ireland, with 161 patients waiting to commence treatment.

Paediatric Orthopaedics

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the paediatric orthopaedic service at Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQO 6308/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised that emergency paediatric trauma and orthopaedic surgery is provided in the Western Health and Social Care Trust by consultants from the Trust's Trauma & Orthopaedic service. Children of all ages are treated within this service. Orthopaedic consultants from the Western Trust also treat children aged 13 and over for elective orthopaedic surgery and outpatient care.

Elective paediatric orthopaedic surgery for children aged under 13 years is provided in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Outpatient services for this patient group are provided at Altnagelvin Hospital by paediatric surgeons from the Belfast Trust, who currently provide 38 all-day clinics per year at Altnagelvin Hospital.

Unscheduled Care

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the progress made in relation to unscheduled care following the recent Emergency Care Summit.

(AQO 6309/11-15)

Mr Poots: In January of this year I commissioned RQIA to examine the fundamental underpinning systems, processes, resources and model for unscheduled and emergency care, including how we build sufficient resilience regionally. I expect to receive a detailed report from them before the end of this month. The RQIA's review team is comprised of eminent healthcare professionals who will each bring their wide experience of emergency care to bear on the issue of delivering further improvements in the delivery of this vital service. The team has taken forward an intensive fact finding process engaging with the Trusts and has held two regional summits with key leaders in the health and social care which will inform the report's recommendations.

The College of Emergency Medicine on 9 June held a follow-up meeting to their Emergency Care Summit in order to finalise proposals for improving the delivery of emergency care. I expect to receive those proposals in the near future. The RQIA's review and the work taken forward by the College and the Royal College of Nursing are complementary and will contribute to the development of the next phase in improving emergency care services which I am aiming to announce in the near future.

My Department continues to look to the Health and Social Care Board to work with the Trusts to deliver the improvements in the delivery of unscheduled care services that we all want to see.

Provisional figures for April 2014 show that the number of people waiting more than 12 hours was 246, the lowest number for the month of April in the last five years. This is a significant improvement compared to April 2013 when 1,003 people waited longer than 12 hours.

Ballymena Health and Care Centre

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Ballymena Health and Care Centre.

(AQO 6310/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am pleased to confirm that construction work on the new Ballymena Health and Care Centre is progressing well on site and is expected to complete in May 2015.

Upon completion of the construction works the Trust will require a short period to commission the building and move services from their current location to the new health centre. It is expected that the new health and care centre will open to the public in the summer of 2015.

Organ Donations/Transplants

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the number of organ donations and transplants have changed in the last five years.

(AQO 6312/11-15)

Mr Poots: Recent statistics published by NHS Blood and Transplant show that there has been a record number of donations by, and transplants for, Northern Ireland residents.

In 2009/2010, there were 38 donors (18 deceased and 20 living); at the end of 2013/14, this had increased to 107 donors (46 deceased and 67 living). During the same timescale, transplants increased from 80 (59 deceased and 21 living) to 133 (72 deceased and 61 living).

This is a remarkable achievement, but I recognise that more needs to be done as there are approximately 160 people waiting for a transplant in Northern Ireland.

The Public Health Agency continues to raise awareness of the need for all of us to consider donating our organs and recently launched a high profile campaign to further this aim. I look forward to the results of this campaign which will be established by way of a public survey after the campaign finishes in the latter part of 2014.

In the meantime, I would encourage everyone to join the organ donor register and discuss their wishes with family and friends.

Mental Health Capacity Bill

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what protections are in place for people under 16 who are currently excluded from the draft Mental Health Capacity Bill.

(AQO 6313/11-15)

Mr Poots: The key protections that will continue to apply to all children when the draft Mental Capacity Bill is enacted are contained in the Children (NI) Order 1995. That Order requires the child's welfare to be given paramount consideration. Importantly, it also recognises that children should be given a voice in relation to what happens to them and provides opportunities for working in partnership with children as far as their age and development allows.

A number of protections are also contained in the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986. Pending the outcomes of a proposed children related project in the next mandate, the Department is seeking views on how the protections in that Order could be made more child-focused and enhanced where appropriate. Any proposal brought forward during the current consultation that better protects children will be given careful consideration.

Both the Children (NI) Order 1995 and the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 are part of a wider legal framework that already exists to protect children and govern decision making in relation to them. This is the main reason why the draft Mental Capacity Bill (and capacity legislation elsewhere in the UK) does not apply to those aged under 16. The Republic of Ireland has gone further in deciding that its proposed capacity legislation will not apply to those aged under 18.

Transforming Your Care

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that it was envisaged as a three to five year plan, for his assessment of the progress of Transforming Your Care.

(AQO 6314/11-15)

Mr Poots: The implementation of TYC is indeed a 3 to 5 year journey and I have kept the House regularly updated on my assessment of progress.

In my Oral Statement of the 11th Match 2014, I provided examples of real changes in patient care and the solid foundations being laid for future healthcare services.

I also provided an update on the progress of actions to deliver the 99 recommendations for service change, set out in the TYC Review, in my response to the recent request from the Health Committee.

To quote one example: TYC Proposal 90 was for the "Establishment of a forum to take forward how technology will support the new model of care linking the services to industry and academia". This was achieved through the establishment of the Connected Health and Prosperity Project Board and the NI Connected Health Eco-System.

Monitoring of progress in implementing TYC is being measured through the Commissioning Plan and the associated Indicators of Performance measurements; through achievement of Public Health Agency and Departmental business plan milestones; and through the measurement of benefits and outcomes identified for individual service change projects.

Primary Schools: Health Checks for Children

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will consider instigating health checks for all children when they start primary school.

(AQO 6315/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has a framework in place known as 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' which delivers the universal child health promotion programme for all children and young people from birth and throughout the school years. The programme includes a specific set of contacts delivered by school nurses for children throughout their school life including when they start primary school as a Year 1 pupil.

General health appraisal takes place in years 1 and 8 and includes individual child health assessment to identify any mental or emotional health issues, review of speech and language development, oral health review, TB risk assessment, measurement of Body Mass Index (BMI) and review of the child's immunisation status. Parents are always invited to attend.

Targeted reviews are also carried out across all school years for example for children with long term conditions. This is in addition to the school based immunisation programme. These are all delivered within the school setting by Trust employed school nurses.

If problems are identified, children are signposted to other services when new or existing physical, emotional or developmental problems are not being addressed. For example weight management programmes may be offered to children, they may be reminded about overdue immunisations, or offered support with long term conditions.

Schools are essential to the delivery of a comprehensive range of health promotion and health protection activities.

Department of Justice

Colin Bell Case: Appeals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33410/11-15 and AQW 33100/11-15, whether any meetings took place between the Labour Relations Agency and the Northern Ireland Prison Service to discuss arrangements for the hearing of appeals in the Colin Bell case and the outcome, given that such appeals were convened outside the NIPS 1995 Code of Conduct and Discipline.

(AQW 33655/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I do not intend to revise my previous responses.

The Introduction and Background of the Ackah and Deane Report states that they were: "independent arbitrators," and "The proposed review stemmed from an agreement made by the Prisons Minister Paul Goggins, in discussions with the POA and NIPS management."

In 2009 the Labour Relations Agency held proximity talks with each side i.e. the Northern Ireland Prison Service Senior Management and the Prison Officers' Association separately, in order to move forward with the disciplinary cases. Subsequently NIPS and the POA agreed to the review. Each side then used the LRA list of arbitrators to select Ackah (selected by NIPS) and Deane (selected by the POA). The Ackah and Deane Review commenced in August 2009 and the Terms of Reference of their report stated that the exercise would have regard to the LRA guidelines.

The Member will also be aware that the Ackah and Deane Review concentrated on the application of the NIPS Code of Conduct and Discipline in the cases of officers subjected to disciplinary procedures following the death in custody of Colin Bell.

The Ackah and Deane Report did recommend that the NIPS Code of Conduct and Discipline should be revised, as did the Pearson Report published earlier and Dame Anne Owers Report published subsequently.

PSNI: Disclosure Obligations

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the review he has initiated into how the PSNI meets its disclosure obligations in a frank and timely manner in light of the failures evident in how the aborted case against William Frazer was handled in respect of alleged flag protest incidents.

(AQW 33662/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not initiated any such review.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33410/11-15 and AQW 33100/11-15, to detail (i) whether he plans to revise the latter part of his answer in view of several previously tabled written questions and his answers concerning the review of the 1995 Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline, in particular, Dr Tony Pearson's comments in the June 2009 Prison Review Team Report regarding concerns relating to the Code of Conduct and Discipline and the Report's confirmation that Prison Service was in the 'process of reviewing' the 1995 Code and given that the Ackah and Deane Report was not published until December 2009, and the review was not facilitated by the Labour Relations Agency as outlined in the Introduction and Background and the Terms of Reference of this Report; and (ii) whether he will provide an explanation as to why the information contained in his answer is not accurate.

(AQW 33665/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not intend to revise my previous responses.

The Introduction and Background of the Ackah and Deane Report states that they were: “independent arbitrators,” and “The proposed review stemmed from an agreement made by the Prisons Minister Paul Goggins, in discussions with the POA and NIPS management.”

In 2009 the Labour Relations Agency held proximity talks with each side i.e. the Northern Ireland Prison Service Senior Management and the Prison Officers’ Association separately, in order to move forward with the disciplinary cases. Subsequently NIPS and the POA agreed to the review. Each side then used the LRA list of arbitrators to select Ackah (selected by NIPS) and Deane (selected by the POA). The Ackah and Deane Review commenced in August 2009 and the Terms of Reference of their report stated that the exercise would have regard to the LRA guidelines.

The Member will also be aware that the Ackah and Deane Review concentrated on the application of the NIPS Code of Conduct and Discipline in the cases of officers subjected to disciplinary procedures following the death in custody of Colin Bell.

The Ackah and Deane Report did recommend that the NIPS Code of Conduct and Discipline should be revised, as did the Pearson Report published earlier and Dame Anne Owers Report published subsequently.

Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Booklet

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to provide a copy of a Prison Service Supporting Prisoners at Risk booklet, or alternatively have one placed in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 33666/11-15)

Mr Ford: A copy of the Supporting Prisoners at Risk booklet has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Investigation into Case 13/056715

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 29883/11-15, to provide a copy of the report in this investigation; and to detail when it was completed.

(AQW 33668/11-15)

Mr Ford: The report is currently being finalised. I will write to the Member when it is complete.

Magistrates Court

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases at Magistrates Court proceeded as a preliminary enquiry in (i) 2011; (ii) 2012; and (iii) 2013; and of these, how many were presented as prima facie cases by the prosecution at hearing, but rejected as such by the defence stating contrary submissions, broken down by court division.

(AQW 33692/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of Magistrates’ Court cases that proceeded as a preliminary enquiry during the period 2011 to 2013, by court division.

Table 1: Preliminary Enquiries at the Magistrates’ Court: 2011 to 2013P

Court Division	Year		
	2011	2012	2013P
Antrim	120	188	212
Ards	188	147	150
Armagh and South Down	142	147	177
Belfast	523	586	573
Craigavon	163	177	168
Fermanagh and Tyrone	200	186	211
Londonderry	131	185	179
Total	1,467	1,616	1,670

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change

All preliminary enquiries are presented as prima facie cases by the prosecution at hearing. If the defence objects to such an enquiry, the court conducts either a mixed committal or a preliminary investigation.

The number of cases that proceeded to either mixed committal proceedings or a preliminary investigation during the period 2011 to 2013 is presented below, by court division.

Table 2: Mixed Committals at the Magistrates' Court: 2011 to 2013P

Court Division	Year		
	2011	2012	2013P
Antrim	4	2	5
Ards	2	0	0
Armagh and South Down	8	2	9
Belfast	14	15	15
Craigavon	7	2	2
Fermanagh and Tyrone	3	2	0
Londonderry	4	1	0
Total	42	24	31

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change

Table 3: Preliminary Investigations at the Magistrates' Court: 2011 to 2013P

Court Division	Year		
	2011	2012	2013P
Antrim	4	5	9
Ards	4	3	5
Armagh and South Down	4	5	1
Belfast	20	13	14
Craigavon	8	8	9
Fermanagh and Tyrone	11	4	2
Londonderry	2	5	2
Total	53	43	42

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change

I plan to include changes to committal proceedings in Magistrates' Courts, including the abolition of preliminary investigations and mixed committals and the direct transfer of certain serious offences, in a Justice Bill to be introduced into the Assembly later this month.

CCTV: Court Grounds

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33512/11-15, whether he will accept representations made by constituents and conduct a review into this matter, including examining CCTV of court grounds; consulting with staff from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and G4S; court users and residents in the immediate area, as well as examining forthcoming court listings and those of the last six months.

(AQW 33693/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials will meet with any constituents concerned about parking congestion caused by court sittings and appropriately investigate any issues arising.

Suicides in Custody

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to provide a breakdown of the nature of convictions and allegations against prisoners who died in custody and were either confirmed or suspected death by suicides, in the last ten years.

(AQW 33694/11-15)

Mr Ford: The breakdown of convictions or alleged offences in respect of each suicide or suspected suicide in prison custody is attached at annex A. There are two deaths where the information about convictions or alleged offences is not available due to information loss at the introduction of the PRISM information management system.

Prisoners: Bullying

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prisoners adjudicated for bullying fellow prisoners and the penalty in each case, broken down by prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 33696/11-15)

Mr Ford: Under Prison Rules there are a number of offences against prison discipline that could relate to bullying. The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) do not specifically record when adjudications are in response to bullying. For those reasons it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Superinjunctions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many super-injunctions have been (i) sought; and (ii) granted through applications to the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland, each year from 2007 to date.

(AQW 33719/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no legal definition of the term “super injunction” and the question has been interpreted as seeking information on orders prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief.

Information on the number of injunctive relief applications sought is held on the originating application. A manual review would be required to identify the nature of the application and would incur a disproportionate cost.

The table below details the number of orders granted since 2007 prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief.

Year	Number of “Super-Injunctions” granted
2007	0
2008	0
2009	2
2010	2
2011	2
2012	0
2013	1
2014	0
Total	7

Legal Aid Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the current proposals in respect of reducing Legal Aid costs payable for Crown Court cases; and for his assessment of whether cuts will lead to the withdrawal of legal representatives from cases, similar to the action of 2011.

(AQW 33728/11-15)

Mr Ford: My proposals for reform of Crown Court legal aid fees are intended to deliver value for money. The proposals include replacing the existing Guilty Plea 1 and 2 fees for both solicitors and counsel with a single guilty plea fee with enhancements designed to remunerate counsel for trial preparation and solicitors for dealing with large amounts of served evidence.

Overall, I propose to reduce the fees for solicitors by 27% and barristers by 22%. I have listened carefully to representations from the legal profession and made a number of concessions to my original proposals to ensure that the fees payable in more complex cases or those with large amounts of served evidence are protected.

Trial refresher fees, the fees in the Table of Additional Fees will be preserved; the fees in Classes A and D will be preserved at existing rates for counsel; the classification of cases in respect of hijacking and driving offences causing death will be re-classified upwards to class D; specific fees will be provided for confiscation hearings; and I will amend the existing interpretation of the rules governing the payment of the full day refresher.

I would hope that action similar to that taken in 2011 would be avoided as the fees payable in Northern Ireland following the implementation of the changes will remain attractive in comparison with England and Wales.

Appeal Tribunals: Human Rights Act 1998

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether all benefit appeal tribunals are compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998, particularly Section 6, and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and all panel members are fully briefed and supplied with copies of the Act and Convention.

(AQW 33729/11-15)

Mr Ford: Responsibility for the operation of tribunal hearings and panel member training are statutory functions of the President of Appeal Tribunals, Mr Conall MacLynn who is an independent judicial office holder. The President can be contacted directly at Office of the President of Appeal Tribunals, 6th Floor Cleaver House, 3 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GA.

Court Hearings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the High Court ruling by Mr Justice Gillen in the case of Marcin Marciniak, Arkadiusz Gruszczynski and others, to detail (i) a breakdown of costs and projected final costs, including Legal Aid for both lower and high court hearings; and (ii) whether an investigation will be carried out into the circumstances of the case. **(AQW 33730/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The table below details the estimated cost of the case as at 30 May 2014.

Cost Type	Estimated Cost (£)
(i) Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	2,232
(ii) Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	410
Total	2,642

Article 24 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (NI) Order 1981 precludes the release of information in relation to civil cases in which legal aid has been granted.

There are no plans to investigate the circumstances of this case. However, it is a matter for any party with an interest in the case to consider if they wish to make a criminal complaint against the plaintiffs. Any such complaint should be referred to the PSNI for investigation.

Community Services Funding

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, to list the 35 organisations that received grants/ payments from 2013-14, including how much each organisation received. **(AQW 33747/11-15)**

Mr Ford: Further to AQW/33561/11-15, the table below lists the 35 organisations that received grant funding from Probation Board for Northern Ireland for community service placements during 2013/2014. As requested, the amount received by each organisation is also included.

Community Service Funded Projects 2013/2014

Organisation	£
174 Trust	7,000
Action Cancer	9,000
Age Concern	14,000
Artillery Youth Club	3,000
Artability	7,000
AR Maintenance	10,000
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	10,000
Banbridge Council	15,000
Baronscourt Scout Camp	2,000
Conservation Volunteers	15,000
Cookstown Youth Football Club	2,000
Corpus Christi Centre	4,000
Crossfire Trust	2,000
Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary	12,000
Drumgor Detached Youth Work Project	2,000
Drumragh Parish Church	2,000
Glen Rural Community Group	1,000

Organisation	£
Holy Trinity Youth Centre	2,000
Intercomm	9,000
Mullaghmore Community Association	4,000
Monkstown Boxing Club	3,000
New Mossley Presbyterian Church	2,000
Oxfam	3,000
Patchwork Ireland	7,000
Portaferry in Bloom	1,000
Quakers	980
Riding for the Disabled Coleraine	8,000
Riding for the Disabled Minnowburn	944
Riding for the Disabled Omagh	1,000
Small Steps Adult Education Group	3,000
Ulster Temple Elim Church	5,000
Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre*	0
Volunteer Services Lisburn	16,500
Windsor Women's Centre	2,000
West Kirk Community Project	3,000
Total Allocation	188,424

* Allocated but not taken up

Community Services Funding

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, how much has been paid per calendar year from 2008 to 2012; and to provide a breakdown of the recipients and the amount each received.

(AQW 33748/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is held by financial year rather than calendar year. The table below provides a breakdown of the recipients and the amount each received covering the financial period 2008/2009 to 2012/2013.

Community Service Funded Projects 2008/2009

Organisation	£
Age Concern Derry	5,000
Artability	10,000
Artability	1,764
Ballykeel 2 Community House	8,000
Ballyloughan Church Com Init	4,671
Cancer Research Ballymena	2,000
Cancer Research Belfast	4,000
Conservation Volunteers	11,000
Glen Rural Community Group	2,000
Greater Village Regeneration	9,000
Intercomm	12,000
Monkstown Community Sports	6,000
New Horizons Partnership	2,500

Organisation	£
Oxfam Ireland	1,000
Riding for the Disabled Coleraine	5,000
Riding for the Disabled Minnowburn	1,000
Roden Street Com Dev Group	4,000
Voluntary Services Lisburn	20,000
Windsor Women's Centre	4,000
Total Allocation	£112,935

Community Service Funded Projects 2009/2010

Organisation	£
Age Concern Derry	5,000
Artability	12,000
Ballyclare Community Concerns	4,105
Ballykeel 2 Residents Association	8,200
Banbridge District Council	5,000
Conservation Volunteers NI	17,500
Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary	12,500
Glen Rural Community Group	1,925
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	9,225
Holy Trinity Centre	15,000
Intercomm	12,300
Quaker Services	1,321
Ulster Temple	3,000
Voluntary Services Lisburn	10,250
Total Allocation	£117,326

Community Service Funded Projects 2010/2011

Organisation	£
Action Cancer	10,000
Age Concern Derry	10,000
AR Maintenance	6,000
Artability	12,000
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	10,000
Ballykeel 2 Residents Association	8,200
Banbridge District Council	15,000
Cancer Research Armagh	1,000
Challenge for Youth 1 (CS)	5,000
Conservation Volunteers NI	17,500
Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary	25,000
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	5,000
Riding for the Disabled	7,500
Voluntary Services Lisburn	20,500

Organisation	£
Total Allocation	£152,700

Community Service Funded Projects 2011/2012

Organisation	£
Action Cancer	16,789
Age Concern Derry	24,566
AR Maintenance	7,890
Artability	9,000
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	18,000
Ballykeel 2 Residents Association	11,468
Conservation Volunteers NI	14,392
Corpus Christie Centre	5,000
Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary	23,850
Glen Rural Community Group	1,000
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	2,000
Holy Trinity Centre	7,688
Holy Trinity Youth Centre CD	500
Intercomm	10,500
Oasis	5,900
Oxfam Ireland	500
Riding for the Disabled	9,940
Strabane Comm Centre	4,075
Ulster Temple	10,630
Voluntary Services Lisburn	20,000
West Kirk	3,000
Total Allocation	£206,688

Community Service Funded Projects 2012/2013

Organisation	£
Action Cancer	18,000
Age Concern Derry	19,998
Artability	7,000
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	14,000
Banbridge Council	15,000
Conservation Volunteers NI	20,299
Corpus Christi Centre	6,000
Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary	17,000
Glen Rural Community Group	1,000
Intercomm	12,000
New Horizons Project	8,800
North West Life Long Learning	5,000
Oxfam Ireland	4,500

Organisation	£
Patchwork Coleraine	9,000
Riding for the Disabled	14,000
Riding for the Disabled Minnowburn	1,450
S.E.H.T. Victoria Gardens	2,165
Small Steps Adult Education Group	6,552
Strabane Community Centre	3,642
Oasis Caring in Action	3,017
Ulster Temple	4,986
Voluntary Services Lisburn	20,000
West Kirk Community Project	4,000
Windsor Women's Aid	3,000
Total Allocation	£220,409

Legal Aid Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to extend the reduction of Legal Aid costs payable in High Court challenges, particularly judicial reviews.

(AQW 33749/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department is currently reviewing the fees paid for civil cases, where legal aid has been granted, across all types of proceedings at the three court tiers, namely the magistrates' court, the County Court and the High Court, with a view to streamlining the existing arrangements and delivering savings to the legal aid budget. The Department's work on the fees payable for High Court cases will include judicial reviews.

Community Services Funding

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, whether all providers of community services places are funded.

(AQW 33799/11-15)

Mr Ford: Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) do not fund all providers of Community Service placements. Community and voluntary groups and charitable organisations can, and do, apply for funding through the PBNI Community Grant Scheme which is advertised on an annual basis. Funding received through the scheme can be used to facilitate and develop placements and to ensure adequate oversight and supervision of offenders undertaking community service in these sites.

European Convention on Human Rights

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether all departmental agencies, as well as those contracted to provide services, are in full compliance of the EU Convention on Human Rights, specifically Articles 3 and 8, and are fully aware of sections 6 and 7 of the Human Rights Act 1998, as required of all public bodies and those contracted to provide services on their behalf.

(AQW 33800/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is fully conversant with both the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and aims that all actions of the Department and its contractors will be compliant with its legal obligations.

CCTV: Courts and Tribunal Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) to detail the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Services CCTV policy; (ii) to provide a copy of the policy; (iii) when the policy was last updated or amended; and (iv) what monitoring is in place to ensure all aspects of the policy are adhered to.

(AQW 33802/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) policy on the usage of CCTV on NICTS premises sets out the stated purpose of CCTV cameras, including the operation, retention, access and disclosure of recorded images to third parties. As the data owner, NICTS can monitor and download CCTV footage at any time. The policy, issued on 5 September 2012, has not been amended and a copy has been placed in the Assembly Library. G4S Solutions (UK) Ltd, the NICTS contracted security and ancillary service provider, has delegated responsibility for viewing and downloading CCTV footage. NICTS monitor policy compliance and it is a Key Performance Indicator in the G4S contract.

Contract Services

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what meetings have been held with G4S, including correspondence received by his Department, in relation to alleged undercharging for contract services at tender stage for supplying services to the NI Courts and Tribunal Service.

(AQW 33805/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department did not hold any meetings or receive any correspondence from G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd in relation to alleged undercharging for contract services at tender stage for supplying services to the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

Preliminary Investigations/Mixed Committals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many preliminary investigations/mixed committals are currently pending per court division; and of these, how many are legally aided.

(AQW 33806/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below shows the number, in each court division, of preliminary investigations and mixed committals pending as at 2 June 2014. All of these cases are legally aided.

Court Division	Preliminary Investigations	Mixed Committals	Total Cases
Armagh and South Down	1	0	1
Belfast	4	2	6
Craigavon	2	1	3
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	0	1
Grand Total	8	3	11

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Prostitution: Project Steering Group

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the job titles of the staff; and (ii) the organisations represented on the Project Steering Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 33809/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in the tender specification schedule for Prostitution Research, published on eSourcing NI on 24 January 2014, the Project Steering Group consists of members of the Department of Justice Criminal Policy Branch, and Analytical Services Group. They are: Head of Criminal Policy Branch; Deputy Principal, Criminal Policy Branch; and Principal Statistician, Analytical Services Group. They were appointed because of their knowledge of the policy area and of research methodology.

There was no prior consultation on their appointment. The Project Steering Group is an internal panel with responsibility for management of the contract in line with the terms of the tender.

Prostitution: Project Steering Group

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice who has been selected to sit on the Project Steering Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 33813/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in the tender specification schedule for Prostitution Research, published on eSourcing NI on 24 January 2014, the Project Steering Group consists of members of the Department of Justice Criminal Policy Branch, and Analytical Services Group. They are: Head of Criminal Policy Branch; Deputy Principal, Criminal Policy Branch; and Principal Statistician, Analytical Services Group. They were appointed because of their knowledge of the policy area and of research methodology.

There was no prior consultation on their appointment. The Project Steering Group is an internal panel with responsibility for management of the contract in line with the terms of the tender.

Prostitution: Project Steering Group

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the selection process for choosing members to sit on the Project Steering Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 33815/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in the tender specification schedule for Prostitution Research, published on eSourcing NI on 24 January 2014, the Project Steering Group consists of members of the Department of Justice Criminal Policy Branch, and Analytical

Services Group. They are: Head of Criminal Policy Branch; Deputy Principal, Criminal Policy Branch; and Principal Statistician, Analytical Services Group. They were appointed because of their knowledge of the policy area and of research methodology.

There was no prior consultation on their appointment. The Project Steering Group is an internal panel with responsibility for management of the contract in line with the terms of the tender.

Courts and Tribunal Service: Disability Audits

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33601/11-15, (i) which organisation or persons were used to carry out the disability audits for the Courts and Tribunals Service; (ii) whether these reports are available to the public; and (iii) when the Omagh and Strabane premises were last inspected.

(AQW 33818/11-15)

Mr Ford: Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) in the Department of Finance and Personnel or consultants commissioned by CPD completed the disability audits for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS). These reports are not available to the public for security reasons as they contain specific information on the layout of court buildings and illustrative photographs. The report for Strabane was completed in July 2010 and the report for Omagh in March 2009.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations: Community Services

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, how charitable and voluntary organisations are selected to provide community services; and to detail how they can apply to be involved.

(AQW 33826/11-15)

Mr Ford: Charitable and voluntary organisations can contact Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) directly at any time via the PBNI website, www.pbni.org.uk, which provides information on community service and details on how organisations can apply for PBNI placements. PBNI staff based in local offices also actively seek out charitable and voluntary organisations and local community groups to facilitate Community Service placements. PBNI undertake an assessment of all applications received with regard to health and safety and capacity of the organisation to deliver the placement to the required standard.

If funding is required organisations can apply through the PBNI Community Grant Scheme which is advertised on an annual basis. Further information on the scheme is also available on the PBNI website.

Public Protection Arrangements

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, given the deadline for potential appeal has now passed, what is causing the delay in the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland publishing the Serious Case Review into the case of David Paige.

(AQW 33827/11-15)

Mr Ford: The serious case review summary was published on the Public Protection Arrangements website on 11 June after the victim's family had been afforded the opportunity to read and discuss its contents with officials.

Courts and Tribunal Service: Contract Services

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many staff, employed by G4S, provide contract services to the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service at court houses; and of these, how many are registered as key holders.

(AQW 33828/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently 352 staff (243.74 full time equivalents) employed by G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service contract for the provision of security and ancillary services, all of whom are registered key holders.

Legal Representation

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33196/11-15, how many cases had representatives as (i) solicitor only; and (ii) solicitor and junior counsel.

(AQW 33829/11-15)

Mr Ford:

Table 1: Defendants involved in a mixed committal that were funded by legal aid, by representation: 2011

Court Division	No. of defendants involved in a mixed committal funded by legal aid	No. with solicitor only	No. with solicitor and Junior Counsel
Belfast	31	15	16
Londonderry	4	3	1

Court Division	No. of defendants involved in a mixed committal funded by legal aid	No. with solicitor only	No. with solicitor and Junior Counsel
Antrim	5	4	1
Fermanagh and Tyrone	3	2	1
Armagh and South Down	10	7	3
Newtownards	2	2	0
Craigavon	7	5	2
Total	62	38	24

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Table 2: Defendants involved in a mixed committal that were funded by legal aid, by representation: 20121

Court Division	No. of defendants involved in a mixed committal funded by legal aid	No. with solicitor only	No. with solicitor and Junior Counsel
Belfast	43	26	17
Londonderry	1	0	1
Antrim	2	1	1
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	1	1
Armagh and South Down	2	1	1
Newtownards	0	0	0
Craigavon	7	4	3
Total	57	33	24

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

1 Two cases in Belfast and one in Armagh and South Down also had Senior Counsel instructed

Table 3: Defendants involved in a mixed committal that were funded by legal aid, by representation: 20132, P

Court Division	No. of defendants involved in a mixed committal funded by legal aid	No. with solicitor only	No. with solicitor and Junior Counsel
Belfast	22	16	6
Londonderry	0	0	0
Antrim	9	8	1
Fermanagh and Tyrone	0	0	0
Armagh and South Down	13	10	3
Newtownards	0	0	0
Craigavon	4	1	3
Total	48	35	13

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

2 Two cases in Craigavon also had Senior Counsel instructed

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change

Roe House: Forced Strip Searches

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33306/11-15, to detail the number of forced strip searches that have taken place in Roe House.

(AQW 33860/11-15)

Mr Ford: New search arrangements were introduced in accordance with the Agreement of the 12th August 2010. From that date routine Full Body Searching of separated prisoners housed within Roe House no longer takes place. This does not affect the requirement for searches to be carried out in other areas of the prison. The total number of such Full Body searches carried out in other areas of the prison, primarily on entering and leaving the prison, was 491 in 2013 and 332 to date in 2014.

Trial Process: Total Cost

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33550/11 -15, when he will be able to provide the total cost of the trial process that began in May 2009.

(AQW 33881/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total cost of this trial will not be available until all claims are received and subsequently assessed. The Legal Services Commission anticipates that legal aid claims will be received for assessment and payment no later than September 2014.

Further payments have been made in respect of legal aid and prosecution costs since the response to AQW/33550/11-15. The table below details the estimated costs as at 6 June 2014.

Cost Type	Estimated Cost
(i) Legal Aid ¹	£149,173
(ii) Prosecution ²	£117,723
(iii) Court (Judiciary and staff costs)	£24,921
(iv) Facilities (e.g. courtroom accommodation)	£5,606
Total	£297,423

- 1 Legal aid costs to date include fees and disbursements paid to legal representatives. A number of costs have yet to be received or assessed.
- 2 The Public Prosecution Service has finalised fees for counsel and witness expenses have been paid. Further witness expenses may still be received.

Prison Service: Chief Finance Officer

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to outline the circumstances surrounding the recent departure of the Chief Finance Officer of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

(AQW 33895/11-15)

Mr Ford: It would be inappropriate to comment on the circumstances surrounding the career management of a specific individual within my Department.

The Chief Finance Officer is a member of the Senior Civil Service and, as such, the movement and placement of such staff is managed centrally within the NICS as a corporate resource.

Prison Service: Staff Duties

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice which member of Prison Service staff is currently responsible for the work formerly undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer; and what other duties they are performing in conjunction with this role.

(AQW 33896/11-15)

Mr Ford: Responsibility for the work formerly undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer has been split between the existing Directors of HR and Organisational Change and of Estates.

This is an interim arrangement pending implementation of a decision recently taken by the Department of Justice Board to deliver corporate services, such as Finance, through a shared service model. This will result in the Finance Director in the Department assuming responsibility for the delivery of Finance Services to the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Consultants: Hotel Expenses

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice whether the Prison Service pays for the hotel expenses of the consultants it engages.

(AQW 33897/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently two suppliers of external consultancy contracts covering four separate contracts.

No hotel expenses have been paid to date. However, the terms of an individual contract would determine whether such expenses could be paid.

Prison Officers: Compulsory Redundancy and Retraining

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to review the decision taken by his Department and the Prison Service to reduce from nine months to fifteen weeks, the decision time allowed for Prison Officers who have, or will avail of, compulsory redundancy to retraining, whilst agreeing to uphold the decision to permit RUC and PSNI reservists a 9 month decision time in similar circumstances, and in the light of equal opportunities legislation to have the decision reversed to permit Prison Officers availing of compulsory redundancy the same opportunities as those retiring from similar occupations. **(AQW 33899/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) launched a Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme on 8 November 2011 and staff were released under these terms between 31 March 2012 and 31 May 2014. From the outset, this included a re-training package of core courses held over a 15 week period. This scheme is now closed and NIPS will not be revisiting any of the associated terms.

The PSNI Reserve (Full-Time) Severance Regulations 2006 included an offer of nine months re-training before the formal date of their leaving the PSNI.

Prison Officers are employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service whereas PSNI officers are appointed by the Chief Constable. Equal opportunities issues do not arise between separate employers.

G4S Staff Keyholders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the policy for G4S staff keyholders who provide contracted services to the NI Courts and Tribunal Service estate and are required to return to work premises outside working hours, including (i) how many staff attend out-of-hours call outs; (ii) how often risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety and security of staff; (iii) what enhancement is provided to staff who are on call; (iv) when the policy was last updated or amended; and (v) what, if any, updates or amendments were replaced. **(AQW 33900/11-15)**

Mr Ford: Under the terms of the contract, two G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd (G4S) site officials are required to attend out of hours call outs as key holders. The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) advises G4S of the results of annual security assessments that provide an evaluation on the level of threat to staff and the NICTS Estate. G4S is responsible for carrying out risk assessments to ensure the safety and security of its staff, the remuneration of its staff who are on call, and updating the policy.

Stephen McCook

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the ruling of Mr Justice Stephens on Wednesday 4 June 2014 which included the awarding of costs against Mr Stephen McCook, whether the costs will be met by Legal Aid. **(AQW 33923/11-15)**

Mr Ford: A copy of the ruling of Mr Justice Stephens is not currently available to the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission and it would be inappropriate for the Commission to comment on the press coverage without having sight of the ruling.

Article 24 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (NI) Order 1981 precludes the release of information in relation to civil cases in which Legal Aid has been granted.

I would expect the Commission to follow all avenues open to them to recover costs where this is applicable.

Ballymena: Farmwatch

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the Farmwatch Scheme in Ballymena. **(AQO 6317/11-15)**

Mr Ford: Since the launch of the Ballymena Farm Watch Scheme 31 January 2014, 226 individuals have registered for a text alert scheme operated by the PSNI; 160 trailers have been security marked; 50 Guardcams have been distributed; and members of the Scheme have been given crime prevention advice and the opportunity to avail of roadside and property signage advertising the Scheme.

Working with the PSNI, Ballymena Policing and Community Safety Partnership continues to highlight the scheme. A recent example of this work was the promotional event held by Ballymena Policing and Community Safety Partnership at the Ballymena Show on 31 May, where 12 farmers signed up for the text alert and trailer marking services offered by the PSNI under the Farm Watch scheme.

Given the impact which this type of crime has on farming and rural communities, my Department will continue to support the development and delivery of initiatives designed to tackle rural crime.

Legal Aid

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Justice what assessment he has made of any impact the reduction of the legal aid budget may have on increases in miscarriages of justice.

(AQO 6325/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not made any reduction in the legal aid budget, but I have taken steps to ensure that the fee structure meets the value for money test.

I do not believe there will be any impact on the potential for miscarriages of justice arising from legal aid reform. My reforms do not reduce the scope of legal aid and anyone entitled to criminal legal aid will continue to receive it. I have also listened carefully to representations made to me and have ensured fees are targeted at most serious cases.

Department for Regional Development

Taxis: Public Hire at Belfast City Hall

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33445/11-15, to supply the information used by departmental officials and passed to their Department of the Environment and Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) counterparts in respect of alleged public hire taxi drive-offs at Belfast City Hall on sight of traffic wardens, including (i) when the information was gathered; (ii) who gathered the information; (iii) the minutes of any meetings with DVA officials when this matter was discussed; (iv) statements taken by those reporting the alleged drive-offs; and (v) what levels of staff held the interdepartmental discussions.

(AQW 33656/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Senior management (Grade 6 and Grade 7) from my Department met with their counterparts in December 2013, to discuss taxi related policy matters, such as, use of bus lanes, illegal parking, non-use of taxi stopping area in Chichester Street, Belfast, enforcement at ranks etc. During this meeting my officials provided an indication that approximately 900 taxi drive-offs had occurred during the period 01 January to 30 November 2013, from an area in front of Belfast City Hall. This figure was based on estimates provided by Traffic Attendants (TA).

TAs, in carrying out their duties, do not record the nature of business in which vehicles are involved. In front of Belfast City Hall, the taxi rank is patrolled by TAs on a regular basis. Taxis that are parked in contravention of parking and bus lane restrictions will regularly drive off when a TA appears. Whilst a TA will record the vehicle registration number (VRN) of the drive off vehicles, the fact that it is a taxi will not be recorded. TAs do not take statements from any vehicle driver when issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) or when recording VRNs. Presently, there is no demand for this information and therefore, it is not recorded.

Fintona and Trillick: Flooding of Roads

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department helped alleviate the flooding of roads in Fintona and Trillick on 22 May 2014; and to detail his Department's plans to keep traffic flowing in the event of any future flooding in this area.

(AQW 33669/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department deployed staff to erect warning signs and distribute sandbags to the area. Officials liaised closely with the PSNI, which had set up an incident centre in Fintona, and issued sandbags as requests came in. As soon as the river levels lowered, the floods quickly cleared through the drainage systems. In total, my Department had nine Industrial staff and three supervisory staff on site until 03:30 am on 23 May, over 100 sandbags were distributed and 35 warning signs were erected.

My Department is part of a multi-agency group which has been set up to deal with such incidents. On the instructions of the PSNI, some local traffic diversions were set up for a short time around the flooded area in Fintona. The flooding in Trillick did not result in any road closures.

Crockanboy Road: Omagh

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department plans to address the state of repair of the Crockanboy Road in Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

(AQW 33680/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Crockanboy Road is a medium trafficked B Class route which is 17km long and connects the villages of Gortin and Creggan. Over the past four years, 3kms of this road have been resurfaced and 11kms surface dressed. It continues to be subject to eight-weekly inspections in accordance with established Roads Maintenance Standards and all defects identified are repaired within stipulated timescales.

Whilst a 1.9km stretch of the route immediately west of Greencastle village has been identified as a priority for resurfacing, the scheme cannot be delivered within current 2014/15 funding allocations. However, should additional in-year funding become available to my Department, this scheme will be considered for inclusion in an enhanced works programme.

Millennium Way Project

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the funds that have been allocated to the Millennium Way project in the current financial year.

(AQW 33685/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is continuing to develop the Extension to Millennium Way scheme and work is ongoing to finalise the detailed design for the proposal.

The acquisition of land for the scheme requires a Vesting Order and it is hoped to publish the draft Notice of Intention to Make the Vesting Order in the near future. A Public Inquiry may also be required to determine if the level of land take identified is appropriate.

I can confirm the appropriate level of funding for progression of the design and other scheme development work has been made available. In relation to funding for lands acquisition and compensation, I can also confirm funding is available should the Vesting Order become operative during this financial year. However, this does not include funding for construction as the Extension to Millennium Way proposal is not in a position to start in the current financial year.

However, a bid has been submitted with a view to commencing construction in 2015/16, subject to the bid being successful, the proposal continuing to have a satisfactory economic appraisal and clearing the Vesting Order statutory procedure.

Footpath Resurfacing: Total Spend

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spend on footpath resurfacing, broken down by constituency, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33697/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain details of spend on roads on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Road Resurfacing: Total Spend

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spend on road resurfacing, broken down by constituency, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33698/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain details of spend on roads on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Street Lighting

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spend on new street lighting, broken down by constituency, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33699/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department deployed staff to erect warning signs and distribute sandbags to the area. Officials liaised closely with the PSNI, which had set up an incident centre in Fintona, and issued sandbags as requests came in. As soon as the river levels lowered, the floods quickly cleared through the drainage systems. In total, my Department had nine Industrial staff and three supervisory staff on site until 03:30 am on 23 May, over 100 sandbags were distributed and 35 warning signs were erected.

My Department is part of a multi-agency group which has been set up to deal with such incidents. On the instructions of the PSNI, some local traffic diversions were set up for a short time around the flooded area in Fintona. The flooding in Trillick did not result in any road closures.

Dropped Kerbs

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spend on dropped kerbs, broken down by constituency, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33700/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain details of spend on roads on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Traffic-calming Measures: Expenditure

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spend on traffic calming measures, broken down by constituency, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33702/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain details of spend on roads on a parliamentary constituency basis.

Community Transport Services: Additional Funding

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33252/11-15, what efforts are being made by his Department to seek additional funding for community transport services in addition to baseline budgets for 2014-2015, so that current service levels can be maintained.

(AQW 33718/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In addition to the significant levels of funding provided to the Rural Community Transport Partnerships by my Department, my officials are in discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) (Active Aging Strategy) in an attempt to secure additional funding.

No final decisions on funding have yet been made by DARD or OFMDFM.

Sewage Pumping Station at Derryhale: Upgrade

Mr Irwin asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the plans and timeframe to upgrade the sewage pumping station at Derryhale in Portadown, given the defects with the current system.

(AQW 33773/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A comprehensive study of the problems associated with both the Brompton Park and Derryhale Wastewater Pumping Stations within the Derryhale catchment has concluded that the preferred solution to defects at the current sites involves the abandonment of the existing stations and the transfer of flows by gravity to a newly built station pumping into the existing Derryhale sewer system. This solution will require land purchase for the new pumping station and agreements with landowners in relation to access and decommissioning of the existing pumping station sites.

A detailed solution is being worked on by Northern Ireland Water and it intends to engage with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency with the intention of including the project in the prioritised capital quality programme. It is not possible at this time to give a commitment on delivery but Northern Ireland Water will continue to maintain the existing system until an upgrade can be progressed.

Portavoe Reservoir: Cost of Repairing

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of repairing Portavoe Reservoir.

(AQW 33780/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The total cost of refurbishing Portavoe Reservoir is approximately £124,000. This consists of £99,000 construction costs plus additional professional costs (including project management, site supervision, environmental surveys and public communication) amounting to £25,000.

Street Lighting

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of street lights being switched on during daylight hours, in the last financial year.

(AQW 33788/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will be aware from my response to his previous Assembly Question, AQW 14529/11-15, that electricity for my Department's street lighting is not metered and therefore there is no additional monetary cost if street lights are operating during daylight hours.

However, when officials are made aware of street lights operating during the daytime, which may be as a result of faulty equipment or for routine maintenance purposes, they endeavour to attend to such issues promptly so that energy is not used unnecessarily.

Greystone Road/Broad Road: Works

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQO 6143/11-15, why no work will be carried out in the next 12 months; and whether he will expedite the works at the Greystone Road/Broad Road.

(AQW 33807/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that, whilst my officials are currently examining a number of proposals to improve safety at the Greystone Road/Broad Road junction in Limavady, the work programme for this year based on current budget allocations has already been finalised.

However, I can assure you my officials are working to bring forward a worthwhile solution for this junction and I have asked for this to be progressed as quickly as possible.

Footpaths: North Belfast

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) whether an assessment has been carried out on the condition of footpaths in the North Belfast constituency; (ii) the total spend on upgrading and repairing footpaths in North

Belfast during each of the last five years; and (iii) the planned spend on upgrading and repairing footpaths in North Belfast in the next 12 months.

(AQW 33865/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department inspects the footpaths in North Belfast on a cyclical basis and any defects considered hazardous to the public are identified and programmed for repair.

In addition, my Department also undertakes an annual programme of reconstruction and resurfacing, which is implemented on a scheme priority basis, taking account of the available funding for such works.

The information relating to expenditure on footpaths is not available in the form requested by the Member, as my Department does not hold financial information on a constituency basis. However, details of total spend on footway upgrading and repair in the Belfast North Section Office area for the last five years are set out in the table below:

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Expenditure	£750,671	£768,626	£1,092,999	£615,777	£1,246,880

My Department has currently programmed approximately £280,000 of work in the Belfast North Section Office area for 2014/15, with the potential for further schemes to be added to the programme based on the availability of additional funding.

Rural Borewells Scheme

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail what help is available to people living in homes which were built after 2000, did not qualify for the Rural Borewells Scheme and are without a mains water supply.

(AQW 33873/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: For those properties built after 2000 that are not eligible for the Rural Borewells Scheme, NI Water provides a Reasonable Cost Allowance (RCA) of around £2,000 per property to connect householders to the mains system. More recent properties are entitled to a lesser RCA because householders are expected to include the cost of a water main in the overall cost of a new build.

Portavoe Reservoir

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any tests have been carried out on dead birds or fish at Portavoe Reservoir.

(AQW 33906/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: To date there have been no tests carried out on dead birds or fish at Portavoe Reservoir. Should any further carcasses be recovered in a state capable of being subjected to tests this will be undertaken.

Drainage Systems: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development what work is planned to upgrade the drainage system in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas of Ballymena to prevent serious flooding, given there has been serious flooding each year from 2008.

(AQW 34012/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Queen Street and Toome Road areas of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in the area.

As part of the Drainage Area plans for this area NI Water has identified a number of structural sewer defects in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas. A scheme to rectify these issues including relining some sections of the sewer and replacement of a number of manholes to prevent ingress of water from a local watercourse into the sewer, was scheduled to commence in August 2014. However, I have asked NI Water to bring this scheme forward and it will now commence before the end of June 2014 with completion due during September 2014.

I am advised that this planned work may not significantly impact on the capacity of the sewer network and I have therefore asked the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, to urgently examine what can be done to help reduce the flood risk in this area.

AQW 34012/11-15

Background

- Locally heavy rainfall on Sunday evening, 8 June 2014, led to flooding in a number of areas across the north and west of Northern Ireland, some of the worst affected areas were reported as Ballymena, Antrim and Ballymoney. The intensity of the rainfall overwhelmed road gullies, storm drains and the sewerage system causing flooding of roads and properties.
- Transport NI staff were on the ground within 1 hour from receiving the first calls and approximately 1000 sandbags were distributed to assist property owners during this event. NI Water staff also attended a number of locations to provide assistance.

- Transport NI has advised that the existing gullies and connections are adequate to cope with road surface water and are cleaned and maintained on a regular basis and there no plans to upgrade the road drainage systems at this location. The road drainage systems are similar to the majority of drainage on the road network and rely on connections to existing NI Water infrastructure.
- There is a history of external out of sewer flooding at fifteen properties in this area (Thirteen properties in Toome Street and two at Queen Street). In 2008 river flood defences were put in place to protect these properties and area. However since 2008 in periods of heavy rainfall there has continued to be issues with out of sewer flooding at these locations. Following flooding in August 2012 investigations carried out by NI Water confirmed a number of structural defects in its sewer network. Work to rectify these defects will commence in August of this year and take approximately 4 months to complete.
- NI Water does not believe that there is a capacity issue with its sewer network in the Toome Road area during normal conditions. However, during periods of intense rainfall, such as that experienced on Sunday evening, it is possible that the system was overwhelmed. NI Water is currently awaiting an assessment from the Met Office in regard to the return period of this weather event.
- DARD has advised that no watercourses contributed to the recent flooding at this location.

AQW 34012/11-15

Drafted by: Barry Spiers, 11 June 2014 Ext No. 40397
 Cleared by Head of Division: Robert Crawford, 11 June 2014 Ext No. 86201
 Cleared by Special Adviser:

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Richard Pengelly
 John McGrath
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 Jeremy Irvine
 Press Office
 NI Water Secretariat

Wakehurst: Severe Flooding

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of two episodes of severe flooding in Wakehurst; Queen Street; and Toome Road areas of Ballymena in the last week, to detail the current plans to alleviate the causal problems. **(AQW 34083/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Wakehurst, Queen Street and Toome Road areas of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in these areas.

As part of the Drainage Area plans for this area NI Water has identified a number of structural sewer defects in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas. A scheme to rectify these issues including relining some sections of the sewer and replacement of a number of manholes to prevent ingress of water from a local watercourse into the sewer was scheduled to commence in August 2014. However, I have asked NI Water to bring this scheme forward and it will now commence before the end of June 2014 with completion due during September 2014.

In light of the recent flooding, Transport NI has checked the road gullies and transfer pipes in these areas and these were found to be working properly. In addition NI Water will be carrying out a detailed inspection of the sewer network to ensure there are no issues that it is currently unaware of and this work will be completed in the next two weeks.

I have also requested that the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, urgently examines what can be done to help reduce the risk of flooding in these areas.

Department for Social Development

Visually Impaired People

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department and its agencies will take a proactive approach with people who are visually impaired by providing correspondence in accessible formats. **(AQW 33524/11-15)**

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Department for Social Development Equality Scheme commits the Department to providing information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable.

In line with the Department for Social Development's policy the Social Security Agency provides publications in a range of suitable alternative accessible formats for people who are visually impaired. The Agency will also make arrangements for correspondence to be provided in Braille, larger font or audio format if requested.

Bloomfield Estate: Clanmil Housing Association

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the reasons for the delay in transferring the pensioners' bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate to Clanmill Housing Association.

(AQW 33742/11-15)

Mr McCausland: By way of clarification I would advise that the housing association involved in this transfer is Oaklee Homes Group; it is not Clanmil.

There are 72 Housing Executive properties in the Bloomfield Estate which have been selected for inclusion in the Stock Transfer Programme. The Programme is overseen by the Housing Executive and they have advised that the delay in the transfer has been caused by the length of time it has taken to prepare and agree the Transfer Agreement and Development Agreement, which are both bespoke and complex documents. Considerable work has to be completed by solicitors to ensure that the interests of tenants are protected and the respective obligations of both the Housing Executive and Oaklee Homes Group are clearly set out and agreed.

I do, however, share the frustrations being experienced by tenants and I am extremely disappointed at the ongoing delay with this scheme which I find unacceptable.

NIHE have advised that the outstanding matters should be cleared up by the end of June and I sincerely hope that this transfer can proceed as soon as possible thereafter.

Bloomfield Estate: Clanmil Housing Association

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current timescale for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to transfer the pensioners' bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate to Clanmil Housing Association.

(AQW 33743/11-15)

Mr McCausland: By way of clarification I would advise that the housing association involved in this transfer is Oaklee Homes Group; it is not Clanmil.

The Stock Transfer Programme is overseen by the Housing Executive and they have advised that they met with Oaklee Homes Group and their respective solicitors on 3rd June to resolve a few outstanding minor matters and although the exact date to complete the transfer is still to be confirmed, it is anticipated that it will be by the end of June.

Bloomfield and Jubilee Estates: Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's current timescale to repair insulation in the twenty homes affected in the Bloomfield and Jubilee Estates in Bangor.

(AQW 33744/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive have advised that the insulation scheme, which includes twenty homes in the Bloomfield and Jubilee estates in Bangor, is programmed to commence in September 2014 and complete at the end of November 2014.

Landlord Registration Scheme

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33150/11-15, what action his Department has taken upon discovery that no landlords in Magherafelt and Downpatrick are registered under the Landlord Registration Scheme.

(AQW 33819/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My response to AQW 33150/11-15 reflects the number of landlords living in the council area and not where the private rented properties are situated. Where no new tenancy is created a landlord has until 25 February 2015 to register.

While my Department is responsible for the policy and legislation around the Landlord Registration Scheme, enforcement of the Regulations is a matter for each local council. The council which is responsible for taking enforcement action depends on where the property is and not where the landlord lives.

Department officials and the Landlord Registration Registrar work closely with district council representatives to provide information and support enforcement. A series of seminars will take place at the end of June for all council environmental health officers to stress the importance of the enforcement of both landlord registration and tenancy deposit schemes requirements.

Meter Installation: Responsibility

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33620/11-15, where an electric meter has been removed, prior to the allocation of the house, who is responsible to have a meter installed; and if it is the tenant's responsibility, how much notice they are given to have this work carried out.

(AQW 33820/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that it would not be their normal policy to allocate a property where the electric meter had been removed. However, if the new tenant preferred a "pay as you go" or "credit type" meter then it would be their responsibility to arrange that with their chosen electricity supplier. The new tenant would be advised of this when signing for the tenancy.

Graffiti: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost to the Housing Executive of removing graffiti from its properties in North Down, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33835/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the cost of removing graffiti from its properties in North Down in each of the last three years was as follows:

2011/12	£7,082.40
2012/13	£1,674.11
2013/14	£4,211.17

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.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Local Goods

Mr Dallat asked the Assembly Commission to outline the steps it has taken to ensure contractors engaged in work in Parliament Buildings use and promote local goods and materials.

(AQO 6334/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): While the Commission would be keen to use and promote local goods and materials, EU legislation does not permit us to specify them in the contract. Building Services Branch utilises a local contractor from a DFP framework agreement to carry out the maintenance of Parliament Buildings. Except when framework rules prevent him from doing so, the contractor relies on locally sourced goods and materials for this work.

The Assembly Commission is pleased to have appointed a locally based contractor, Tracey Brothers from Enniskillen, to carry out the repair and refurbishment work to Parliament Buildings roof and associated services. Many of the products used in the project will be locally produced and where that is not possible, local suppliers will be used to source the products.

At this early stage of the project we can confirm that some of the major mechanical and electrical components, including air handling units, solar thermal panels and switchgear panels will be locally manufactured.

Although already part of the previous contract terms and specifications, Support Services once again, at tender stage in 2012, specified that the appointed catering services provider must support the Northern Ireland Assembly policy for sustainability. This is achieved by embedding in its contract and its tender competition the principles of sustainable procurement of fresh and local produces, when possible. This aspect of the contract is continuously monitored as part of the contract monitoring process. For example, in March 2014, some 50% of food products used originated either from Northern Ireland or Ireland. This percentage might be lower than expected by some Members however it is important to note that March is a "winter month", preceding the main growing season for the region.

In terms of promoting non-food items within the Assembly Gift Shop, Support Services, implemented the Crafter Initiative designed to showcase designer makers exclusively from Northern Ireland.

Parliament Buildings: Car Parking

Mr Copeland asked the Assembly Commission whether the car parking facilities at Parliament Buildings meet existing staff and visitor need.

(AQO 6336/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission is aware of the difficulties faced by staff and visitors as regards parking at Parliament Buildings, particularly on sitting days, and recognises that the provision of additional car parking spaces would be of benefit. Extensive discussions between Assembly management and DFP have taken place which have resulted in the securing of a further 42 car parking spaces. This has been very well received by all.

Whilst Assembly management will naturally continue to explore further possibilities that might improve the overall situation, DFP have already carried out a broader review of car parking within the Stormont Estate, and they have confirmed that they have no plans at this time to build additional car parks or further develop existing ones.

DFP have indicated however that on particularly busy days, there may be some easing of current parking restrictions on Prince of Wales and Massey Avenues, thus freeing up more car parking space for users of Parliament Buildings. Assembly management will liaise closely with DFP in that regard.

It may also be possible to generate a small increase in car parking space at the rear of Parliament Buildings on completion of the roof project in 2015.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 20 June 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Hospitality: DARD

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) her Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 33833/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The Department provided hospitality at a number of external events during the year. These included a number of CAFRE graduation ceremonies, AFBI demonstration events and the Balmoral breakfast.

The total cost incurred by (i) the Department for the 2013/14 financial year was £75,268.25 and (ii) £21,175.50 in respect of the Department's four arm's-length bodies.

DARD: Staffing

Mr Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) name; and (ii) number of new posts created within her Department within each of the last three years; and whether posts were filled by internal trawl or by external appointment.

(AQW 33862/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The following tables outline the number of new posts created within my Department within each of the last three years; their names and whether they were filled by internal trawl or by external appointment.

Year	External	Internal	Total
4 Jun 11 – 3 Jun 12	27	30	57
4 Jun 12 – 3 Jun 13	19	65	84
4 Jun 13 – 3 Jun 14	13	43	56
Total	59	138	197

External appointment 4 June 11 - 3 June 12

Post name
Lisburn Industrials Specialist A Grade 2
Lisburn Industrials Specialist A Grade 2
Enzootics BR/Enzootics TB/Epidemiology
Asset Management Section O-Level Trainee Civil Engineer
Asset Management Section O-Level Trainee Civil Engineer
Capital Procurement O Level Trainee Civil Eng Asst
Capital Procurement O Level Trainee Civil Eng Asst
Asset Management Section O-Level Trainee Civil Engineer
Asset Management Section O-Level Trainee Civil Engineer
Design Section Graduate Trainee Civil Eng

Post name
Mapping & Modelling Graduate Trainee Civil Eng
Dairy Development Centre Semi-skilled Grade G
Rural Development Corporate Services Executive Officer 2
Hydrometries Graduate Trainee Civil Engineer
DVO Armagh Veterinary Officer
DVO Newry Veterinary Officer
DVO Newry Veterinary Officer
DVO Armagh Veterinary Officer
DVO Newry Veterinary Officer
VS Logistics TB/BR programmes Veterinary Officer
Craigavon Industrials Auto Electrical Fitter
Resource Economics Assistant Agricultural Economist
Hydrometries Property & Construction PTO
VS Logistics Implementation EO2
Coleraine Sub-region Technical PTO (CEA)
Belfast Industrials Basic Grade 5
Belfast Industrials Basic Grade 5

Internal appointment 4 June 11 - 3 June 12

Post name
Information Management Section Executive Officer 2
Countryside Management Compliance - Antrim Inspector Grade II
LPIS Improvement Inspector Grade II
Hydrometries Higher Scientific Officer
Economics and Statistics Staff Officer
DVO Coleraine Inspector Group 2
Information Systems ICT Level 5
Climate Change and Renewable Energy Staff Officer
Single Farm Payments Staff Officer
Grants and Subsidies Payments Principal (G7)
Animal Health Strategy and TSE Deputy Principal
Veterinary S Logistic Implementation AO
NIFAISS Programme AO
Information Systems ICT Level 3
Corporate Services Section Staff Officer
Countryside Management Compliance - Down Inspector Group 2
Relocation Project Team Staff Officer
Information Systems ICT Level 6
QAB Ballymena Inspector Group 2
QAB (Quality Assurance Branch) Inspector Group 2
Animal Health Strategy and TSE Executive Officer II

Post name
Operations Support Senior Scientific Officer
Information Systems ICT Level 7
NIFAISS Programme EOI
Countryside Management Development Inspector Grade II
Countryside Management Development Inspector Grade III
NIFAISS Programme DP
Estate Branch Senior Instructional Officer
Grants and Subsidies Payments Administrative Officer
Grants and Subsidies Payments Administrative Officer

External appointment 4 June 12 - 3 June 13

Post name
Resource Economics Assistant Agricultural Economist
Mapping & Modelling Graduate Trainee Civil Engineer
Estate Branch AO
Countryside Management Development Inspector Grade III
Food Technology Development FTD Inspector Grade III
Food Technology Development FTD Inspector Grade III
Food Technology Development FTD Inspector Grade III
Food Technology Centre Food Technology Technician
Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Assistant Secretary
Education and Technology Transfer - Packaging Inspector Grade III
Food Technology Education Inspector Grade 3 III
Food Technology Education Inspector Grade III
Hydrometrics Scientific Officer
Resource Economics Senior Agricultural Economist
Belfast Sub-region Technical PTO (CEA)
Financial Reporting Staff Officer (Accountant)
Programme Planning and Management EOII
SDG Resource Management services DP (Accountant)
Financial Reporting Staff Officer (Accountant)

Internal appointment 4 June 12 - 3 June 13

Post name
NIFAISS Programme EOI
Information Systems ICT Level 5
NIFAISS Programme EOI
Bill Team EO1
College Services AO
Welfare and Zoonoses SO
Review of Decisions Administrative Assistant
Review of Decisions Staff Officer

Post name
Review of Decisions Administrative Officer
Review of Decisions Administrative Officer
Review of Decisions Staff Officer
Single Farm Payments Executive Officer 1
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems EOII
Countryside Management Compliance - Armagh Insp Gp 4
Countryside Management Compliance - Tyrone Insp Gp 4
Countryside Management Compliance - Antrim Insp Gp 4
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems ICT Level 6
FS Corporate Services Director G7
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems ICT Level 5
LPIS Improvement Loughry Inspector Group 4
LPIS Improvement Loughry Inspector Group 4
CSIB Ballymena AO
WD Meats Team Meat Inspector
Review of Decisions Staff Officer
Estate Branch AO
Farm Policy Deputy Principal
Fisheries Bill Team Principal (Gd7)
Fisheries Bill Team DP
Fisheries Bill Team SO
HQ Relocation Programme Assistant Sec (GD5)
FS Corporate Services DP
Area-based Schemes Payments Development AO
Area-based Schemes Payments Development EOII
Area-based Schemes Payments Development SO
Area-based Schemes Payments Development AO
Area-based Schemes Payments Development EOI
Area-based Schemes Payments Development EOI
CSIB Ballymena AO
College Services AO
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Information Systems ICT Level 4
Single Farm Payments Executive Officer 2
Animal Id, Legislation & Welfare DP
TB-BR Policy Branch Deputy Principal

Post name
Rural Development Programme Management DP
Information Systems Principal Grade 7
Rural Development North Dundonald House EO1
LPIS Improvement Loughry Inspector Group 4
LPIS Improvement Loughry Inspector Group 4
Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Senior Scientific Officer
Financial Policy and Investment Deputy Principal
Estate Branch EO1
Internal Audit Executive Officer 1
Information Systems ICT Level 3 112897
Policy Development Deputy Principal
Agriculture Education Enniskillen ICT Level 3
Programme Planning and Management EO1
Financial Systems Deputy Principal
Environmental Policy Deputy Principal
Environmental Policy Staff Officer

External appointment 4 June 13 - 3 June 14

Post name
Omagh Industrials Specialist A Grade 2
Ballinamallard Industrials Specialist A Grade 2
Finance Rivers Agency Staff Officer (Acc)
Belfast Sub-region Technical PTO (CEA)
Digital Services Director
Emergency Planning/Health and Safety PTO (CEA)
Omagh Industrials Specialist A Grade 2 110302
Information Systems ICT Level 1
Information Systems ICT Level 1
Information Systems ICT Level 1
Craigavon Industrials Craft - Fitter Mechanic
Craigavon Industrials Craft - Fitter Mechanic
DVO Mallusk Veterinary Officer

Internal appointment 4 June 13 - 3 June 14

Post name
Information Systems ICT Level 6
Information Systems ICT Level 6
Information Systems ICT Level 5
Information Systems ICT Level 5
Information Systems ICT Level 5
EU Area-based Reform DP
Information Systems ICT Level 5

Post name
Information Systems ICT Level 5
Rural Development West (Sperrin Hse) SO
Policy Unit SO
Area-based Schemes Payments Development DP
Rural Development Corporate Services Deputy Principal
Area-based Schemes Payments Development EO1
Hrydrometics HSO
EU Area-based Reform SO
Plant Unit Admin EO1
VS Logistics Implementation EO2 154283
VS Logistics Implementation EO2
Customer Services Branch B'mena Academy House EO1
Programme Planning and Management EOII
Programme Planning and Management DP
Programme Planning and Management AO
EU Area-based Reform Principal Gd 7
College Services (Greenmount) SO
Area-based Schemes Transformation Management Gd 7
Animal Health Strategy and TSE Administrative Assistant
Food Strategy Board Support DP
Rural Training and Development Insp GdI
Pillar II Programme Support Principal Gd7
Operations Support SPTO (CE)
Omagh Industrials Supervisor Grade 1
Area-based Schemes Payments Development SO
Welfare and Zoonoses B'mena Academy House EOII
Media Services Staff Officer
Area-based Schemes Transformation Management SO
College Services (Greenmount) SO (Accountant)
In-House Design Graduate Trainee Civil Eng
Rural Development South SO
Area-based Schemes Transformation Management EOII
Pillar II Programme Support DP
Pillar II Programme Support DP
Planning Advisory HPTO (Civil Engineer)
Pillar II Capital Investment SO

Illegal Dog Breeds: Sale

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the sale of illegal dog breeds in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 33930/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current legislation regarding the control of dogs here is the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011, which provides for the licensing of dogs by Councils and other related enforcement matters.

The legislation also designates certain types of dogs that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess. Responsibility for enforcing the Dogs Order rests with Councils.

The four breeds of dogs banned under this legislation are:

- Pit Bull terrier;
- Japanese Tosa;
- Dogo Argentino; and
- Fila Brasileiro.

Councils are not required to supply statistics in relation to the sale of banned dogs to my Department. However, my officials contacted Councils, through their Dogs Advisory Group, and were advised that they are not presently aware of any investigations being carried out regarding the sale of illegal dog breeds.

The NI Courts and Tribunals Service has advised that, since 2007, there has been one prosecution for this offence, however the defendant was found not guilty.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether his Department plans to reduce or extend the breeds of dog regulated under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
(AQW 33931/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Dangerous Dogs Order 1991 amended the Dogs Order 1983 to designate four types of dog that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess.

The Dogs Order 1983 was further amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. This clarifies the status of any dogs that are exempted from the ban on dogs bred for fighting, and includes measures to promote responsible dog ownership and improve dog control to safeguard the public and other animals.

Given that a comprehensive review of the dog control legislation was undertaken so recently, and the terms of the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 were fully considered and agreed by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Assembly, I have no plans to carry out a further review at this time.

Illegal Dog Breeds: Cross-border Smuggling

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for his assessment of the extent of cross border smuggling of illegal dog breeds.
(AQW 33932/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current legislation regarding the control of dogs here is the Dogs Order 1983, which provides for the licensing of dogs by Councils and other related enforcement matters. The Dangerous Dogs Order 1991 amended the Dogs Order by banning types of dogs specifically bred for fighting and empowering Courts to order the destruction of these dogs.

This legislation also designates four types of dogs that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess. The four breeds of dogs banned under this legislation are:

- Pit Bull terrier;
- Japanese Tosa;
- Dogo Argentino; and
- Fila Brasileiro.

No concerns have been brought to the attention of my Department in relation to cross border smuggling of banned dog breeds. As Councils are responsible for enforcement of dog control legislation, my officials contacted them through their Dogs Advisory Group. Councils have advised that they do not have any knowledge of this type of activity.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effectiveness of the Dangerous Dog Act 1991.
(AQW 34000/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current legislation regarding the control of dogs here is the Dogs Order 1983, which provides for the licensing of dogs and other related enforcement matters. The Dogs Order was amended by the Dangerous Dogs Order 1991 to designate certain types of dog that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess.

The Dogs Compensation and Exemption Schemes Order 1991 allows for exemptions to the ban on certain types of dog where a District Judge (magistrates' court) is persuaded that a dog, if kept under certain conditions, will pose no danger to the public. A breach of the exemption conditions is likely to lead to the destruction of the dog concerned.

A Review of the dog control legislation, commissioned in 2007, led to the development of a range of policy proposals to address certain ongoing problems, including attacks by dogs on people, livestock and other dogs. That Review considered the views both of those who called for the removal of the prohibition on certain types of dogs and those who supported the prohibition. Given the lack of consensus on this issue, and because breeds such as pit-bull terriers have a high pain threshold and a jaw structure developed specifically for fighting - which means that the risk that they pose to public safety remains qualitatively greater - it was concluded that the prohibition should remain.

Following this Review, the Dogs Order was amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. It maintained the ban on the four types of dogs bred for fighting, clarified the status of any dogs that were exempted from the ban on dogs bred for fighting, and included measures to promote responsible dog ownership and improve dog control.

Councils are responsible for enforcing the Dogs Order and I am not aware of concerns about its effectiveness in this area. Given that a comprehensive review of the dog control legislation has been undertaken so recently, and that the terms of the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 were fully considered and agreed by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Assembly, I have no current plans to carry out a further review.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the projects in Upper Bann that currently receive funding from the Rural Development Programme.

(AQW 34030/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Under various funding measures of the Rural Development Programme there are currently a number of projects being implemented in the Upper Bann area with financial support of around £5.78m awarded, these are:-

Axis 1

- Measure 1.1: Under the Focus Farms and Supply Chain Development (Training) 2 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £99k.
- Measure 1.2: Under the Agricultural and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme 6 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £1.6m.
- Measure 1.3: Under the Tranche 3 extension of the Farm Modernisation Programme 2 farm businesses have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £6k.
- Measure 1.4: Under Supply Chain Development 1 project has been awarded Letters of offer totalling £13k

Axis 2

- Measure 2.1: Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowance scheme, 107 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £88k
- Measure 2.2: Agri-Environment Programme, 322 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £508k
- Measure 2.3 and 2.4: Afforestation/Forest Environments, 67 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £78k

Axis 3

- Measure 3.1: diversification into non-agricultural activities 6 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £199.6k
- Measure 3.2: business creation and development 5 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £172.7k
- Measure 3.3: encouragement of tourist activities 3 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £362.4k
- Measure 3.4: basic services for the economy and rural population 16 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £2.02m
- Measure 3.5: village renewal and development 10 projects have been awarded Letters of Offer totalling £633.7k

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests she has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34052/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The position in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is set out in tabular form below:-

Financial Years	Total number of Freedom of Information Act Requests received	Total number of Environmental Information Regulations Requests (EIR) received	Number of EIR requests considered which had a section 12 exception applied
2011 - 2012	212	65	54

Financial Years	Total number of Freedom of Information Act Requests received	Total number of Environmental Regulations Requests (EIR) received	Number of EIR requests considered which had a section 12 exception applied
2012 – 2013	194	132	98
2013 – 2014	158	131	93

Section 12 of the Environmental Regulations 2004 sets out a number of exceptions to the duty to disclose environmental information. Section 12(3), which prevents the release of personal data where the requester is not the data subject, was the most commonly applied exception during the periods in question.

You may wish to be aware that this information is published in a series of Freedom of Information Annual Reports, although these are compiled on the basis of calendar rather than 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.

DARD: Full Cost Recovery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department pursues a policy of full cost recovery where costs are incurred against her Department.

(AQW 34119/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department operates full cost recovery as the standard approach to setting charges for public services.

In cases where full cost recovery is not likely to be achievable, the normal process would be for the Department to seek the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Common Agricultural Policy: Reform

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she intends to submit a paper to the Executive detailing her proposals on Common Agricultural Policy reform.

(AQW 34122/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 33750/11-15.

Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what guidance is provided to farmers in relation to the use of hydrogen sulphide detectors when working with or near slurry.

(AQW 34158/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Health and Safety Executive for NI advise that Hydrogen Sulphide gas monitors are not a substitute for a safe system of work. My Department advises farmers to follow the HSENI good practice guide on working with slurry, only using a monitor as a backup if desired, and not relying on a monitor at the start of mixing; gas concentration rises so quickly it is dangerous to remain in the building. The message from HSENI is that a monitor will not give adequate warning or time to escape.

More information is available at – http://farmsafe.hseni.gov.uk/will_hydrogen_sulphide_monitors_keep_me_safe_when_working_with_slurry_web.pdf

My Department as part of the Farm Safety Partnership continues to urge all farmers to remain vigilant to the dangers of slurry usage, and to stop and think SAFE before starting any job on the farm. Further information and advice is available on the FarmSafe website (<http://farmsafe.hseni.gov.uk>).

Farm Safe Awareness Courses

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the budget allocated to Farm Safe Awareness courses in (i) 2014; (ii) 2015; and (iii) 2012 and 2013.

(AQW 34161/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farm Safe Awareness training is funded under the Rural Development Programme. The training programme has been extended for 2014/15 as part of the transition arrangements for the New Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020.

My Department spent £35,168.30 in the year 2012/13 and £154,709.50 in the year 2013/14 on Farm Safe Awareness courses.

For the year 2014/15 my Department has committed £91,495.76 for Farm Safe Awareness courses.

Farm Safe Awareness Courses

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of participants who have completed the Farm Safe Awareness course in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34162/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farm Safe Awareness training is funded under the Rural Development Programme (RDP). The training programme has been extended in 2014/15 as part of the transition arrangements for the New RDP 2014 -2020.

Training on the Farm Safe Awareness programme started in December 2012 and to date 3,575 people have been trained.

53 people were trained in December 2012. From January 2013 to December 2013 a total of 2,179 people were trained and from January 2014 to May 2014 another 1,343 people were trained.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the recent announcement that 300 employees of the Driver and Vehicle Agency will be made redundant in the near future, whether she will follow the example set by the Minister of the Environment and relocate jobs from within her Department to Coleraine.

(AQO 6374/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: After the announcement was made on 13 March that all vehicle registration and licensing services would be centralised in Swansea, I asked my Permanent Secretary to consider the ways in which my Department could help to facilitate those affected by the announcement. My officials initially carried out a detailed examination of the Department's functions to consider whether there was scope to move specific functions from my Department to Coleraine. That examination bore in mind my decision to relocate my Department's headquarters to Ballykelly and the timeframe for that move which is planned for 2017. In advance of the relocation date my officials have concluded that the current grading mix of specific functions within Headquarters did not match the affected staff in Coleraine and therefore there is no scope to move functions or relocate jobs to Coleraine.

However in line with my agreement to the proposals of the Minister of Environment regarding restrictions on recruitment, promotion and transfer of staff to the grades most affected, my officials have been working to make available posts to DVA staff for transfer. A number of posts have subsequently been identified within my Department and these have been offered to the affected DVA staff in Coleraine.

Regarding affected DVA staff in other locations, the relocation of Forest Service to Fermanagh and Fisheries to South Down from June 2015 may create the scope for some posts becoming available for DVA staff currently located in Enniskillen and Downpatrick and DARD will assist if any opportunities arise in these areas.

I remain committed to doing all that I can in helping all those affected by the decision of the Department of Transport.

Single Farm Payment: Distribution

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail "the political process" in which she claims to be involved with a view to getting agreement on the future distribution of Single Farm Payments, including the date and nature of each meeting.

(AQW 34399/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As I have indicated in response to recent Assembly Questions, the allocation under Pillar 1 of the CAP of almost €2 billion of taxpayers' money over the remainder of this decade has to be considered very carefully, with final decisions representing a fair and balanced outcome. Political discussions are ongoing in relation to the remaining key policy issues and it is my intention to bring proposals on these matters to the Executive for final agreement in the coming weeks. The issue of CAP reform has been discussed at a significant number of meetings held at political level. If the member would like to participate in this process of dialogue I am happy to meet with him at a mutually convenient time.

Single Farm Payment: Flat Rate

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact that the introduction of a flat rate of Single Farm Payment will have on the number of people employed in, or making a living from, farming.

(AQO 6370/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I cannot project how the introduction of a flat rate direct support payment model might affect the pace of long term and on-going restructuring of the agricultural industry. It is clear the move towards a flat rate payment regime will cause significant redistribution of support by altering the level of direct payments that individual farmers receive. Economists from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute carried out an assessment of the production impacts of moving to a flat rate payment regime. Their results indicated that a move to flat rate support had a minimal production impact on most agricultural sectors. However, this modelling work did not examine the impact on agricultural structures or employment.

If we look back over the last 20-30 years, through fluctuations in farm income and repeated, sometimes radical, reforms of the CAP, the rate of structural adjustment in the local agricultural industry has been relatively constant. There is no evidence to suggest that this latest reform will markedly change the long term rate of structural adjustment. However, the pace of

transition towards flat rate support and the ability of farm businesses to adjust to this change are important factors in relation to the financial stability of farm business at least in the short term.

Cattle Movement: Penalties

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association in relation to the penalties that are imposed for four or more movements of cattle.

(AQO 6376/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I met with NIMEA on 24 February 2014 to discuss the concerns about beef prices and the new pricing mechanism. At that time they indicated that the changes were in response to market requirements but they would consider deferring introduction of the changes. NIMEA did delay these changes, however, I am aware that some plants have now introduced penalties for cattle which have had 4 or more residencies.

Clearly, robust traceability is the cornerstone of our beef industry. However, it is not fair that farmers who bought animals in good faith should be penalised by these changes in this difficult trading environment. I want to see a profitable and sustainable local beef industry with farmers seeing a fair return for their efforts.

I am encouraging all elements of the supply chain to work together. To that end, I am planning to meet again with processors, and with retailers, in the coming weeks to discuss the impact the changes are having on the farming industry and the marts, and to explore what role they can play in achieving a successful resolution to the current difficulties in the beef sector.

In the meantime, my Department is offering practical support to help address some of the issues facing this sector. As part of our customer service we can provide herd keepers with a report on the movement history of all cattle in their herd. This information can help farmers to decide if their cattle meet the processors' specifications. DARD can also help facilitate more co-operation and collaboration in beef supply chains, and provide training and advice to improve efficiency in the chain.

Young Farmers

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, following her recent announcement at the Balmoral Show, to outline the measures she will put in place for young farmers.

(AQO 6377/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From 2015, young farmers will be able to access support under the Young Farmers' Scheme and from the Regional Reserve under Pillar I. The European Regulations require that young farmers must be no more than 40 in the year of first application and setting up as head of holding for the first time, or have had already set up as such during the five years preceding their first application. At the Balmoral Show, I announced that 2% of the direct payments budget, about €6.5m per annum, will be allocated to the Young Farmers' Scheme. The level of payment received by a young farmer will be based on 25% of the total direct payments regional average per hectare (€84/ha) and limited to 90ha per applicant. A Level II qualification in agriculture (or related subject containing at least a farm business management module) will also be a requirement. I announced that a Level II qualification in agriculture will also be a requirement for young farmers and new entrants to receive awards from the Regional Reserve.

I have asked CAFRE to provide the necessary courses to enable young farmers who do not have this qualification to obtain them within a relatively short period.

In April, I announced that entitlements will be allocated to farmers in 2015 who never held SFP entitlements previously but who can submit verifiable evidence that on 15 May 2013, they produced, reared or grew agricultural products. This will allow those young farmers who commenced farming after 2005 but have never held SFP entitlements to receive an allocation of entitlements in 2015 if they are not in a position to receive support from the Regional Reserve.

As the development of my Rural Development Programme continues, I am also looking at ways in which the needs of young farmers can be accommodated.

Flooding

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her Department's work to reduce the impact of future flooding.

(AQO 6378/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: While continued investment in flood alleviation has reduced the risk of flooding to people and property, a significant element of risk remains. Rivers Agency is taking forward a programme of flood alleviation schemes which seeks to maximise the benefit of flood protection to people and property. The most significant of these is the flood alleviation work associated with the Greenway Project in East Belfast, which when completed, will provide protection to some 1,700 properties.

Rivers Agency officials have been working with other departments and key stakeholders for some months now in preparing proposals for an Individual Property Protection Scheme for people in the north of Ireland. These proposals will be the key vehicle for providing funding assistance to residents to improve protection against flooding for their properties. To underpin these measures, Rivers Agency carries out inspections to designated watercourses and culvert inlet grilles. The timing of these inspections is dependent on the likely maintenance requirements, drainage impact and flood risk.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the current status of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

(AQO 6379/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Good progress has been made in developing the proposals for the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme. A public consultation was carried out on DARD's proposals for the future programme between July and October last year. There was considerable interest in the consultation and my department's response has been published on the DARD website. As part of the public consultation we also sought views on the Equality Impact Assessment and the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

A Stakeholder Consultation Group was established in November 2012 to provide a forum for key stakeholders to discuss and influence the development of the next programme. This Stakeholder Group has met seven times and my officials will continue to work with this Group to develop the proposals further over the next few months.

My officials are discussing the proposed content of the next programme informally with the EU Commission prior to formal submission later this year.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her Department's implementation plans for the Common Agricultural Policy.

(AQO 6380/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A CAP Reform Programme board was established in January 2012 to take forward the implementation of both Pillar 1 direct payments and Pillar 2 rural development.

Five projects report to this Board. Two focus on the development of policy for Pillars 1 and 2. Two projects focus on the development of delivery arrangements for area-based schemes and the remainder of the Pillar 2 schemes respectively. The final project is tasked with development of the Farm Advisory Service in line with EU regulation to provide advice to farmers applying to farm-based schemes.

I am planning to open Direct Payment area-based schemes for application in 2015.

Work is ongoing to develop a draft Rural Development Programme in consultation with Stakeholders for submission to the EU for approval later this year.

My Department will deliver a Farm Advisory System which will provide farm businesses with advice, training and support to meet their obligations as part of the new CAP Reform.

Tree Diseases

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her efforts to prevent the spread of tree diseases.

(AQO 6381/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A CAP Reform Programme board was established in January 2012 to take forward the implementation of both Pillar 1 direct payments and Pillar 2 rural development.

Five projects report to this Board. Two focus on the development of policy for Pillars 1 and 2. Two projects focus on the development of delivery arrangements for area-based schemes and the remainder of the Pillar 2 schemes respectively. The final project is tasked with development of the Farm Advisory Service in line with EU regulation to provide advice to farmers applying to farm-based schemes.

I am planning to open Direct Payment area-based schemes for application in 2015.

Work is ongoing to develop a draft Rural Development Programme in consultation with Stakeholders for submission to the EU for approval later this year.

My Department will deliver a Farm Advisory System which will provide farm businesses with advice, training and support to meet their obligations as part of the new CAP Reform.

Less-favoured Area Land

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effectiveness of measuring less-favoured area land by electoral ward.

(AQO 6382/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The methodology defined by the Rural Development Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and EU Commission guidance for the designation of Areas of Natural Constraint is prescriptive. The Regulation requires compliance "at the level of local administrative units ("LAU2" level) or at the level of a clearly delineated local unit which covers a single clear contiguous geographical area with a definable economic and administrative identity". This derives from a World Trade Organisation obligation and requires designation at the electoral ward or townland level.

Designation is a two stage process, the first stage being the application of prescribed biophysical criteria to eligible agricultural land to identify those administrative units affected by biophysical constraints and the second a fine tuning exercise to remove those administrative units where it can be demonstrated that the constraint has been overcome. Some flexibilities exist within the second stage with regard to the data that may be used. However, the application of fine tuning is mandatory.

Significant work has been carried out to date on the application of the methodology contained within the Rural Development Regulation and guidance from the EU Commission. Preliminary results were published on the DARD website in December 2013 for information. Work on the designation of Areas of Natural Constraint is ongoing and my officials are currently seeking clarification from the EU Commission on a number of detailed issues.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

World War I: Commemoration Funding

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline any plans she has to open a funding stream for community groups who wish to commemorate the centenary of the Great War.

(AQO 6389/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): An extensive range of events, exhibitions and initiatives aimed at commemorating the First World War has been and continues to be funded by DCAL, its ALBs and funded organisations. DCAL will also continue to support 'Creative Centenaries' which provides a suite of resources and an online platform to showcase events and activities related to the Decade of Centenaries. The Department will continue to coordinate and maximise the impact and reach of such initiatives and opportunities to enhance community involvement.

I plan to meet with the Community Relations Council and Heritage Lottery Fund to explore further ways to work together to promote the Decade. DCAL will continue to work with other stakeholders to explore opportunities to promote and enhance funding opportunities for community organisations to deliver projects at a local level to commemorate the Decade of Centenaries including World War I.

DCAL has and will continue to play a key role in telling the stories and different interpretations of the First World War and other important events from this Decade of Centenaries. Other government departments also need to consider how they can play their part.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the recent announcement that 300 employees of the Driver and Vehicle Agency will be made redundant in the near future, whether she will follow the example set by the Minister of the Environment and relocate jobs from within her Department to Coleraine.

(AQO 6390/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL is a small department with approximately 300 staff and the mix of grades and specialisms of these staff presents limited opportunity to assist in the redeployment of the surplus DVA staff who are mostly Administrative Assistants (AAs) and Administrative officers (AOs). I do nevertheless affirm my Department's support, where possible, in assisting with the redeployment of the DVA staff.

My officials will continue to work collaboratively with Corporate HR in the Department of Finance and Personnel and other Departments to accommodate surplus staff using NICS vacancy management and staff redeployment processes.

My Department is also committed to maximising the impact of the City of Culture 2013 year and tackling socio-economic challenges across the North West of Ireland. My new North West Office will coordinate this commitment. And I have made a bid to the Executive for additional funding which will determine the level of staffing for this office.

Museum Visits

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the Triennial Review into participation in culture, arts and leisure showing that 55 per cent of young people visited a national museum last year, what action she is taking to increase this figure.

(AQO 6391/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am pleased that the 'Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey' which the member refers to has shown an increase in the number of young people visiting a National Museum from 46% in 2007 to 55% in 2013. The Annual Continuous Household Survey also shows an increase amongst all individuals from 24% in 2007/08 to 35% in 2013/14.

This has been possible as a result of the increased outreach work that National Museums has undertaken amongst young people particularly those from socially deprived backgrounds.

In the last financial year I was pleased to provide an additional £306k which allowed National Museums to take forward 18 projects targeted at those most in need. These initiatives have been a success with almost 14,000 people attending and taking part in the different projects.

This excellent work was recognised last week when National Museums won two awards at the DCAL Learning Forum. These awards recognised creative approaches to education and lifelong learning.

In the coming financial year National Museums is focused on attracting visitors from the 20% most deprived areas in the north; including providing free admission to paid-for sites for 5,000 households and an aim to achieve 35-40% audiences from lower income households as well as increasing access to collections and outreach engagement initiatives. National Museums will also deliver 45,000 formal learning visitor events. 7,000 of these are for children from areas of multiple deprivation.

In the coming year National Museums also plan to develop a range of new strategies aimed at increasing general participation in the Museums Sector.

However more can be done and the challenge that I have set The Trustees is to find new and innovative ways of reaching and meaningfully engaging with those who do not traditionally come to museums.

Ulster-Scots Agency: Belfast

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the Ulster Scots Agency's budget for 2012/13 has been approved.

(AQO 6392/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The North South Language Body's budget is based in the calendar year, 1 January to 31 December. The budget for 2012 has been agreed and approved. The 2013 budget has not yet been approved.

Public Services: Provision

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department and its arm's-length bodies will work with the new super councils in the provision of public services.

(AQO 6393/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department will work in partnership with the new councils to advocate and integrate the valuable contribution that culture, arts and leisure can make to people's lives. This will support local social and economic development and maximise the impact and reach of public services and particularly to areas and groups of greatest need.

I will personally play an active role in partnership arrangements being brought forward by the Executive to enhance strategic cooperation between central and local government.

I have directed my officials to further develop a programme of engagement with local communities across the north and to help build effective partnerships between the DCAL family and the new councils. This will support community planning and joined-up approaches to social and economic development.

Enniskillen Library: Relocation

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the potential benefits of relocating Enniskillen Library to the old Erne Hospital site and sharing with other public sector services such as the new build for the South West College.

(AQO 6394/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI is currently developing a business case aimed at securing resources for the development of a new and improved public library in Enniskillen. The possibility of moving the existing branch library to the old Erne Hospital site and sharing with other public sector services, like South West Regional College, is being considered as an option in the appraisal process alongside other options such as redevelopment on the present site.

While I consider there may be potential benefits to be gained from relocating Enniskillen Library to the old hospital site, it is not possible at this point to provide a full assessment of these as the business case is not yet completed. Moreover, any benefits that may be identified will need to be balanced against benefits that might emerge from other options including the library remaining at its present location.

Sandy Row Boxing Club

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the grants awarded to Sandy Row Boxing Club in each of the last two years.

(AQO 6395/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arm's-length body of my Department has a responsibility for the general provision of funding for the development of sport in the north of Ireland, including boxing.

As part of this, Sport NI established the Lottery funded Boxing Investment Programme to meet the needs of boxing, with a clear focus on improving facilities and building capacity in the sport. Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club (ABC) was eligible to submit an expression of interest for this funding; however, in order to progress to the next stages of the programme, all clubs, including Sandy Row ABC, were required to be affiliated to a recognised governing body. This is a standard requirement for all Sport NI funding programmes.

Therefore, Sandy Row ABC was not eligible to receive funding, and consequently, in each of the last two years, Sport NI has not awarded any grants to Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club.

I have offered to meet with Sandy Row ABC on several occasions. To date the club has not taken up this offer which remains open to them.

Walking

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline her proposals to promote walking as a leisure activity. (AQO 6396/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department through Sport NI and in partnership with DOE and DETI funds Outdoor Recreation NI in support of its outdoor recreation Action Plan 'Our Great Outdoors' 2013-2020. This plan details a range of activity to ensure that outdoor recreation as a leisure activity contributes significantly to healthy lifestyles for local people from all communities; delivers economic growth in the sector through the encouragement of visitor participation at outdoor walking venues; and supports the protection of landscapes and eco-systems for future generations.

The plan highlights the objectives of WALK NI and has set a target through to 2018, to increase the number of quality walks on WALK NI by 10%.

Additionally my Department through its Strategy for sport, Sport Matters, sets out a number of targets specifically designed to increase participation generally in sport and exercise. DCAL's delivery body Sport NI continues to invest heavily in a number of regional consortia of district councils to increase participation in sport and physical activity, including walking.

My Department also maintains and provides access to a total of 18.5 miles of traffic free walking and cycling routes, along towpaths and in regional parks and water recreation sites which provide a variety of riverside walking routes.

Ulster-Scots Agency: Budget

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she has had with the Ulster-Scots Agency about extra resource and finance. (AQO 6397/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are established financial processes and procedures in place for North South Implementation Bodies and the Ulster-Scots Agency is aware of these.

I understand that there are ongoing discussions between the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Sponsor Departments about ways in which the Agency might be able to access additional resources.

The Agency has been asked to provide a business case to enable Sponsor Departments to consider a modest increase in its staffing complement.

The MAGUS and the Agency are working with the Sector to develop a collaborative approach to scoping a Líofoa type initiative of Ulster-Scots that will include History, Heritage, Culture and Language.

I have supported a bid for £20K as part of the June monitoring to fund this scoping and development work.

Department of Education

Hospitality: DE

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14. (AQW 33797/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The total cost of hospitality provided in 2013/14 by:

- (i) the Department was £32k; and
- (ii) its arm's-length bodies was £710k.

The 2013/14 figures are based on draft accounts which are in the process of being audited.

Elective Home Education

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the consultation by Education and Library Boards on Elective Home Schooling, what prompted the Northern Education and Library Board to seek legal advice on this issue; and who provided this legal advice. (AQW 33838/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that in light of legal advice received by one of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) following litigation in which an issue surrounding home education arose, the ELBs decided to review their arrangements for ensuring

that the parents of children and young people who are electively home educated provide an efficient full time education for their children appropriate to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. The Boards may seek legal advice from in-house experts or through Counsel as may be considered appropriate.

Voting

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has had any discussions with the Electoral Commission, or other organisations, in relation to educating people on the importance of voting.

(AQW 33851/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While my Department has not had any recent discussions with the Electoral Commission, or other organisations, regarding educating young people on the importance of voting, it does encourage schools to play their part in the electoral registration process by completing the annual returns to the Chief Electoral Officer and by facilitating the visits to schools of Electoral Office staff.

Throughout the curriculum there are also a number of opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss the issue of voting.

Drumadonnell Primary School: Pupil Transport

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Education why school transport has been withdrawn for pupils attending Drumadonnell Primary School who live in Down District area.

(AQW 33919/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am advised that Drumadonnell Primary School lies within the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) area, but close to the junction between SELB and the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB). As a result, some SEELB pupils attend Drumadonnell PS. Those SEELB pupils that are eligible have been assisted with transport by SELB on a discretionary basis. However, the number of pupils living in the SELB area requiring transport assistance to Drumadonnell PS will increase from September 2014. This will lead to overcrowding on the SELB bus, which is not permitted. As the SELB's priority is to pupils living within its area, it has written to the families living in the Down District (SEELB) area to advise that it cannot guarantee ongoing discretionary travel on its bus next year. Any displaced eligible pupils attending Drumadonnell PS from the Down District area will, therefore, become the responsibility of SEELB.

Woodlands Speech and Language Unit

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the range of opinions expressed in the consultation on the proposal to close Woodlands Speech and Language Unit at the Belmont site in Londonderry.

(AQW 33928/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I approved Development Proposals 233-236 on 16 September 2013. These relocate the current four classes at the Woodlands Unit to two at Ebrington Primary School and two at St Anne's Primary School, both in Derry City, and extend the service by approving two new classes at Ballykelly Primary School.

The Development Proposal submission which includes a summary of the opinions expressed in the consultation is available on the Department of Education website at:-

http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp233-236_woodlands_unit_-_copy_of_submission.pdf

Special Educational Needs: Statements

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education should a Statement of Special Educational Needs state that a child requires (i) speech and language therapy; (ii) occupational therapy; and (iii) physiotherapy, to detail (i) the responsibility of the Education and Library Board to provide therapy; and (ii) the timeframe a child can reasonably expect to receive such treatments.

(AQW 33956/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that, as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, prime responsibility for the provision of therapeutic services, following the issue of a statement of special educational needs (SEN), rests with health and social services. Where a statement specifies such therapy as educational provision in part three of the statement of SEN and this is not provided by a health authority, ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the provision is made rests with the ELB.

Agencies work together so that this support is provided as soon as possible following the issue of a statement of SEN. However the timeframe in which a child will normally receive therapy support is beyond the immediate control of the ELB.

Occupational Therapist Advice: Schools

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail the requirement on schools to act on advice provided by occupational therapists in respect of the support required by a child to meet their education needs.

(AQW 33957/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that if an occupational therapist recommends a programme of support to be provided by a school there is a legal requirement, as detailed in the Special Educational Needs and Disability

(NI) Order 2005, upon the school that the child is not discriminated against because of their disability. While there is no legal requirement for the school to act on the occupational therapists advice schools do have a responsibility to liaise with therapists to consider their recommendations and in most cases will act on the advice of an occupational therapist.

Long-term Planning: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education when he will publish his Department's senior counsel's opinion on the Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy on his Department's approach to long-term planning.

(AQW 33962/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Mr Justice Treacy's judgement clarified the scope of the Article 64 (1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 duty, following a judicial review brought by Drumragh Integrated College. The Court rejected the argument by the Applicants that the Area Planning process was unlawful. Legal opinion provided in relation to the case is privileged and will not be published.

Education Reform: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education when he will be issuing guidance based on the court judgement of Justice Treacy in relation to Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989; and to whom will the guidance be issued.

(AQW 33963/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The court judgement has provided clarity as to whom the Article 64 (1) duty is owed. In light of this clarification I will review the internal guidance to my Officials to ensure this is consistent with the judgement.

Illuminate: Protocol

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the introduction of a protocol to deal with Illuminate.

(AQW 33968/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that development of the protocol is progressing and both management and union side are working to resolve any outstanding issues. This is a complex issue and one that needs time for full consideration from all perspectives to ensure that a workable solution is put in place regarding the use of the Illuminate software.

Elective Home Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in light of the intention to further regulate Elective Home Education, what assessment has been conducted in respect of achievements and outcomes for children educated in this way; and what was the result of this assessment.

(AQW 33974/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is no intention to further regulate home education at the present time. The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have directly prepared guidance in relation to home education which reflects their existing legislative responsibilities and are currently consulting on that guidance. The outcome of the consultation process will be of assistance in informing any future proposals in this regard.

The Boards have confirmed that they do not undertake assessments of the achievements and outcomes of children who are educated at home.

Elective Home Education: Further Regulation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in light of the intention to further regulate Elective Home Education, why it is appropriate to subject this sector to more frequent inspections than other sectors.

(AQW 33975/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is no intention to regulate further home education at present. The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have directly prepared guidance in relation to home education which reflects their existing legislative responsibilities and are currently consulting on that guidance. The outcome of the consultation process will be of assistance in informing any future proposals in this regard.

The Boards have advised that they do not undertake inspections of home education and that the draft home education guidance document does not include any reference to an inspection process.

Ballee Community High School: NEELB Advice

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33732/11-15, to provide the letters that the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) sent to parents of children currently attending Ballee Community High School, who have to now find a new school; and to outline the nature of the advice given by NEELB about the issues to consider when choosing another school and any assistance on admission and transport matters.

(AQW 33976/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The letters sent by NEELB to the parents of children currently attending Ballee Community High School are attached, along with the guidance provided by the Board outlining what to consider when choosing a post-primary school and how to make an application. Alternative schools with places available are also listed.

Teacher:Pupil Ratios

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what is the local teacher pupil ratio compared to (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales.

(AQW 34035/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information is provided in the table below. All figures refer to the 2012/13 school year. Direct comparisons are not advised, as there are differences in the coverage and scope of the data collections.

	NI ¹	England ²	Scotland ³	Wales ⁴
PTR	17.5	17.7	13.8	18.2

Sources:

- 1 NI School Census and Teachers' Payroll and Pensions Administration System;
- 2 English School Workforce Census;
- 3 Scotland Annual School Census of Pupils and Teachers;
- 4 Welsh School Census.

Post-primary Schools: Upper Bann

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in Upper Bann are using mobile classrooms compared to 2010.

(AQW 34038/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board does not normally hold historic detail in relation to the number of mobile classrooms however in 2009 the Department provided this information and it has been included in the table below together with current numbers.

	Number of mobile classrooms in primary schools (i)	Number of mobile classrooms in post primary schools (ii)	Total
April 2009	50	33	83
June 2014	55	36	91

Nursery Places: Upper Bann

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Education how many applications were received for nursery places in Upper Bann for 2014/15; and how many were unsuccessful.

(AQW 34039/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School applications process is a preference based system comprising two stages.

The Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has advised that of the 1723 children whose parents stayed with the pre-school application process to the end, only one child remained unplaced.

At the end of stage one of the pre-school applications process, 1757 applications had been received and 1664 children were offered a funded pre-school place. The parents of unplaced children were invited to submit further preferences and advised of a range of providers in the area with places still available.

During Stage two, the parents of 40 unplaced children submitted further preferences and an additional 19 new applications were received. All 40 unplaced children and 18 of the 19 new applications were offered a funded pre-school place during stage two.

Preschool Places: September 2014

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children in each constituency have yet to be allocated a pre-school place for September 2014.

(AQW 34085/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that 24 children, whose parents engaged fully with the pre-school application process to the end, have yet to be allocated a funded pre-school place.

The table following provides this information on a constituency basis.

Pre-school places remain available in each child's local area, should their parents wish to apply for them. I would, therefore, expect this number to fall in the coming weeks.

Constituency	No. of Children Unplaced – June 2014
East Belfast	13
South Belfast	5
North Down	3
Foyle	3
Total	24

Primary Schools: Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children in each constituency have yet to be allocated a primary school place for September 2014.

(AQW 34086/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards advise that as at 16 June 2014, there are 30 children who remain unplaced in the primary school admissions process for September 2014. One of the children is moving to the north of Ireland from England. The constituencies in which the other 29 children reside are listed in the following table:

Constituency	Number
Belfast East	2
Belfast North	3
Belfast South	4
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	3
Lagan Valley	5
Mid Ulster	2
Newry & Armagh	3
North Down	3
South Down	2
Upper Bann	2
Total	29

Schools: Formal Intervention

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the criteria used, and the process followed, to determine whether a school is subject to formal intervention.

(AQW 34087/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I would refer the Member to my answer to AQW 23938/11-15 which he previously tabled and was published in the Official Report on 14 June 2013.

Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to outline the rationale for making changes to the criteria for excluding pupils from school examination statistics.

(AQW 34096/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The requirement for the Summary of Annual Examination Results data collection is underpinned by legislation, the Education (School information and prospectuses) Regulations (NI) 2003. Under the above named regulations, post primary schools are required to provide information about public examination performance for the year immediately preceding the publication of the prospectus.

Schedule 3, paragraph 14(c) and 14(d) require schools to report particulars about the performance in public examinations of pupils who on the 31st October of the school year before the school year in which the prospectus is published were enrolled in year 12, year 13 and year 14.

While the current legislation dictates that schools should report on all pupils, the Department has historically, in discussion with schools, provided reasons under which pupils may be recorded as ineligible for inclusion in this data collection. The current list of 8 reasons for ineligibility has been in place since the 2004/05 academic year.

However, during the 2012/13 annual data collection a number of schools raised concerns with Statistics and Research Team regarding the scope and relevance of the current 8 reasons for ineligibility. In response to these concerns the Department formed a working group in January 2014 with a remit to review the current ineligibility criteria and, where appropriate, develop and action short term measures to ensure clarity for schools in the interpretation and scope of the current 8 reasons as well as to develop and action longer term changes.

It is important to emphasise that the criteria under which a pupil may be deemed ineligible in 2013/14 has not changed from the 2012/13 data collection. Rather, the Department has sought to clarify the existing guidance for schools, as it had become apparent that the reasons were being incorrectly interpreted by some schools. Reasons were clarified in the interests of fairness to all schools, in order that there was no ambiguity in the interpretation of their scope.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Collaborative Working Arrangements

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to outline the collaborative working arrangements between the Education and Training Inspectorate and relevant inspectorates in other jurisdictions.
(AQW 34097/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), along with the inspectorates from neighbouring jurisdictions, is a member of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) a European-wide network of educational inspectorates. It also represents the Department of Education in a European network for Special Education.

Since 2008, ETI has had a Memorandum of Understanding to guide working relationships with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate in the South of Ireland.

At a workshop in Cardiff in 2013,, attended by representatives of the educational inspectorates from Scotland, English, Wales, the South of Ireland and the North of Ireland, the inspectorates from Wales and Scotland both asked that links be set up in ETI which would be guided by an MOU similar to that in use with the DES Inspectorate.

It was agreed that Education Scotland would link with ETI in the 2013-2014 academic year and that the Welsh Inspectorate (Estyn) would link with ETI during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Education and Library Boards

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education (i) how many staff employed by the Education and Library Boards are on the wrong pay band for their job role due to a moratorium imposed because of the Education and Skills Authority project; (ii) when affected staff will be moved to their correct pay band and have their pay harmonised with that of their colleagues; and (iii) when any back pay owed will be calculated and paid.

(AQW 34101/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The moratorium on job evaluation does not relate to the proposal to establish the Education and Skills Authority. It was introduced on 27 November 2007, following the publication of a Public Accounts Committee Report into Job Evaluation in the Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

The Education and Library Boards have advised that there are currently 137 requests to have posts re-evaluated, once the moratorium is lifted.

The moratorium will remain in place until a way forward for job evaluation has been agreed. I understand that negotiations between Management Side and Trade Union Side regarding new job evaluation procedures are ongoing and I have encouraged all parties to actively work together to reach an early agreement on this issue.

ICT Facilities

Mr Hazzard asked Minister of Education what sources of non-departmental funding have been secured by local schools to improve ICT facilities, such as computer suites.

(AQW 34106/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Any decision to apply for non-Departmental funding is a matter for each school and the Department does not hold information on the sources of funding available for, or received by, schools.

GCSE and A-level Irish Language: West Belfast Schools

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Education to list the schools in West Belfast that offer (i) GCSE; and (ii) A Level Irish language.

(AQW 34108/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below sets out the schools in West Belfast that offer Irish at (i) GCSE and (ii) A Level. This is based on the 2013/14 school year information held by the Entitlement Framework Online Audit.

School	GCSE	A Level
Christian Brothers School	Yes	Yes

School	GCSE	A Level
Colaiste Feirste	No – but offer Gaeilge	Yes
Corpus Christi College	Yes	Yes
De La Salle College	Yes	Yes
St Colm's High	Yes	No
St Dominic's High	Yes*	Yes
St Genevieve's High	Yes	Yes
St Louise's Comprehensive College	Yes*	Yes
St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar	Yes*	Yes
St Rose's Dominican College	Irish Spoken Language (short course)	Yes

* Also offer Gaeilge

Mandarin Language

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to include the Mandarin language on the statutory curriculum for schools, thereby allowing pupils to choose this as their other language, and to study to GCSE level or equivalent.

(AQW 34111/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Modern languages are a statutory requirement at KS3 and a qualification choice at KS4 and Sixth form. Schools are encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages, and the curriculum offers schools more flexibility in the choices of subjects they can offer to meet the needs of their pupils. The curriculum has broadened the range of modern languages that schools can now offer so that, instead of being limited to choosing from 5 languages as previously, 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, including Mandarin/Chinese. The curriculum also includes scope for schools wishing to offer language learning at primary level before it becomes a statutory requirement at Key Stage 3.

Ballee Community High School: Pupil Placements

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33891/11-15, what checks his Department undertakes to ensure that all the pupils affected have gained a place in another school, and none have been over looked.

(AQW 34113/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Responsibility for ensuring that pupils currently enrolled at Ballee Community High School are placed in other schools rests with the North-Eastern Education and Library Board. The Board is working to ensure that all pupils are suitably placed in advance of the new school year.

The Board has a record of all pupils currently enrolled in Ballee Community High School and is tracking their progress in gaining a place in another school. The principals of schools in the area have been asked to advise the Board of any pupils who have applied to their schools and the status of their applications. The principals have also been asked to bring any issues which arise as a result of the applications to the attention of the Board in order that solutions can be considered.

The Board is recording information gained from parents who telephone for advice or information and wrote on 12th June, to the parents of pupils who have been identified as not yet having made an application to another school. These parents will be offered individual support to complete their application if required.

Schools: Intervention Stage

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to list the schools currently in the intervention stage.

(AQW 34131/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As at 13 June 2014 the following schools, for which inspection reports have been published, were in formal intervention.

School

- Ballee Community High School, Ballymena
- Crumlin Integrated College*1
- Dundonald High School
- Dunluce School, Bushmills
- Edenbrooke Primary School, Belfast
- Euston Street Primary School, Belfast
- Glenwood Primary School, Belfast
- Harryville Primary School, Ballymena
- Kirkinriola Primary School, Ballymena
- Laurehill Community College, Lisburn
- Monkstown Community School
- Movilla High School, Newtownards

- Nettlefield Primary School, Belfast*1
- Orangefield High School, Belfast
- Springhill Primary School, Belfast
- St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan*1
- Tullygally Primary School, Lurgan
- Wheatfield Primary School, Belfast

*1 These schools have had recent follow-up inspections and the Education and Training Inspectorate has reported that overall the quality of education provided is satisfactory or better. The Department is currently considering whether these schools can exit the Formal Intervention Process.

A list of schools in formal intervention during the current school year is published on the Department of Education website. The list can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/mw_schools_in_the_formal_intervention_process_8_may_2014.pdf

Temporary Classrooms: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what steps he will take to reverse the increase in the number of temporary classrooms in North Down.

(AQW 34132/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I utilise all means at my disposal to ensure the capital infrastructure is in place to support the educational needs of pupils. This may include the provision of good quality modular buildings as a way of addressing accommodation deficiencies within a relatively short timescale.

I would emphasise that statutory approvals such as planning and building control require modular accommodation to be provided to the same building performance standards as that of permanent builds.

I would add that in considering projects for inclusion in any major capital investment programme the undue reliance on temporary accommodation within schools is taken into account.

Computer Infrastructure: Upgrade

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education for an update on the recent transformation process to upgrade the computer infrastructure in schools.

(AQW 34151/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: By Friday 13th June, approximately 70% of schools had their C2k Local Area Network (LAN) upgrade completed, the LAN upgrade being the final part of the transformation process being undertaken in schools.

By the end of June, 77 % will be completed with the remaining schools scheduled for transformation over the summer break. Many of the schools being installed in July and August requested a summer date so that their school could avoid any disruption during the term and C2k and Capita have worked with schools to facilitate this.

C2k System

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 32495/11-15, whether authorisation can be given to Education Welfare Officers to access the C2k system from their place of work, rather than having to physically attend a school to analysis unauthorised absences.

(AQW 34155/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: C2k has actively been pursuing giving Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) access to pupil information, which is currently based on schools C2k servers.

This is a complex area as EWOs require access to multiple servers in schools and C2k must be sure that the best way to do this is identified and that no security risks are taken.

Schools are being transformed to the new services at present and new network services are part of this, so it is important that EWO access is based on the new services. Transformation of all schools to the new services is scheduled to be completed by September 2014 and the Department has been informed that a pilot can only be taken forward after transformation is complete.

C2k propose to conduct the pilot from September 2014 to December 2014.

Ballee Community High School: Closure Impacts

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education what impact the closure of Ballee Community High School will have on the North Eastern Education and Library Board's Youth Service provision.

(AQW 34160/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board's intention is to continue to provide 'centre based' youth provision at the Ballee Community High School site while the premises remain available to it. Any additional costs against the 'Leader in Charge' role presently covered by the Youth Tutor Post will be covered from the NEELB Youth Service budget

In the area served by the school, the NEELB Youth Service presently operates two other full-time controlled youth units (Ballykeel and Waveney Youth Clubs) along with two full-time Area Youth Worker posts. In addition, it supports twenty-two uniformed youth groups and thirteen part-time youth groups, which operate on various evenings each week.

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) pupils; (ii) parents; and (iii) professionals from (a) Northern Ireland; and (b) the Republic of Ireland, supported by the Middletown Centre in each of the last three years. (AQW 34169/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executive of the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) has confirmed that the number of pupils, parents and professionals who have been supported by MCA, in each of the last three financial years, in the north and south of Ireland, is as follows:

	Pupils North	Pupils South	Parents North	Parents South	Professionals North	Professionals South
2011/12	10	0	710	1,854	3,171	2,180
2012/13	10	0	597	2,261	3,331	2,024
2013/14	33	0	895	6,410	2,962	4,495

Teachers: Redundancies

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what is the current projected number of teacher redundancies over the next three years, broken down by (i) sector; and (ii) Education and Library Board.

(AQW 34171/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not project the number of teacher redundancies. It is a matter for Boards of Governors, in conjunction with Employing/Funding Authorities, to decide if teacher redundancies are required within their school taking into account all relevant information, including projected enrolments and budgetary position.

'British Values': Promotion in Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to follow Michael Gove's plans to promote 'British values' in schools. (AQW 34201/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no plans to make any changes to this area of the curriculum at this time.

Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many pupils have been excluded from school examination statistics, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34202/11-15)

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

Year 12 pupils ineligible for inclusion in Summary of Annual Examination Results returns.

	Number of year 12 pupils - Annual School Census	Number of pupils ineligible for inclusion in Summary of Annual Examination Results returns	% of pupils ineligible for inclusion in Summary of Annual Examination Results returns
2008/09	24,444	1,123	4.6
2009/10	24,244	1,043	4.3
2010/11	23,858	1,356	5.7
2011/12	23,382	1,488	6.4
2012/13	24,343	1,650	6.8

Source: Annual School Census, Summary of Annual Examination Results

Mandarin: Qualified Teachers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many teachers are qualified to teach Mandarin.
(AQW 34203/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council (GTCNI) assesses the qualifications of teachers for the purposes of registration. I have been advised that it does not have a record of any registered teacher currently holding a qualification in Mandarin.

A teacher who holds a recognised teaching qualification and is registered with the GTCNI is able to teach a range of subjects in any grant-aided school. It is possible that individual teachers can speak Mandarin and may therefore be able to teach it. Employers should ensure that such individuals are appropriately trained.

Elective Home Education

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education to detail the inspection process of the Elective Home Education system.
(AQW 34220/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The home education system is not subject to an inspection process.

Whilst the Education and Training Inspectorate provides inspection services for a number of organisations it does not undertake inspections of home education provision.

The Boards have also advised that they do not undertake inspections of home education.

C2k: Attendance Records

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 32495/11-15, when Education Welfare Officers will be able to access C2k attendance records from their own offices in order to have access to live attendance records.
(AQW 34278/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: C2k has actively been pursuing giving Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) access to pupil information, which is currently based on schools C2k servers.

This is a complex area as EWOs require access to multiple servers in schools and C2k must be sure that the best way to do this is identified and that no security risks are taken.

Schools are being transformed to the new services at present and new network services are part of this, so it is important that EWO access is based on the new services. Transformation of all schools to the new services is scheduled to be completed by September 2014 and the Department has been informed that a pilot can only be taken forward after transformation is complete.

C2k propose to conduct the pilot from September 2014 to December 2014.

World War I: Schools Commemoration

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education, following the Prime Minister's announcement that all secondary schools in England would receive support to ensure that children and a teacher could go to battlefield sites to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the First World War, what plans are in place for schools here to do likewise.
(AQW 34361/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department delegates as much funding and decision-making as possible to schools which are best placed to assess the needs of their pupils and we take the view that it is very much a matter for schools themselves to reach a judgement on programmes or visits they wish to participate in to enhance their teaching and learning.

I therefore have no plans to assist post-primary schools that wish to visit First World War battlefields to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the First World War – such a decision will be a matter for each school.

Department for Employment and Learning

Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he is aware of the work of the not-for-profit organisation Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina who are creating employment opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum; and if he intends to bring forward a similar scheme to help local people who suffer from this disorder to find employment.
(AQW 33777/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department was not aware of Extraordinary Ventures until now. It is worth noting that there are a number of similar employment operations being delivered throughout Northern Ireland, primarily through the social enterprise business model. Indeed, my Department, through the European Social Fund and the Disability Employment Service is directly supporting some of these schemes. Specifically, there are social enterprise businesses in operation that are providing services and products such as; catering and hospitality, arts and crafts, business

administration support, as well as a very successful bottle sorting operation in Belfast. The common factor amongst all these social enterprise organisations is that they are directly employing people with disabilities, and specifically people with learning difficulties and those on the autism spectrum.

The Department for Employment and Learning is delighted to support such initiatives and will continue to encourage similar models of best practice.

The Department's Disability Employment Service has extensive experience of working in partnership with a number of local organisations engaged in training adults with developmental disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum and helping them move into and retain employment. Examples of effective partnership projects include; the design and publication of an employer booklet with The National Autistic Society; work with Queens University Autism Research and Treatment Centre, (QUART) to evaluate the Orchardville and NOW Project Able programme; developing referral and signposting partnerships with Specialisterne, a new Community Interest Company dedicated to providing IT job opportunities for people on the autistic spectrum; and working with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to establish an Adult Autism Advisory Service in the Northern Trust Region.

During the past two years, staff from the Disability Employment Service have worked very closely with local disability organisations and a number of employers to secure ring-fenced recruitment and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This initiative resulted in a considerable number of successful job outcomes for the target applicant group, including people with autism or Asperger's syndrome. It is critical that the Department, in conjunction with its partner organisations, tries to maximise the breadth of employment opportunities available to people with disabilities, and the ultimate aim is to help those who are capable of doing so, to secure employment in the open labour market where they become a valued member of a fully inclusive and diverse workforce.

Finally, the department's Occupational Psychology Service is currently working with colleagues from Analytical Services to examine research literature and rehabilitation projects on an international basis. This will provide greater opportunity to identify initiatives such as Extraordinary Ventures that may inform the service delivery landscape of the future.

Hospitality: DEL

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 33831/11-15)

Dr Farry: The total cost of hospitality provided by the Department in 2013/14 was £44,009. The total cost of hospitality provided by the Department's arm's-length bodies in 2013/14 was £155,257.

Voting

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions his Department has had with the Electoral Commission in relation to educating college students on the importance of voting.

(AQW 33847/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has not had any discussions with the Electoral Commission in relation to educating college students on the importance of voting. However, Colleges NI, the membership body for the further education colleges in Northern Ireland, has had contact with the Electoral Office for NI over the years. In this respect, they have provided contact details for each of the six colleges. Subsequently, staff from the Electoral Office have attended 'fresher'/open days at the colleges to promote their role and to educate students. As part of their student services, all colleges offer information on topics which are considered beneficial to students.

This year, one of the principal aims of the Electoral Commission's Communications Policy in Northern Ireland was to increase the number of eligible people registered to vote and to provide information on upcoming elections.

It is a matter for individual colleges how they organise these contacts, for example, South Eastern Regional College's (SERC) Student Union held Voter Registration Days during Refreshers Week in February this year, in line with the NUS-USI campaign. SERC invited Electoral Office staff into each campus where students could register to vote, and electoral officers also informed students of the benefits and importance of voting. I understand there was a very positive uptake at these events.

In addition, the Electoral Office for NI has accessed contact information on full-time students in the colleges and has used this to write to students to encourage them to register to vote.

Disabled Students' Allowance: Review

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there will be any changes to the support provided for students with a disability following a decision by his Great Britain counterpart to undertake a review of the Disabled Students' Allowance.

(AQW 33951/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have no current plans to undertake a review or change the student financial support offered to Northern Ireland domiciled students applying for, or in receipt of, Disabled Students' Allowances.

I can further advise that my Department will offer the following Disabled Students' Allowance support package for academic year 2014/15: A specialist equipment allowance of up to £5,266 for the whole course; a non-medical helper's allowance of up to £20,938 per year; a general allowance of up to £1,759 per year to help towards other disability related spending such as printer cartridges and Braille paper; and, any extra travel costs the student may have to pay to attend University or College because of their disability.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress he has made regarding the development of a new build for the Belfast Metropolitan College campus on Montgomery Road, Belfast.

(AQW 33979/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have met with the Senior Management team from Belfast Metropolitan College and I am aware that they have plans for the Castlereagh campus on Montgomery Road. Approval has been granted to the College to prepare a Strategic Outline Case (SOC). This will provide a high level analysis of the plans and supply initial estimates of capital costs. The college has advised that the SOC is expected to be submitted to my Department by the end of June 2014.

Until the Strategic Outline Case is received and assessed, I am unable to provide further information.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 33988/11-15)

Dr Farry: The number of Freedom of Information requests received by the Department in each of the last three financial years is set out in the table below. One request was considered under the Environmental Information Regulations, but not under Regulation 12.

Year	Number of Requests Received	Number of Requests Considered Under EIRs
2011/12	188	0
2012/13	132	1
2013/14	129	0

The statistical information concerning requests dealt with under Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations is combined within a series of published Freedom of Information Annual Reports; these are on the basis of calendar years rather than 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 statistics for 2013 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be regarded as validated until the publication of the 2013 FOI Annual Report.

National Minimum Wage

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that workers are not paid less than the minimum wage.

(AQW 34013/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department does not have specific policy responsibility in relation to the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The enforcement of breaches of NMW legislation is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) who carry out this function on behalf of the Great Britain Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. HMRC's remit extends to Northern Ireland in this respect.

The Department's Employment Agency Inspectorate, which enforces the regulations governing the private recruitment sector, does however liaise with HMRC colleagues in instances where there are concerns about agency workers who may not be receiving NMW.

Marine Environment: Welders

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he is taking to provide training to address the need to upskill individuals who may secure jobs as welders through short term marine contracts.

(AQW 34218/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department is currently working with Harland and Wolff and Belfast Metropolitan College to address the need for highly skilled welders in the marine environment. Based on the academy model, which has been successfully used to

meet demand for skills in the ICT sector, this pilot exercise will provide the opportunity for unemployed people with relevant background skill sets and aptitude to enhance those skills to meet the specific needs of Harland and Wolff. These specialist welding skills can also have application to the broader advanced engineering sector.

Harland and Wolff has a crucial role to play in articulating the high-specification skills required if the individuals are to get the training they will need to operate effectively. Belfast Metropolitan College has both the expertise and facilities to provide that training. It is also hoped that the training can include experience of the type of practical working environment trainees would find in employment, rather than being purely workshop based.

Work on the project is at an early stage and issues such as initial numbers to be trained and timescale remain to be addressed, but all parties involved believe this is an excellent opportunity to address skills shortages in this specialism.
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Employment and Regeneration: Strabane

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the type of business and industry that will create employment and regenerate Strabane, given the areas historic reliance on the textile industry.
(AQW 33821/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Invest NI has identified food & drink, tourism, ICT & electronics, financial services, life sciences, materials handling and aerospace as sectors in which Northern Ireland has existing capability. Sectors in which Northern Ireland has the potential to develop are creative industries, renewable and sustainable development.

Invest NI provides a wide range of advisory and financial support to help business grow. In the five year period 2008/09–2012/13 Invest NI made 284 offers of support totalling over £5million of assistance in Strabane District Council area. This contributed towards approximately £30million of investment, which promoted 481 new jobs in the Strabane District Council area. Almost 90% of these offers were made to locally-owned businesses, which accounted for 65% of the assistance offered in the area and 70% of the investment planned by these projects.

Invest NI's Jobs Fund has provided support to 21 businesses in the area, promoting 63 jobs (2011-2013) including a £2million investment by Frylite Limited which will bring a further 19 jobs to Strabane in the Food sector.

Invest NI works closely with Strabane Council to provide support in the area through a range of initiatives including the Local Economic Development measure. These include a suite of tailored mentoring support programmes to improve the capability of local businesses in the areas of Sales Growth, Financial Management and Procurement.

Support is also available through the Regional Start Initiative which is designed to support locally focussed entrepreneurs into self employment.

Invest NI also promotes Northern Ireland as an attractive and viable location for new inward investment opportunities. Key target sectors are ICT, business services, financial services and renewables. It also works with existing investors to grow and expand in Northern Ireland. A recent example of this is Allstate (a major US ICT company) which announced plans to create 650 new jobs across its three sites in Strabane, Londonderry and Belfast.

Textiles still has an important role to play in the area illustrated by the success of O'Neills which announced a £3million expansion project, with £322,000 support from Invest NI. As a result the company plans to create a further 61 jobs in the area.

Small Businesses: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether InvestNI have any plans to organise a conference to provide information on the grants available to small businesses in the North Down area.
(AQW 33822/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department and Invest NI provide information on grants available to small businesses in the North Down area on an ongoing basis and also offer a wide range of initiatives to provide support and guidance.

For example, the Regional Start Initiative is free to participants and offers the services of a business advisor to support the development of a business plan.

In addition, Invest NI's Business Support Team (contact 0800 181 4422) and www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk provide a valuable source of business information and signposting to relevant, specialist advice.

Moreover Invest NI is planning a series of pop up offices across Northern Ireland. These pop ups provide an opportunity for local businesses to avail of advice and guidance and to hear about the support Invest NI can offer. Dates and locations of the pop ups are to be confirmed.

Invest NI's Executive Director, Bill Scott, is due to meet the new Chief Executive for the North Down and Ards area in July and will discuss the potential to further address this issue with him.

Cross-border Initiatives

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the current cross-border initiatives aimed at boosting job creation in border towns such as Strabane.

(AQW 33857/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradelreland is responsible for cross border trade and business development, and it does this through a wide range of trade and innovation initiatives. It also supports companies in taking advantage of and making full use of cross border co-operative opportunities to improve capability and drive competitiveness, jobs and growth.

You will also be aware, from the recent adjournment debate on 3 June, about Invest NI and its role in providing a wide range of support to encourage investment in Strabane and the West Tyrone Constituency area. Invest NI continues to be proactive in its efforts to help local businesses develop and grow through important interventions and programmes such as, the Regional Start Initiative, the Boosting Business Programme and the Jobs Fund which helps to create jobs quickly.

As we await confirmation of Invest NI's 2013/14 figures, I can confirm that in Strabane alone, the Jobs Fund has promoted 91 jobs with 72 jobs created from its launch in 2011 to December, 2013. Other examples include O'Neill's International Sports Company Limited and Frylite Limited which are jointly expected to bring a combined 80 jobs to the area, are very welcome.

Invest NI also provide support to Strabane District Council with a range of new initiatives under the Local Economic Development measure, designed to improve the capability of local businesses.

Invest NI: Return Investment

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether InvestNI target companies, who have previously held contracts outside Northern Ireland, receive assistance to regain this business and return investment to Northern Ireland.

(AQW 33945/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI provides a wide range of assistance to help local businesses access international markets and secure sales outside Northern Ireland. It works with businesses at each stage of the exporting journey, offering a range of Trade Solutions. These solutions range from early-stage export skills development programmes and access to market intelligence, through to financial assistance toward overseas travel, exhibitions and Trade Missions, along with export-focused market visits. Also, assistance is available toward the costs of procuring legal advice and translation services. While we seek to meet the needs of any business targeting export sales, it is the company that will pursue specific contracts and sales opportunities. Invest NI does not get involved in specific contract negotiations.

Invest NI: Financial Assistance

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail all investment into the sandwich sector of the foodservice market by Invest NI, or any other source linked to her Department, in each month of the last three years, including the (i) amount invested; (ii) company name; and (iii) location.

(AQW 33946/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The below table details all assistance from Invest NI to companies related to the sandwich sector within the past three years:

Company Name	Invest NI Scheme/ Programme	Date of Offer	Total Investment	Location
Deli-Lites (Ireland) Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	25/11/2011	£117,120	Warrenpoint
Trevor Poole	Growth Accelerator Programme	24/01/2012	£55,460	Ballymoney
Around Noon Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	29/06/2012	£22,000	Newry
Deli-Lites (Ireland) Ltd	SFA Jobs Fund	29/06/2012	£352,000	Warrenpoint
Bite Snack Foods Ltd	Restructuring Support	18/09/2012	£125,000	Enniskillen
Woodwin (Catering) Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	15/02/2013	£95,572	Craigavon
Around Noon Ltd	Business Growth – Jobs Fund	16/12/2013	£198,000	Newry
Around Noon Ltd	SFA Jobs Fund	16/12/2013	£1,674,000	Newry
		Total	£2,639,152	

Invest NI: Religious Demographics

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 33774/11-15, of the countries that InvestNI enjoys productive and mutually beneficial relationships with, to detail those that are predominantly Muslim countries. (AQW 33980/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI is responsible for attracting high quality inward investment to Northern Ireland and developing export opportunities for Northern Ireland companies. Religious demographics are not a consideration for Invest NI's decision to explore business opportunities in a particular region or country.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests she has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 33991/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The details requested are as follows:

Financial Year	Number of Requests	Number of Requests considered under the Environmental Information Regulations
2011/12	128	14
2012/13	135	14
2013/14	159	22

The Member should note that the figures covering January 2013 to March 2014 cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2013 and 2014 FOI Annual Reports by OFMDFM.

FOI Annual Reports provide detailed information on the basis of calendar years and combine data on requests considered under FOI and the Environmental Information Regulations. 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

Electricity Prices

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that electricity users in Great Britain have the option to fix the price of electricity for a period of time, why NI Electricity companies are not allowed to offer the same arrangements to customers.

(AQW 33996/11-15)

Mrs Foster: This issue was raised with Power NI by the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee as part of its review of electricity policy and pricing. Power NI informed the Committee that as its licence conditions do not allow it to discriminate between customers it cannot promote a product that only a certain number of domestic customers might benefit from.

I am informed by the Utility Regulator that no other suppliers to domestic customers currently offer the option to fix prices for a longer period of time. Instead they map to the Power NI tariff or offer a discount off their own standard tariff. The Regulator has also advised that all of the suppliers may provide contract offers to business customers and large energy users, which may be fixed over a period of time. These contracts are on an individual customer by customer basis.

CHx Industrial LLC

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the issuing of an onshore petroleum licence to CHx Industrial LLC.

(AQW 34004/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Departmental officials are continuing to process an application for a Petroleum Licence from CHx Capital LLC.

Invest NI: Outreach Programmes

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the current Invest NI outreach programmes designed to ensure that small businesses are aware of available grants.

(AQW 34018/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI provides information on grants available to small businesses throughout Northern Ireland on an ongoing basis and also offers a wide range of initiatives to provide support and guidance.

For example, the Regional Start Initiative (RSI) is free to participants and offers the services of a business advisor to support the development of a business plan. In addition, Invest NI's Business Support Team (contact 0800 181 4422) and www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk provide a valuable source of business information and signposting to relevant, specialist advice.

www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk, a free service offered by Invest NI, is the official online channel for business support, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland. The website offers updates on funding opportunities, key events and contains essential information on support and services to help start, maintain or grow a business.

Moreover, Invest NI is running a series of pop up offices across Northern Ireland. These pop ups provide another opportunity for local businesses to avail of advice and guidance and to hear about the support Invest NI can offer. Dates and locations of all the pop ups are to be confirmed but some have already been held in Enniskillen, North Belfast and Limavady, with Newtownabbey taking place on the 24-26 June.

Tamboran Resources

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has received notification of an intention by Tamboran Resources to drill a borehole; and if so, to provide details of the notification.

(AQW 34065/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has not yet received an application for consent to drill a borehole from Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd. A stratigraphic borehole forms part of the agreed work programme for PL2/10.

Communities and Renewable Energy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, further to the report *Communities and Renewable Energy: A Study*, and the Department of Energy and Climate Change Community Energy Strategy, for an update and timeline on her Department's plans to formulate and consult on a draft action plan to support communities and renewable energy.

(AQW 34082/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since publication of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) Community Energy Strategy earlier this year, my officials have met with DECC and the Scottish Government in relation to their Community Energy plans and strategies.

This engagement has been very useful in identifying how some of the key issues, such as the development of a Community Benefits Register and best practice guidelines, have been taken forward in Great Britain. Community energy is a cross departmental matter and discussions are underway with relevant departments to develop a draft action plan for Northern Ireland.

Following engagement with community and industry stakeholders, it is envisaged that a draft action plan will issue for consultation in early 2015.

Business Start-up Programme

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she will consider providing a guide to service provision, similar to that produced by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with the Equality Commission, Racial Equality in Health and Social Care, for ethnic minority groups who access business startup programmes.

(AQW 34109/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI currently offers two publications that can assist individuals thinking of starting a business. These are the 'No Nonsense Guide' to starting a business and 'My New Business Pack'. These guides are available in a translated form upon request.

In line with commitment to equality of opportunity, Invest NI provides additional support to individuals who are considering starting their own business and do not speak English as their first language. This support takes the form of translation and interpretation services. An interpreter can attend business advice interviews with individuals on request. Invest NI also provides translated corporate literature where it is reasonable to do so.

Invest NI's Business Support Team provides information and support to all businesses across Northern Ireland, including start up businesses. The team provides signposting and advice to those wishing to avail of business support services delivered by Invest NI and other organisations.

The Business Support Team is complemented by online support through www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk.

Ethnic Minority Communities: Economic Mobility

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department is promoting economic mobility amongst ethnic minority communities.

(AQW 34110/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The challenge the Executive set out in the Economic Strategy is to support the rebalancing of the NI economy, through a focus on export-led economic growth, as the means to deliver higher levels of prosperity and employment for all, regardless of community background or ethnicity.

We are committed to implementing actions to support our business base to invest in research and development, embrace new processes and technologies, build the skills of their workforce and broaden their horizons by embracing global opportunities all across the world in both existing and emerging markets.

We are taking action to improve the essential skills and employability of the entire workforce to help people can have access to the right move into employment and also progress within the workplace.

Across the Executive our actions to grow the economy are guided by the cross-cutting principles of balanced sub-regional growth, equality and sustainability.

Regional Development: Working Paper 2013/20

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the actions and recommendations which will be identified for implementation from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Regional Development Working Paper 2013/20 The Case of Ireland; and (ii) whether she plans to table the report for discussion at the next North South Ministerial Council meeting.

(AQW 34114/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Please refer to my previous response to AQW 33390/11-15 on 28 May 2014.

Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether consideration has been given to making the wearing of hydrogen sulphide detectors a health and safety requirement for farmers working with or near slurry.

(AQW 34157/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) has given careful consideration to the potential for hydrogen sulphide gas monitors to be used on farms during slurry mixing operations.

HSENI has consulted regarding the possible use of gas monitors on farms with other organisations including the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Ulster Farmers' Union and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Hand held hydrogen sulphide gas monitors are readily available and can, if properly maintained and calibrated, provide an additional safety precaution for farmers working with slurry. However, the measurement range for many hydrogen sulphide monitors is 0 – 100 ppm and during slurry mixing operations readings of over 500 ppm of hydrogen sulphide are common in livestock houses within minutes of mixing commencing. Levels of hydrogen sulphide in excess of 100 ppm may saturate the gas sensor and will result in the monitor having to be replaced. In addition the majority of monitors require regular calibration by the manufacturer (potentially every 6 months) and the first and second alarms on many detectors are set to go off between 5 – 30 ppm of hydrogen sulphide. Thus most personal alarms will sound almost immediately mixing commences.

Due to the reasons outlined above, HSENI is of the opinion that monitors can only ever be a back-up to a safe system of work, not a substitute. Therefore, HSENI encourages all farmers to develop and follow a safe system of work before even considering the purchase of monitors.

The Farm Safety Partnership recommends that any person mixing slurry should follow the following safe system of work:

Safe system of work for mixing slurry

The safe system of work is based on many years experience of working with farmers. The key points are:

- 1 If possible, mix on a windy day.
- 2 Keep children away from the area at all times when working with slurry.
- 3 Take all animals out of the building before starting to mix slurry.
- 4 Open all doors and windows.
- 5 Use outside mixing points first.
- 6 If slats are removed, cover exposed areas of the tank beside the pump/mixer to stop someone falling in.
- 7 Start the pump/mixer and then stay out of the building for as long as possible - at least 30 minutes or longer depending on the size of the tank.
- 8 If you have to go into the building make sure that another adult, who knows what you are doing, stays outside the building and can get help if needed.
- 9 If you have to re-enter the house to move the pump, or change the direction of the pump, then you need to leave the building as soon as this is done. Do not go back in for as long as possible - at least another 30 minutes or longer depending on the size of the tank.
10. Avoid naked flames, as slurry gas mixture is flammable.
11. Do not stand close to the pump/exhaust of a vacuum tanker when it is being filled.

Renewable Energy

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the proportion of energy production from each renewable source, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34166/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Table 1 details the proportion of electricity exported to the grid by renewable technology in the period 2009/10 to 2013/14. Data on renewable electricity consumed on site is not captured.

Table 1 – Proportion of energy from each renewable source in megawatt hours from 2009/10 to 2013/14

Technology	Proportion of energy from each renewable source by year in megawatt hours (MWh)*				
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Biogas	0	0	629	6,064	19,741
Biomass	0	59	99	5,051	10,742
Combined Heat & Power (CHP)	318	1,414	2,217	2,928	2,460
Hydro	9,058	7,668	7,673	9,478	9,498
Landfill Gas	34,884	59,533	57,674	57,394	57,023
Onshore Wind	709,760	675,394	1,094,209	1,026,321	1,493,377
Solar PV	5	13	15	12	28
Tidal Flow	841	1,380	1,048	3,567	2,182
Totals	754,866	745,461	1,163,564	1,110,815	1,595,051

* Data provided by Northern Ireland Electricity

Broadband Services

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) why the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment to deliver broadband services of 2mpbs to 100 per cent of premises by 31 March 2015 will not be reached; (ii) the areas that will not be served by at least 2mbps broadband; and (iii) the percentage of premises that will be covered.

(AQW 34212/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The DETI Corporate Plan has a target of 'services of at least 2 Megabits per second (Mbps) to 100% of premises by 31 March 2015'.

The position is, currently all premises in Northern Ireland have access to a broadband service of 2Mbps and more delivered via a mix of technology options including fixed line, fixed wireless, satellite and mobile.

In its 2013 infrastructure report Ofcom reported that in June 2013, 88% of fixed line broadband connections in Northern Ireland were achieving speeds of 2Mbps or more.

In February 2014 my Department signed a contract with BT for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project (NIBIP) the aim of which is to increase the percentage of premises that can access fixed-line broadband services of 2Mbps and extend the coverage of fixed-line superfast broadband services of 24 Mbps or more.

It is anticipated that the project, which is due to complete by end December 2015, will impact on at least 45,000 premises across Northern Ireland. The deployment of services will be determined by the use of an engineering model which takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc. This methodology seeks to achieve the greatest value for money and the highest number of beneficiaries. This model has already been used by BT across the UK and is accepted as a credible and practical methodology. Until this process has been completed it will not be possible to be precise as to which areas are to benefit.

Border Region: Economic Development

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the key steps required to align border region economic development and wider economic strategies to ensure maximum return to the local economy.

(AQO 6356/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Executive's Economic Strategy identifies export led economic growth as the means to deliver the rebalancing of the economy and higher levels of prosperity and employment for all. The strategy prioritises innovation, R&D, skills development and infrastructure investment as the drivers of future growth.

It is important that all new councils across Northern Ireland, when considering their economic priorities, align these to those identified within the Executive's Economic Strategy. DETI, Invest NI and IntertradeIreland will engage with the new councils

and other stakeholders, through the community planning process, to ensure a joined-up approach that provides maximum return for the local economy.

Mackies: Site Development

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the development of the former Mackies site on the Springfield Road, Belfast.

(AQO 6357/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's landholding at Forthriver Business Park totals some twenty three acres of which thirteen acres are available to support qualifying projects.

Invest NI is currently working with Belfast City Council over the sale of a two acre serviced site within the Park to support the development of their proposed Innovation Centre.

Forthriver Business Park will continue to be proactively marketed by Invest NI to potential investors, both indigenous and foreign direct. However, the final decision on investment location rests solely with the investor.

Broadband: Business Premises

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance is available to businesses seeking to upgrade broadband speed at their premises.

(AQO 6358/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Belfast and Derry City Councils are currently participating in the UK 'Super Connected Cities Programme'. This programme, which is administered by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, provides vouchers of up to three thousand pounds each, to help small and medium sized enterprises and third-sector organisations, to get connected to broadband, or to improve their current broadband connections.

The Belfast City Council Programme has recently been widened to cover the extended boundaries of Lisburn, Castlereagh and North Down. It is understood that Department of Culture Media Sport is currently considering extending the Programme to other cities across the UK but no further details are available at present.

DETI is also currently involved in implementing a number of projects, aimed at extending the reach of Superfast broadband services across Northern Ireland. The latest of these, the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project will improve broadband access for a further forty five thousand, premises, both domestic and business, across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015

R&D: Economic Benefits

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the value of research and development projects to the local economy.

(AQO 6359/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Business Expenditure on R&D is important as it leads to new innovative products and processes, increases in productivity and sustainable export growth.

Economic Benefits also spill over in to the local economy with collaboration with the local universities, increased skills and the development of industry clusters

Over the last five years (2007-2012) total R&D spending in real terms in NI has risen by 57%. Most encouragingly Business R&D expenditure rose by 120% between 2007 and 2012 in real terms.

We are determined to build on this progress through the Executive's forthcoming Innovation Strategy, which is led by DETI, but also recognizes the role of the wider public sector in driving Innovation in the economy.

3G Mobile Network: East Londonderry

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the action taken by her Department to improve 3G mobile network services in rural areas and smaller towns, such as those in the East Londonderry Constituency.

(AQO 6360/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The telecommunications market is fully privatised and independently regulated. Operators make network investments on the basis of commercial return.

The UK's four main mobile network operators are currently investing significantly to improve their 2G and 3G networks. Ofcom's latest infrastructure report would indicate that between June 2012 and June 2013 Northern Ireland has seen the biggest improvement in reducing 3G not-spots of any UK nation, dropping by some nine point one percent.

For those areas that are not currently being addressed by market forces the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has launched the one hundred and fifty million pounds Mobile Infrastructure project which aims to address mobile voice and basic data not-spots across the UK by March 2015. While the project is focused on 2G technology, it is understood that opportunities will be taken to upgrade to 3G where possible. Northern Ireland is in line for nineteen percent of the sites to

be deployed under this project despite representing just three percent of the UK population. Three of the sites identified are located in the East Londonderry Constituency.

DETI is maintaining a watching brief on these ongoing initiatives and will assess the need for further government intervention once they have completed.

Tourism: Giro d'Italia

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what her Department is doing to capitalise on the tourism potential following the Giro d'Italia.

(AQO 6361/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The highly anticipated 'Grande Partenza' of the Giro d'Italia was a tremendous success – showcasing our spectacular scenery to a potential seven hundred and seventy five million viewers in one hundred and sixty four countries across the world.

NITB and Tourism Ireland will continue to capitalise on the success of this event by highlighting Northern Ireland as a top cycling and outdoor activities destination in both their promotional activity and by Tourism Ireland at events linked to the Giro such as the Gran Fondo in Italy in 2014; and at other international cycling events and outdoor activity shows.

NITB is working closely with RCS, owners of the Giro, in terms of delivering a Giro Sportive currently known as Gran Fondo to Northern Ireland from 2015 onwards and it is hoped that Minister Foster will be in a position to provide an update on this shortly.

Tourism: Commonwealth Games

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps Tourism Ireland have taken to promote Northern Ireland as an additional tourist destination during the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

(AQO 6362/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow offer the opportunity to highlight Northern Ireland to local and visiting international media and participants alike.

Tourism Ireland has developed a programme of promotional initiatives, which include;

Working with the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Committee to secure access to Northern Irish athletes for a promotional campaign to generate positive publicity for Northern Ireland.

Promoting Northern Ireland in a series of ads in the Opening Ceremony and Preview Guide using the tagline "Northern Ireland is right on your doorstep" and featuring iconic Northern Irish landscapes and attractions such as Titanic Belfast, the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, The Giant's Causeway and Dark Hedges.

In cooperation with Northern Ireland Connections, using leading Northern Irish sporting icons to host business leaders and highlight Northern Ireland as a great place to do business;

Providing an international media information pack including USB devices featuring information and stories about Northern Ireland as a holiday destination and sample Northern Ireland touring itineraries.

Cross-border Trade

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the importance of cross border trade to the local economy, for an update on the research undertaken by both her Department and the Centre for Economic Policy on the cost of cross border business.

(AQO 6363/11-15)

Mrs Foster: To clarify, this study is not focused on the cost of cross border business.

Research is being undertaken to identify which costs represent the greatest burden to local businesses and benchmark these against elsewhere in the UK and other relevant comparators, including the Republic of Ireland.

Work is ongoing with a business survey having been completed and a review of local costs underway. DETI will publish initial results later this year, with the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy providing additional policy advice in this area.

Electricity: ROC Support

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether changes in Renewables Obligation Certificate support will apply retrospectively to renewable electricity generation projects which were in the planning process before her statement to the Assembly on 19 May 2014.

(AQO 6364/11-15)

Mrs Foster: No. Amended Renewables Obligation Certificate levels apply to ground mounted solar photovoltaic generating stations with an installed capacity above 250 kilowatts which are accredited under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation from 1 June 2014. A generating station cannot apply for accreditation until after it has obtained planning permission. The date of full accreditation will determine the ROC banding level that will apply.

Disposable Income

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the most recent statistics published by the Office of National Statistics showing that the average local disposable income is lower than in Britain. (AQO 6365/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Northern Ireland has historically had lower household income per head than elsewhere in the UK, and these new statistics highlight that this continues to be the case.

Although some progress in closing this gap was made up to 2007, the severe impact of the recession on the local economy has led to this widening again in recent years even though local household income has been rising.

The Economic Strategy clearly outlines an aim to improve the wealth and living standards of everyone. This is not just about creating well paid jobs, which Invest NI works to deliver on, but also requires the Executive to address a range of wider socio-economic issues facing households.

Events

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the success of recent major events, to outline any other events scheduled to take place in the next 12 months. (AQO 6366/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The following International Tourism Events are scheduled to take place in 2014/15:

- The Foyle International Maritime Festival including the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race in June;
- The Dale Farm Milk Cup in July & August;
- The Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival in July & August;
- The West Belfast Festival in August;
- The International Ulster Grand Prix in August;
- The Northern Ireland Open Challenge in August;
- The MAC International in October; and
- The Belfast Festival at Queen's in October and November 2014.

As well as this range of International Events Northern Ireland has also secured two major events for 2015 including The Irish Open at Royal County Down in May 2015 and The Tall Ships returning to Belfast in July 2015.

Mobile Infrastructure Project

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the roll out of the Mobile Infrastructure Project in conjunction with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (AQO 6367/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The contract for the Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) is being fully administered, resourced and managed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. DETI therefore has no direct involvement in its implementation.

DCMS does however keep DETI informed of progress under the terms of the Economic Pact between the UK Government and the NI Executive. Work is progressing although there have been challenges around planning policy at District Council level and technical issues related to transmission links between the MIP sites and the existing mobile networks.

Indications are that the first MIP site in Northern Ireland will 'go live' in the Autumn.

Department of the Environment

Lough Neagh: Unauthorised Sand Extraction

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32086/11-15, whether his Department has granted any planning permissions for any onshore operations associated with the unauthorised mineral extraction of sand from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area. (AQW 33055/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): My Department has granted a number of onshore planning permissions associated with sand extraction from Lough Neagh.

The permissions include plant, stockpiles, buildings, car parks, settlement ponds and weighbridges. The permissions (nine in total) date from 1982 until 2005 and relate to four sites. Please refer to Table 1 for details of permissions granted.

Table 1 – Lough Neagh Sand Extraction Permissions

Ref.	Grid Reference	Planning Ref	Approved Development	Approval Date
01	296461 389897	H/1985/0512/F	Portable Power Screen	6th June 1989
		H/1986/0083/F	Extraction of Sand	24th May 1989
02	297794 390297	H/2004/1188/F	Retrospective application for retention of Sand & Gravel stockpiles & processing plant to include office, weighbridge, aggregate bays, generator house, canteen/toilets, workshop, garage, bagging shed, fuel tanks, oil storage, static screener, sub station, de watering plants, static reclaim cranes, settlement pond, store & car park (staff)	11th March 2005
		H/1997/0419/F	Addition of 1 no sand screening processing machine to existing business	19th June 1998
03	311808 371287	S/1998/0055/F	Reclamation of Lough Neagh Shore to accommodate relocation of plant and stockpiled sand & gravel, erection of offices, weighbridge and stores and creation of new access	9th July 1998
		S/1992/0067/F	Extension of Plant lands to provide for relocation of Plant and relocation of entrance	15th September 1992
		S/1981/0880/F	Sand classifying plant, canteen and offices	5th March 1982
		S/1999/0378/F	Building for bagging and storing sand and associated materials	15th May 2000
04	307674 363731	N/2000/0161/F	Retain plant for processing sand	20th February 2001

Ballinlea: Drilling

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether the recent environmental information submitted by the applicant on the project to carry out exploratory drilling at Ballinlea, County Antrim (E/2013/0093/F) now confirms an intent to undertake hydraulic fracturing; and whether he will seek clarification from the applicant why this information was originally withheld from his Department and local residents.

(AQW 33056/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Planning application E/2013/0093/F seeks permission for the temporary works of drilling an exploratory borehole to approx 2700m depth to investigate underground strata for hydrocarbon exploration under DETI license PL3/10 issued to Rathlin Energy Ltd. The application also includes road widening of the Kilmahamogue Road and ancillary site works.

The application does not propose high volume unconventional hydraulic fracturing. However at the extended testing phase, should the operator have difficulty obtaining the natural flow of the gas/oil, a conventional hydraulic stimulation fracture may need to be conducted.

A conventional hydraulic stimulated fracture is different from the unconventional hydraulic fracturing currently being considered as a means of shale extraction in the Lough Allen Basin. It has been common practice in the industry over many years and was not controversial prior to the horizontal fracking debate.

A shale gas fracking operation is multiple fracking zones over a significant length through a horizontal section in the shale requiring a significant amount of equipment, water and high pressure.

The conventional hydraulic stimulation would only be carried out if the oil or gas production rate was poor during previous flow tests.

A stimulation test would likely be done over a small interval circa 2365m to 2480m depth which is the prognosed depth of the lower carboniferous sandstone.

The volumes of fluid likely to be used (115 cubic metres) are significantly lower than those specified by the European Commission in their definition of High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (1000 cubic metres per stage or 10,000 cubic metres per well) to which the recent recommendation paper on the 'Exploration and production of hydrocarbons (such as shale gas) using high volume hydraulic fracturing in the EU' (Jan 2014) applies.

Following a review of this aspect of the scheme and discussions with DETI, DOE Planning Officials are content that this development constitutes a conventional borehole and is not for the unconventional exploration of hydrocarbons, neither does it propose to use any unconventional testing techniques.

Following a review of the application and a subsequent meeting with the company and agent held on 4 September 2013, it became apparent that further information was required to accompany the application. Information concerning the extended testing phase of the application has been readily provided by the agent at the request of the Department. It is not uncommon for the Department to seek additional clarification to assist the determination of any planning application.

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.

Moorland: Definition

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment to detail his Department's definition of moorland.
(AQW 33230/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Moorland is not a recognised technical term with environmental legislation. It is though often used to refer to unenclosed land in the uplands that includes a range of different habitat types.

When describing upland habitats, Departmental officials use the terminology set out in either Biodiversity Priority Habitats or Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats.

North Western River Basin Management Plan

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33555/11-15, whether the North Western River Basin Management Plan will include measures to protect and enhance the numbers of eel, salmon and sea trout.
(AQW 33855/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The North Western River Basin Management Plan which covers the period 2009-2015, was published in December 2009 to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). A Programme of Measures was published as part of the Plan setting out the actions required to meet the objectives to improve the status of all water bodies. The Programme includes measures to protect and enhance fisheries (eels, salmon and sea trout).

Fisheries has been identified as a Significant Water Management Issue (www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/swmi.htm). The Department of the Environment is working closely with Fisheries Agencies (DCAL and Loughs Agency) to monitor and assess fish populations for WFD classification reporting in 2015.

The DOE will publish a draft North Western River Basin Management Plan for the second cycle for consultation by 22 December 2014. The North Western River Basin Management Plan will then be published by 22 December 2015.

There is already positive work happening on the ground and we are moving in the right direction but it is still clear to me that we need to do more. Healthy numbers of eels, salmon and sea trout will boost recreation and tourism, help to create a better environment and a stronger economy. As such, I have directed my officials to ensure that updated measures to protect and enhance fisheries will be included in the second cycle North Western River Basin Management Plan.

Planning: Response Rates

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33617/11-15, for those applications not responded to in time in 2012/13 and 2013/14, to list the total number of days it took to respond in each case; and what steps are being taken to improve these response rates.
(AQW 33861/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The total number of days it took to respond to the overdue cases is detailed in the attached tables. As can be seen, the majority of cases returned outside of the 15-day target fall into the '1-5 days overdue' category in each year.

As I have already indicated the Historic Buildings Unit of NIEA has consistently exceeded its published target for the return of planning applications relating to listed buildings. Performance is regularly and routinely reviewed. I have directed the NIEA Chief Executive to further improve the planning consultee performance of all parts of the Agency as part of my programme of planning reform.

2012/2013 Overdue Planning Responses

Days Overdue	No. of Overdue Responses	Percentage %
1-5	85	38.64
6-10	44	20.0
11-15	31	14.09
16-20	10	4.54
21-25	7	3.18
26-30	8	3.64
31-35	9	4.09

Days Overdue	No. of Overdue Responses	Percentage %
36-40	2	0.91
41-45	0	-
46-50	2	0.91
51-55	0	-
56-60	1	0.45
61-65	3	1.36
66-70	1	0.45
71-75	1	0.45
76-200	12	5.45
	Total = 216	98.18

There were 4 responses which actually issued on time, but due to an administrative error – whereby the wrong date was put into the 'Issue Date' box, are recorded as being issued late when in fact they were issued on time; this cannot now be amended on the IT system and accounts for the remaining 1.82%

Total Overdue Planning Applications = 220

2013/2014 Overdue Planning Responses

Days Overdue	No. of Overdue Responses	Percentage %
1-5	92	30.26
6-10	43	14.14
11-15	52	17.10
16-20	23	7.57
21-25	12	3.95
26-30	18	5.92
31-35	8	2.63
36-40	3	0.99
41-45	8	2.63
46-50	9	2.96
51-55	3	0.99
56-60	3	0.99
61-65	2	0.66
66-70	3	0.99
71-75	-	-
76-80	5	1.64
81-200	13	4.27
	Total = 297	97.69

There was 1 response which actually issued on time, but due to an administrative error – whereby the wrong date was put into the 'Issue Date' box, this is recorded as being issued late when in fact it was issued on time; this accounts for remaining 0.33% of the total

6 overdue Planning Applications have not yet been responded to - this equates to 1.98%. These are currently being addressed.

Total Overdue Planning Applications = 304**Dumping Sites: Illegal**

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the action taken to tackle illegal dumping sites.
(AQW 33893/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Tackling illegal dumping, and the organised criminality associated with it, is one of my Department's key priorities.

NIEA, assisted by the PSNI, is continuing its actions against illegal dumping through 'Operation Toothfish', a major push against those undermining our environment and our economy through large scale environmental offending. Under Operation Toothfish there are currently 31 ongoing investigations, involving 37 locations – most of these focus on illegal waste management.

I have demonstrated my commitment to making the changes needed to drive our action forward. Through the recommendations of the Mills Report and the NIEA steering group progressing them, my Department is in the process of making significant improvements to the overall design and implementation of Northern Ireland's waste regulation system.

A new Resource Efficiency Division has been created to bring together the various regulatory and enforcement teams in NIEA. This will enhance communication and the sharing of information about potential illegal dumping, particularly in the waste industry.

Within this Division, my officials will continue to work closely with colleagues in other enforcement agencies especially developing a new partnership approach with local councils on the overall management of waste. On the enforcement side, there is a Strategic Partnership with the PSNI for joint work on the prevention of illegal dumping.

Explosives: Storage

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) why his Department approved the location of the explosives store associated with planning approval K/2013/0072/F; (ii) whether his Department was in possession of the full details of the store prior to approval; and (iii) the advice he has received from Planning Service as to why the explosives store was approved without the required information.
(AQW 33952/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department approved the explosives store location as was shown by the applicant on their Site Layout drawing and annotated 'Proposed temporary surface explosives store', having considered the entire proposal against the relevant policies.

The building may only be used for the storage of explosives once a licence has been given by the DOJ under the Management and Storage of Explosives (NI) Regulations 2006, subject to the facility satisfying an explosives inspector from Health and Safety (GB) and meeting security requirements set out by PSNI. Final details of the building must satisfy the stringent requirements of the above named Regulations. Certification cannot be given by the DOJ until after construction is complete as it requires a physical inspection to take place by both HSE (GB) and PSNI. It is understood that this process remains ongoing with DOJ.

Explosives: Store Relocation

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of Dalradian Gold Mining Company's 'minor amendment' to relocate an explosives store, which was not approved under the original planning application K/2011/0072/F.
(AQW 33953/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Planning permission K/2013/0072/F includes provision for a temporary explosives store building. The minor amendment for the relocation of this store is currently under consideration.

Retrofitting

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to encouraging the retrofitting of older diesel powered vehicles and construction machinery with diesel particulate filters.
(AQW 33959/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Given the younger age of the vehicle fleet in Northern Ireland compared to Britain, and the levels of particulate matter monitored and reported here compared to other parts of the UK, I have no plans at this time to take specific steps to encourage the retrofitting of older diesel powered vehicles and construction machinery with particulate filters. DVA testing centres check the presence of a particulate filter during annual roadworthiness (MOT) tests. If a filter was originally fitted to a vehicle and has subsequently been removed, this is a reason for test failure.

Driver and Vehicle Agency

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33644/11-15 and AQW 33445/11-15, whether he will undertake to advise Driver and Vehicle Agency officials of this response and have them formally correct their previous statement regarding this matter, made to the Committee for the Environment on 12 December 2013.

(AQW 33970/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials are aware of the responses to both AQW 33644/11-15 and AQW 33445/11-15. My officials, in their 12 December 2013 appearance at the Environment Committee, mentioned a figure in relation to drive offs in the area outside Belfast City Hall that was provided by officials from the Department for Regional Development, as was acknowledged in the Minister for Regional Development's response to AQW 33656/11-15. I therefore do not share the member's view that any correction or other action is required.

River Faughan: Hydroelectric Scheme

Mr McCartney asked Minister of the Environment whether the processing of planning application A/2011/0246/F for a hydroelectric scheme on the River Faughan Special Area of Conservation has been suspended pending the outcome of the investigation into the unauthorised in-river works carried out by the applicant at the site of the proposed weir.

(AQW 33977/11-15)

Mr Durkan: On 8 March 2013 the Department was made aware of alleged works being undertaken at the site. This information was forwarded to the Planning Enforcement Team and an enforcement file was opened. The matter is under investigation and consideration will be given to any further enforcement action.

To date no recommendation has been made on the above planning application. On 12 February 2014 the Department wrote to the applicant highlighting that serious issues exist relating to the proposal and outlined that it will proceed to make a decision based on the current information in the near future.

River Faughan: Special Area of Conservation

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment whether any of the planning applications for hydroelectric schemes affecting the River Faughan Special Area of Conservation, A/2011/0219/F, A/2011/0237/F, A/2011/0242/F and A/2011/0246/F, propose development located outside of the red lines of the application sites; and whether this is acceptable under planning law.

(AQW 33978/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In the submission of any application all proposed works must fall within the red line of the application site boundary unless those works do not require planning permission by virtue of permitted development or not constituting development. Potential impacts of development within and beyond the application site are material considerations in determining an application.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 33990/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department receives requests for information the majority of which are handled under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004. The table below shows the total number received, those handled under EIR and the number of cases where Regulation 12 has been engaged.

Financial Year	Total Requests Received	Requests considered under EIR	Requests where Regulation 12 of EIR was applied
2011/2012	431	274	125
2012/2013	497	318	159
2013/2014	539	351	177

It should be noted that more than one exception may be applied to one request.

Information regarding requests under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations is collected and published on a calendar year basis by OFMDFM for all departments. Annual Reports for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 which contain statistical data concerning requests dealt with under both legislative regimes 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 2013 are provided on a quarterly basis but should not be regarded as final until the publication of the 2013 FOI Annual Report.

Gas Flares

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what his Department regards as best practice regulation of flaring.
(AQW 34003/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Gas flares are currently regulated under Waste Management Licences and Pollution Prevention Control Permits. When regulating these installations inspectors apply the requirements set out in the following Environment Agency Guidance

Notes:

- EA Guidance LFTGN 03 Guidance on the Management of Landfill Gas
- EA Guidance on Landfill Gas Flaring
- EA LFTGN 05 Guidance for Monitoring enclosed Landfill Gas Flares when regulating Landfill Gas Flares.

Planning: CTY 10

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the recent Judicial Review (Lamont [2014] NIQB 3) which quashed a decision by the Planning Service to grant planning permission for the building of an additional dwelling on a farm, whether he has asked Divisional offices to hold certain CTY 10 applications until he has reviewed the relevant policy; and if so, how long these applications are likely to be held.
(AQW 34036/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There were a number of factors associated with rural planning policy which resulted in me asking officials to hold certain planning applications in relation to CTY 10. This has allowed me to fully consider the issues involved.

Following the judgment of the judicial review to which you refer, officials have withdrawn internal guidance which had previously issued on CTY 10 regarding applications where there were no buildings on the farm.

I have also had time to consider some other operational issues in relation to policy CTY10 and am content that all planning applications which have been held, by previous instruction, can now be processed to decision.

Committee for the Environment

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33656/11-15, whether his officials can propose legislative alteration or amendment to the Committee for the Environment, without presenting factual evidence and using an estimate which provides no tangible proof; and whether he will conduct a review into the manner in which his officials based this issue and brought it to committee.
(AQW 34047/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The estimate which was provided by my officials, when appearing at the Environment Committee meeting on 12 December 2013, was used to provide context to a discussion around the enforcement challenges facing both DOE and DRD enforcement officers in respect of parking non-compliance at ranks in Belfast City Centre.

My Department is not planning to bring legislation before the Committee based on the estimate; therefore I do not believe that it is necessary to review this matter further.

Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how many Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates were granted by his Department in association with minerals extraction operations which did not have planning permission.
(AQW 34367/11-15)

Mr Durkan: An ALCS Certificate was only granted under the Scheme once the criteria, as set out in the ALCS Code of Practice, had been applied. These required the Department to be satisfied that the operation was complying with the regulatory framework, e.g. relevant planning conditions, environmental authorisations, etc.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Interest Rates

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department, or any of its arm's-length bodies, have carried out research or analysis on the impact that potential interest rate rises will have on households, especially those in housing negative equity.
(AQW 33716/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Neither my Department, nor any of its arm's length bodies, have carried out research or analysis on the impact that potential interest rate rises will have on households.

Public Expenditure

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much of the total expenditure calculated through Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses and presented in the departmental Net Fiscal Balance Report as non-identifiable expenditure was committed to nuclear defence programmes for the most recent five consecutive years for which data is available.

(AQW 33746/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Expenditure and Statistical Analyses (PESA) report does not provide a breakdown of defence expenditure committed to nuclear defence programmes.

Net Fiscal Balance Report

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the total revenue, as estimated in the Net Fiscal Balance Report, by capita for each of the most recent five years for which data is available; (ii) how the total revenue per capita compares with (a) Britain; (b) England; (c) Scotland; (d) Wales; and (e) the South of Ireland, during these years; (iii) the per capita figure for each revenue stream estimated in the Net Fiscal Balance report for the most recent five years for which data is available; and (iv) how these figures compare with (a) Britain; (b) England; (c) Scotland; (d) Wales; and (e) the South of Ireland, during these years.

(AQW 33752/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The table overleaf provides per capita estimates of the various revenue streams included within the 2011-12 Net Fiscal Balance Report.

My Department is not responsible for producing revenue estimates for Great Britain, England, Scotland, Wales or the Republic of Ireland.

	NI per capita revenue (£)				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Income Tax (net of tax credits)	1652	1548	1380	1441	1383
Corporation Tax (excluding NS revenues)	525	386	350	387	358
Capital Gains Tax	71	101	32	44	52
Inheritance Tax	29	24	18	22	16
Stamp Duties	245	102	74	75	69
National Insurance Contributions (NICs)	1143	1165	1146	1162	1198
VAT	1538	1447	1394	1610	1900
Fuel Duties	484	474	507	516	511
Tobacco Duty	225	232	261	284	297
Alcohol Duties	125	129	148	152	181
Betting & Gaming Duties	16	16	16	16	19
Air Passenger Duty	32	30	30	35	42
Insurance Premium Tax	38	37	37	40	47
Land Fill Tax	19	19	22	26	26
Climate Change Levy	8	8	8	7	9
Aggregates Levy	5	4	3	4	3
VED	88	92	92	93	94
Business Rates (non-domestic rates)	262	283	285	291	294
Council Tax (domestic rates)	252	272	274	280	289
Other Taxes & Royalties	79	91	116	147	172
Interest & Dividends	153	129	57	44	48
Gross Operating Surplus & Rent	687	742	707	725	750
Other Taxes on income and wealth	38	37	31	76	37
Current receipts (excluding NS revenues)	7712	7371	6987	7477	7792

Totals may not add due to roundings

Sources: Northern Ireland Net Fiscal Balance Report 2011-12

ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates

Budget 2015-16

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the Executive has agreed the next Budget; and if not, what is the estimated timescale for agreement.

(AQW 33755/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive has not yet agreed its Budget for 2015-16.

Corporation Tax

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the devolution of Corporation Tax powers.

(AQW 33814/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Government will make its decision on whether to devolve responsibility for corporation tax in the autumn - with an announcement to be made no later than the 2014 Autumn Statement.

The Government has previously indicated that if it did decide to devolve responsibility for the rate of corporation tax, then a stand-alone Bill would be introduced in the normal way with the aim of it becoming law before the prorogation of Parliament prior to the 2015 General Election.

This is a very tight timescale and the First Minister and deputy First Minister have previously highlighted the need for an early decision to the Secretary of State. In advance of that, my officials continue to engage with their Treasury counterparts on preparatory work in respect of the development of the proposed technical design of a devolved regime.

This will inform the content of the necessary legislation and follows on from the previous work by the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.

Solicitors: Complaints

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the outcome from solicitors firms that had more than one complaint made against them in 2013.

(AQW 33824/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not hold this information. The report of the Lay Observer revealed that 15 firms had more than one complainant in 2013, but the outcome of such complaints is not analysed in the report. The information may be held by the Law Society.

Civil Servants: Stormont Estate

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Service employees based in the Stormont Estate reside in the (i) Fermanagh; (ii) Omagh; (iii) Dungannon; and (iv) Strabane council areas.

(AQW 33888/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table overleaf.

Number of Civil Service employees based in the Stormont Estate who reside in the (i) Fermanagh; (ii) Omagh; (iii) Dungannon; and (iv) Strabane council areas at 1 January 2014.

Council Areas	Count
Dungannon	15
Fermanagh	11
Omagh	8
Strabane	5
Total	39

Notes:

- 1 The above data was taken at 01 January 2014.
- 2 Data does not include staff on a career break or staff seconded outside of the NICS.
- 3 Stormont Estate was defined as housing the following buildings:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Castle Buildings ■ Dundonald House ■ Craigantlet Buildings ■ Hillview Buildings ■ Knockview Buildings ■ Massey House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Netherleigh ■ Parliament Buildings ■ Rosepark House ■ Stormont Castle
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European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the role his Department and the Executive has in formulating and approving the content of the Consultation Information Document on European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020.

(AQW 33936/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Consultation Information Document was prepared by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). As joint Sponsor for SEUPB, officials from my Department worked with it on the content of the document.

Input was also provided by the other co-sponsor, Ireland's Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), along with the Scottish Government in the case of INTERREG.

Executive approval will be sought prior to the submission of draft PEACE IV and INTERREG V European Territorial Co-operation programmes to the European Commission.

Rates: Business Rates

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the business rates in each council area, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 33942/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The business rates for each council area is not available as data is collated at 'Domestic', 'Non-Domestic' and 'Mixed' sector level only. Information is only available for the financial years 2009/10 to 2012/13.

The table overleaf provides information on rates assessed (before the award of reliefs) for the 'Mixed' and 'Non-Domestic' sectors in each of those financial years broken down by District Council.

Non-Domestic and Mixed Rates Assessments 2009/10 to 2012/13

Council	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £
Antrim	27,020,398	25,115,005	27,591,751	25,229,107
Ards	16,688,157	16,401,661	16,775,664	16,954,554
Armagh	12,945,932	14,257,568	12,972,216	12,910,573
Ballymena	24,421,974	23,571,905	24,838,123	23,869,016
Ballymoney	5,153,275	6,947,497	5,358,137	5,201,698
Banbridge	9,822,694	10,156,657	9,999,219	10,469,846
Belfast	239,907,464	241,774,395	248,719,082	255,572,209
Carrickfergus	9,721,002	11,044,073	11,396,100	11,117,561
Castlereagh	22,037,012	21,799,093	22,779,204	22,732,176
Coleraine	22,632,470	20,012,210	22,677,791	21,612,815
Cookstown	8,936,066	8,473,314	9,201,768	8,880,132
Craigavon	29,144,096	29,075,048	29,934,130	30,470,484
Derry	49,751,129	48,240,757	45,986,190	49,184,695
Down	14,509,923	15,212,179	16,692,568	15,769,703
Dungannon & South Tyrone	13,892,086	16,054,273	13,517,276	15,201,497
Fermanagh	17,970,169	16,621,419	18,617,028	19,454,149
Larne	11,944,956	10,721,487	15,884,306	12,159,303
Limavady	9,364,043	8,119,669	6,800,629	6,755,660
Lisburn	37,056,214	36,220,417	37,255,870	37,876,221
Magherafelt	8,646,644	8,061,378	8,450,660	8,566,149
Moyle	4,116,047	3,305,469	3,187,079	2,944,248
Newry & Mourne	28,680,001	31,217,287	29,338,581	30,062,017
Newtownabbey	32,567,329	32,576,614	33,789,643	34,330,254
North Down	28,062,035	26,730,775	27,339,218	27,889,869
Omagh	15,692,537	19,863,971	16,317,716	16,266,666

Council	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £
Strabane	9,003,069	7,739,929	8,299,277	8,039,284
NI Total	709,686,722	709,314,048	723,719,225	729,519,888

Totals may not sum due to rounding

Rates: Business Rates

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total annual revenue generated from business rates in each council area, in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 33943/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total annual revenue generated from business rates is not available as data is collated at 'Domestic', 'Non-Domestic' and 'Mixed' sector level only. Information is only available for the financial years 2009/10 to 2012/13. The table overleaf provides information on receipts relating to the 'Mixed' and 'Non-Domestic' sectors in each of those years broken down by district council.

Non-Domestic and Mixed Receipts 2009/10 to 2012/13

Council	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £
Antrim	19,373,291	21,855,747	21,573,699	21,432,489
Ards	11,787,639	12,616,577	12,365,300	13,289,010
Armagh	9,759,066	9,904,568	10,489,773	10,384,209
Ballymena	18,684,630	19,689,078	19,997,550	19,802,617
Ballymoney	3,687,140	4,079,595	3,834,949	3,913,738
Banbridge	7,575,252	7,707,269	8,086,691	8,110,395
Belfast	179,585,858	194,435,597	198,478,974	204,437,889
Carrickfergus	8,383,290	8,454,807	9,217,227	9,402,937
Castlereagh	16,841,198	18,721,613	18,757,819	18,960,630
Coleraine	17,019,117	17,246,348	17,374,201	18,397,096
Cookstown	7,379,282	7,489,163	7,475,033	7,502,390
Craigavon	22,429,685	23,543,538	24,950,148	25,007,644
Derry	36,941,273	38,854,991	37,797,195	39,275,669
Down	10,969,302	13,191,202	12,824,482	12,941,251
Dungannon & South Tyrone	10,706,138	11,079,475	11,041,156	11,686,373
Fermanagh	14,221,830	14,162,890	14,591,966	16,652,245
Larne	9,454,982	9,767,597	10,105,011	10,201,353
Limavady	5,854,674	5,810,778	5,507,509	5,689,195
Lisburn	27,841,531	28,926,246	31,189,705	31,407,908
Magherafelt	6,639,749	6,550,539	6,823,312	7,142,343
Moyle	2,416,680	2,469,846	2,484,014	2,442,508
Newry & Mourne	21,243,485	21,961,801	22,078,029	22,981,101
Newtownabbey	26,132,315	26,539,662	27,111,014	28,264,131
North Down	19,761,992	19,985,767	20,901,766	21,930,301
Omagh	11,865,838	13,483,810	13,279,380	13,342,276
Strabane	6,924,562	6,388,703	6,394,608	6,796,361
NI Total	533,479,802	564,917,208	574,730,510	591,394,059

Totals may not sum due to rounding

Equal Pay Settlement: PSNI

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the equal pay settlement proposals for the PSNI, Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Office staff were submitted to the Executive on 29 May 2014; and when the proposals will be published.

(AQW 33958/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It has been clearly established that there is no valid equal pay claim upon which to base a settlement for this group. However, I have circulated a paper to Executive colleagues setting out proposals which I hope will recognise the moral argument put forward and satisfactorily resolve the issue for this group of staff. Since my proposals are currently under consideration by Executive colleagues, and will require the approval of the Executive, it would not be appropriate to provide details until agreement is reached.

Financial Transaction Capital

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the current balance of the Financial Transaction Capital available to the Executive until the end of this mandate; and what applications have been (i) made; (ii) approved; and (iii) rejected as part of the scheme.

(AQW 33981/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the current balance available to the Executive is outlined in the Financial Transactions Overview Paper available on my Department's website:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/ced-financial-transactions-capital-overview-paper.pdf>

This paper outlines the criteria for applying for funding as well as detailing a list of projects that have applied for and received Executive funding. Whilst a number of projects are being considered by departments, no further bids have been submitted to date and no bids have been turned down by the Executive.

Floodline

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how reports to Floodline of flooding or blocked sewers are subsequently passed on to the relevant agency, namely the River Agency, Roads Service or NI Water.

(AQW 34033/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: On answering calls to the Flooding Incident Line, the Customer Service Representatives capture details of the reported flood from the caller by means of a series of scripted questions. These questions are used to establish the relevant Agency responsible for the operational response. Once established, the information is passed to that Agency by electronic means. This is done via e-mail to Rivers Agency and Transport NI, formally Roads Service, and by means of the transfer of an electronic interface file directly into NI Water's Incident Management System. The Customer Service Representatives also follow up e-mails to Rivers Agency and Transport NI with a telephone call to confirm receipt.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34050/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table overleaf.

Financial Years	Number of requests considered under FOI by DFP	Number of requests considered under EIR by DFP	Number of EIR requests considered which had a section 12 exception applied
April 2011 - March 2012	386	4	0
April 2012 – March 2013	320	4	0
April 2013 – March 2014	322	6	1

Welfare Reform: Cost to Health Service

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what the estimated added cost is to the Health Service arising from Welfare Reform proposals; and whether his Department has carried out the estimates for this cost.

(AQW 34089/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In the first instance it is for the Health Minister to determine any additional costs for his Department as a consequence of the introduction of Welfare Reform. Should any such costs arise, the Health Minister may seek additional funding from the Executive through in-year monitoring rounds or the Executive's Budget process. To date, DHSSPS has not brought any cost pressures to my attention as a consequence of Welfare Reform.

Of course HM Treasury has advised that should the Executive not agree Welfare Reforms, then it will cut the Executive's DEL budget by £87 million in 2014-15 and £114 million in 2015-16. This cost will continue to increase beyond 2015-16. Whilst it will be for the Executive to decide how this pressure is funded, there is a significant risk that the Health budget will be impacted.

Green Investment Bank Workshop

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why no officials from his Department were in attendance at the Green Investment Bank Workshop on public sector investment in green technology, which was held in the Long Gallery on 10 June 2014.

(AQW 34121/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Officials from my Department could not be in attendance at the event on 10 June since they were otherwise engaged in providing support for the Assembly Budget debates and preparing for the Executive's 2014-15 June Monitoring round.

Finance: Ministerial Spending

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if a Minister has spent any part of their budget on a matter which has not been agreed by the Executive, on the basis of which finance is initially allocated following the approval of a spending plan. (AQW 34222/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As you will be aware, spending plans are set at a level of detail known as Unit of Service. Following publication of the spending plans, the in-year Monitoring process provides the Executive with the opportunity to react to changing financial requirements by approving changes to the previously published spending plans.

As part of the in-year process, departments, with the approval of DFP Supply can make a marginal change within controlled parameters.

The Executive does not approve these internal technical transfers, therefore in answer to your question, there will be a wide range of marginal movements across most departments, but these will have been scrutinised by DFP Supply to ensure they are in line with Executive priorities.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mental Health Service Provision

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many posts will be lost in 2014 in front line mental health service provision in each Health and Social Care Trust as a result of efficiency savings.

(AQW 33400/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): All of the Health and Social Care Trusts have advised that there are no current plans for a reduction in frontline mental health service provision as a result of efficiency savings in 2014.

Intensive Care Provision

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 31365-11-15, for his assessment of local intensive care provision per 100,000 of the population when compared to the European average of 11.5 as identified in the 2012 report 'The variability of critical care bed numbers in Europe'.

(AQW 33576/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed this refers to an article in 'Intensive Care Medicine' published online on 10 July 2012 which reported that the overall number of critical care beds for Europe was 11.5 per 100,000 head of population with individual countries ranging from 4.2 to 29.2 per 100,000 per head of population. I understand that while the article identified that there were major differences between countries it does not express a view on what the optimum level of provision might be.

The Health and Social Care Board is responsible for commissioning health and social care in Northern Ireland, including intensive care provision. The Board has advised that there are 86 general adult critical care beds within Northern Ireland, which equates to 4.8 per 100,000 head of population. The 86 beds comprise 54 Intensive Care beds (Level 3) and 32 High Dependency beds (Level 2). All units are combined (Level 2/3) and can be flexed between the two levels in response to clinical demands. Intensive care provision, although located across different sites in Northern Ireland, functions as a single system in response to the needs of the total population.

In addition to the 86 critical care beds there are 18 Cardiac Surgical Intensive Care Unit beds (10 Level 3 and 8 Level 2), ring fenced specifically for cardiac surgical patients in the Royal Victoria Hospital and 12 Paediatric Intensive Care beds (Level 3) located in Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

A 24/7 dedicated specialist adult transport and retrieval service operates alongside the intensive care service, staffed by critical care clinicians, to ensure that patients are able to be rapidly and safely transferred to available beds even if these are outside their geographic area of residence. The system is supported by the Northern Ireland Critical Care Network which

works closely with intensive care services in each of the HSC Trusts, monitoring capacity and ensuring best use of available beds in keeping with clinical demand. At times of high demand for intensive care services, the Network will instigate agreed escalation protocols across the region to ensure that the service can rapidly respond to changes in demand in a coordinated way.

Pancreatic Cancer: Improvement of Treatment

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is improving the (i) awareness; (ii) diagnosis; and (iii) treatment of pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 33765/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency recently hosted a workshop to ensure that key individuals and stakeholders, including cancer charities, are fully engaged in planning and supporting the development of a cancer awareness campaign. This essential planning work will be finalised by October with commencement of the campaign shortly thereafter.

Because the symptoms of early pancreatic cancer are non-specific it is often diagnosed at a late stage and as a result has poor outcomes. Whilst current practice in the HSC is informed by the latest evidence based guidance published by NICE and NHS England (NICE intends to publish pancreatic cancer specific guidance later this year), more research offers the best prospect of improving diagnosis and treatment of this disease. I have supported the work of the work of the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund which seeks to increase the amount of money available to research that will lead to the development of more effective detection, diagnosis and treatment.

My Department also funds core staff and facilities of the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre (NICTC). The centre has had a successful pancreatic cancer clinical trials portfolio which has added to global knowledge that is available to clinicians who are treating pancreatic cancer. Several new trials are being set-up currently involving potentially beneficial new drugs to be used alone or with radiotherapy. I trust that this work will continue and that we will be able to use the knowledge gained to secure the improvements in diagnosis and care that we all would wish to see.

Bangor: New Health and Care Centre

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the need to consult with local GPs on the services that will be provided at a new health and care centre in Bangor.

(AQW 33836/11-15)

Mr Poots: An essential element of TYC is the provision of care closer to home, making the citizen the focus of healthcare services rather than the organisation; this means placing primary and community care at the heart of the work, providing services that ensure that preventative and early intervention work is undertaken enabling people to take responsibility for their health.

As GPs will have a central role in delivering services associated with TYC it is imperative that they should be consulted on the services that will be provided at a new health and care centre in Bangor.

Payroll Systems: Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Health and Social Care Trusts regarding their payroll systems to ensure that no employees have discrepancies in their June 2014 salaries.

(AQW 33889/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have made it clear that I expect Departmental officials and Trust and Business Service Organisation management to work collectively to ensure that all outstanding payments are made quickly and that, on a case by case basis, there is urgent consideration given to any losses experienced by staff arising from employer responsibilities.

A range of measures have already been taken to rectify the payroll issues affecting health service staff. The new payroll system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and Trusts continue to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols. There is also on-going training and awareness work with managers who complete and submit timesheets.

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

Patients: Placement in Border Areas

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department works with the Department of Health in the south of Ireland to place patients in border areas in nearby nursing homes such as Shannagh Nursing Home, Belleek.

(AQW 33922/11-15)

Mr Poots: In 2009, the Republic of Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) introduced the 'Fair Deal for Nursing Home Scheme'. This scheme permits the HSE to place clients only in private nursing homes, voluntary nursing homes and public nursing homes in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and registered with the ROI regulator.

This is similar to our legislative position in Northern Ireland whereby Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts can only place clients in care homes in Northern Ireland that are registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) under Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Dog Attacks: Injuries and Deaths

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people who have (i) been killed; and (ii) seriously injured as a result of dog attacks, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 33933/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- i) The latest available data on deaths registered with the General Register Office in Northern Ireland, shows that from 2003 to 2012, there have been no deaths where being bitten or struck by a dog was the recorded cause of death.
- ii) Information on the number of admissions to HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland with a diagnosis of being bitten or struck by a dog over the same period is detailed in the table below.

Calendar Year	Admissions
2003	76
2004	71
2005	67
2006	48
2007	62
2008	61
2009	73
2010	69
2011	83
2012	70

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

UK Rare Disease Strategy

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on Northern Ireland's Implementation Plan of the UK Rare Disease Strategy.

(AQW 33949/11-15)

Mr Poots: Northern Ireland's Statement of Intent in regard to the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases will shortly be available on my Department's website (www.dhsspsni.gov.uk). The statement sets out the Department and the Health and Social Care system's commitment to implement the 51 recommendations from the UK Rare Disease Strategy.

The Statement of Intent will be followed by a public consultation on the Northern Ireland Implementation Plan later this year.

Patients: Transfer

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether it is accepted practice for consultants to transfer patients to another consultant in another Health and Social Care Trust without prior discussion with the patient.

(AQW 33960/11-15)

Mr Poots: As part of appropriate clinical care pathway for patients, consultant to consultant referrals will be made to ensure that the patient is seen by the most appropriate clinician within clinically appropriate timescales, this may necessitate a referral to a consultant in another Trust.

The General Medical Council (GMC) issued advice on Delegation and Referral in 2013. The guidance states that:

- a You should explain to the patient that you plan to transfer part or all of their care, and explain why.
- b You must pass on to the healthcare professional involved:
 - relevant information about the patient's condition and history;
 - the purpose of transferring care and/or the investigation, care or treatment the patient needs.
- c You must make sure the patient is informed about who is responsible for their overall care and if the transfer is temporary or permanent. You should make sure the patient knows whom to contact if they have questions or concerns about their care.

Care Packages

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people, in each quarter of the last three years, have been assessed as requiring (i) residential care packages; (ii) domiciliary care packages; and (iii) supportive living packages.

(AQW 33983/11-15)

Mr Poots:

(i) & (ii) Information on the number of completed care management assessments which recommended (i) residential care and (ii) domiciliary care is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *

Quarter ending	Care management assessments completed during quarter which recommended	
	(i) Residential care	(ii) Domiciliary care
31 March 2014	220	799
31 December 2013	195	729
30 September 2013	181	671
30 June 2013	207	740
31 March 2013	182	661
31 December 2012	212	732
30 September 2012	237	759
30 June 2012	234	659
31 March 2012	238	695
31 December 2011	230	653
30 September 2011	230	663
30 June 2011	251	622

Source: CC4 return, Community Information Branch - DHSSPS

* Figures refer to assessments that were completed during the quarter for adults aged 18 and over.

(iii) Information on supportive living packages is not collected centrally and was requested from the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses are detailed below:

Belfast HSC Trust

The information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Northern HSC Trust

For the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014, there were 134 applicants requiring supported living in the Frail Elderly client group. It is not possible to break this down into each quarter.

South Eastern HSC Trust

In the past 3 years, 127 people have been assessed as requiring supportive living packages. Of these, 56 people were in Adult Disability services which cannot be broken down by quarter. The remaining 71 were in Older People and Mental Health services as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: People with Assessed Need for Supportive Living (Older People & Mental Health services)

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	5	3	3	2	13
2012/13	2	10	15	16	43
2011/12	2	4	6	3	15

Source: South Eastern HSC Trust

Southern HSC Trust

In the past 3 years, 88 people have been assessed as requiring supportive living packages as detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Number of Supportive Living Placements (Mental Health, Learning Disability & Physical Disability services)

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	12	28	3	9	52
2012/13	5	3	13	2	23
2011/12	7	2	1	3	13

Source: Southern HSC Trust

Western HSC Trust

In the past 3 years, 69 people have been assessed as requiring supportive living packages. Of these 30 were in Adult Mental Health services which cannot be broken down by quarter. The remaining 39 were in Learning Disability services as detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Learning Disability Clients Assessed as Requiring Supported Living Packages

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	1	2	4	8	15
2012/13	11	3	2	0	16
2011/12	0	4	3	1	8

Source: Western HSC Trust

Paracetamol: Prescriptions

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many prescriptions have been dispensed for paracetamol since 2010.

(AQW 33985/11-15)

Mr Poots: (i) The number of prescriptions and prescription items for drugs containing paracetamol for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, and presented for payment in each of the last four financial years is shown in table 1 below.

Figures relate to prescriptions which were dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment during the period. Not all prescriptions issued are subsequently dispensed and presented for payment, so the number of prescriptions issued is not known centrally.

The figures shown are presented by the financial year in which the prescription was paid to the pharmacist; it should be noted that there may be a time lag where prescriptions have been dispensed by the community pharmacist in a particular year but paid the following year. The data provided only covers drugs dispensed in primary care, as drugs prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems

Table 1: The number of prescriptions and prescription items for drugs containing paracetamol, which were dispensed and presented for payment by community pharmacists within each of the last four financial years.

Financial Year	Number of prescriptions that included paracetamol items	Number of prescription items for paracetamol
2010/11	784,117	788,171
2011/12	761,729	764,550
2012/13	781,985	784,463
2013/14	778,860	781,015
Total	3,106,691	3,118,199

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

The figures in the first column above refer to the number of prescriptions that included at least one item of paracetamol, whereas the figures in the second column refer to the total number of items containing paracetamol.

A prescription may contain more than one paracetamol item, for example a doctor may prescribe both a tablet and a soluble form for patients who have trouble taking pills, and therefore the number of paracetamol items prescribed is higher than the number of prescriptions containing paracetamol.

Prescriptions

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many prescriptions have been dispensed for items up to the value of 50p in since 2010.

(AQW 33986/11-15)

Mr Poots: (i) The number of prescription items up to the value of 50p for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, and presented for payment in each of the last four financial years is shown in table 1 below.

Figures relate to prescriptions which were dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment during the period. Not all prescriptions issued are subsequently dispensed and presented for payment, so the number of prescriptions issued is not known centrally.

The figures shown are presented by the financial year in which the prescription was paid to the pharmacist; it should be noted that there may be a time lag where prescriptions have been dispensed by the community pharmacist in a particular year but paid the following year. The data provided only covers items dispensed in primary care, as items prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems

Table 1: The number of prescriptions including individual items up to the value of 50p, and the number of prescription items with a value of up to 50p, which were dispensed and presented for payment by community pharmacists within each of the last four financial years.

Financial Year	Number of prescriptions that included individual items with a value of up to 50p	Number of prescription items with a value of up to 50p
2010/11	463,231	463,533
2011/12	675,267	675,428
2012/13	590,546	590,848
2013/14	573,924	574,086
Total	2,302,968	2,303,895

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

The figures in the first column above refer to the number of prescriptions that included at least one individual item with a value of up to 50p, whereas the figures in the second column refer to the total number of items with a value of up to 50p.

A prescription may contain two or more items each with a value of up to 50p, and therefore the total number of items with a value of up to 50p is higher than the number of prescriptions.

The cost of items are the Gross Ingredient Cost of the item, i.e. before discounts have been applied.

Prescriptions: Single and Multiple Items

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many prescriptions have been dispensed for (i) single; and (ii) multiple items, since 2010.

(AQW 33987/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of prescriptions for (i) single; and (ii) multiple items for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, and presented for payment in each of the last four financial years is shown in table 1 below.

Figures relate to prescriptions which were dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment during the period. Not all prescriptions issued are subsequently dispensed and presented for payment, so the number of prescriptions issued is not known centrally.

The figures shown are presented by the financial year in which the prescription was paid to the pharmacist; it should be noted that there may be a time lag where prescriptions have been dispensed by the community pharmacist in a particular year but paid the following year. The data provided only covers items dispensed in primary care, as items prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems

Table 1: The number of prescriptions for (i) single; and (ii) multiple items, which were dispensed and presented for payment by community pharmacists within each of the last four financial years.

Financial Year	Number of prescriptions for single items	Number of prescriptions for multiple items
2010/11	12,072,259	8,296,164
2011/12	12,296,062	8,534,107
2012/13	12,536,950	8,810,883
2013/14	12,630,762	9,055,607
Total	49,536,033	34,696,761

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

National Insurance and Tax Deductions

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many employees within the Health Service are having the wrong National Insurance and Tax deductions made from their salaries; and how many of these employees are on an incorrect Tax Code as a consequence of the payroll issues affecting Health Service staff.

(AQW 33995/11-15)

Mr Poots: All employees affected by incorrect NIC contributions have received payments to address this issue and a corrective fix has been applied to the system to prevent this issue from recurring.

In terms of the application of emergency tax codes, the HMRC has reviewed the tax codes for all affected staff and, where appropriate, has revised the tax codes in time for the May pay run. The HMRC has confirmed that some staff will still remain on an emergency tax code in line with normal business – these are being considered on a case by case basis.

Health and Social Care Board Meeting

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the nature of the discussions, referred to in the minutes of April's Health and Social Care Board meeting, between the Board and the BBC.

(AQW 34017/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (Board) requested and held a meeting on the 24th March 2014 with the BBC. The purpose of the meeting was to highlight a number of issues relating to the fairness and balance of how some health and social care stories were being covered by the Corporation. The meeting was attended by the Head of News BBC, the HSCB Chair, Chief Executive and Head of Communications.

During the meeting, the Board emphasised the importance of the general public being fully informed about all aspects of health and social care - both the positive and negative developments. As the vast majority of care delivered by the Health and Social Care system is successful, the Board stressed its view that it is important that media coverage accurately reflects this in a balanced way.

Going forward, the Board offered to provide the BBC with regular briefings on areas of major change.

Cervical Screening Awareness Week

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to support Cervical Screening Awareness Week.

(AQW 34027/11-15)

Mr Poots: National Cervical Cancer Prevention Week is held in January and Cervical Screening Awareness week in June each year and the Public Health Agency (PHA) use these key times as an opportunity to promote the importance of women attending for cervical screening through local media releases and activities.

Raising public awareness of cervical cancer prevention is important because in Northern Ireland almost a quarter of women still do not attend for cervical screening. Individual GP practices have taken specific steps to improve access to screening for their population based on local need: for example providing walk in appointments with the practice nurse and undertaking opportunistic screening.

The overall coverage rate in Northern Ireland has been increasing year on year for the last 5-6 years. The overall coverage of 78.04% at end March 2013 compares to 73.45% at end March 2008. This is the highest coverage rate ever reported by the cervical screening programme in Northern Ireland.

The PHA has undertaken work to explore how potential inequalities in the uptake and coverage of all cancer screening programmes can be addressed. Following a series of meetings and a workshop with representative voluntary groups, a four year 'Informed Choice Action Plan' (2012-15) was developed. The Action Plan provides a coordinated approach to promote informed choice of the three cancer screening programmes. It includes commissioning focus group work in 2014/15 with non-

attenders for cancer screening to better understand the barriers to participation and identify any actions which can be taken to overcome these. For cervical screening, the barriers for participation by younger women will specifically be explored.

The Demos 'Behind the Screen' report commissioned by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust is to be published for Cervical Screening Awareness week in June 2014 and an event is planned in Parliament Buildings on 24th June for the launch of the report. I will consider the recommendations of the report once it has been formally published.

'Behind the Screen' Demos Report

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Demos report 'Behind the Screen', which shows a decline in screening rates for all age groups, particularly for women 25 to 29 years and 50 to 64 years old, and highlights the costs to both the Health Service and individual women as a result of screening uptake levels.

(AQW 34028/11-15)

Mr Poots: National Cervical Cancer Prevention Week is held in January and Cervical Screening Awareness week in June each year and the Public Health Agency (PHA) use these key times as an opportunity to promote the importance of women attending for cervical screening through local media releases and activities.

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'Behind the Screen' Demos Report

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department will take to progress the recommendations of the Demos report 'Behind the Screen' and increase the uptake of cervical screening.

(AQW 34031/11-15)

Mr Poots: National Cervical Cancer Prevention Week is held in January and Cervical Screening Awareness week in June each year and the Public Health Agency (PHA) use these key times as an opportunity to promote the importance of women attending for cervical screening through local media releases and activities.

Raising public awareness of cervical cancer prevention is important because in Northern Ireland almost a quarter of women still do not attend for cervical screening. Individual GP practices have taken specific steps to improve access to screening for their population based on local need: for example providing walk in appointments with the practice nurse and undertaking opportunistic screening.

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The Demos 'Behind the Screen' report commissioned by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust is to be published for Cervical Screening Awareness week in June 2014 and an event is planned in Parliament Buildings on 24th June for the launch of the report. I will consider the recommendations of the report once it has been formally published.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34053/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested in response to your question is set out below:

Financial Year	Total requests Received	Number considered under EIR Regulation 12
2011-2012	158	0
2012-2013	151	5
2013-2014	175	1

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people who have been referred by their GP to cognitive behavioural therapy provided by the Health Service, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34061/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people who have been referred by their GPs for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) provided by the Health Service is not available centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of places available for patients on a standard course of cognitive behavioural therapy provided by the Health Service, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34062/11-15)

Mr Poots: Details on the number of places available for patients on a standard course of cognitive behavioural therapy provided by the Health Service, in each of the last five years, is not available centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting List

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients in each Health and Social Care Trust are currently on the Otto Bock C-Leg trial waiting list.

(AQW 34090/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that, at week commencing 9th June 2014, there were 9 people in Northern Ireland on the Otto Bock C-Leg trial waiting list. These are broken down by Health and Social Care Trust in the table below.

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of patients waiting
Belfast	1
Northern	4
South Eastern	0
Southern	4
Western	0
Northern Ireland	9

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting Time

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average waiting time for patients to take part in the Otto Bock C-Leg trial.

(AQW 34091/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have advised that the average waiting time for patients to take part in the Otto Bock C-Leg trial is 17.5 months. This information is for patients waiting in the period January 2011 to May 2014.

Prescriptions: Repeat

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department issues guidance to GPs on the length of time between issuing repeat prescriptions to patients.

(AQW 34098/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department does not issue guidance to GPs in respect of repeat prescribing. That responsibility rests with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). Any guidance issued in relation to repeat prescribing, cannot specify a length of time as this will vary depending on the medication and length of use.

ITH Pharma Supplies

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34015/11-15, what assurances he can give that no ITH Pharma parenteral nutrition or total parenteral nutrition is used for home treatments for adults or children.

(AQW 34273/11-15)

Mr Poots: My response to AQW 34015/11-15 on 13 June 2014 was based on information received formally from the HSC Trusts.

However, my officials have continued to liaise with HSC Trusts in respect of this matter and the most recent information from Belfast Trust advises that they do provide parenteral nutrition products produced by ITH Pharma to adults and children as part of a regional service which they provide to home-based patients in all five Trusts. I am assured that this is in line with the current advice of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) who are the body responsible for regulating all medicines in the UK and ensuring their safety.

The MHRA advice is that, based on the information it currently has, it believes that the contamination of the ITH neonatal product was an isolated incident and that the appropriate immediate action has been taken at ITH Pharma's facility to avoid a reoccurrence. MHRA has allowed ITH Pharma to continue production and supply of these critical products while their investigation proceeds.

GP Services: Out of Hours

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the recent media reports on the Out of Hours GP services in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34346/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of the recent media reports concerning the GP OOHs service in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust is currently reviewing its GP OOHs service and recognises that the service has been under increasing pressure over the past year and has faced many challenges in sustaining a responsive service while dealing with steadily rising demand.

The Trust has already taken action to address issues around the delivery of GP OOHs services such as on-going recruitment for GPs, flexible working arrangements, enhanced payment rates for difficult to fill shifts and the phased introduction of skilled nurses, including advanced nurse practitioners. The Trust has also run a series of workshops open to all staff in the GP OOHs service through which staff were encouraged to share their views on the service now and in the future. Following these workshops a confidential report was compiled which highlighted areas of concern which senior staff within the Southern Trust are currently working to address.

The Trust takes all views of the service extremely seriously and is committed to working with all staff in looking at changes needed and working through the suggestions and recommendations discussed at the workshop. The work will be taken forward in partnership between the Trust, GPs and OOHs staff, the Local Commissioning Group and the Health and Social Care Board to ensure a safe and effective service continues to be provided for all patients across the Southern Trust. The HSCB has already provided additional funding to the Southern Trust in order to address the issues of GP recruitment and retention as well as the provision of staff training.

Department of Justice

Hospitality: DoJ

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013-14.

(AQW 33830/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): In 2013-14 the Department of Justice spent the following on providing hospitality:

- (i) Department (including Agencies) - £53,036
- (ii) Arms-length Bodies - £243,017

The audit process for 2013-14 expenditure has not been finalised.

Teenage Dating Violence

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) awareness raising schemes; and (ii) support mechanism in place to deal with teenage dating violence.

(AQW 33912/11-15)

Mr Ford: Preventing and responding to violence and abuse within all intimate relationships remains a key priority for my Department and our partners in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors through the work of the Regional Strategy Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.

Local delivery networks, such as the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and Domestic Violence Partnerships had led and funded initiatives for children and young people aimed at promoting and raising awareness of healthy relationships and providing information on the full range of support available.

The DOJ funded support service provided by Victim Support is available to all victims of crime, including all victims of violence within intimate relationships. Further help and support is available to teenage victims of intimate relationship violence through the Government funded 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline. Should this abuse include sexual violence and abuse teenage victims can also avail of the services of The Rowan (Sexual Assault Referral Centre).

It is important to note that children and young people up to the age of 18 who have been abused in an intimate relationship will be responded to under the requirements of The Children (NI) Order 1995; the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland child protection policy and procedures; and the Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers.

The member will be aware that during the recent public consultation on the new draft strategy 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse', which ended on 11 April 2014, officials met with young people aged fourteen to eighteen years old. These groups have now responded formally to the consultation. It is anticipated that their feedback will help to inform the strategic priorities for raising awareness of and supporting victims of teenage dating violence.

Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether an investigation was carried out by the NI Courts and Tribunal Service into former service providers, Resource, and if so, to detail (i) the reason for the investigation; (ii) the dates the investigation commenced and concluded; and (iii) the outcome and any subsequent recommendations and actions; and to provide a full copy of the investigation report.

(AQW 33915/11-15)

Mr Ford: An investigation into Resource timekeeping and key holding practices commenced in August 2011 following correspondence from a whistleblower and concluded in February 2013. The investigation report recommended that the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service recover £1,233 from Resource, review key holding procedures and review existing contract management processes. These recommendations were subsequently implemented.

The investigation report contains information relating to third parties whose interests may be affected by any disclosure. Your request for a copy of the report will be considered in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998 and I have asked my officials to reply to you directly.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prosecutions for offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 33929/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below outlines the number of defendants who have appeared in court on at least one charge contrary to the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 as amended by the Dangerous Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

These charges relate to a range of offences in respect of dangerous dogs and not only those offences that relate to illegal dog breeds.

Year	Number of defendants appearing in court on at least one charge contrary to the Dangerous Dogs Order 1991
2007	98
2008	85
2009	73
2010	58
2011	56
2012	43
2013P	61

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

P Data are currently provisional and may be subject to change

Provision of data for years prior to 2007 would require a manual trawl of court records and would incur a disproportionate cost.

Serotonin

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Justice whether recommendations have been made to classify the legal drug containing serotonin as illegal following the deaths of 18 people.

(AQW 33939/11-15)

Mr Ford: Controlled substances are classified through the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and classification remains a reserved matter, led by the Home Office in Westminster. For substances not already controlled under the Act the Home Secretary may place a new psychoactive substance under temporary control by invoking a Temporary Class Drug Order (TCDO), following advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

The recent analysis, carried out by the Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) and published in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology identified the presence of para-methyl-4-methylaminorex (4,4'-DMAR), reportedly known, among other names as "serotoni" (and not serotonin as published) in a total of 18 fatal cases.

I understand that, in line with current reporting practice, the emergence of this substance was notified by FSNI through the European Union Early Warning System to the European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) of which the UK wide Early Warning System is part.

There will be a forthcoming EMCDDA and EUROPOL Joint Report on this new psychoactive substance which I understand forms an integral part of a process prior to control measures being implemented by member States across the European Union. Whilst a Temporary Class Drug Order is not in place in the UK at the moment, I understand that the Home Office has identified this particular substance to ACMD as one of concern.

Serotonin

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Justice whether the legal drug containing serotonin can be removed by local authorities under the General Product Safety Regulations.

(AQW 33940/11-15)

Mr Ford: Enforcement activity relating to the powers provided within the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 was recently utilised by Belfast City Council to remove a number of new psychoactive substances from sale through "head-shops". I understand the lessons learned have been disseminated across all local councils and wider afield.

Whilst the source of this illicit substance is not known at this stage, reports would suggest that the substance was supplied at street level through dealers as "Ecstasy" type pills.

I have been advised that the Consumer Safety legislation is a reserved matter under Schedule 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and that any enforcement activity of this legislation in Northern Ireland is undertaken by local Councils.

However, it is clear that the risks associated with any substance of misuse can have fatal consequences and I would support the efforts of all related agencies and local Councils as they continue to work to remove these dangerous substances from our communities.

Committal Proceedings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33648/11-15 and AQW 33196-11-15, to provide an estimate of the requested information.

(AQW 33965/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission estimates that, for the years specified in the answer to AQW 33196/11-15, mixed committal proceedings would have cost the legal aid fund the following amounts:

- 2011 - £211,000
- 2012 - £123,000
- 2013 - £104,000

Court Hearings: Parking Spaces

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33643/11-15, whether he is aware that since this issue was raised, police in the area have supplied cones to the primary school opposite the court house to prevent parking spaces in the lay-by used by parents/guardians and school buses, being taken up by court users.

(AQW 34001/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prior to the Member's question, I was unaware of this issue.

This 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 Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Prostitution: Project Steering Group

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) remit; and (ii) reporting timescale of the Project Steering Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 34020/11-15)

Mr Ford: The remit of the Project Steering Group for Research into Prostitution is to manage the contract in line with the terms of the tender and to ensure that the final report on the research is presented to the Department by 31 October 2014.

Police Pensions

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 31594/11-15, whether new instructions have been issued by his Department in relation to the review of injury on duty police pensions.

(AQW 34021/11-15)

Mr Ford: I can confirm that my officials issued guidance on 1 April 2014. The guidance withdrew Annex A together with paragraphs referring to compulsory retirement age within DoJ Circular 6/2007.

Fines and Enforcement Bill

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33642/11-15, in relation to the forthcoming provision for courts in respect of additional sentencing, collection and enforcement options in the Fines and Enforcement Bill, whether this will only apply to fines imposed once these measures are introduced or will they be effective on all currently outstanding fines.

(AQW 34040/11-15)

Mr Ford: Subject to Assembly approval, it would be my intention to apply the new collection and enforcement proposals retrospectively, thereby allowing deductions from income to be available for fines that are currently outstanding as well as fines imposed in the future.

A consultation on additional powers that might be available to allow, for example, access to bank accounts has just closed. I will be considering the way forward and taking further legal advice on the issue of also allowing these powers to be applied retrospectively.

Trafficking: Associated Sexual Charges

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why a number of cases within the court system involving associated sexual charges in which trafficking was included on the original charges, have since had the human trafficking element dropped.

(AQW 34042/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is the role for the Public Prosecution Service to be satisfied that the evidence which can be adduced in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction. There are a variety of reasons why charges can be dropped, any of which could lead to the Test for Prosecution no longer being met for a particular offence. Every case is different and considered on its own merits.

While evidence may be insufficient to prosecute for the offence of human trafficking a prosecution may proceed for other offences such as controlling prostitution for gain, brothel keeping or proceeds of crime offences. It should be acknowledged that an effective means of combating human trafficking is disruption, which includes prosecution and the confiscation of criminal assets. The prosecution of other, also serious offences is still effective in disrupting trafficking and making Northern Ireland a hostile place for traffickers, and most importantly, that victims have been recovered.

The Public Prosecution Service is independent of me as Justice Minister and I am not in a position to comment on individual cases. You may however wish to seek advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I am committed to ensuring that those who would traffic and enslave others will be made to feel the full force of the criminal law. Ensuring that we have a robust and effective legislative framework is a vital part of the fight against human trafficking and slavery. Following public consultation, I intend to bring forward legislative changes to strengthen further Northern Ireland's response to these crimes. These include new measures to consolidate offences which will make it administratively simpler for investigators and prosecutors to bring forward prosecutions.

As set out in the 2014-15 Northern Ireland Action Plan on human trafficking and exploitation these legislative measures will be supported and complemented by a range of other administrative and non-legislative responses including training, awareness raising and support for victims and witnesses.

Prisons: Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33696/11-15, to detail the number of prisoners adjudicated for offences against prison discipline that could relate to bullying and the penalty in each case, broken down per prison facility, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34043/11-15)

Mr Ford: Consistent with my previous response there are a number of offences against prison discipline that could relate to bullying.

The information provided in Annex A shows the number of prisoners in the last five years who have been found guilty of an offence at adjudication and the offence could potentially have been related to bullying.

It is not possible to provide details of the penalties incurred as this is decided on a case by case basis.

Annex A

Maghaberry

Prison Rule	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
(3) commits an assault causing injury against any other person including another prisoner;	7	10	22	25	45
(4) commits any other assault;	1	12	6	12	10
(5) fights or wrestles with any prisoner or other person;	36	21	38	58	82
(6) escapes or absconds from prison or legal custody;					1
(7) endangers the health or personal safety of any person or persons, including prisoners, through intentional or reckless conduct;	1	1	1	21	13
(8) detains any person against his will;			1		2
(11) (a) fails to comply with a condition of temporary release under rule 27; (b) provides false information in an application for temporary release.	6	6	6	12	14
(12) has in his possession any unauthorised article, or a greater quantity of any article that he is authorised to have, or sells or delivers to or receives from any person unauthorised article, or sells, or without permission, delivers to any person any article which he is allowed to have only for his own use;	84	67	94	145	243
(13) takes improperly any article belonging to another person or to a prison;	1	1	4	5	13
(14) intentionally or recklessly sets fire to any part of a prison or any property, whether or not his own, or, destroys or damages any part of a prison or other property not being his own.	24	28	52	81	115
(15) absents himself from any place where he is required to be or is present at any place where he is not authorised to be;	2			7	2
(16) is disrespectful to any person or uses threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour;	49	46	52	71	115
(18) commits an indecent or obscene act;			1	3	3
(19) prepares, manufactures, consumes, inhales or administers to himself or any other prisoner, with or without consent, any intoxicating substance or drug, or buys, sells, passes or possesses any such item;	1	1		2	6
(21) being required to work refuses to do so, or intentionally fails to work properly;		2			
(22) disobeys any lawful order;	50	49	67	140	120
(23) disobeys or fails to comply with any rule or regulation applying to him;	14	17	13	5	7
(24) in any other way offends against good order and discipline;	35	79	66	71	93

Prison Rule	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
(25) attempt to commit, incites another prisoner to commit, or assists another prisoner to commit or attempt to commit any of the foregoing offences.	3	8	9	10	19

Magilligan

Prison Rule	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
(3) commits an assault causing injury against any other person including another prisoner;	2	2	4	5	4
(4) commits any other assault;				1	
(5) fights or wrestles with any prisoner or other person;	16	17	34	24	36
(7) endangers the health or personal safety of any person or persons, including prisoners, through intentional or reckless conduct;	3		6	2	2
(11) (a) fails to comply with a condition of temporary release under rule 27; (b) provides false information in an application for temporary release.	39	54	20	20	16
(12) has in his possession any unauthorised article, or a greater quantity of any article that he is authorised to have, or sells or delivers to or receives from any person unauthorised article, or sells, or without permission, delivers to any person any article which he is allowed to have only for his own use;	88	76	92	105	123
(13) takes improperly any article belonging to another person or to a prison;		2	5	4	2
(14) intentionally or recklessly sets fire to any part of a prison or any property, whether or not his own, or, destroys or damages any part of a prison or other property not being his own.	13	10	18	25	18
(15) absents himself from any place where he is required to be or is present at any place where he is not authorised to be;	4	1	3	8	8
(16) is disrespectful to any person or uses threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour;	32	33	32	45	59
(18) commits an indecent or obscene act;	3				
(21) being required to work refuses to do so, or intentionally fails to work properly;	1	1	1		2
(22) disobeys any lawful order;	27	33	51	49	58
(23) disobeys or fails to comply with any rule or regulation applying to him;	2		1	11	14
(24) in any other way offends against good order and discipline;	22	14	24	24	28
(25) attempt to commit, incites another prisoner to commit, or assists another prisoner to commit or attempt to commit any of the foregoing offences.	1		1	2	

Hydebank

Prison Rule	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
(3) commits an assault causing injury against any other person including another prisoner;	12	14	16	13	15
(4) commits any other assault;	13	6	8	8	8
(5) fights or wrestles with any prisoner or other person;	47	54	80	56	31
(7) endangers the health or personal safety of any person or persons, including prisoners, through intentional or reckless conduct;	3	21	32	16	38

Prison Rule	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
(11) (a) fails to comply with a condition of temporary release under rule 27; (b) provides false information in an application for temporary release.	5	6	6	9	3
(12) has in his possession any unauthorised article, or a greater quantity of any article that he is authorised to have, or sells or delivers to or receives from any person unauthorised article, or sells, or without permission, delivers to any person any article which he is allowed to have only for his own use;	90	84	106	81	98
(13) takes improperly any article belonging to another person or to a prison;	8	2	4	2	4
(14) intentionally or recklessly sets fire to any part of a prison or any property, whether or not his own, or, destroys or damages any part of a prison or other property not being his own.	48	66	69	45	64
(15) absents himself from any place where he is required to be or is present at any place where he is not authorised to be;	2	3	6	4	5
(16) is disrespectful to any person or uses threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour;	69	58	74	61	55
(18) commits an indecent or obscene act;	2	2	2	2	3
(19) prepares, manufactures, consumes, inhales or administers to himself or any other prisoner, with or without consent, any intoxicating substance or drug, or buys, sells, passes or possesses any such item;	4	12	6	4	3
(21) being required to work refuses to do so, or intentionally fails to work properly;	3	10	9	3	1
(22) disobeys any lawful order;	32	33	39	45	32
(23) disobeys or fails to comply with any rule or regulation applying to him;	19	12	28	11	15
(24) in any other way offends against good order and discipline;	18	20	8	15	9
(25) attempt to commit, incites another prisoner to commit, or assists another prisoner to commit or attempt to commit any of the foregoing offences.	13	5	14	11	5

RUC GC Widows' Association

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) why the decision was taken to withdraw funding from the RUC George Cross Widows' Association; (ii) the advice on which the decision was taken; (iii) when the advice was provided; and (iv) who provided the advice.

(AQW 34057/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following devolution, the Department of Justice undertook a review of its arm's-length bodies, the purpose of which was to strengthen the governance arrangements and ensure that all bodies with a funding relationship with the Department had the appropriate governance arrangements in place. A classification exercise was undertaken to determine the status of a number of bodies, including the RUC George Cross Widows' Association.

- (i) As a result of the classification exercise the Association was classified as being in the private sector. The Department has not withdrawn funding from the Association. Following this classification, the mechanism available to the Association to access funding from the Department is now via a grant application.
- (ii) The classification was based on information provided in a classification questionnaire which is a HM Treasury function, implemented in Northern Ireland by the Department of Finance and Personnel.
- (iii) The classification exercise was initiated by DOJ in July 2012 and a classification questionnaire was provided to the DFP Classification Assessment Committee. The DOJ was advised of the outcome of the assessment in April 2013 by DFP.
- (iv) DOJ sponsor branch for the Association completed the classification questionnaire. DFP assessed the classification questionnaire, based on the information provided by DOJ.

Anne Owers Report

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the implementation of the Anne Owers Report.
(AQW 34063/11-15)

Mr Ford: Good progress continues to be made against the extensive programme of end to end transformational reform, guided by the 40 recommendations made by the Prison Review Team.

To date, 14 of the 40 recommendations have been signed off as complete by the Prison Review Oversight Group. Additionally, the Oversight Group has referred a further two recommendations to Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland and six recommendations to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority for independent assessment, bringing to 22 the number of recommendations signed off or under assessment.

The Oversight Group has a robust independent element and provides the Justice Committee with an update on progress after each meeting, with the latest update due to be issued to the Committee before recess.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Regulation 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34068/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) Number of FOI requests received;
 - 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 – 149 requests received
 - 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 – 149 requests received
 - 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 – 193 requests received

Information regarding requests under FOI and EIRs is collected and published on a calendar year basis. The annual reports are published on the OFMDFM website and the statistical figures up to September 2013 can be viewed at the links below. Please note that statistical data concerning requests dealt with under FOI and the EIRs is combined within the figures above and the reports at the links below.

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch.htm

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

- (ii) How many have been considered under Regulation 12 of the EIR;

None of the requests received by the DOJ have been considered under regulation 12 of EIRs.

Sexual Offences Act 2003: Victims

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33659-11-15, whether the alleged victims in these cases are adults or children.

(AQW 34071/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is one child and two adult alleged victims in the three cases identified in AQW33659-11-15.

Bullying

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33696/11-15, given that concerns have been raised by a number of agencies, including the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, whether he plans to introduce a system permitting this information to be collated and accessed, particularly in respect of a duty of care and justice to the victims of prisoner bullying and to allow a prisoner's previous behaviour to be held for future reference in order to identify potential prisoner profiles including bullying, should there be any further incidents.

(AQW 34073/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service will consider whether a mechanism for recording this information should be introduced in any future review of the approach to tackling bullying.

Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many staff employed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 34115/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the Member's questions address the same issue I will provide an amalgamated response.

In 2010 seven members of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2011 six members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2012 five members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six (including a case from 2010) were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

No members of NIPS staff at a Governor grade have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

Where there have been fewer than five members of (NIPS) operational staff convicted of a criminal offence; subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction; or dismissed from the service following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years the actual number has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many staff employed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34116/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the Member's questions address the same issue I will provide an amalgamated response.

In 2010 seven members of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2011 six members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2012 five members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six (including a case from 2010) were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

No members of NIPS staff at a Governor grade have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

Where there have been fewer than five members of (NIPS) operational staff convicted of a criminal offence; subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction; or dismissed from the service following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years the actual number has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many staff employed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been dismissed from service following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34117/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the Member's questions address the same issue I will provide an amalgamated response.

In 2010 seven members of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2011 six members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2012 five members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six (including a case from 2010) were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

No members of NIPS staff at a Governor grade have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

Where there have been fewer than five members of (NIPS) operational staff convicted of a criminal offence; subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction; or dismissed from the service following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years the actual number has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many staff at a Governor grade in the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last 5 years; and of these, how many have been dismissed.

(AQW 34118/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the Member's questions address the same issue I will provide an amalgamated response.

In 2010 seven members of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2011 six members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

In 2012 five members of NIPS operational staff were convicted of a criminal offence and six (including a case from 2010) were subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction.

No members of NIPS staff at a Governor grade have been convicted of a criminal offence in each of the last five years.

Where there have been fewer than five members of (NIPS) operational staff convicted of a criminal offence; subjected to disciplinary proceedings following a criminal conviction; or dismissed from the service following a conviction for a criminal offence in each of the last five years the actual number has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Compliance: Testing

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33800/11-15, whether an audit has been carried out to test compliance across contractors that supply departmental agencies; and if so, to detail when this occurred and the result; and if not, when he will conduct an audit and report on the findings.

(AQW 34184/11-15)

Mr Ford: With regard to the EU Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 the Department is unaware of, and has not carried out, an audit to test compliance among contractors who supply departmental agencies. The Department has no intention at present to conduct such an audit.

Zero-hours Contracts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of zero-hour contracts in relation to staff within his departmental remit.

(AQW 34185/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice, including its Agencies, has no staff members on zero-hour contracts. In the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook there is no provision for a Department to provide zero hours working for permanent civil servants.

European Convention on Human Rights

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33800/11-15, what action can be taken against a departmental agency or contractors who are found to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

(AQW 34239/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is difficult to answer this question without further details. Accountability through the courts or the Assembly may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances.

Department for Regional Development

Portavoe Reservoir: Fauna and Wildlife

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the impact to fauna and wildlife since drainage commenced of Portavoe Reservoir.

(AQW 33785/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): NI Water has worked closely with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DACL) throughout this project to ensure that the agreed method of lowering the water in the reservoir, to complete essential safety work, will minimise the impact on the environment. The work will have some impact to fauna and in the short term, some species may be impacted more than others by the reservoir drawdown. Regrettably, this is unavoidable.

A number of site surveys have been undertaken by NIEA staff and ecological consultants acting on behalf of NI Water to gather data to assess the potential impact of the water lowering on nesting birds. Based on the results of those visits, it is the opinion of the NIEA that no nesting birds were directly impacted by the lowering of water levels in Portavoe.

A swan mussel mitigation plan has also been devised by NI Water in conjunction with NIEA. This plan has involved collection, translocation, storage and monitoring of live mussels in reservoir cages and tanks. On completion of the reservoir works, and once the water has reached a suitable depth, the swan mussels will be returned to their original habitat.

DCAL's Inland Fisheries Group has undertaken a major netting operation at Portavoe to remove fish from the reservoir. Operations of this nature are difficult in nature and regrettably fish losses occur however DCAL has advised that approximately 16,000 fish, mostly rudd and eels, have been transferred to the River Quoile. DCAL will restock the reservoir on completion of the works.

Tidal Urban Clearway Scheme: Antrim Road, Belfast

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will carry out an assessment of the suitability of a tidal urban clearway scheme for the Antrim Road, Belfast.

(AQW 33823/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department introduced an experimental Traffic Regulation Order to provide a tidal urban clearway on three routes in south Belfast, namely the Lisburn Road, Malone Road and part of the Stranmillis Road in November 2013. This order was recently extended by a further six months to allow a fuller assessment of its impact and if it should be made permanent.

A final decision on this has not yet been made but the outcome of the assessment will influence if other urban clearway routes, such as the Antrim Road, should be considered for similar treatment.

Illegal Landfilling

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33421/11-15, given there is a valid enforcement notice which requires the offender to remove the illegally deposited landfill which is now confirmed to lie directly in the path of the A6 road proposal, whether it is his Department's intention to vest this land for the construction of the new road prior to compliance with the enforcement notice.

(AQW 33866/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am considering the report on the August/September 2012 Public Inquiry into the Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme. If I decide to proceed with the scheme, I will make the Direction Order to ensure planning protection. The draft Vesting Order to acquire the necessary lands to construct the scheme, and will remain in draft form until confirmation of funding to construct the scheme is received.

As you are aware, the scheme includes a proposal to reinstate part of the Campsie Sand and Gravel quarry located between Mobouy Road and the River Faughan to replace flood storage capacity lost to the new dual carriageway. It is hoped the illegal waste issue will have been resolved by the time funding is confirmed. However, if the illegal material is still present when the road is being constructed, I am content the installation of appropriately engineered measures to contain the illegal waste will ensure that the compensatory floodplain can be constructed as planned.

Illegal Landfilling

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33421/11-15, given that his Department's ground investigation did not find anything untoward in March 2010, why in October 2011 the Northern Ireland Environment Agency raised concerns regarding the composition of the illegal landfill associated with retrospective planning application A/2010/0596/F.

(AQW 33867/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Natural Heritage branch of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), in compliance with planning law, has to treat retrospective applications as if the work has not yet begun and therefore, in this particular case, it asked for additional information to allow it to fully consider the planning application.

As the proposed development could have potentially serious adverse impacts on the features of the River Faughan and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation and Area of Special Scientific Interest, NIEA objects to the proposal until a fuller evaluation can be undertaken that demonstrates there will be no adverse impacts on the qualifying features of these sites.

NI Railways: Dog/Animal Policy

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what consultation took place prior to changing the NI Railways Dog/Animal Policy.

(AQW 33904/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Consultation on this condition of carriage was included as part of the Autumn 2013 independent Passenger Charter monitoring review. Translink had been challenged on its operational policy in this area and specifically why its approach differed from operational policies applied by rail operators in the rest of the UK.

Manhole Covers: Non-slip

Mr Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department plans to install non-slip manhole covers in order to reduce the number of motorcycle accidents.

(AQW 33905/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: All manhole covers installed on the public road network should meet the requirements of European Standard BS EN 124, which stipulates minimum standards for strength and skid resistance.

In addition, during the development of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020, it was recognised that motorcyclists have particular road safety issues that needed to be addressed. One of these was riders sliding on wet and worn manhole covers.

A series of Action Measures has been developed targeting the motorcycling road user group. Amongst these will be the development of a motorcycle strategy, being taken forward by the Department of the Environment, to investigate the issue of manhole covers and propose solutions in areas where this is a problem.

Park-and-ride Scheme: Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the areas, other than Stangmore, that have been considered for the proposed Dungannon park-and-ride Scheme.

(AQW 33917/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015, published in 2004, detailed the following areas for Park and Ride in the Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council Area:

- A4/A5 Ballygawley Roundabout;
- A29/M1 at Stangmore Roundabout; and
- A45/M1 at Tamnamore Roundabout.

The Ballygawley site has already been provided and the Tamnamore site is currently under construction. A Park and Ride facility is currently also provided adjacent to the Translink Depot located at Beech Valley, Dungannon.

In 2005, my Department employed ATKINS Consultants to carry out an options study of proposed Park and Ride sites including the A4/M1 junction 15 at Stangmore.

As access to such a site would not be permitted from the M1 slip roads, a number of sites were considered along the A29 on both the Moy and Dungannon sides of Stangmore Roundabout. The preferred site was identified as being on the A29 Moy Road between Stangmore Roundabout and Dungannon, close to Stangmore Villas.

NI Water

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the total revenue raised; and (ii) the operating costs of NI Water in each of the last three years; and to outline how these compare with budgeted figures.

(AQW 33921/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water's total revenue raised and operating costs compared to budget in each of the last three years is as follows:

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14
	Budget £m	Actual £m	Budget £m	Actual £m	Budget £m
Income	94	91	91	90	88
Operating Costs	191	188	200	199	198

- The information contained in this response reflects public expenditure reporting and will not accord with the information contained in NI Water's regulatory and company accounts for which elements are prepared on a different accounting basis. The 2013/14 Actual position will be available following the Finance Minister's Statement to the Assembly on Provisional Outturn.
- Total Revenue consists of Income including charges, largely to non-domestic customers, for water and wastewater services and related services (eg Septic Tank emptying) and road drainage income payable by DRD. It excludes the transfer of assets from customers.
- Operating Costs includes staff costs and other operating costs. It excludes capital costs, depreciation, interest costs, corporation tax and dividend paid to the Department as Shareholder.
- In addition, the Department provides a subsidy in lieu of domestic charges to domestic customers reflecting the Executive's decision on the deferment of charges and its ongoing Programme for Government commitment not to introduce additional water charges during the current mandate.

Antrim Coast Road

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the work carried out on the Antrim Coast Road prior to the Giro d'Italia 2014 will be maintained to the same standard and budget.

(AQW 33926/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department and the local councils committed a significant amount of additional resource to a very successful Giro D'Italia event to ensure the best possible exposure for Northern Ireland. Routine maintenance operations will continue in line with my Department's 'Road Maintenance Standards for Safety'.

The importance of the Antrim Coast Road is recognised by my Department as evidenced by the recent significant investment made in this strategic infrastructure, such as the stabilisation of the slopes at Straidkilly, Glenarm and the sea defence work, north of Carnlough.

Traffic Weight Restrictions

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 9038/11-15, for an updated list of the locations where traffic weight restrictions are in force.

(AQW 33954/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of locations where traffic weight restrictions are in force, in respect of roads, are set out in the following tables. The roads are listed under the appropriate weight restriction at each location identified, with restrictions having been put in place by means of an Order under Article 4 of the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

The reason for the restriction is not stated in the legislation and given that many of the restrictions have been in place for a considerable number of years and in some cases decades, this information is not readily available. However, the Member will be aware from my answer to her Assembly Question AQW 8961/11-15, of the factors that my Department considers when determining whether a weight restriction is necessary at any particular location to protect the underlying road.

Weight Restrictions

2 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

Dogleap Road, Limavady, carried by the Largy Bridge over the River Roe.

3 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

- Church Road, Armoy, from its junction with Main Street, to its junction with Gracehill Road, Route B15.
- Shore Road, Unclassified No. 2017, in the townlands of Ballyvanen and Ballyvorally, County Antrim, from its junction with Darachrean Road, Unclassified No. 49, to its junction with Ingram's Road, Unclassified No. 49.
- Ingram's Road, Unclassified No. 49, in the townland of Ballyvorally, County Antrim.
- Shell Road, Unclassified No. 125, Campsie, County Londonderry.
- Gortscreagan Road, Unclassified No. 181, Claudy, from its junction with Slieveboy Road, Route C512, to its junction with Carnanreagh Road, Route C511.
- Torr Road, Route C82, Cushendun and Ballycastle, from its junction with Bay Road, Cushendun, to its junction with Murlough Road, Unclassified No. 88, Ballycastle.
- Groganstown Road, Unclassified No. 26, Groganstown, Dunmurry, County Antrim, from its junction with Colinglen Road, Route A501, to a point 350 metres north-east of that junction.
- Ardrough Road, Route C503, Londonderry, from its junction with Carmoney Road, Unclassified No. 131, to its junction with Old Drumahoe Road, Route C503.
- Bonds Glen Road, Route C514, Londonderry, from its junction with Ardground Road, Route C508, to its junction with Longlands Road, Route B49.
- Chapel Road, Londonderry, from its junction with Spencer Road, to its junction with Fountain Hill.
- Corrody Road, Unclassified No. 155, Londonderry, from its junction with Woodside Road, to its junction with Kittybane Road.
- Fountain Hill, Londonderry, from its junction with Spencer Road, to its junction with Chapel Road.
- Moore Street, Londonderry.
- Rosstown Road, Unclassified No. 120, Londonderry, from its junction with Ardrough Road, Route C503, to its junction with Crescent Link, Route A514.
- Woodside Road, Unclassified No. 155, Londonderry, from its junction with Bards Hill, to a point 645 metres south of its junction with Corrody Road.
- Temple Road, Route C568, in the townlands of Templetown and Maydown, County Londonderry, from its junction with Clooney Road, Route A2, to a point 850 metres north-east of that junction.
- Ballysillan Park, Belfast, while travelling in a south-easterly direction. 3.5 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

3.5 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

- North-eastbound carriageway of Church Place, Route A3, Lurgan, between the War Memorial and Shankill Parish Church

5 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

- Hammond Road, Unclassified No. 2062, in the townlands of Aghadavy, Magheramesk and Maghaberry, County Antrim.
- Craneystown Road, Unclassified No. 72, in the townlands of Ballycarrickmaddy and Ballymave, County Antrim.
- Hungry House Lane, Unclassified No. 72, in the townlands of Ballycarrickmaddy and Ballynadolly, County Antrim.
- Horse Park Road, Unclassified No. 70, in the townland of Ballyellough, County Antrim.
- Kilcorig Road, Unclassified No. 70, in the townlands of Ballyellough, Magheragall and Kilcorig, County Antrim.
- Flowbog Road, Unclassified No. 23, in the townlands of Ballymacward Upper and Slievenacloy, County Antrim, from its junction with Rock Road, Route B101, to a point 69 metres north-west of its junction with Ballycollin Road, Unclassified No. 23.
- School Lane, Unclassified No. 72, in the townlands of Ballymave, Ballyellough and Ballycarrickmaddy, County Antrim.
- Ballyrainey Road, Route C266, Comber.
- Filterbeds Road, Unclassified No. 78, in the townland of Derrykillultagh, County Antrim.
- Porters Bridge Road, Unclassified No. 78, in the townland of Derrykillultagh, County Antrim.
- Shore Road, Unclassified No. 2017, in the townlands of Feumore and Ballyvanen, County Antrim, from its junction with Lough Road, Unclassified No. 49, to its junction with Feumore Road.
- Whinney Hill, Unclassified No. 70, in the townlands of Kilcorig, Ballyclogh and Ballynadolly, County Antrim.
- Lagmore Road, Unclassified No. 100, in the townland of Lagmore, County Antrim, from its junction with Colinglen Road, Route A501, to a point 190 metres west of its junction with Stewartstown Road, Route B102.
- Park Road, Newtownabbey, from its junction with Mallusk Road, to its junction with Antrim Road.
- Glenleary Road, Unclassified No. 3340, Coleraine, from its junction with Castleroe Road, to its junction with Coolyvenny Road.
- Hillhead Road, Unclassified No. 5285, Newry.
- Corcreechy Road, Unclassified No. 6062, Newry, from its junction with Corcreechy Road, Route C340, to its junction with Turmore Road, Route C339.
- Ballybarnes Road, Unclassified No. 104, Newtownards, from a point 800 metres north-east of its junction with Belfast Road, Route C263, to its junction with Ballysallagh Road, Route B170.

7.5 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

- Boghead Bridge Road, Unclassified No. 1002, Aghalee.
- Brankins Island Road, Unclassified No. 1011, Aghalee.
- Diamond Lane, Unclassified No. 1005, Aghalee.
- Feather Bed Road, Unclassified No. 1024, Aghalee.
- Grants Lane, Unclassified No. 1023, Aghalee.
- Montiaghs Road, Unclassified No. 1024, Aghalee.
- Moss Lane, Unclassified No. 1003, Aghalee.
- Unnamed road, Unclassified No. 1004, Aghalee, linking Boghead Bridge Road, Unclassified No. 1002, and Brankinstown Road, Route C10.
- Birch Hill Road, Unclassified No. 1074, Antrim, from its junction with Crosskennan Road, Route C44, to its junction with Ballygore Road.
- Bush Road, Unclassified No. 1073, Antrim, from its junction with Crosskennan Road, Route C44, to its junction with Glenmullion Road, Unclassified No. 1072.
- Carnearney Lane, Unclassified No. 1067, Antrim, from its junction with Carnearney Road, Unclassified No. 1066, to its junction with Ladyhill Road, Unclassified No. 1065.
- Carnearney Road, Unclassified No. 1066, Antrim, from its junction with Ladyhill Road, Unclassified No. 1065, to its junction with Parkgate Road, Route C43.
- Chapeltown Road, Unclassified No. 1058, Antrim, from its junction with Steeple Road, Route C45, to its junction with Tavnaghmore Road, Unclassified No. 1056.
- Drumkeeran Road, Unclassified No. 1048, Antrim, from its junction with Oldwood Road, to its junction with Lisnevenagh Road, Route A26.
- Eskylane Road, Unclassified No. 1059, Antrim, from its junction with Kilgavanagh Road, Unclassified No. 1061, to its junction with Chapeltown Road, Unclassified No. 1058.
- Kilgavanagh Road, Unclassified No. 1057, Antrim.
- Kilgavanagh Road, Unclassified No. 1061, Antrim, from its southern extremity to its junctions with Kilgavanagh Road, Unclassified No. 1057, and Creevery Road, Unclassified No. 1060.
- Ladyhill Road, Unclassified No. 1065, Antrim, from its junction with Carnearney Road, Unclassified No. 1066, to its junction with Steeple Road, Route C45.

- Old Ballynoe Road, Unclassified No. 1068, Antrim, from its junction with Carnearney Lane, Unclassified No. 1068, to its junction with Crosskennan Lane, Unclassified No. 1069.
- Oldwood Road, Antrim, from its junction with Craigstown Road, Route B53, to its junction with Lisnevenagh Road, Route A26.
- Rough Lane, Unclassified No. 1071, Antrim.
- Thornhill Road, Unclassified No. 1057, Antrim, from its northern junction with Creevery Road, Unclassified No. 1060, to its junction with Fernisky Road, Route 53.
- Ballynulto Road East, Unclassified No. 2101, Ballymena, from its junction with Church Road, Route A36, to its junction with Rocavan Road, Route C65.
- Carniny Road, Unclassified No. 2026, Ballymena, from its junction with Tullygrawley Road, Route C57, to its junction with Teeshan Road, Unclassified No. 2027.
- Fenagh Road, Unclassified No. 2025, Ballymena, from its junction with Crankill Road, Route A26, to its junction with Tullygrawley Road, Route C57.
- Shillanavogy Road, Unclassified No. 2107, Ballymena, from its junction with Glenhead Road, Unclassified No. 2106, to its junction with Drumcrow Road, Unclassified No. 4015.
- Deroar Road, Unclassified No. 1738, Beragh, County Tyrone, from its junction with Dreenan Road, Unclassified No. 1737, to its junction with Bancran Road, Route C627.
- Dreenan Road, Unclassified No. 1737, Beragh, County Tyrone, from its junction with Spring Road, Route C628, to its junction with Bancran Road, Route C627.
- Athenree Lane, Unclassified No. 1733, Carrickmore, County Tyrone, from its junction with Quarry Road, Route C626, to its junction with Tiroony Road, Route B46.
- Curran Road, Route C558, Castledawson.
- Ardbarren Road, Unclassified No. 138, Castlederg, from its junction with Scraghy Road, Route B72, to its junction with Ardbarren Road, Route C672.
- Drumgallan Road, Unclassified No. 119, Castlederg, from its junction with Castlederg Road, Route B50, to its junction with Magheracreggan Road, Route C679.
- Tullymoan Road, Unclassified No. 202, Clady, County Tyrone, from its junction with Lisdoon Road, Unclassified No. 202, to its junction with Orchard Road, Route C677.
- Kilcronagh Road, Unclassified No. 829, Cookstown, from its junction with Pomeroy Road, Route B4, to its junction with Sandholes Road, Route C622.
- Ardmore Road, Unclassified No. 1145, Crumlin, from its junction with Largy Road, Route C22, to its junction with Diamond Road, Route C23.
- Ballyclan Road, Unclassified No. 1143, Crumlin, from its junction with Largy Road, Route C22, to its junction with Diamond Road, Route C23.
- Cidercourt Road, Unclassified No. 1140, Crumlin, from its junction with Largy Road, Route C22, to its junction with Cidercourt Road, Unclassified No. 1141.
- Cidercourt Road, Unclassified No. 1141, Crumlin.
- Loughview Road, Unclassified No. 1148, Crumlin, from its junction with Diamond Road, Route C23, to its junction with Dunore Road, Unclassified No. 1152.
- Dunnygarron Road, Unclassified No. 2024, Cullybackey, County Antrim, from its junction with Fenagh Road, Route C56, to its junction with Redford Road, Unclassified No. 2023.
- Bay Rampart, Unclassified No. 1065, Derryadd.
- Byrnes Rampart, Unclassified No. 1068, Derryadd.
- Church Road, Unclassified No. 1069, Derryadd.
- Hall Rampart, Unclassified No. 1064, Derryadd.
- Lenny's Road, Unclassified No. 1070, Derryadd.
- Pier Rampart, Unclassified No. 1067, Derryadd.
- Skeltons Rampart, Unclassified No. 1066, Derryadd.
- Unnamed road, Unclassified No. 1071, Derryadd, linking Pier Rampart, Unclassified No. 1067, and Byrnes Rampart, Unclassified No. 1068.
- The Palms, Unclassified No. 1149, Derrymacash.
- Cullion Road, Unclassified No. 5200, Desertmartin, from its junction with Drumard Road, Unclassified No. 5204, to its junction with Iniscarn Road, Route C555.
- Drumard Road, Unclassified No. 5204, Desertmartin, from its junction with Cahore Road, Unclassified No. 5206, to its junction with Cullion Road, Unclassified No. 5200.
- Altmore Drive, Unclassified No. 7516, Dungannon, from its junction with Carland Road, Route A29, to its junction with Oaks Road, Route A45.

- Teeavan Road, Unclassified No. 2404, Dungiven, from its junction with Glenshane Road, Route A6, to its junction with Teeavan Road, Unclassified No. 2403.
- Turmeel Road, Unclassified No. 2403, Dungiven.
- Carnduff Road, Unclassified No. 4050, Glynn, Larne, from its junction with Carrickfergus Road, Route C74, to its junction with Browndod Road, Route C73.
- Glenburn Road, Unclassified No. 4049, Glynn, Larne, from its junction with Shore Road, Route A2, to its junction with Carrickfergus Road, Route C74.
- Ballyfore Road, Unclassified No. 4045, Larne, from its junction with Ballyvallagh Road, Unclassified No. 4044, to its junction with Ballyrickard Road, Route B100.
- Casement's Brae, Larne.
- Lodge Road, Larne.
- Corran Road, Unclassified No. 8112, Markethill.
- Inisclan Road, Unclassified No. 1253, Mountfield, County Tyrone, from its southern junction with Lenagh Road, Route C612D, to a point 225 metres north-east of that junction.
- Boghill Road, Unclassified No. 1104, Newtownabbey, from its junction with Lylehill Road, Route C27, to its junction with Flush Road, Unclassified No. 1104.
- Cavankill Road, Unclassified No. 5172, Newtownhamilton.
- Cold Brae Road, Unclassified No. 5123, Newtownhamilton.
- Elders Road, Unclassified No. 5178, Newtownhamilton.
- Macullaghs Road, Unclassified No. 5173, Newtownhamilton.
- School Road, Unclassified No. 5096, Newtownhamilton.
- Viewpoint Road, Newtownhamilton.
- Largybeg Road, Route C679D, Newtownstewart, from its junction with Drumlegagh Church Road, Route C680, to its junction with Letterbin Road, Route C680B.
- Strahulter Road, Unclassified No. 1910, Newtownstewart, from its junction with Killymore Road, Route B46, to its junction with Strahulter Road, Route C613.
- Arleston Road, Unclassified No. 1701, Omagh.
- Glencam Road, Unclassified No. 1269, Omagh, from its junction with Gortin Road, Route B48, to its junction with Killybrack Road, Unclassified No. 1269.
- Clonavon Avenue, Portadown.
- Ballylurgan Road, Unclassified No. 1044, Randalstown.
- Ballylurgan Road, Unclassified No. 1050, Randalstown, from its junction with Connaught Road, Unclassified No. 1043, to its junction with Craigstown Road, Route B53.
- Greenan Road, Unclassified No. 1037, Randalstown, from its junction with Moneynick Road, Route A6, to its junction with Derrygowan Road, Route C52.
- Knockroe Road, Unclassified No. 209, Sion Mills, County Tyrone, from its junction with Melmount Road, Route A5, to its junction with Orchard Road, Route C677.
- Aughnabrack Road, Unclassified No. 1104, Templepatrick, from its junction with Lylehill Road, Route C27, to its junction with Flush Road, Unclassified No. 1104.
- Cloughanduff Road, Unclassified No. 1100, Templepatrick, from its junction with Antrim Road, Route A6, to its junction with Old Coach Road, Route B95.
- Flush Road, Unclassified No. 1104, Templepatrick, from its junction with Boghill Road, Unclassified No. 1104, to its junction with Ballyutoag Road, Route A52.
- Brecart Road, Unclassified No. 1005, Toomebridge.
- Creagh Road, Unclassified No. 5107, Toomebridge, from its junction with Blackpark Road, Unclassified No. 5106, to its junction with Castledawson By-Pass, Route A6.
- Crockroe Road, Unclassified No. 1647, Trillick, County Tyrone.
- Coolkill Road, Route B210, Tynan, County Armagh.
- Mound Road, Unclassified No. 6196, Warrenpoint.
- Rawbrae Road, Unclassified No. 3014, Whitehead.
- Moneycarrie Road, Route C543, Coleraine, from its junction with Mullaghinch Road, Route B207, to its junction with Ballygawley Road, Route B188.
- Ardreagh Road, Unclassified No. 361, Coleraine, from its junction with Greenhill Road, Route B66, to its junction with Drumcroon Road, Route A29.
- Ballymacrea Road, Unclassified No. 36, Portrush, from its junction with Ballybogey Road, Route B62, to a point 1300 metres south-west of that junction.

- Corbally Road, Route C96, Portrush, from its junction with Gateside Road, Route C93, to its junction with Ballyholme Road, Route C96.
- Grove Road, Route C545, Garvagh, from its junction with Carhill Road, Route A29, to its junction with Kurin Road, Route C545.
- Grove Road, Unclassified No. 378, Garvagh from its junction with Kurin Road, Route C545, to its junction with Edenbane Road, Route B64.
- Killeague Road, Route C539, Coleraine, from its junction with Cashel Road, Route B186 to its junction with Kinnyglass Road, Unclassified No. 338.
- Macleary Road, Unclassified No. 338, Coleraine, from its junction with Cashel Road, Route B186, to its junction with Killure Road, Unclassified No. 338.
- Killure Road, Unclassified No. 338, Coleraine, from its junction with Killeague Road, Route C539, to its junction with Drumcroon Road, Route A29.
- Dawson Street, Unclassified No. 7008, Armagh, from its junction with Edward Street, to its junction with Abbey Street, while travelling in a southerly direction.
- Dawson Street, Unclassified No. 7008, Armagh, from its junction with Edward Street, to its junction with Cathedral Road, while travelling in a northerly direction.
- Clooney Road, Route C558, Tobermore.
- Ballyheather Road, Route C602, Strabane, from its junction with Moyagh Road, Unclassified No. 1819, to its junction with Ballyheather Road, Route C602.
- Split Bog Road, Unclassified No. 4277, Moneyslane, from a point approximately 600 metres south-east of its junction with Closkelt Road, Unclassified No. 4276, to its junction with Moneyslane Road, Route B7.
- Island Road, Unclassified No. 82, Shankbridge, Ballymena.
- Tullynamullan Road, Unclassified No. 83, Shankbridge, Ballymena, from its junction with Maine Road, Route C48, to a point approximately 1,275 metres south-east of that junction.
- Bachelors Walk, Portadown.
- Pinehill Road, Unclassified No. 109, Ballymoney.
- Lisboy Road, Unclassified No. 110, Ballymoney, from its junction with Knockahollet Road, Route C86 to its junction with Kilraughts Road, Route B16.
- Loughabin Road, Unclassified No. 111, Ballymoney, from its junction with Knockahollet Road, Route C86, to its junction with Gortstagherty Road, Route C90.
- Old Frosses Road, Unclassified No. 173, Cloughmills.
- Dowgry Road, Route C60, Cloughmills.
- Canal Street, Route A27, Newry, and that part of Armagh Road, Route A27, Newry, between its junction with Barrack Street, and a point approximately 10 metres northwest of its junction with Plunkett Street.
- Beechmount Park, Unclassified Nos. 6293-16 and 6293-17, Newry.
- Elmwood Park, Unclassified No. 6293-14, Newry.
- Upper Damolly Road, Unclassified No. 6293-04, Newry, from its junction with
- Millbay Road, Route B90, Islandmagee, County Antrim.
- McRory's Road, Unclassified No. 5071, Newtownhamilton.
- Manooney Road, Unclassified No. 8733, Killylea, County Armagh.
- Ballynahone Road, Route C557, Magherafelt.
- Killyboggin Road, Unclassified No. 5172, Magherafelt, from its junction with Desertmartin Road, Route A29 to its junction with Lisalbanagh Road, Unclassified No. 5171.
- Killynamph Road, Unclassified No. 9446, Lisnaskea.
- Carn Road, Unclassified No. 127, Nutts Corner, Crumlin, from its junction with Belfast Road, Route A52, to its junction with Seven Mile Straight, Route B39.
- Umgall Road, Unclassified No. 104, Nutts Corner, Crumlin.
- Lisnabilla Road, Route C8, Moira.
- Kensington Park, Unclassified No. 7027, Lisburn, County Antrim.
- Friary Road, Newtownhamilton, Route C204, from its junction with Clady Road, Route C204, to a point approximately 2392 metres south of that junction.
- Drennan's Road, Route C25, Crumlin.
- Davagh Road, Unclassified No. 1236, Greencastle, County Tyrone.
- Craighulliar Road, Unclassified No. 306, Portrush.
- Craighulliar Road, Unclassified No. 36, Portrush.
- Corramore Road, Unclassified No. 1974, Plumbridge, County Tyrone.

- Shinnys Road, Unclassified No. U337, Coleraine, from its junction with Cashel Road, Route B186 to its junction with Cam Road and Letterloan Road Route C540.
- Ballinteer Road, Unclassified No. 336, Coleraine, from its junction with Farranseer Park Macosquin, to its junction with Windyhill Road, Route B201.
- Ballystrone Road, Unclassified No. 326, Coleraine.
- Isle Road, Unclassified No. 325, Coleraine.
- Ringrash Road, Route C534, Coleraine, from its junction with Ramsey Park Macosquin, to its junction with Windyhill Road, B201.
- Cullyrammer Road, Unclassified No. 368, Kilrea, from its junction with Mullaghinch Road, Route B188, to a point approximately 650 metres north of its junction with Killyvally Road, Unclassified No. 369.
- British Road, Aldergrove, Crumlin, County Antrim, from its junction with Dungonnell Road, for a distance of approximately 2,500 metres in an easterly direction.
- Bog Road, Unclassified No. 5412, Forkhill, between its junction with Sheen Road, Route C224, and a point approximately 1,050 metres north of that junction.
- Barnaghs Road, Unclassified No. 1725, Carrickmore, County Tyrone, between its junction with Gleneeny Road, Unclassified No. 1725, and its junction with Reclaim Road, Unclassified No. 903.
- The north-western carriageway of Bridge Street, Banbridge, from its junction with Scarva Street, to a point 96 metres north-east of that junction.
- The south-eastern carriageway of Bridge Street, Banbridge, from a point 99 metres north-east of its junction with Rathfriland Street, to that junction.
- The north-western carriageway of Newry Street, Banbridge, from a point 75 metres south-west of its junction with Scarva Street, to that junction.
- The south-eastern carriageway of Newry Street, Banbridge, from its junction with Rathfriland Street, to a point 72 metres south-west of that junction.
- Ballydonaghy Road, Route C20, Crumlin, from its junction with Moira Road, Route A26, to its junction with Dundrod Road, Route B101.
- Ballycowan Road, Unclassified No. 2079, Ballymena from its junction with Lisnevenagh Road, Route A26, to its junction with Liminary Road, Route C46.
- Eskragh Lough Road, Unclassified No. 1104, Dungannon, from its junction with Old Ballygawley Road, Route C684, to its junction with Eskragh Road, Unclassified No. 1104.
- Old Magherafelt Road spur, Castledawson, from a point 15 metres north-east of its junction with Old Magherafelt Road, for a distance of 45 metres in a north-easterly direction.

16.5 Tonnes Maximum Gross Weight

- Rallagh Road, Unclassified No. 2401, Dungiven.
- Teeavan Road, Unclassified No. 2403, Dungiven, from its junction with Magheramore Road, Route C523, to its junction with Teeavan Road, Unclassified No. 2404.
- Printshop Road, Nutts Corner, Crumlin, County Antrim.
- Long Rig Road, Route C26, Nutts Corner, Crumlin.

My Department similarly prohibits or restricts use of vehicles on certain road bridges. This is done by means of signs where my Department is satisfied the bridge is insufficient to bear vehicles exceeding certain weight limits.

The location of the bridges is provided by Council area and the bridge structure name in the table below. Details of the weight restriction in place are also provided for each bridge.

Council Area	Bridge/Structure Name	Location	Weight Restricted Tonnes
Magherafelt Council	Newbridge Old	Airfield Road.	7.50
	No Name	Bridge Street.	18.00
Coleraine Council	Glasgort	Glasgort Road, Ballymoney.	7.50
Derry City Council	The Crooked Bridge	Barnes Road.	3.00
	Tireighter	Tireighter Road	18.00
Limavady Council	Owenbeg 2	Foreglen Road.	7.50
	Largy	Dog Leap Road.	2.00

Council Area	Bridge/Structure Name	Location	Weight Restricted Tonnes
Moyle Council	Armoy	Church Road	2.00
Craigavon Council	Fishponds Bridge	Tamnamore Road, Dungannon	18.00
	Douglas Bridge	Cullnagrew Road, Dungannon.	7.50
	Featherbed Rd., Br.	Featherbed Road, Derryhirk, Aghagallon.	17.00
Armagh Council	Metal Bridge	Porthill Road, Mowhan Armagh.	3.00
	Fergy's Bridge	Cusher-Gosford Road, Derryeughan Markethill.	7.50
	Mill Race Br.	Ballynagallagh Road, Tassagh	3.00
	Ballynagallagh Rd. Br.	Ballynagallagh Road, Tassagh	3.00
	Kilmacanty Rd. Br.	Kilmacanty Rd., Br., Kilmore, Loughgall	3.00
	B'macawley-Foley Rd. Br.	Ballymacawley-Foley Road, Tullynagin.	3.00
Newry & Mourne Council	Skerriff's Br.	Skerriff Road, Cullyhanna.	3.00
	Ballyfannaghan Br.	Freeduff Road, Cullyhanna.	7.50
Belfast City Council	Summerhill Ave	Summerhill Avenue.	17.00
	Kings Bridge	Sunnyside Street	7.50
	Ladas Way/Loop River	Ladas Way	17.00
	Knockvale Grove	Knockvale Grove.	17.00
Omagh Council	King James Bridge	Irishtown Road, Omagh.	7.50
Strabane Council	Newtownstewart Br.	Tullycar Road, Castlederg.	7.50
	Mullyfabeg Bridge		7.50
	Abercorn Bridge		3.00
Fermanagh Council	Rosscor Viaduct		7.50
Dungannon Council	Oona Bridge	Drumflugh Road, Benburb.	7.50
	Bonds Bridge		7.50
Down Council	Kilmore Bridge	Kilmore Road, Kilmore.	10.00

Car Parks: Revenue

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the annual revenue earned from charges in each off-street car park, in the last three years.

(AQW 33992/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of annual revenue from parking charges in each off-street car park for the last three financial years are provided in the table below:

Car Park Name	Location	Off Street Receipts		
		2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Harrier Way	Ballyclare	30,160	32,598	33,189
Market Square	Ballyclare	25,596	26,050	25,661
Abbey Street East	Bangor	67,741	70,115	69,353
Bingham Lane	Bangor	60,192	62,790	64,077
Castle Street	Bangor	46,692	46,011	42,697
Clifton Road	Bangor	13,501	14,137	15,232

Car Park Name	Location	Off Street Receipts		
		2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Holborn Avenue	Bangor	38,261	37,601	33,682
Mills Road	Bangor	26,070	26,018	24,661
The Vennel	Bangor	33,473	31,816	33,802
Abbey Street West	Bangor	0	5,892	9,493
Central Avenue	Bangor	0	1,299	1,413
Dufferin Avenue	Bangor	0	17,718	13,600
Bankmore Street	Belfast	80,478	66,293	51,839
Charlotte Street	Belfast	84,440	138,191	150,818
Corporation Square	Belfast	86,003	109,828	168,465
Corporation Street	Belfast	49,362	64,257	80,026
Cromac Street	Belfast	107,874	114,293	283,677
Dunbar Street	Belfast	67,289	71,743	75,821
Exchange Street	Belfast	49,838	58,471	68,502
Frederick Street	Belfast	52,037	57,575	61,858
Hope Street North	Belfast	98,590	90,806	106,518
Kent Street	Belfast	91,030	79,520	58,388
Lt Donegall Street	Belfast	54,149	47,171	45,179
Lt Victoria Street	Belfast	121,194	107,864	217,503
Eastside	Belfast	73,609	80,448	116,317
Northside	Belfast	120,117	118,482	123,532
Smithfield	Belfast	251,894	232,639	184,478
Station Street	Belfast	123,798	121,015	151,984
York Street (No 1)	Belfast	23,557	20,550	24,458
York Street (No 2)	Belfast	19,435	18,584	11,288
Ashdale Street	Belfast	0	11,178	12,974
Marlborough Avenue	Belfast	0	10,335	16,363
High Street	Carrickfergus	52,270	51,993	42,884
Joymount	Carrickfergus	14,289	13,299	11,956
Lancasterian Street	Carrickfergus	38,684	38,296	25,203
St Brides Street	Carrickfergus	35,200	41,538	0
Ballynahinch Street	Hillsborough	28,600	28,267	31,771
Church Road	Hollywood	64,285	62,744	66,508
Hibernia Street North	Hollywood	59,336	43,999	44,497
Hibernia Street South	Hollywood	27,709	26,260	26,387
Antrim Street	Lisburn	207,467	205,510	197,059
Barrack Street	Lisburn	27,790	27,577	27,154
Governors Road	Lisburn	74,331	67,563	61,636
Laganbank Road	Lisburn	230,717	231,619	220,590
Longstone Street Roundabout	Lisburn	23,492	23,195	22,415

Car Park Name	Location	Off Street Receipts		
		2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Queens Road	Lisburn	10,830	12,098	13,698
Smithfield East	Lisburn	96,277	100,499	98,592
Shore Road	Whiteabbey	0	12,878	15,155
Central (Causeway)	Antrim	133,515	133,576	124,932
Railway Street	Antrim	41,819	46,996	47,113
Ann Street	Ballycastle	0	18,893	23,873
Ballymoney Road	Ballymena	58,380	58,456	59,698
Church Street	Ballymena	126,421	120,055	120,042
Coach Entry	Ballymena	43,766	47,620	47,562
Garfield Place	Ballymena	145,658	147,073	143,900
Meeting House Lane	Ballymena	32,201	31,230	29,445
Springwell Street	Ballymena	547,338	549,122	518,209
Henry Street	Ballymena	0	14,173	19,851
Castle Street	Ballymoney	16,241	17,162	16,563
Church Street	Ballymoney	46,116	47,990	48,862
Abbey Street	Coleraine	163,345	169,341	180,282
Long Commons	Coleraine	67,991	73,876	70,513
Mall	Coleraine	185,901	187,986	192,676
Railway Place	Coleraine	49,360	50,151	47,819
Railway Road	Coleraine	67,243	69,441	66,310
Waterside	Coleraine	0	27,912	37,214
Agnew Street	Larne	17,711	17,995	15,648
Circular Road West	Larne	8,720	8,856	9,663
Fairhill	Larne	8,753	8,298	8,494
Narrow Gauge Road	Larne	22,681	22,059	22,988
Riverdale	Larne	0	2,504	3,185
Central	Limavady	72,630	81,033	76,445
Connell Street	Limavady	56,734	63,305	64,512
Main Street	Limavady	0	4,065	5,570
Carlisle Road	Londonderry	24,478	23,063	23,261
Rectory/Masonic/Bishop Street	Londonderry	138,245	162,474	166,570
Foyle Road	Londonderry	31,944	36,592	35,150
Foyle Street	Londonderry	45,947	56,663	67,852
Queens Quay South	Londonderry	51,358	29,893	47,138
Society/Palace Street	Londonderry	21,257	21,896	23,324
Spencer Road	Londonderry	21,019	24,472	27,865
Strand Road	Londonderry	36,173	54,211	57,481
Victoria Market	Londonderry	90,370	104,512	101,347
William Street	Londonderry	86,622	94,579	116,342

Car Park Name	Location	Off Street Receipts		
		2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Friary Road	Armagh	33,995	31,933	26,809
Linenhall St	Armagh	35,387	36,232	36,149
Mall West	Armagh	96,216	84,227	89,068
Dobbin Street Lane	Armagh	39,800	42,177	45,313
Lonsdale Street	Armagh	0	11,296	15,040
Lisburn Street	Ballynahinch	12,161	10,187	8,774
Windmill Street	Ballynahinch	12,551	9,459	9,526
Commercial Road	Banbridge	76,583	80,950	85,125
Downshire Place	Banbridge	23,364	34,621	37,136
Kenlis Street	Banbridge	24,930	27,058	29,781
Bridge Street East	Banbridge	0	6,854	8,478
Townsend Street	Banbridge	0	5,603	7,272
Irish Street	Downpatrick	62,247	63,768	66,285
Scotch Street	Downpatrick	7,064	7,016	9,349
Church Street	Downpatrick	8,371	7,865	8,575
Castle Lane	Lurgan	49,870	54,383	51,597
Moores Lane 2	Lurgan	0	4,181	5,655
Waring Street 3	Lurgan	0	5,477	7,538
Canal Bank 2	Newry	66,256	65,634	57,257
Canal Bank 1	Newry	50,121	56,297	56,076
Basin Walk	Newry	41,733	38,914	41,961
Abbey Way/Mill Street	Newry	102,969	98,544	83,071
Monaghan Street	Newry	83,158	75,405	75,603
New Street	Newry	16,265	17,445	20,416
Ann Street	Newtownards	33,786	33,221	35,019
Kennel Lane	Newtownards	54,122	54,281	54,883
Mill Street Gas Works North	Newtownards	21,019	20,032	20,288
Mill Street	Newtownards	39,629	44,780	52,043
Old Cross Street East	Newtownards	9,997	10,326	10,158
Old Cross Street West	Newtownards	55,673	55,779	51,399
South Street/ Court Street	Newtownards	136,013	135,533	133,817
4 South Street	Newtownards	19,829	20,045	19,198
West Street	Newtownards	19,479	19,256	20,174
Upper Court Street	Newtownards	10,585	10,554	9,802
Magowan Buildings	Portadown	146,358	156,112	163,955
Marley Street	Portadown	12,586	14,507	14,953
Meadow Lane West	Portadown	45,416	45,413	45,359
West Street	Portadown	0	7,363	9,882
William Street	Portadown	0	11,729	15,100

Car Park Name	Location	Off Street Receipts		
		2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Anne Street East	Dungannon	8,776	9,508	9,973
Castle Hill	Dungannon	53,387	56,556	54,772
Church Street/Perry Street	Dungannon	10,494	10,075	11,459
Scotch Street North	Dungannon	34,609	34,597	31,769
Down/Market/Cross Street	Enniskillen	85,510	89,583	85,439
Eden Street	Enniskillen	107,864	106,485	107,728
Head Street	Enniskillen	36,128	35,225	32,451
Quay Lane North	Enniskillen	62,860	66,745	59,002
Quay Lane South	Enniskillen	23,695	23,434	26,718
Shore Road East	Enniskillen	45,682	46,812	44,814
Shore Road West	Enniskillen	17,406	17,636	17,285
Rainey Street	Magherafelt	140,451	144,408	146,620
Union Road	Magherafelt	67,381	61,886	65,215
Central	Magherafelt	0	14,263	21,113
Drumragh Avenue	Omagh	101,388	107,438	102,121
Foundry Lane	Omagh	72,759	75,948	69,649
Johnston Park	Omagh	131,783	138,298	133,796
Market Street	Omagh	64,101	69,397	64,623
Market Place	Omagh	22,361	23,849	23,159
New Brighton Terrace	Omagh	0	10,769	22,334
Butcher Street	Strabane	45,325	51,307	50,990
Lower Main Street North	Strabane	9,250	9,680	4,445
Lower Main Street South	Strabane	30,621	32,715	34,844
Railway Street	Strabane	42,755	42,559	39,787
Upper Main Street	Strabane	0	14,457	20,127
Total		8,009,717	8,414,231	8,768,164

Please note that VAT is payable on income from parking charges.

Belfast Rapid Transit System: South Belfast

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department, or its agencies, have carried out any research or scoping on potential routes for a Belfast Rapid Transit extension to South Belfast; and if not, when they propose to do so.

(AQW 33994/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has recently commenced the implementation of the pilot Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) routes which will link East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the city centre. Subject to the success of this pilot and the availability of finance, we would intend to extend the BRT network to serve both North and South Belfast.

In order to assess the viability of potential BRT routes to North and South Belfast, my Department undertook a number of surveys in 2013. The results of these, along with other surveys, will be used in the development of a new transport model for Belfast. It is anticipated the transport model will be completed in early 2016 and 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.

My Department is already engaging 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.

Park-and-ride Schemes: Greater Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to increase the number of park-and-ride schemes in the Greater Belfast area.

(AQW 33999/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Strategic Park & Ride Delivery Programme 2013-15 aims to deliver at least an additional 1,000 Park & Ride and Park & Share spaces across Northern Ireland. Over 600 additional spaces have already been delivered as part of the Programme.

There are plans for several sites that will serve the Greater Belfast area. In relation to major sites in and around the Greater Belfast area, the following projects are currently being developed:

- **Dundonald Park & Ride, Dunlady Road, Dundonald**
Work has started on the provision of this new 520-space Park & Ride facility. It is anticipated this will be operational later this year.
- **Sprucefield Park & Ride**
This new 650-space Park & Ride facility will replace the existing 320-space facility. Work is scheduled to commence later this year with completion by mid 2015.
- **Ballymartin Park & Ride, Templepatrick**
Work on this new 420-space Park & Ride facility is scheduled to commence later this year with completion due in 2016.

Environmental Contamination Issues

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all the environmental contamination issues in the Belfast Harbour Estate.

(AQW 34064/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department of the Environment, through its Environmental Policy Division and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has responsibility for the formulation, development and implementation of Government policy, strategy and legislation in Northern Ireland.

My department is aware that an element of contamination has been identified at a development site off Airport Road. It is understood that discussions and agreements on mitigation/decontamination measures have taken place between the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in its role as the appropriate authority.

The Belfast Harbour Commissioners have further identified two potential contamination issues; these are:

- a) Potential tri-butyl tin contamination in the sediments off the outfitting quay in a section of Musgrave Channel and;
- b) Potential tri-butyl tin / heavy metal contamination in the sediments off the Alexandra Wharf.

It is my Departments understanding that both issues are subject to verification by testing and that the sediments in question are currently believed to be undisturbed.

Any discussions on these and other environmental issues are unlikely to involve my Department in anything other than a peripheral role, but I have indicated to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners that I would like my officials to be appraised of any developments in relation to the issues identified, should they occur.

Portavoe Reservoir

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has had talks with North Down Borough Council to discuss purchasing Portavoe Reservoir.

(AQW 34103/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water representatives have held a number of meetings with both North Down and Ards Borough Councils regarding Portavoe Reservoir. At the last meeting on 25 April 2014 the possibility of the Councils acquiring the reservoir was discussed and the representatives of the Councils advised that they were considering their position. However, they indicated that a decision may not be made until the new Council arrangements are established in 2015.

Down Armagh Rural Transport

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development why funding has been reduced for the Down Armagh Rural Transport (DART) in the Craigavon area.

(AQW 34198/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The allocation of funding for 2014/15 will be notified to each of the Rural Community Transport Partnerships week ending 20 June 2015. The allocation for the southern area of which Down Armagh Rural Transport is part will not be reduced.

Translink: Employees Community Background

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for a breakdown of the community background of Translink employees in the Dungannon district at (i) management; and (ii) inspector level.

(AQW 34217/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that given the small number of employees in the two categories within the Dungannon district area it feels unable to provide the community background. This is in order to protect the identity of individual staff members.

Down Armagh Rural Transport

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will intervene and continue funding the Down Armagh Rural Transport (DART) provision in the Craigavon area.

(AQW 34245/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer to my answer to AQW 34198/11-15.

Car Parks: Control

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development, following the transfer of off-street parking to local council control, whether he can provide an assurance that sites will not be sold.

(AQO 6343/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is unfortunate following the Executive's proposed transfer of off-street car parks to the new councils, which form part of the package of new responsibilities and assets transferring under RPA, there has been comment which suggests some Councils will be reckless or not act in the public interest in their management of these car parks.

Of course, no assurance can be given that at some future point a council may decide, in the interest of their ratepayers, it would be appropriate to dispose of a car park. I am, however, confident the new councilors, including the 88 from my own party, will be very well aware of the views of local stakeholders on parking issues. It will be a matter for the new councils, to take account of the view of these stakeholders who will include those with local business interests, as well as ratepayers and other members of the public, when they make decisions relating to off-street parking provisions and costs.

I can also confirm that my Department proposes to issue an Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill for consultation soon. It is scheduled to be introduced to the Assembly in September at which stage Members will have an opportunity to debate and propose changes.

Transport: Mid-Ulster

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the public and community transport pilot scheme in mid-Ulster.

(AQO 6344/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to advise that good progress continues to be made on the Integrated Transport Pilot Project currently underway in the Dungannon and Cookstown areas.

To date, the project has seen the integration of Translink and Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) services for four routes to post primary school services in Dungannon. This has enabled the spare vehicles and drivers to be redeployed to other priority work within SELB. A new evening visitor service to Craigavon Area Hospital has also been introduced, providing improved access for passengers, particularly those travelling from rural areas.

The pilot has also seen Community Transport providing school transport services in the Castlecaulfield area, an important example of how transport providers could deploy their resources more flexibly. Following a review, improvements have been made to the provision of information to passengers about the services available.

However, more can be done and, over the coming months, my Department will be working with the SELB to plan the wider utilisation of its vehicles in the Clogher Valley area, in order to provide additional services at times when the vehicles are not needed for school transport. There is also ongoing liaison with the Southern Health Trust to develop options for the more flexible use of the Trust's transport fleet.

My Department is also collecting information on routes, vehicles and costs from all service providers: Translink, the Education and Library Boards, the Health Trusts and the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. The Department has recently appointed expert transport planners to help identify how the lessons learned from the pilot can be implemented on a wider scale across Northern Ireland. The conclusions from this work will form the basis of the Economic Appraisal, which should be completed by late 2014.

Water Bill

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the main components of the proposed Water Bill.

(AQO 6345/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am currently consulting on policy proposals to be taken forward in a new Water Bill.

The consultation includes a proposal to extend my Department's power to pay subsidy to NI Water on behalf of domestic customers to 2017 to cover the extension of the current assembly mandate.

The consultation includes proposals to provide powers to direct the Utility Regulator to abide by Social and Environmental policies issued by my Department and to consolidate requirements on NI Water to produce separate Water Resource Management and Drought Plans.

Grit: Stockpile

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the recent mild winter, how much grit is now in stock. (AQO 6346/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I assume the Member's question relates to Rock Salt, which is the primary material used in the delivery of my Department's winter service programme.

Whilst the 2013/14 winter was relatively mild, my Department still carried out a significant number of salting actions as weather forecasts for frost remained at levels consistent with an average year's winter.

By the end of the 2013/14 winter season, my Department had used approximately 63,000 tonnes with approximately 56,000 tonnes of rock salt held in storage. Should the Member wish to visit one of my Department's salt barns, I would be happy to make the necessary arrangements.

Jan Gehl

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the issues he discussed at his meeting with the architect Jan Gehl.

(AQO 6347/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Jan Gehl led a discussion on the theme of 'Cities for People', and highlighted a number of world cities, including Melbourne, New York and Moscow where significant work has been undertaken to encourage higher levels of walking and cycling and greater engagement in the public realm. Jan Gehl talked about the world's most liveable cities, of which Copenhagen is ranked number one, and highlighted the criteria which is applied to generate this ranking.

The meeting was beneficial because it presented valuable examples of the types of transport planning and innovative urban design interventions that have worked well elsewhere. It confirmed to me that while my Department is taking positive steps towards creating an environment which invites people to walk and cycle as much as possible, maximising the potential requires the adoption of a strategy which involves many Government Departments.

The issues dealt with by Jan Gehl are presented in a film entitled 'The Human Scale'. I have found these concepts very challenging but they are influencing my approach to the drafting of a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Dungiven: Roads

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place for the realignment of the dangerous corner, approximately two miles north from Dungiven, on the B68 Ballyquin Road.

(AQO 6348/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has developed a scheme to realign the bend on the Ballyquin Road in the townland of Scriggan. Unfortunately, due to difficulties acquiring the land required to carry out the scheme it has not yet been possible to bring this proposal forward into a works programme.

However, my officials will continue to pursue this matter and subject to progress on this and the availability of funding, the scheme will be considered for delivery in a future works programme.

Cycling Unit

Mr Milne asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the other departments and stakeholders he has engaged with in relation to the new Cycling Unit.

(AQO 6349/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Since setting up the Cycling Unit in November 2013, the Unit has met with an extensive range of stakeholders including the Committee for Regional Development, the All Party Group on Cycling and the Department of Health, the Public Health Agency and the Department of Education and the Department for Social Development. Meetings involving other Departments are planned. The Cycling Unit has also met with the Belfast Active Travel Task and Finish Group, Sustrans, a number of councils, Translink, Waterways Ireland, the Blackwater Regional Partnership and the Connswater Community Greenway. In developing a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland, my Department has engaged with Councils and various interested bodies through five informal consultations workshops across Northern Ireland.

I wrote to Ministerial colleagues in April, informing them of my intention to establish, and Chair, a Cross-sectoral Cycling Group which would bring together the key organisations which need to work together to deliver the health, economic, social

and environmental benefits already identified in the Active Travel Strategy and assist in the development of the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland. DHSSPS, DE, DCAL, DSD, DOE, DOJ and DETI have nominated members to this Group which will include several other organisations. The first meeting is arranged for 26th June.

Transport: Public Attacks

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline any departmental studies that have measured the attitudes of people with a disability, and older people, towards public transport.

(AQO 6350/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has commissioned a survey into the attitudes of disabled and older people towards public transport which is expected to be completed in the autumn.

There have been previous studies into the attitudes of people with a disability and older people towards public transport and these are listed below.

Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2000 – 2002 through to 2010 -2012	http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/northern_ireland_travel_survey.htm
Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Users Survey May 2011	http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/traffic_and_transport_research.htm
Public Perception of Safety on Public Transport January 2010 and January 2013	http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/traffic_and_transport_research.htm

Sewage Odours: Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his Department's efforts to rectify the sewage-related odour problems in the Danny's Mill Road area of Enniskillen.

(AQO 6351/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am aware that there has been a long standing issue in this area due to odours emanating from the sewerage system. The root cause is the pumped sewage flows entering the system from Rossory Wastewater Pumping Station (WWPS) which is part of the Enniskillen sewerage drainage system. NIW has met local residents on a number of occasions and has developed a four phase programme of work to address the issue.

The first phase, which was completed in January 2013, involved the removal of five private house connections and sealing manhole lids on the trunk sewers that run through the area, in order to help contain odours within the sewerage system. The second phase, which involves undertaking essential cleaning/repairs to the trunk sewers and sealing additional manhole lids, commenced in March 2014. It is scheduled for completion in mid-July 2014. Unfortunately, during this construction work the odours in the area temporarily increased owing to the disturbance of the drainage system.

The third phase relates to the feasibility of re-routing the pumping sewer and upgrading the Enniskillen sewerage system. A number of options are currently under consideration including re-routing the pumping sewer from Rossory WWPS, septicity dosing to neutralise odours in the pumping main and upgrading Rossory and Killynure WWPS as part of the Enniskillen Drainage Area Plan (DAP). The re-routing of the pumping sewer is emerging as the most economical option to permanently address the immediate odour issues at Danny's Mill. This phase is expected to commence later this year with completion in early 2015.

A business case is currently being developed to consider the longer term requirements for the upstream drainage system and in particular Rossory WWPS and Killynure WWPS, as part of the Enniskillen Drainage Area Plan. It is envisaged that this final phase will complete the work needed to provide a long term solution to the sewerage problems in this area.

NI Water representatives shall be meeting local residents affected to reassure them of NI Water's commitment to have the matter resolved.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of jobs in his Department that could be located in County Hall, Coleraine in order to reduce the impact on the upcoming redundancy of Driver and Vehicle Agency staff.

(AQO 6352/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to, once again, pledge my support to the efforts being made to redeploy those staff affected by the decision to withdraw licensing work from Northern Ireland.

My Department has already made a positive contribution towards finding posts for the affected staff. Three DVA staff have transferred to DRD's Transport NI offices in County Hall, Coleraine and a further three posts have been offered to staff from DVA. When combined with contributions offered by other Departments, I would hope this will make a positive impact in terms of addressing the surplus staff position.

I understand from the Minister of the Environment's recent announcement that a number of DOE posts will be moving from Belfast to Coleraine. Given that this decision is likely to lead to a number of staff being displaced in Belfast, my Department

will continue to work closely with DOE officials to identify redeployment opportunities which might be made available to staff affected by this decision.

My Department's officials are also actively engaged in work with DOE and DFP colleagues to identify other job opportunities which may be made available. In tandem with this, DRD is an active member of the NICS Inter-Departmental Redeployment Group tasked to consider ways of resolving the surplus situation.

I can assure Members that my officials will continue to work closely with the appropriate personnel to find ways in which we can further assist the affected staff.

Department for Social Development

Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development what actions his Department will take as a result of the findings of The Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland, produced by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

(AQW 33803/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): NIHE presented at the launch in Belfast of the Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland. This report provided a 'baseline' account of how homelessness stood in Northern Ireland in 2013. It also highlighted emerging trends and forecasts of some of the likely changes, identifying developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness. These include welfare, housing and other social policy reforms, including cutbacks in public expenditure.

The report indicates that rates of statutory homelessness are higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK. However, it did qualify that this was partly as a result of different policy and administrative practices that differ than those in Great Britain as can be seen in the two quotes from the report below:

- i "This reflects in part the fact that acceptances have fallen in England and Wales as a result of the vigorous implementation of the Homelessness Prevention/Housing Options model. There has also been a more recent but similarly substantial drop in the levels of statutory homelessness in Scotland as a result of the later adoption of the Housing Options model"
- ii "Another contributory factor to the rates of statutory homeless in Northern Ireland may be local administration tradition of the treatment of certain categories of applicants. In particular, older people whom it is unreasonable to expect to continue to occupy their current accommodation (e.g. because they cannot manage the stress), are treated as statutory homeless in Northern Ireland whereas they are generally accommodated via mainstream allocation processes elsewhere in the UK."

This means that the information on levels of statutory homelessness compared to Great Britain are not directly comparable.

The Housing Executive has produced a Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 to address homelessness in Northern Ireland with the aim of eliminating long term homelessness and rough sleeping across Northern Ireland by 2020. The Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 has recently been reviewed, taking account of the findings of the Homeless Monitor Northern Ireland 2013. Key themes have been identified going forward;

- Given the significant impact within Great Britain the adoption of a Housing Options approach in Northern Ireland will be investigated which will examine an individual's options and choices in the widest sense when they look for housing advice. This approach features early preventative intervention and explores all possible housing options including social renting, private renting, owner-occupation and remaining in current accommodation.
- The implementation of a Housing First approach is based on the concept that a homeless individual's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that the other issues that may affect them can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. This approach moves away from the use of temporary accommodation hostels towards an emphasis on placing homeless households directly into mainstream accommodation with appropriate support provided. A Housing First pilot scheme managed by the Depaul organisation is currently operating in Belfast. It helps chronically homeless people with complex needs move from a hostel environment to independent living with necessary support and prevents repeat homelessness.
- The development of a Common Assessment Tool to comprehensively assess the health and social care needs of those presenting as homeless. This approach, which has been agreed with the sector, would ensure that an initial assessment of a homeless person's housing and support needs would be easily accessible to a wide variety of agencies across Northern Ireland thus allowing appropriate help to be provided in a timely manner.
- The introduction of a Central Access Point for all homeless services will be explored examining the creation of a centralised facility which advises on current temporary and permanent housing vacancies and has access to a range of support services. This model, which will remove the need to travel or contact a range of homeless agencies, will provide a known single point of contact for a homeless person who requires immediate help with accommodation or other support requirements.

The Housing Executive will establish revised inter-agency structures to develop these themes both centrally and locally. Within these new forums it will continue to work with a wide range of voluntary, statutory and private stakeholders to produce and deliver on action/commissioning plans.

Homelessness

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to outline his Department's plans to address the level of homelessness.

(AQW 33804/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has produced a Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2017 with the main aim that long term homelessness and rough sleeping is eliminated across Northern Ireland by 2020. There has been steady progress to date relevant to the strategy's 38 recommendation action plan. The Housing Executive achievements funded from the Homelessness Budget include;

- Simon Community undertaking a preventative homeless programme within schools
- Housing Rights Service working with prisoners to find suitable accommodation on release
- Women's Aid extending their Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline to aid vulnerable women
- The procurement of a Private Rented Sector Access Scheme by Smartmove NI
- The establishment of a Multi-Disciplinary Team in Belfast to support homeless people with complex needs
- The development of crisis facilities an accompanying street outreach services for rough sleepers and street drinkers in Belfast and Londonderry.

In addition through the Housing Related Support Strategy £26.6 million funding for homeless linked services has been provided within the Supporting People programme for 2014/15. The Homeless Strategy 2012 – 2017 has recently been reviewed, taking account of the findings of the Homeless Monitor Northern Ireland 2013.

Key themes have been identified going forward;

- Given the significant impact within Great Britain the adoption of a Housing Options approach in Northern Ireland will be investigated which will examine an individual's options and choices in the widest sense when they look for housing advice. This approach features early preventative intervention and explores all possible housing options including social renting, private renting, owner-occupation and remaining in current accommodation.
- The implementation of a Housing First approach is based on the concept that a homeless individual's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that the other issues that may affect them can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. This approach moves away from the use of temporary accommodation hostels towards an emphasis on placing homeless households directly into mainstream accommodation with appropriate support provided. A Housing First pilot scheme managed by the Depaul organisation is currently operating in Belfast. It helps chronically homeless people with complex needs move from a hostel environment to independent living with necessary support and prevents repeat homelessness.
- The development of a Common Assessment Tool to comprehensively assess the health and social care needs of those presenting as homeless. This approach, which has been agreed with the sector, would ensure that an initial assessment of a homeless person's housing and support needs would be easily accessible to a wide variety of agencies across Northern Ireland thus allowing appropriate help to be provided in a timely manner.
- The introduction of a Central Access Point for all homeless services will be explored examining the creation of a centralised facility which advises on current temporary and permanent housing vacancies and has access to a range of support services. This model, which will remove the need to travel or contact a range of homeless agencies, will provide a known single point of contact for a homeless person who requires immediate help with accommodation or other support requirements.

The Housing Executive will establish revised inter-agency structures to develop these themes both centrally and locally. Within these new forums it will continue to work with a wide range of voluntary, statutory and private stakeholders to produce and deliver on action/commissioning plans.

Housing Executive: North Down Properties

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Housing Executive stock in North Down are being considered for transfer to a housing association.

(AQW 33834/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that their stock in North Down which is currently on the Stock Transfer Programme are all located in Bangor:

- Drumawhey Gardens (54 properties)
- Rathgill Park (16 properties)
- Jubilee Court (38 properties)
- Ballynoe Gardens (8 properties)
- Ravara Gardens (12 properties)

A review of the Stock Transfer Programme is currently taking place to determine whether the Programme in its current form is the best way to effectively deliver the desired outcomes. The expectation is that the review will be completed in the next few weeks at which stage any revised approach and recommendations will be presented for consideration.

Although it is accepted that any revisions to the current planned process may delay progress initially, the intention is to make the Programme more readily deliverable overall. If it is decided that the Stock Transfer Programme should be reconfigured, the Housing Executive will write to all of the affected tenants to clarify the timescale for their properties.

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

Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Contracts

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what has been the change in the audited assessment of planned maintenance contracts carried out by the Housing Executive in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33842/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that in 2011/12 their Corporate Assurance Unit (CAU) completed 28 inspections with 43% obtaining a satisfactory or substantial classification. This improved slightly in 2012/13 with 44% of the 43 inspections completed being satisfactory or substantial.

2013/14 saw a further improvement in the inspection results with 83% of the 18 completed inspections achieving a substantial or satisfactory rating. As part of the planned merger of the Internal Audit Department and Corporate Assurance Unit, the Housing Executive's Acting Chief Executive has requested a due diligence exercise to review the current reporting arrangements. The exercise is due to be completed and reported on by 30th June 2014.

There has been a continuous improvement each year in terms of the inspection results. In the 2013/2014 inspection programme, CAU staff provided feedback highlighting the main recurring issues found specifically within Kitchen installations and window replacement schemes as well as identifying the main Health & Safety issues found within these work streams to ensure further improvement. CAU has found the quality of work on site has generally improved and is widening its inspection regime to include the wider scheme delivery process from inception to completion, which includes contract management.

Housing Executive: Superannuation Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development who is responsible for the training of Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff in the administration of the superannuation scheme, particularly when it relates to severe ill health.

(AQW 33845/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that it is not responsible for the administration of the superannuation scheme. This is handled by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) of which the Housing Executive is a participating employer.

The Housing Executive has further advised that their HR staff deal with cases of severe ill health by referring them, on receipt of an independent Occupational Health Advisor's opinion, to NILGOSC for their consideration. NILGOSC then deal with such cases on the basis of their own Occupational Health advisor's opinions.

NILGOSC provides regular refresher training on the administration of the scheme to Housing Executive payroll and HR staff and advice on the aspects of the scheme when required to Housing Executive's HR managers.

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development what financial, or other, resources his Department has provided to ethnic and religious minority groups, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 33875/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Detail of funding provided by my Department to ethnic and religious minority groups in each of the last five years is attached at Annex A.

My Department provides funding to the Churches Community Work Alliance to enable it to deliver generic faith-based community development services to groups across Northern Ireland, including those from an ethnic minority background. Additionally, in 2010 the Community Faiths' Forum was established to bring together representatives from Christian and non-Christian backgrounds to discuss social and community issues. This Forum contains representation from Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths alongside members from various Christian traditions.

Through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy funding was provided where a priority need for action was identified within local Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans and where resources were available. An example of such funding was provided to Strabane Ethnic Community Association, which is an organisation delivering services to people from ethnic minorities living in the Strabane Neighbourhood Renewal Area and to An Munia Tober, which is the Travellers' Support Programme for Northern Ireland.

Through the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme the Department provides support for Advice Services, Women's Services and Volunteering Services across Northern Ireland, including those from ethnic and religious minority groups.

While the Social Security Agency does not provide financial support for religious and minority groups, the Agency does provide telephony and face to face interpretation and translation services to ensure that claimants from a minority ethnic background, whose first language is not English, are able to access the benefit system. The Social Security Agency has also delivered programmes of work aimed at improving the uptake of benefits to the whole population across Northern Ireland, including those from ethnic minority groups.

Annex A

OrganisationName	FinancialYear	Total
Afro Community Support Organisation	2011/2012	£ 1,500.00
An Munia Tober	2009/2010	£ 87,417.00
	2010/2011	£ 88,826.00
	2011/2012	£ 87,620.00
	2012/2013	£ 81,143.00
	2013/2014	£ 88,519.00
An Munia Tober Total		£ 433,525.00
An Tearmann Project Ltd	2013/2014	£ 633.00
Asian Over 50 Club	2010/2011	£ 511.00
	2012/2013	£ 560.00
Asian Over 50 Club Total		£ 1,071.00
Ballycastle Churches Action Group	2009/2010	£ 800.00
Bike Aid Africa	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
Black Mountain Zen Centre	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
Black Mountain Zen Centre Total		£ 2,200.00
Called 2 Care Ministries	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
Chinese Art & Calligraphy Association	2009/2010	£ 758.00
	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
Chinese Art & Calligraphy Association Total		£ 1,858.00
Chinese Language School	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
Chinese Language School Total		£ 2,200.00
Christian Ministries Centre	2009/2010	£ 806.00
	2011/2012	£ 1,300.00
Christian Ministries Centre Total		£ 2,106.00
Church of Ireland Diocese for Derry and Raphoe	2009/2010	£ 36,773.09
	2010/2011	£ 46,117.02
	2011/2012	£ 43,000.00
	2013/2014	£ 23,424.00
Church of Ireland Diocese for Derry and Raphoe Total		£ 149,314.11
Churches Community Work Alliance	2009/2010	£ 102,820.63
	2010/2011	£ 128,168.88
	2011/2012	£ 137,075.72
	2012/2013	£ 124,351.30

OrganisationName	FinancialYear	Total
Churches Community Work Alliance Total		£ 492,416.53
Churches Trust Ltd	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
Community Restorative Justice Newry/Armagh	2009/2010	£ 940.00
	2010/2011	£ 850.00
	2011/2012	£ 1,000.00
	2012/2013	£ 250.00
Community Restorative Justice Newry/Armagh Total		£ 3,040.00
Craigavon & District Vietnamese Club	2012/2013	£ 300.00
Indian Senior Citizens Club	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
	2011/2012	£ 1,500.00
	2013/2014	£ 500.00
Indian Senior Citizens Club Total		£ 4,200.00
NI Pakistani Cultural Association	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
	2010/2011	£ 1,100.00
NI Pakistani Cultural Association Total		£ 2,200.00
Oi Yin Womens Chinese Womens Group	2009/2010	£ 1,100.00
Polish Association County Down	2012/2013	£ 650.00
Romanian Roma Community Association NI	2012/2013	£ 1,119.00
Seaview Enterprises Ltd	2012/2013	£ 1,000.00
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme	2009/2010	£ 70,000.00
	2010/2011	£ 67,211.00
	2011/2012	£ 66,538.89
	2012/2013	£ 66,538.89
	2013/2014	£ 66,538.89
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme Total		£ 336,827.67
Strabane Ethnic Community Association	2009/2010	£ 22,737.00
	2010/2011	£ 31,452.00
	2011/2012	£ 31,631.00
	2012/2013	£ 31,960.00
	2013/2014	£ 33,742.00
Strabane Ethnic Community Association Total		£ 151,522.00
The Churches Voluntary Work Bureau Ltd	2011/2012	£ 108,782.00
	2012/2013	£ 152,904.00
	2013/2014	£ 118,211.00
The Churches Voluntary Work Bureau Ltd Total		£ 379,897.00
The Welcome House	2011/2012	£ 1,000.00
	2012/2013	£ 1,200.00
The Welcome House Total		£ 2,200.00
Training For Women Network Ltd	2013/2014	£ 184,324.35

OrganisationName	FinancialYear	Total
Women Of The World	2009/2010	£ 850.00
Grand Total		£2,160,153.66

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development what financial, or other, support is available from his Department for religious and ethnic minority groups.

(AQW 33878/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department provides funding to the Churches Community Work Alliance to enable it to deliver generic faith-based community development services to groups across Northern Ireland, including those from an ethnic minority background. Additionally, in 2010 the Community Faiths' Forum was established to bring together representatives from Christian and non Christian backgrounds to discuss social and community issues. This Forum contains representation from Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths alongside members from various Christian traditions.

Through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy funding is provided where a priority need for action is identified within local Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans and where resources are available.

Through the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme the Department provides support for Advice Services, Women's Services and Volunteering Services across Northern Ireland, including those from ethnic and religious minority groups.

The Social Security Agency provides telephony and face to face interpretation and translation services to ensure that claimants from a minority ethnic background, whose first language is not English, are able to access the benefit system. The Social Security Agency has also delivered programmes of work aimed at improving the uptake of benefits to the whole population across Northern Ireland, including those from ethnic minority groups.

Housing Executive: Rent and Rates Charges

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development what steps he will take to rectify the situation whereby Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants, especially elderly tenants, who receive notifications regarding variations in their charges for rent and rates, find that these notifications do not adequately explain the impact that these changes will have on how much they have to pay.

(AQW 33916/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they are aware through customer feedback that some tenants are not satisfied with the volume and content of Housing Benefit notifications currently being sent to them. They have already identified through engagement with tenants that many people would prefer to receive their information in a more straightforward, conventional letter format. This would better meet the needs of the tenants rather than the computer generated Benefit Decision Notices that are currently issued.

The Housing Executive is to some extent constrained by legislative requirements but they have already entered into discussions with their software suppliers with a view to making notifications clearer and more easily understood.

Finally, the Housing Executive hopes to start issuing revised notifications later this year and will be seeking further feedback from tenants both directly and via the Community Housing Forum before implementing further changes

Social Housing: Grosvenor Barracks Site

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant AQW 33567/11-15, to detail (i) when the decision was taken not to provide additional social housing on the Grosvenor Barracks site, given that it was previously announced that 500 mixed tenure homes were to be built on the site; (ii) who took the decision; and (iii) why no further social houses are planned for this site.

(AQW 33920/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The twenty acre Grosvenor Barracks site is divided into two sections. The smaller of these is 2.7 acres in size (referred to as Ballaghmore Heights) which has been developed by Clanmil Housing Association to provide ten units of social housing. The remaining 17.2 acre site contains a range of former military buildings and installations. Outline planning permission was submitted in January 2011 for a 200 dwelling (mixed tenure) scheme on this site. A remediation plan has been completed and submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Regulator. Planning consent is dependent on the approval of this remediation plan.

However, it is worth noting that under the reform of Local Government, Fermanagh District Council was notified by the Department of the Environment on 13 November 2013 that this development site would be transferring to the new Fermanagh/Omagh Council from 1 April 2015.

My officials continue to work with the appointed Consultants and DFP to resolve the outstanding issues to progress planning approval.

Migrant Residents

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what research has been undertaken to determine the number of migrants currently resident in areas classified or regarded as unionist and nationalist.

(AQW 34024/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has two studies in progress which involve migrant residents: the first involves mapping segregation and will include migrant households and communities; the other will examine the impact of migrant workers on the housing market by comparing Dungannon, with large numbers of migrants, with Larne where numbers are low.

The Community Relations Council published an article, "Moving apart or moving together? A snapshot of residential segregation from the 2011 Census"¹ in November 2013, which examines residential segregation and refers to where migrants are settling. The Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study also examines these issues.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34049/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The number of Freedom of Information requests received in my Department, in each of the last three financial years, was as follows –

- 2011-2012 - 240
- 2012-2013 - 239
- 2013-2014 - 287

Information was withheld under the Environmental Information Regulations exceptions in two of the requests received during the 2011/12 financial year. One exception was applied in the 2012/13 year and none in 2013/14.

The Member may wish to note that information regarding requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports. It is collected on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. This has been the case since 01 January 2005, when the legislation came fully into force.

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 report for 2013 is in preparation and cannot be seen as validated until it is published.

Charity Commission: Staffing

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development how many staff in the Charity Commission are involved in investigative work; and how many of those staff have been trained in this work, broken down by grade.

(AQW 34164/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

Grade 7 (x1):

- Almost 20 years experience of audit and investigation work
- CIPFA/Bond Solon: Advanced Professional Certificate in Investigative Practice
- CMIIA (Chartered Membership Institute Internal Auditors)

Grade SO (x1):

- 25 years investigative experience
- Forensic specialist
- PEACE Interview Trainer
- Accredited Counter Fraud Specialist

Grade EO (x2):

- Completed training in CIPFA/Bond Solon: Certificate in Investigatory Practice
- Both regulatory/investigative background

1 (Shuttleworth I., Lloyd C., (2013) Moving apart or moving together? Shared Space Vol 16, November 2013. CRC)

Criteria Used by the Charity Commission

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development what criteria the Charity Commission uses to decide whether to carry out a statutory inquiry; and how does it apply the risk-based approach described on its website.

(AQW 34165/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are a number of criteria, which include the seriousness of the issues presented, the risk to governance within the charity, the risk to the charities assets and the need to use the powers assigned to the Commission under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. A risk assessment is carried out on initial receipt of the concern and this risk assessment is repeated throughout the life of the investigation as new information is received and conclusions drawn. The opening of a statutory inquiry is ratified by at least three Commissioners before being taken forward.

Grove Park: Roof Replacement Scheme

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Social Development when final approval will be granted for the roof replacement scheme for Grove Park, Culcavy, given that the initial date for completion was November 2012.

(AQW 34338/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that it is their expectation that tender documents will be with their contracts department week commencing 16 June 2014. The Housing Executive's aim is to be on site by late August with completion scheduled for November 2014.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Disability: Members Declaration

Mr Hussey asked the Assembly Commission how many Members have declared a disability.

(AQW 34125/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): At the start of each mandate (or whenever a Member joins the Assembly midway through a mandate), each Member is provided with a disability audit form. So far in this mandate, 4 members have declared a disability.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 27 June 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what financial, or other, resources their Department has provided to ethnic and religious minority groups in each of the last five years.

(AQW 33874/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): For the past five years, including this financial year, the Minority Ethnic Development Fund has been set at £1.1m per annum.

The Racial Equality Unit also provides day to day assistance and guidance to individuals and groups in respect of their funding awards.

Markethill: Main Street

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what propriety interest their Department has in the premises at Main Street, Markethill, formerly occupied by SAVER/NAVER.

(AQW 33908/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has a charge over the premises at Main Street, Markethill along with two other funders (Rural Development Council and International Fund for Ireland). A pari passu agreement is in place between the funders.

Social Investment Fund

Mr P Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any changes that have been made to the Area Plans of the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 6286/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following our decision on the allocation of the Fund across the nine Zones, the Steering Groups were given the opportunity to revise the priority ranking of projects submitted within the Area Plans. As a result, a number of projects were reprioritised within the Belfast South, Western, Southern and Belfast East area plans by the Steering Groups. This took account of progress since submission of the plans and the current needs of the local communities, as well as to maximise the impact of available funding.

Active Ageing Strategy

Mr Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Active Ageing Strategy 2014-20.

(AQO 6280/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The purpose of the Active Ageing Strategy is to transform attitudes to and services for older people. It is important that we fully acknowledge the enormous contribution that older people make to our society and that we challenge the negative stereotyping of older people. The Strategy will provide direction for departments' policies, make connections between Strategies and lead to the improvement of services for older people.

It will increase the understanding of the issues affecting older people and promote an emphasis on rights, value and contribution, as opposed to needs, costs and burden.

The public consultation on the Active Ageing Strategy ran from Friday 21 February and ended on Friday 23 May.

Consultees were asked for their views on the draft Vision, Strategic Aims and signature programme proposals in the Strategy.

Nine public consultation events were held and these included an intergenerational event at which younger and older people worked together to provide feedback on the Strategy.

Over 300 people attended the events and approximately 140 online or written responses have been received.

The consultation responses are currently being analysed and it is planned that following Ministerial and Executive approval the finalised Strategy will be launched in the autumn.

The Strategy will be implemented under the Delivering Social Change initiative and the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group, chaired by Claire Keatinge the Commissioner for Older People, will play a key role in overseeing its delivery.

St Patrick's Barracks

Mr Frew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress made at the St Patrick's Barracks site. (AQO 6281/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The St Patrick's Barracks site occupies a significant position within Ballymena. It is consequently very important that when looking at the future of the site all potential uses are examined and consideration is given to the wider regeneration and development needs of Ballymena Town Centre and its environs.

With that in mind, a stakeholder group was formed and our Department is working closely with both the Department for Social Development and representatives of the new shadow Mid and East Antrim Council to consider how the site can best be developed for the economic and social benefit of the community.

To ensure that all of the public sector interests in the site are consulted as part of the wider stakeholder group, our Department recently arranged for Land and Property Services to undertake a trawl for interest in the site by public sector bodies. We are still awaiting the final report on the outcome of that trawl but we understand that a number of interests have been expressed including in the education and housing sectors.

We will continue to work with the shadow council and the Department for Social Development to determine the most advantageous uses for the site and the best way in which these can be delivered.

Bright Start

Miss M McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the level of interest expressed in Bright Start. (AQO 6282/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme was launched on 27 March 2014. The Scheme is open to existing and prospective providers of school age childcare services and aims to create or sustain up to 7,000 childcare places. Public interest in the Grant Scheme has been significant. Our promotional events in April 2014 attracted close to 300 potential applicants and, to date, 76 full applications and 60 expressions of interest have been received.

Social Investment Fund: East Belfast

Mr Douglas asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Social Investment Fund projects in East Belfast. (AQO 6283/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Five projects have been prioritised by the Steering Group within the funding allocation for the Belfast East Social Investment Fund Zone. One of these projects, a capital development of Bryson Street Surgery, has been formally approved and a draft letter of offer has been issued. Our officials are working to issue and agree a revised letter of offer in the coming weeks to enable work to commence on delivery. The remaining four projects, details of which can be found at

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/social-investment-fund/sif-projects.htm> are currently being progressed through the economic appraisal approval process. We hope to be in a position to secure approvals for these and move to delivery over the remainder of the year.

Victims and Survivors: Support and Financial Assistance

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the delays whereby victims and survivors have yet to receive offer letters for packages of support or financial assistance which have been registered since February 2014. (AQW 34224/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) has received 2,041 applications via the Gateway Process since 4 February 2014. This was higher than anticipated and to date the Service has issued 787 award letters, which was the maximum possible based on the budget available for 2013-14.

The remaining applications are currently being processed to ensure that when the schemes and budgets are opened for 2014-2015, the Service will be in a position to respond with minimum delay.

The Financial Assistance Scheme (Scheme 6) was opened to the seriously injured on the higher care component of Disability Living Allowance in April 2014. It opened to remaining clients on 2 June 2014 and will close on 30 June 2014.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Flooding: Greystown and Sicily Park

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the recommendations proposed by the November 2012 Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit report on flooding in the Greystown and Sicily park area of Belfast. (AQW 34174/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The PEDU Report made a number of recommendations relating to many aspects of flood risk management. Many of these recommendations have already been implemented and others are at various stages of progression. The Report did not refer specifically to Greystown and Sicily Park, but I can confirm that significant work has been done and is ongoing at these locations to improve drainage infrastructure.

DARD Direct Office: Claudy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the decision was taken to abandon a Direct Office in Claudy; and how the needs of farmers in the Limavady, Dungiven, and Claudy areas will be met. (AQW 34206/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Since the announcement that there would be a network of 12 DARD Direct offices across the north of Ireland in 2009, DARD has been working with (Department of Finance and Personnel) DFP to identify, secure and refurbish office accommodation at the named locations, which included Claudy. Whilst suitable premises were identified in Claudy, DFP were unable to confirm a procurement programme and clarify payment conditions with the developer for delivery within 2012/13.

In September 2012, I announced that the new DARD HQ would be located at the Ballykelly site. Given the position with the Claudy premises, I asked my officials to re-consider the options for the DARD Direct office in the Northwest. Following analysis of the options, I decided that locating the office in Strabane meets the DARD Direct criteria, is a good fit with DARD's Estate Strategy, and ties in with the Regional Development Strategy 2035.

Customers in the Limavady, Dungiven and Claudy areas who need to visit a DARD Direct office will have the choice of Coleraine, Magherafelt or Strabane DARD Direct offices, whichever is the most convenient.

Headquarters Relocation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there will be any front of office service to deal with the queries of local farmers when her Department's headquarters relocates to Ballykelly. (AQW 34207/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I intend that the new DARD headquarters at Ballykelly will carry out broadly similar functions to those currently carried out at our existing headquarters at Dundonald House. These do not include front of office services.

Veterinary Offices: Londonderry and Limavady

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the future plans for the veterinary offices in Londonderry and Limavady, including the timeframes that apply. (AQW 34208/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In November 2013, I announced the final DARD Direct office would be incorporated within a new purpose built Government office on the site of the current Social Security Office at Urney Road, Strabane. The building will also include a new modern Jobs and Benefits office. Work is due to begin at the site in Autumn 2014, subject to planning permission and the Central Procurement Division's tender process.

Once delivered, this office will complete the roll-out of DARD Direct and will bring together DARD staff currently headquartered at Orchard Industrial Estate, Strabane; Asylum Road, Derry and from our offices at Killane Road, Limavady.

Following staff re-location, I expect the full range of DARD services will be available to farmers in the surrounding area by Spring 2016. Feedback from farmers has always been very positive and I believe co-locating with DSD and DEL is a very cost effective way for DARD to ensure our customers in the North West enjoy the same benefits as others.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DARD Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much her Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years. (AQW 34247/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total spend incurred by the Department on heat, electricity and water over the past five financial years is analysed in the table below.

Year	(i) Heat/Fuel	(ii) Electricity	(iii) Water
2009/10	£412,915.58	£677,660.29	£118,883.96
2010/11	£486,103.95	£781,684.80	£168,780.49
2011/12	£507,646.76	£849,218.28	£105,258.96
2012/13	£563,068.03	£873,368.05	£69,646.38
2013/14	£515,469.29	£923,429.44	£106,446.12
Total	£2,485,203.61	£4,105,360.86	£569,015.91

- (i) There is no specific account code to collate all spend incurred specifically on heat. Therefore, for the purposes of answering this question, the total spend in relation to fuel for accommodation has been used.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to what extent her Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34310/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2013-14 all 20 of the contracts awarded by my Department included Community Benefit clauses in relation to early payment commitments and health & safety and equality in the workplace requirements. Rivers Agency contracts afforded the opportunity to include other clauses in addition to these, particularly in relation to sustainability.

Two of the contracts in this period were construction projects and these included the award of apprenticeships and work placements.

Fisheries Task Force

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the work of the recently announced Fisheries Taskforce.

(AQW 34340/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The inaugural meeting of the Fishing Industry Task Force will take place on Friday 4 July 2014. I want the Task Force to undertake a fundamental examination of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry and to identify options for reform to help to ensure the future sustainability of the local fishing sector. I expect the Task Force to make initial recommendations by the end of 2014.

Livestock Carcasses

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) for a breakdown of the number of illegally dumped livestock carcasses in each council district which were removed by the local authority; (ii) to detail the financial cost to the local authority of removing these illegally dumped livestock carcasses, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 34347/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Disposal of animal carcasses is required under Regulation EC 1069/2009 Articles 13 and 21 and subsequently the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations (NI) 2001. DARD is the Competent Authority for the implementation of these regulations.

The responsibility for the disposal of fallen animals lies with the occupier of the premises or the person considered by DARD to be in charge of the premises.

Where a carcass is dumped on private land, wherever possible the owner of the animal will be identified and held responsible. If ownership cannot be proven, responsibility for disposal rests with the landowner.

Where a carcass is dumped elsewhere, including on public land or highways, and ownership of the carcass cannot be ascertained, responsibility for disposal often rests with the local authority. DARD, through the local Divisional Veterinary Office, can assist the district council wherever possible to try and establish ownership of the carcass on a case by case basis.

DARD is not responsible for the disposal of illegally dumped livestock carcasses nor has DARD any responsibility for collating information about local authority removal of waste and associated costs. Information on carcass collection and costs should be sought from individual councils.

Livestock Carcasses

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what advice she can offer to local authorities attempting to tackle repeat offences of illegal dumping of livestock carcasses in a particular rural area.

(AQW 34348/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for investigating and enforcing illegal dumping lies with the NIEA and local councils. DARD is responsible for enforcing animal by-products legislation, including the proper disposal of animal carcasses. DARD is very aware of the issue of dumped carcasses and the environmental, animal and public health risks which result. DARD's Veterinary Service are consulted on a regular basis by District Council officials about the disposal of animal by-products, which includes livestock carcasses. Veterinary Service staff have also met local district councillors (including Newry and Mourne District Council) to discuss issues associated with this activity. Where the carcass identity can be established, Veterinary Service provides keeper details to the District Council.

Livestock Carcasses

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to address the issue of illegal dumping of livestock carcasses.

(AQW 34349/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The disposal of animal carcasses, is required under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations (NI) 2011 (ABPER). DARD is the Competent Authority for the implementation of these regulations. The responsibility for the disposal of fallen animals lies with the occupier of the premises or the person considered by DARD to be in charge of the premises.

Where a carcass is dumped on private land, wherever possible the owner of the animal will be identified and held responsible. If ownership cannot be proven, responsibility for disposal rests with the landowner. When such cases are reported to DARD, local Veterinary Service (VS) staff will collect information and establish responsibility. VS will then require the proper disposal, if necessary by serving a Statutory Notice and taking enforcement action.

Where a carcass is dumped elsewhere, including on public land or highways, and ownership of the carcass cannot be ascertained, responsibility for disposal often rests with the local authority. DARD, through the local Divisional Veterinary Office, can assist the district council wherever possible to try and establish ownership of the carcass on a case by case basis.

Farm Safe Awareness Courses

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 34162/11-15, to detail the number of participants in each financial year.

(AQW 34461/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2012/13 some 238 people were trained. In the 2013/14 year 3,030 people were trained and for 2014/15 some 307 people were trained.

Since my last reply an additional 28 people have been trained bringing the total for 2014/15 to 335.

To date 3,603 people have now been trained since the Farm Safe Awareness programme started in December 2012.

Young Farmer Scheme

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the Young Farmer Scheme payment will include people who have become active farmers in the five years preceding their first application.

(AQW 34488/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: To benefit from the Young Farmers' Scheme, a young farmer must be setting up as head of an agricultural holding for the first time, or must have set up as such during the five years preceding the first submission of an application under the new Basic Payment Scheme.

Regulation (EU) 1307/2013 is clear that support is available for a maximum of five years, but this must be reduced by the number of years that have elapsed between setting up as head of an agricultural holding and the first submission of an application to the Young Farmers' Scheme.

Therefore, a young farmer who has been head of an agricultural holding for less than five years preceding his/her first application to the Young Farmers' Scheme will potentially be eligible for a payment under that Scheme, subject to meeting all eligibility criteria for the Basic Payment Scheme. Young farmers who have farmed in their own right for more than five years as head of holding will not be entitled to receive additional support under the Young Farmers' Scheme.

Slurry Mixing Operations: Safe Practice

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the research project at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute on Safe Practice in Slurry Mixing Operations.

(AQW 34519/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The research project on Safe Practice in Slurry mixing Operations started in April 2013 and was due to finish in March 2014.

While the project itself has been completed the report detailing the outcomes of the project is still being finalised in the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute. We expect to receive the report by the end of July.

Slurry Tanks: Safety

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the financial assistance available to farmers to improve the safety of slurry tanks.

(AQW 34520/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department currently does not provide financial assistance to improve slurry tanks.

As I have outlined previously, my Department, through its work with the Farm Safety Partnership, is already doing as much as it can to help ensure farmers are better informed about safety on their farms, including the key issue around the mixing of slurry which is one which concerns me greatly. The key message to farmers remains "think SAFE". Getting that message across will promote good practice and help to mitigate against the dangers on our farms.

Guidance on the handling of slurry during mixing, and one that I strongly recommend, can be found on the Farm Safe website at http://farmsafe.hseni.gov.uk/will_hydrogen_sulphide_monitors_keep_me_safe_when_working_with_slurry_web.pdf

In the current proposals for the draft Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 a Farm Business Investment Scheme is proposed with the potential to support investment in larger capital items that would help improve farm safety, among other aspects of farm competitiveness. This scheme, if agreed, will allow for investment in larger items that could not be accommodated in the existing Farm Modernisation Programme.

Livestock Grazing

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the estimated farmland that is not in the ownership of individuals who have livestock grazing without the permission of legal owner of the land.

(AQW 34612/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department does not hold the information necessary to estimate the area of farmland that is not in the ownership of individuals who have livestock grazing without the permission of legal owner of the land.

Land ownership is not in itself an eligibility condition of area-based schemes and claims can legitimately be made on land that is not owned.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Hospitality: DCAL

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) her Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 33832/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Department spent a total of £38,790 on hospitality during 2013/14.

The Department's arm's-length bodies (excluding North/South bodies) spent a total of £63,713 on hospitality during the same period.

The Department's North/South bodies have a financial year which mirrors the calendar year. Spending on hospitality during 2013 for these bodies was £2,384.

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what financial, or other, resources her Department has provided to ethnic and religious minority groups in each of the last five years.

(AQW 33876/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department supports ethnic and religious minority groups through the funds it provides to its arms length bodies which deliver a wide range of grants, programmes and other support. The financial assistance provided in each of the last five years by my Department and delivered through its arms length bodies is in the table below:

2009/2010	£18,962
2010/2011	£9,128
2011/2012	£18,029
2012/2013	£26,960
2013/2014	£49,404

The following are some examples of events and programmes that have been supported.

- Community Festivals Fund supports numerous ethnic events that help people engage with and learn from other cultures for example the Belfast Mela and Polish Christmas Festival;
- In 2012/13 £8,000 was awarded from the City of Culture's Cultural Programme to the Chinese Welfare Association for Chinese New Year celebrations;
- In 2013/14 DCAL provided £7,225 to the NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS) project which organised trips to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. This collaboration resulted in a programme of work experience being set up for a core group of nine refugees and asylum seekers from African countries including Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Sudan and Algeria who availed of the opportunity to gain work experience and skills at the Museum; and
- Sport NI has provided direct investments to ethnic and religious groups including £3,177 to the Polish Saturday School Ballymena to improve integration through sport and physical activity.

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what financial, or other departmental support, is available to each of the ethnic and religious minority groups in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 33898/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure supports ethnic and religious minority groups through the funds it provides to its arms length bodies which deliver a wide range of grants, programmes and other support.

The Arts Council (ACNI)

ACNI provides funding through schemes that directly target ethnic minority groups such as:

- the Intercultural Arts Grants Programme which provides opportunities for minority ethnic communities to access the arts and use artistic activities as a creative vehicle to explore and highlight social issues that impede access to the arts.
- Support for the Individual Artist Programme – Minority Ethnic Individual Award for specific projects, specialized research, personal artistic development and certain materials or equipment that support professional arts practice specifically targeted at artists from Minority Ethnic communities.
- The Community Festivals fund is available to applicants from all communities including those from ethnic and religious minority groups. It is administered by Local Councils who match fund allocations provided by DCAL.

LibrariesNI

All library services are available to people from minority ethnic communities, but in addition a range of tailored services are provided which includes reading materials and other resources that meet the needs of people from minority ethnic communities and in the context of building a shared future, opportunities are taken to raise awareness of, and celebrate, different cultures. For example, in partnership with the Belfast Migrant Centre, Libraries NI is hosting an exhibition called 'Belonging' a multimedia project that showcases the individual stories of migrants in the North of Ireland through personal items and stories. The exhibition is integrated with a series of workshops on immigration, cultural diversity and equality.

National Museums (NMNI)

National Museum sites and programmes are available to all groups including those from ethnic/religious minority backgrounds. A forthcoming event in June to celebrate Community Relations Week involves the Ulster American Folk Park partnering Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group to host 'Foodfest' where visitors are invited to taste ethnic traditional foods.

Sport NI (SNI)

SNI's Active Clubs programme is aimed at targeting underrepresented groups which has the potential to secure funding for programmes that will target ethnic/religious minority groups. Sport NI can provide organisations representing ethnic/religious minority groups with advice and support in a range of sport related areas including performance, coaching, technical guidance, sport facility development and funding.

Cliff Project: Seacourt Estate, Larne

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) Larne Borough Council's role in the operating and governance issues of the Cliff Project in Seacourt Estate, Larne; (ii) the role councillors have in decision making; and (iii) the councillors who are members of the relevant committee.

(AQW 33924/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The terms and conditions for the Sport NI lottery award which assisted the construction of The Cliff facility did not stipulate (i) Larne Borough Council's role in the operating and governance issues of the Cliff Project in Seacourt Estate, Larne; (ii) the role councillors have in decision making; or (iii) the councillors who are members of the relevant committee. These are matters therefore for The Cliff Association and Larne Borough Council, and not appropriate for me to comment on.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests she has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Section 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34051/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information requested is published in a series of Freedom of Information (FOI) Annual Reports which are based on calendar years, not financial years. Statistical data concerning requests dealt with under FOI and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) is combined within these reports.

The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/annual-reports-and-statistics>

The member should note that statistics for 2013 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2013 FOI Annual report. The specific number of information requests dealt with under EIR is as follows:

Year	Total number of requests received	Number of requests handled under EIR
2010	348	12
2011	549	14
2012	490	16

Fencing: Financial Support

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much financial support has been provided to the sport of fencing in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34088/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has a responsibility for the general provision of funding for the development of sport in the north of Ireland, including fencing.

In the last five financial years up to March 2014, Sport NI provided £78,695 of Exchequer and Lottery funding to the sport of fencing as detailed below:

Fiscal Year	Organisation	Programme	Grant Amount	Fund
2013	NI Fencing Ltd	Performance Focus	£15,000	Lottery
2011	Lisburn Gladiators Fencing Club	Awards For Sport	£7,438	Exchequer
2011	NI Fencing Ltd	Pre-Games Training Camps	£5,000	Exchequer
2010	Friends of Grosvenor Fencing Club	Sport Matters: Capital and Equipment Programme	£13,692	Exchequer
2010	NI Fencing Ltd	Pre-Games Training Camps	£5,000	Exchequer
2009	University of Ulster Coleraine Fencing Club	Awards For Sport	£9,200	Exchequer
2009	NI Fencing Ltd	Athlete Support Programme	£4,500	Lottery
2009	NI Fencing Ltd	Athlete Support Programme	£3,000	Exchequer
2009	NI Fencing Ltd	Investing in Performance Sport	£15,865	Exchequer

In addition, in 2013/14 financial year, Sport NI provided £1,670 of Exchequer funding to Cairnshill Primary School through the Active Schools Programme. This funding was for multisports which included the sport of fencing.

Braid River

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the Rivers Agency or the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development consulted with her Department prior to work commencing on the Braid River to remove gravel shoal and reinforce the banks; and if so, to detail (i) the information passed on; and (ii) the powers her Department have in matters related to the work and maintenance of rivers.

(AQW 34126/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Rivers Agency staff consulted with the DCAL Fisheries Officer responsible for the area regarding the impact of the proposed works on fish stocks. Rivers Agency indicated that the work was considered to be urgent.

- (i) It was agreed with my officials that works would not commence on the river bed until after 1 April, to give as many juvenile fish as possible time to emerge from the gravel.

- (ii) The powers available to my Department in relation to in-river works and maintenance of rivers are detailed in Section 48 of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966.

Derry: City of Culture 2013

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33681/11-15, to detail (i) the options being explored for possible inclusion in the funding bid to the Executive for 2014/16 to maximise the impact and sustainable legacy of Derry as the City of Culture 2013; and (ii) when the bid will be formally submitted.

(AQW 34148/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My officials have prepared a business case for the development and delivery of a creative, sporting and cultural programme of activity in the North West of Ireland. It contains a range of options including proposals to continue key projects from City of Culture 2013 and establish new interventions to tackle on-going challenges in terms of poverty, social exclusion and inequality. As the business case is still in draft form, it would be inappropriate to disclose precise details at this stage.

Subject to a successful bid to the Executive for additional funding to take forward these proposals, I will seek to build on the success of 2013 by continuing to invest in key projects such as Music Promise, Portrait of a City, Community Cultural Strategies and to support development of cultural hubs and step up activity for organisations across the North West.

A bid for funding was submitted to DFP as part of the in year monitoring round on 5 June 2014.

Edward the Bruce: Anniversary of Landing

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has engaged with any other agencies or Departments to gain support for a programme of events to mark the 700th Anniversary of the landing of Edward the Bruce and his campaign in Ulster.

(AQW 34223/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The MAG Ulster-Scots Academy which is funded by my Department commissioned the Ulster Historical Foundation to research the 700th anniversary of Edward the Bruce in Ireland and recommend how it could be developed as a tourism initiative.

The Foundation made several recommendations including the development of a travelling exhibition, tourism trail and mobile app. The potential for a series of high profile events to coincide with the anniversary of key milestones in the 1315 invasion campaign, such as the Landing at Larne in May, the Coronation of Edward Bruce as King of Ireland at Carrickfergus in June, the Battle of Connor (outside Antrim) in September and his eventual death and burial at Faughart in Co Louth were also identified.

On the basis of this research, my Department has made funding available for a partnership project between the MAG Ulster-Scots Academy, the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Ulster Historical Foundation to produce a Bruce tourism trail map and app, interpretative signage on trail sites and a travelling exhibition.

My officials have shared the Ulster Historical Foundation report with the Ulster-Scots Agency, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Tourism Ireland and Mid and East Antrim District Council and have been in contact with them regarding the development of commemorative events. The 700 year anniversary presents an excellent opportunity to maximise the tourism potential for north-south and east-west connections and capitalise on the worldwide interest in the Bruce story generated by the anniversaries of the Bruce invasion of Ireland and the Battle of Bannockburn.

North/South Language Body

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on 2013/14 budget of the North/South Language Body. **(AQW 34234/11-15)**

Ms Ní Chuilín: The North South Language Body's budget for Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency is based on the calendar year, 1 January to 31 December. The budgets for 2013 and 2014 have not yet been approved.

Hockey: Portadown and Lurgan

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps she is taking to support hockey in Portadown and Lurgan. **(AQW 34235/11-15)**

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has a responsibility for the general provision of funding for the development of sport in the north of Ireland, including hockey.

In the last three financial years up to March 2014, Sport NI provided £3,361 of Exchequer funding to multisport, which includes hockey, in Portadown and Lurgan, as detailed below:

Fiscal Year	Organisation	Programme	Grant Amount
2013	Derryhale Primary School (Portadown)	Active Schools	£1,375
2013	Maralin Village Primary School (Magheralin)	Active Schools	£1,986

Active Awards for Sport is a Lottery funded small grants programme primarily aimed at grassroots community based sport and is due to re-open for applications in September 2014. Hockey clubs in Portadown and Lurgan can register their interest for future funding programmes at www.sportni.net/Funding.

Sport: Children Involvement

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the number of children who are actively involved in sport on a weekly basis; and how this compares with 2009.

(AQW 34270/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Findings from the sport module of the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (YPBAS) conducted by NISRA in 2007, 2009 and 2013 indicate that young peoples' (11-16 years) involvement in sport and physical activity in the north of Ireland has remained very high:

- 2007 - 98% of all young people surveyed has taken part in one or more sports during the last 7 days.
- 2009 - 97% of all young people surveyed has taken part in one or more sports during the last 7 days.
- 2013 - 96% of all young people surveyed has taken part in one or more sports during the last 7 days.

Sport: Adult Involvement

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the number of adults who are actively involved in sport on a weekly basis; and how this compares with 2009.

(AQW 34271/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department commission questions in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) to collect information on frequency of sport participation.

Two-fifths of respondents (40%) said that they normally participate in some type of sport or physical activity on at least one day a week in 2009/10. Almost a half of adults (48%) normally participate in sport and physical activity on at least one day a week in 2013/14.

	Adults				Significant difference
	2009/10		2013/14		
	%	Base	%	Base	
Normally participate in sport and physical activity on one or more days per week	40	3,571	48	3,753	Significant

Source: DCAL

Procurement Contracts: DCAL

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to what extent her Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34306/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department's priority is to promote equality and to tackle poverty and social exclusion. The inclusion of social clauses in procurements aligns perfectly with this. As I highlighted at a social clauses event my Department recently held in Colaiste Feirste, I am determined to use my DCAL's spending power to drive out as much benefit for the wider community as possible while still maintaining efficient and cost effective public services.

A review of DCAL's performance in 2013/14 has just been completed and I am therefore able to report on our success stories so far as well as reflect on areas where we can expect progress and improvement in the future.

In 2013/14, DCAL and its ALBs entered into 25 large contracts, with a total value of £94m. I provide detail below on some of the social clauses contained in these.

Stadiums programme

Contracts for IFA/ Windsor Park and UCGAA/ Casement Park were entered into in the year. Both contracts required the following: employment of 17 Long Term Unemployed; and the creation of 8 new apprenticeships and 2 student placements. Where contractors/sub-contractors had over 20 employees, they must have over 5% of their workforce in recognised apprenticeships. The contractor must also produce 5 practical projects to deliver community initiatives and to return public benefits to the local community. The relevant contractors have now been invited to submit their own proposals to satisfy this requirement.

City Of Culture

The Letter of Offer between DCAL and Derry City Council required the Council and the Culture Company to: promote equality and sustainability in all procurements undertaken as part of the City of Culture project; maximise the sustainable socio-economic impacts achievable through the investment of public resources in ways that can target and deliver measurable and monitored employment opportunities and socio-economic outcomes at those sectors of society assessed as suffering the greatest objective need and inequalities in the North of Ireland, specifically in the Derry City and surrounding area, in conjunction with DCAL, as public authorities under S.75(1) of the NI Act 1998; and ensure the provision of a wide range of social returns targeted on the basis of S.75(1) of the NI Act 1998 at the most deprived communities living in proximity to the Project in the context of effective and meaningful community consultation to achieve agreed outcomes.

National Museums

Contracts in relation to the UFTM residential centre development contained the following clauses: for every £250k of contract labour value, the contractor provides directly, or through the supply chain, 13 person weeks of work experience, or employment opportunities for the un-employed; and 5% of the contractor's workforce and the workforce of its first tier subcontractors (with 20 or more employees) should be employed on formally recognised paid apprenticeships.

While I am very pleased with the progress demonstrated, I am also conscious that improvement is always possible. I want to explore, for instance, the extent to which social clauses can be meaningfully incorporated into smaller procurements. I also want to ensure that, going forward, a consistent approach to social clauses is taken right across the DCAL family of ALBs and that collaborative procurements and more specialised procurements such as financial services also benefit from the inclusion of social clauses.

Meanwhile, I believe that sufficient momentum has now gathered around this initiative to ensure that sustainable and material benefits will be generated into the future, especially for those experiencing poverty, inequality and exclusion.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DCAL Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much her Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34344/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Departments occupy buildings on either a single or multiple occupancy basis.

Departments are directly responsible for paying the utility bills (heat, electricity and water) associated with single occupancy buildings. DCAL has a number of single occupancy buildings including PRONI at Titanic Quarter and several regional Fisheries offices.

DFP Properties Division (PD) is responsible for paying utility bills associated with multiple occupancy buildings. The Department's headquarters are located in a multiple occupancy building and as such figures supplied in the DFP response to this AQW will include utility costs relating to DCAL's headquarters.

The figures provided below therefore refer to utility costs incurred at single occupancy buildings in which the Department operates.

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Electricity	£114,673	£163,336	£200,965	£225,073	£176,057
Heating	£37,731	£53,774	£55,445	£49,148	£33,094
Water	£5,426	£9,979	£22,816	£18,252	£6,811
Total	£157,830	£227,089	£279,226	£292,473	£215,962

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Parking Spaces

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of parking spaces at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; and of these, how many are available for people with a disability.

(AQW 34356/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Parking facilities for the area adjacent to PRONI are provided by Titanic Quarter Ltd who decide on the number of spaces which are available for people with a disability.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Car Parking Charges

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how car parking charges are calculated at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34357/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Parking facilities for the area adjacent to PRONI are provided by Titanic Quarter Ltd who calculate their own parking charges.

Irish Language Information

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33404/11-15, (i) what steps Libraries NI is taking to ensure Irish language information and reading material is available in the majority of its libraries; (ii) what steps Libraries NI is taking to make its Irish language collection more readily accessible to the entire community; and (iii) what training is provided to Libraries NI staff regarding its Irish language collection and the promotion of the Irish language.

(AQW 34373/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) Libraries NI has informed me that in order to ensure that Irish language information and reading material is available in the majority of its libraries it makes available 103 service points which have Irish language stock. This includes branch libraries, mobile libraries and homecall vans, as well as its heritage libraries.

The amount of Irish language stock in individual libraries varies, depending on a range of factors including the size of the branch and the audience for material in the Irish language in the catchment area of that library. Where there is an Irish Medium school in the vicinity of a branch library there will also be children's material in Irish. 56 libraries hold children's collections in Irish.

- (ii) All libraries are shared spaces, open to all sections of the community and Libraries NI's general approach to all its collections, programmes and events is one of inclusivity. For example, Libraries NI works closely with ULTACH, an independent charitable trust based in Belfast whose principal aim is to promote the Irish language throughout the entire community in the North. During 2013/14 ULTACH facilitated talks on aspects of the Irish language and provided taster sessions in Irish in 12 libraries.
- (iii) Libraries NI has stated that no specific training has been provided for staff regarding Irish language material, although there are a number of staff employed by the service who are Irish language speakers and who support reading groups and activities as well as class visits from Irish language schools.

European Business Network Congress

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the amount paid to each of the guest speakers at the European Business Network Congress from 29 to 31 May 2013; and (ii) the amount of funding provided by her Department for this event.

(AQW 34441/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The NI Business Innovation Centre (NORIBIC) has confirmed that the costs for speakers for the Annual European Business Network (EBN) Congress in 2013 were met through the generation of ticket sales and by securing private sector sponsorship. No public funds were used to contribute towards any of the speaker costs. NORIBIC have also confirmed that the contracts signed with individual speakers and NORIBIC are commercially sensitive.

My Department provided NORIBIC a 'principal sponsor' grant of £50,000 as a contribution to costs associated with holding the Annual EBN Congress. This grant was used to support pre-event marketing and networking costs during March 2013 as well as a contribution to staff and development costs incurred during 2012/13.

World War I: Commemoration

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many First World War commemoration events she will be attending (i) this year; (ii) in 2015; and (iii) in 2016.

(AQW 34585/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have received two invitations regarding the First World War commemorations, one of which was a meeting and the other was an event both of which I was regretfully unable to attend.

My diary commitments for the rest of 2014, and the years 2015 and 2016 have not yet been planned. I will respond to future invitations when I receive them.

Department of Education

Dunclug High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education what additional resources (i) his Department; and (ii) the North Eastern Education and Library Board has provided to Dunclug High School to support its permitted increase in numbers.

(AQW 33853/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The approved Development Proposal to increase pupil enrolment numbers is only due to take effect from the commencement of the 2014/15 Academic Year in September 2014. No additional resources for the school have been considered by the Department at this current time.

The North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), as Funding Authority for Dunclug College, has advised me that, in the short term and under the terms of the School Reorganisation agreement, a number of staff from Ballee High School which is scheduled to close on 31 August 2014 can be reallocated posts in Dunclug College. The Board is liaising with the Principal to identify the staffing needs, levels and expertise required to accommodate the increase in enrolment at the school.

Dunclug College has identified a number of spaces within its existing building which can be re-commissioned for use as additional teaching spaces. Dunclug Primary School has also offered the use of a classroom. To support these interim measures the Board has allocated an initial budget of £10,000 of recurrent funds to allow a number of rooms to be refurbished in time for September. In addition the NEELB is also costing the option of possibly renting 3 mobile classrooms, to be in place for September.

Ligoniel Primary School: Pupil Enrolment Numbers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, given increasing pupil enrolment numbers at Ligoniel Primary School, what action his Department is taking to address the school's accommodation needs.

(AQW 33984/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) is the managing authority responsible for the Controlled schools in its area. BELB's draft primary area plan notes the enrolment increases at Ligoniel PS over the past six years and highlights the Board's intention to increase the school's approved enrolment from 171 to 205 places. Effecting this change will require the support of an approved statutory development proposal (DP).

Over the past 2 years there has been significant investment in the school with a total of £634,000 having been spent on improved toilet facilities, window replacement, road improvements and the heating system.

IT Strategy

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what mechanisms exist to coordinate IT strategy within the education service.

(AQW 34093/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education (DE) sets policy and strategy for, and approves investment in, ICT across the education sector. I have approved a Strategic Outline Case for the modernisation of ICT systems from 2013/14 – 2017/18.

DE has established an ICT Programme Board to oversee ICT modernisation. The Board includes the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards, the Chief Executive of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and representatives from DE.

C2k, which supports ICT infrastructure in schools, also has its own Programme Board. It reports into the ICT Programme Board via its chair, the Chief Executive of the Western Education and Library Board.

IT Systems

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how his Department is supporting Pupil Services IT systems within Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 34094/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pupil Services System comprises a range of software packages used by schools and Education and Library Board (ELB) headquarters.

I approved the replacement of the Pupil Services System in the Strategic Outline Case for the modernisation of ICT systems from 2013/14 – 2017/18

This is being overseen by the ICT Programme Board, established by DE and including the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

IT Systems

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when the Pupil Services IT systems were last subject to competitive tendering.

(AQW 34095/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pupil Services System comprises a range of software packages used by schools and Education and Library Board (ELB) headquarters.

Since 2004 the ELBs have used the C2k contract with Capita Children's Services for the purchase of licences and support maintenance for this system.

Elective Home Education

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area receive elective home education.

(AQW 34129/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) has advised that, at 1st January 2014, 75 children and young people were registered with the SEELB as being educated at home. However, the Department recognises there may also be other young people who are being educated at home who are not currently registered with the SEELB hence the actual figure may be higher.

Maintenance and Repairs Spending: Western Education and Library Board Area

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on maintenance and repairs in each school in the Western Education and Library Board area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34145/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details expenditure on maintenance and repairs in Controlled, Voluntary Maintained and Irish Medium Schools in the Western Education and Library Board area in each of the last five financial years:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Ballycolman NS	2,994	4,175	3,687	6,250	5,882	22,988
Belmont NS	11,159	9,170	8,749	13,694	12,316	55,088
Blighs Lane NS	4,193	3,818	8,001	16,211	11,619	43,842
Carnhill NS	10,871	8,598	6,700	6,535	7,173	39,877
Enniskillen NS	4,549	4,487	6,669	6,985	13,125	35,815
Galliagh NS	10,704	5,210	8,239	5,406	6,743	36,302
Limavady NS	2,968	4,373	7,792	4,321	10,283	29,737
Lisnagelvin NS	3,689	8,174	3,309	3,265	4,884	23,321
Academy NS	2,747	4,768	6,069	5,005	10,490	29,079
Omagh North NS	6,399	4,887	2,747	3,130	2,240	19,403
Strathfoyle NS	7,683	6,517	6,946	7,724	8,974	37,844
Trench Rd NS	10,858	8,614	13,050	9,188	3,695	45,405
Aghadrumsee PS	10,594	4,481	5,717	5,402	16,902	43,096
Ardstraw PS	5,168	9,275	6,840	10,731	1,466	33,480
Artigarvan PS	24,192	19,792	28,912	5,527	51,142	129,565
Ashlea PS	5,428	7,476	4,525	17,801	30,557	65,787
Ballinamallard PS	9,641	12,787	5,647	8,561	12,921	49,557
Ballougry PS	5,912	9,877	10,443	35,292	17,334	78,858
Ballykelly PS	14,435	18,600	28,438	58,160	37,757	157,390
Bellarena PS	6,666	18,603	4,240	3,676	6,144	39,329
Belleek PS No 2	3,648	4,070	6,162	999	9,070	23,949
Bready Jubilee PS	8,045	8,222	6,198	5,388	8,896	36,749
Bridgehill PS	4,332	2,673	5,575	3,723	8,055	24,358
Brookeborough PS	4,122	7,034	15,740	11,261	15,174	53,331
Burnfoot PS	1,370	167	7,943	8,374	0	17,854
Culmore PS	7,084	18,868	7,437	6,474	9,293	49,156
Culmore PS - New School	0	0	0	955	0	955
Cumber Claudy PS	8,300	20,638	8,393	8,238	9,783	55,352
Denamona PS	10,029	18,747	8,321	33,395	16,678	87,170
Derrygonnelly PS	3,269	13,677	6,274	2,882	5,085	31,187
Donemana PS	11,029	13,737	13,886	6,181	9,143	53,976
Dromore PS	10,506	9,686	8,973	7,153	6,539	42,857
Drumachose PS	12,540	18,130	10,405	11,998	22,574	75,647

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Drumahoe PS	2,697	15,379	10,121	9,947	16,242	54,386
Drumlegagh PS	2,747	1,378	1,819	1,217	20	7,181
Drumskinney PS	310	0	0	0	0	310
Dungiven PS	2,082	0	0	0	0	2,082
Dunmullan PS	7,480	4,119	9,461	24,799	14,684	60,543
Ebrington PS	24,268	13,743	26,457	20,264	23,039	107,771
Ebrington PS - New School	190	0	135,023	0	148	135,361
Edwards PS	10,840	10,325	17,912	11,504	46,842	97,423
Eglinton PS	18,217	43,333	38,317	24,296	15,697	139,860
Enniskillen Model PS	14,507	26,474	35,865	18,723	12,895	108,464
Erganagh PS	7,746	3,390	2,889	7,324	5,805	27,154
Florencecourt PS	6,313	10,520	4,885	7,525	7,158	36,401
Fountain PS	13,252	7,471	10,393	8,057	22,984	62,157
Gibson PS	19,882	43,401	47,817	39,251	18,308	168,659
Gillygooley PS	4,017	8,128	6,480	7,920	13,441	39,986
Gortin PS	4,586	10,719	11,447	14,171	5,303	46,226
Greenhaw PS	11,602	15,987	39,034	17,016	26,519	110,158
Groarty Integrated PS	8,702	6,592	5,541	17,286	7,407	45,528
Irvinestown PS	19,628	19,384	10,342	9,819	17,797	76,970
Jones Memorial PS	20,245	18,189	25,405	26,279	14,874	104,992
Kesh PS	5,466	5,633	12,352	3,565	12,989	40,005
Killen PS	3,798	4,749	2,438	3,718	10,391	25,094
Lack PS	7,965	6,981	18,153	8,804	73,726	115,629
Langfield PS	8,769	8,225	4,223	8,027	5,943	35,187
Largy PS	95	0	0	0	156	251
Limavady PS	19,336	13,466	17,805	15,576	28,555	94,738
Lisbellaw PS	12,958	10,526	5,785	13,395	12,819	55,483
Lisbellaw PS - New School	0	0	1,180	0	0	1,180
Lisnagelvin PS	8,653	2,246	18,916	6,834	11,220	47,869
L'derry Model PS	39,567	11,855	19,066	22,442	47,841	140,771
Maguiresbridge PS	8,536	7,751	7,099	3,417	4,590	31,393
Maydown PS	93	1,034	0	0	0	1,127
McClintock PS	16,968	18,990	26,466	15,108	10,512	88,044
Moat PS	14,885	10,606	18,918	9,122	12,108	65,639
Newbuildings PS	22,729	21,603	28,838	11,327	58,617	143,114
Newtownbutler PS No 2	6,639	12,873	19,265	22,060	8,634	69,471
N'stewart Model PS	27,071	17,385	31,819	15,834	81,850	173,959
Omagh County PS	13,933	18,662	13,380	9,849	39,440	95,264
Queen Eliz II PS	4,349	3,451	12,479	6,320	7,049	33,648
Shanmullagh PS	592	1,273	60	0	0	1,925
Sion Mills PS	14,078	38,801	18,895	17,239	110,058	199,071

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Strabane PS	20,519	22,772	25,384	9,488	31,365	109,528
Tempo No 1 PS	17,198	17,000	9,720	6,275	5,042	55,235
Trillick PS	419	442	0	1,804	88	2,753
Cooley PS	5,406	8,053	6,246	12,031	6,326	38,062
Drumrane PS	5,059	15,364	7,215	6,332	7,962	41,932
Ardstraw Jubilee PS	0	0	0	3,928	9,809	13,737
The Reading Ctr, L'derry PS	645	687	503	455	564	2,854
All Saints T'sallagh PS	5,962	6,045	8,122	7,059	14,838	42,026
Altishane PS	4,562	7,418	7,122	4,671	3,781	27,554
Barrack Street Boys' PS	17,892	25,180	44,581	77,507	23,157	188,317
Broadbridge PS	14,547	46,686	30,281	8,427	20,375	120,316
Bunscoil Cholmcille PS	15,377	33,368	8,210	19,226	45,875	122,056
Chapel Rd PS	44,812	38,106	27,497	14,472	55,912	180,799
Christ The King PS	8,451	7,053	3,015	56,453	39,456	114,428
St Colmcille's PS, Claudy	16,966	15,638	20,420	35,996	32,426	121,446
Cornagague PS	1,549	3,885	11,163	8,795	97	25,489
Corranny PS	9,440	3,016	5,246	-150	0	17,552
Craigbrack PS	4,529	23,905	17,305	5,864	11,841	63,444
Drumduff PS	6,485	12,899	8,221	10,156	19,054	56,815
Drumlish PS	16,125	11,175	6,888	36,129	12,081	82,398
St Francis of Assisi PS (Drumnabey)	4,761	4,225	5,922	12,730	4,770	32,408
Envagh PS	5,304	16,803	3,447	4,233	4,901	34,688
Ewish PS	13,094	6,273	11,049	4,265	18,020	52,701
Faughanvale PS	9,431	3,545	8,042	9,197	5,271	35,486
Glendermott PS	19,200	9,640	15,280	32,878	24,840	101,838
St Joseph's PS, Glenmornan	9,742	13,317	14,616	10,645	20,038	68,358
Good Shepherd (Dungiven Rd) PS	54,046	33,812	50,127	81,642	73,346	292,973
Gortnagarn PS	13,031	12,935	3,099	29,118	32,920	91,103
Gortnaghy PS	3,810	3,151	3,718	2,155	14,448	27,282
Hollybush PS	15,129	41,071	32,907	56,705	17,728	163,540
Holy Child PS	34,387	23,152	13,370	94,711	33,404	199,024
Holy Family PS, Londonderry	29,327	47,529	10,993	38,292	76,242	202,383
St Mary's PS, Killyclogher	15,769	11,907	11,005	9,086	18,218	65,985
Killyhommon PS	7,599	6,198	796	9,169	3,612	27,374
Magheralough PS, Kilskeery	3,224	3,881	2,224	3,762	6,620	19,711
Knocknagor PS	3,355	4,897	9,152	2,699	10,094	30,197
Lenamore PS	20,764	31,296	21,088	42,170	221,188	336,506
Listress PS	8,453	35,510	5,735	3,085	7,807	60,590

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Long Tower PS	18,534	28,529	23,030	29,600	14,542	114,235
Loughash PS	11,945	4,697	2,243	7,339	4,155	30,379
St Aidan's PS, Magilligan	9,966	9,517	3,270	5,034	18,964	46,751
Mullabuoy PS	11,508	42,850	3,459	10,986	17,433	86,236
St Patrick's PS, Mullanskea	10,213	10,961	18,307	7,047	39,915	86,443
Nazareth House PS	14,027	31,002	32,270	51,170	51,126	179,595
Loreto Convent PS Omagh	14,396	30,196	20,703	53,679	96,561	215,535
Our Lady of Lourdes PS	9,728	5,900	20,637	49,196	31,161	116,622
Recarson PS	8,990	8,265	14,368	12,452	14,242	58,317
Roscavey PS	15,622	15,296	10,102	4,572	30,966	76,558
Rosemount PS	38,872	18,725	15,067	66,967	34,845	174,476
Sacred Heart Tattyreagh PS	8,844	14,071	5,790	12,076	63,781	104,562
St Davog's PS, Scraghey	4,004	4,443	3,761	2,207	45	14,460
St Finloughs PS (Sistrakeel)	2,843	8,349	3,398	19,062	42,161	75,813
Slievemore PS	25,099	12,206	36,007	7,732	42,423	123,467
St Anne's PS, Londonderry	23,439	49,372	19,321	13,224	47,780	153,136
St Anne's PS, Strabane	9,067	21,757	28,845	11,089	11,396	82,154
St Anthony's PS, Roe	16,156	4,537	6,092	5,063	10,744	42,592
St Brigid's PS, Altamuskin	6,994	3,927	6,777	10,651	36,042	64,391
St Brigid's PS, Carnhill	35,119	43,052	23,256	62,776	40,654	204,857
St Brigid's PS, Cranagh	7,691	2,725	6,398	6,937	5,441	29,192
St Brigid's PS, Mountfield	6,446	6,076	496	5,966	15,149	34,133
St Caireall's PS (Castledearg)	6,315	5,261	6,094	7,023	10,281	34,974
St Canice's PS, Dungiven	22,703	21,435	13,578	13,458	220,639	291,813
St Canice's PS, Feeny	7,433	22,643	8,187	6,750	16,148	61,161
St Colmcille's PS, Omagh	17,807	12,929	12,673	50,828	4,780	99,017
St Columban's PS, Belcoo	3,615	6,347	12,702	14,163	19,257	56,084
St Columba's PS, Clady	9,010	8,070	8,170	6,652	7,800	39,702
St Columba's PS, Dromore	414	0	0	0	0	414
St Columba's PS, Newbuildings	21,314	11,220	7,227	16,750	53,522	110,033
St Columbkille's PS, Carrickmore	13,837	8,319	14,969	18,734	74,934	130,793
St Conor's PS	20,056	33,324	54,187	28,089	158,579	294,235
St Davog's PS (Belleek No 1)	23,139	22,396	11,865	3,970	13,359	74,729
St Dympna's PS	8,115	9,687	11,963	6,132	7,931	43,828
St Eithne's PS, Ballymagroorty	13,753	17,521	11,393	12,522	42,931	98,120
St Eugene's PS, Lisnaskea	8,537	10,700	9,416	4,972	3,985	37,610
St Eugene's PS, Londonderry	20,847	54,626	24,700	25,192	44,867	170,232

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Eugene's PS,Tycur	8,775	9,244	9,820	6,634	3,074	37,547
St Eugene's PS, Victoria Bridge	4,018	4,720	5,049	11,617	8,178	33,582
St John the Baptist PS	7,113	12,367	3,297	10,472	3,396	36,645
St John's PS, Bligh's Lane	19,813	46,390	23,368	30,369	39,152	159,092
St John's PS, Dernaflaw	11,038	12,400	6,304	5,827	7,901	43,470
St Joseph's PS, Drumquin	2,820	9,505	6,905	4,127	12,568	35,925
St Joseph's PS, Ederney	15,467	24,887	28,953	3,838	46,037	119,182
St Joseph's PS, Lisnaskea	7,179	9,364	4,654	13,953	2,946	38,096
St Lawrence's PS	42,986	15,669	10,008	4,073	23,859	96,595
St Macartan's PS	4,132	3,970	5,915	1,218	3,550	18,785
St Martin's PS, Garrison	3,171	12,165	4,077	3,388	6,085	28,886
St Mary's Boys' PS,Strabane	44,968	35,027	21,345	9,619	6,742	117,701
St Mary's Girls' PS,Strabane	31,437	37,285	17,093	20,632	7,275	113,722
St Mary's PS,Altinure	5,273	22,962	16,773	33,912	-11,642	67,278
St Mary's PS,B'borough	5,220	4,332	3,754	4,619	18,095	36,020
St Mary's PS,Cloughcor	11,407	11,314	13,018	17,160	24,965	77,864
St Mary's PS,Killesher	4,733	2,623	5,984	2,587	2,099	18,026
St Mary's PS,M'bridge	6,815	4,250	7,101	9,711	24,376	52,253
St Mary's PS,Mullymesker	5,067	10,990	4,646	6,985	8,327	36,015
St Mary's PS,Newtownbutler	13,241	11,961	15,731	7,913	68,797	117,643
St Mary's PS,Teemore	13,892	7,868	35,853	7,756	6,244	71,613
St Mary's PS,Tempo No 2	10,968	17,622	11,101	34,126	6,608	80,425
St Matthew's PS,Garvaghey	3,198	5,961	2,680	3,764	15,571	31,174
St Matthew's PS,Limavady	15,813	12,026	7,367	4,281	45,348	84,835
St Naile's PS,Kinawley	7,602	3,000	5,494	2,901	8,680	27,677
St Ninnidh's PS (Derrylin)	2,223	2,447	15,539	8,418	7,298	35,925
St Oliver Plunkett PS,Beragh	7,383	5,146	11,605	12,908	180,733	217,775
St Oliver Plunkett PS,Strathfoyle	5,834	14,321	8,174	20,749	36,504	85,582
St Patrick's PS,Carrickmore	1,745	420	0	0	0	2,165
St Patrick's PS,C'derg	11,170	21,451	29,878	23,136	35,137	120,772
St Patrick's PS,Derrygonnelly	4,403	18,694	3,335	24,093	4,733	55,258
St Patrick's PS,Donemana	5,425	15,827	5,810	50,653	10,952	88,667
St Patrick's PS,Eskra	9,044	21,229	11,513	32,442	30,326	104,554
St Patrick's PS,Gortin	9,095	10,100	17,023	7,303	9,324	52,845
St Patrick's PS,N'stewart	12,591	25,203	11,654	6,734	44,463	100,645
St Patrick's PS,Pennyburn	13,376	20,297	14,651	23,600	22,860	94,784

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Patrick's PS,Seskinore	985	121	0	0	0	1,106
St Paul's PS	10,798	9,647	19,462	56,170	61,260	157,337
St Peter's & St Paul's PS	4,727	4,059	8,824	3,980	22,541	44,131
St Peter's PS, Plumbridge	16,989	53,706	4,695	1,256	8,115	84,761
St Ronan's PS	11,916	31,547	10,682	24,626	6,792	85,563
St Scire's PS	8,593	9,054	2,383	7,901	2,873	30,804
St Teresa's PS,Loughmacrory	6,790	8,455	18,253	18,965	33,026	85,489
St Theresa's PS,Glebe	8,673	12,636	14,106	13,961	12,784	62,160
St Tierney's PS	9,114	8,201	3,033	2,125	10,951	33,424
Steelstown PS	24,269	34,557	37,403	29,782	127,821	253,832
Tattygar PS	2,765	18,582	4,994	3,503	8,902	38,746
Termoncanice PS	68,263	15,629	19,829	35,355	131,225	270,301
Sacred Heart PS, Trench Rd	26,628	13,574	17,848	40,813	28,016	126,879
Tummery PS	4,960	10,786	3,018	6,566	14,829	40,159
Holy Trinity PS	58,842	47,545	30,184	42,212	86,888	265,671
Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh	14,215	5,831	6,922	8,513	18,216	53,697
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	5,706	3,887	2,222	7,535	10,284	29,634
Gaelscoil an Traonaigh	1,607	813	2,088	2,771	7,440	14,719
Gaelscoil na gCrann	1,949	8,056	1,545	4,237	18,828	34,615
Gaelscoil na Daroige	1,087	2,144	8,652	6,895	8,377	27,155
Gaelscoil Leim An Mhadaidh	0	0	1,526	2,048	2,903	6,477
St Macartan's PS Roslea	0	0	0	-6,592	1,631	-4,961
Holy Family PS,Omagh	0	0	0	31,543	48,573	80,116
St Mary's PS Strabane	0	0	0	118,113	108,539	226,652
Castlederg Secondary	39,205	64,018	40,115	87,896	45,893	277,127
Duke of Westminster HS	0	0	4,286	576	1,998	6,860
Enniskillen HS	0	463	0	0	0	463
Faughan Valley HS	0	0	0	0	4,495	4,495
Limavady HS	45,394	43,122	30,540	46,456	55,257	220,769
Lisnaskea HS	24,831	42,118	31,454	17,865	38,369	154,637
Omagh HS	50,307	92,894	84,865	137,373	201,415	566,854
Strabane HS	35,487	103,642	68,183	23,798	14,113	245,223
Lisneal College	27,258	30,250	248,219	75,070	89,419	470,216
Devenish College-Old School	55,392	58,726	62,020	99,125	126,098	401,361
Devenish College - New School	0	0	0	0	13,267	13,267
Dean Brian Maguire HS	32,565	39,357	51,426	43,995	126,556	293,899
St Aidan's HS	36,033	25,580	42,020	70,516	65,732	239,881

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Immaculate Conception College	58,905	91,087	32,345	46,118	60,749	289,204
St Brigid's HS,Carnhill	46,361	28,053	23,843	16,572	60,069	174,898
St Cecilia's College	15,485	7,026	2,766	667	243	26,187
St Colman's HS	0	669	0	0	0	669
St Comghall's College	70,585	182,668	117,640	121,229	100,461	592,583
St Eugene's College, Roslea	26,967	31,220	16,293	22,288	22,083	118,851
St Eugene's HS,C'derg	22,602	51,941	25,491	16,037	12,927	128,998
St Fanchea's College	14,506	40,294	18,130	22,304	43,728	138,962
St John's Business & Enterprise Col	33,860	41,902	33,260	23,840	34,305	167,167
St Joseph's Coll,E'killen	57,283	65,903	24,699	41,623	57,765	247,273
St Joseph's HS,Plumbridge	0	403	0	0	0	403
St Joseph's Secondary, Westway	43,342	44,056	35,324	49,882	44,815	217,419
St Mary's College, Creggan	27,731	17,044	1,573	844	4,334	51,526
St Mary's Secondary, Brollagh	23,223	11,150	19,985	17,835	13,554	85,747
St Mary's Secondary, Irvinestown	28,688	30,241	42,957	29,645	66,438	197,969
St Mary's HS,Limavady	34,746	39,577	57,200	32,998	69,335	233,856
St Patrick's & St Brigid's Secondary	-14,489	46867	58,482	97,785	60,145	248,790
St Patrick's HS,Dungiven	33,060	50,802	40,251	59,175	227,091	410,379
St Peter's Secondary, Londonderry	31,742	32,944	38,229	16,241	18,923	138,079
Sacred Heart College	65,168	153,226	177,657	136,758	121,732	654,541
Holy Cross College	2,795	98	10,551	8,342	1,902	23,688
Collegiate GS	26,371	34,702	71,590	38,622	68,814	240,099
Limavady GS	49,121	74,950	70,831	61,182	111,988	368,072
Omagh Academy	85,337	75,051	63,988	80,642	115,584	420,602
Strabane GS	93,890	91,192	84,325	26,544	37,675	333,626
Strabane Academy	167	725	137,200	79,398	58,785	276,275
Belmont House Special School	43,705	60,653	27,374	31,479	63,097	226,308
Erne Special School	20,965	30,732	23,188	15,197	24,296	114,378
Limegrove Special School	-2,953	0	0	0	1,160	-1,793
Altnagelvin Hospital (relates to room in hospital for use by pupils)	0	2,782	51	373	131	3,337
Rossmar Special School	16,757	21,712	29,458	16,511	38,642	123,080
Willowbridge School	0	0	0	10,675	15,514	26,189
Arvalee - Site 1 (Cranny)	18,303	2,223	11,065	5,097	3,813	40,501

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Arvalee Special School (Fire)	0	0	0	78,542	1,321	79,863
Overall Totals	3,671,688	4,676,668	4,560,817	4,980,351	7,375,059	25,264,583

*In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments.

Information regarding Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools has not been included as this information is not held by the Department.

Capital Funding: Western Education and Library Board Area

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education how much capital funding has been allocated to each school in the Western Education and Library Board area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34146/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not allocate capital funding to schools. At the beginning of the financial year capital funding is allocated to each of the five Education and Library Boards who are responsible for capital projects in the controlled sector.

Estate Operations Team (EOT) within the Department is allocated a capital funding minor works budget for the non-controlled sectors. EOT recently made a call for applications for capital minor works schemes. When submitted each application is assessed on its merits. Grant aid is allocated to successful schemes.

The following table details capital expenditure in all schools in the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) area in each of the last five financial years:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
L'derry Model PS	63,837	68,860	21,430	27,575	20,965	202,667
L'derry Model PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	3,547	21,744	515,783	541,074
Ebrington PS	6,975	0	49,246	50,043	1,776	108,040
Ebrington PS - New School	31,910	86,238	0	51,546	36,870	206,564
Ebrington PS Meals Kitchen	12,529	0	7,121	223	0	19,873
Kesh PS	8,561	0	4,960	14,054	0	27,575
Kesh PS-New School	620	75,534	0	0	0	76,154
Kesh PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	4,994	4,994
Moat PS	35,710	25,333	17,894	15,730	5,360	100,027
Moat PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,005	3,005
Belleek PS No 2	110,777	10,570	3,919	4,885	0	130,151
Belleek PS No2 Meals Kitchen	0	0	784	24,907	239	25,930
Aghadrumsee PS	11,661	84	23,868	23,201	12,145	70,959
Newtownbutler PS No 2	15,151	822	41,055	13,009	43,349	113,386
Florencecourt PS	40,056	20,339	28,387	15,243	45,079	149,104
Florencecourt PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	7,824	7,824
Ballinamallard PS	47,402	24,108	14,684	30,704	347,493	464,391
Ballinamallard PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	5,129	0	5,129
Brookeborough PS	21,979	2,879	29,381	17,962	0	72,201
Derrygonnelly PS	1,119	0	0	0	0	1,119
Groarty Integrated PS	1,440	2	19,510	1,495	0	22,447
Culmore PS	16,918	421	4,346	24,137	14,998	60,820

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Bellarena PS	4,746	8,142	0	0	0	12,888
Ballougyr PS	43,152	29,752	32,379	39,872	8,101	153,256
Drumahoe PS	32,894	43,329	0	25,697	30,230	132,150
Eglinton PS	11,232	20,948	38,857	19,115	2,473	92,625
Eglinton PS-New School	71,196	722	0	6,226	105,373	183,517
Eglinton PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	6,732	0	0	6,732
Newbuildings PS	28,497	140	18,659	3,846	14,510	65,652
Newbuildings PS-New School	45,676	701	0	1,207	0	47,584
Newbuildings PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	3,005	636	3,641
Ballykelly PS	3,193	15,596	34,548	23,614	54,527	131,478
Ballykelly PS-New School	94,561	1,206	0	0	0	95,767
Ballykelly PS Meals Kitchen	3,017	6,618	0	0	0	9,635
McClintock PS	0	0	0	7,766	0	7,766
Dunmullan PS	20,099	28,243	210	42	0	48,594
Drumlegagh PS	9,200	0	0	0	0	9,200
Erganagh PS	28,043	4,016	18,196	8,211	0	58,466
Edwards PS	7,205	2,597	17,720	16,800	0	44,322
Edwards PS - New School	136	0	0	0	0	136
Killen PS	8,412	14,033	38,030	16,053	0	76,528
Killen PS-New School	2,371	0	0	0	0	2,371
Gillygooley PS	1,077	0	24,289	9,056	0	34,422
Denamona PS	18,440	30,685	8,412	0	69,222	126,759
Queen Eliz II PS	21,542	3,271	0	11,615	4,280	40,708
Queen Eliz II PS Meals Kitchen	135	1,181	0	0	0	1,316
Bridgehill PS	0	2,250	5,360	0	0	7,610
Omagh County PS	15,274	17,975	26,568	46,022	0	105,839
Omagh County PS-New School	2,702	344	0	0	0	3,046
Dromore PS	1,149	4,651	15,339	191	0	21,330
Strabane PS	31,564	28,456	30,230	39,644	6,215	136,109
Strabane PS-New School	2,616	365	0	0	0	2,981
Strabane PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	20,503	5,352	25,855
Donemana PS	35,456	18,714	49,147	15,015	0	118,332
Donemana PS-Proposed New School	2,506	65	0	0	0	2,571
Donemana PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	6,068	408	6,476
Jones Memorial PS	44,146	18,977	31,714	13,968	53,918	162,723
Jones Memorial PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	8,324	8,324

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Drumachose PS	55,585	35,638	6,766	123,100	313,642	534,731
Drumachose PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	265,713	265,713
Artigarvan PS	8,307	17,840	22,911	110,822	51,820	211,700
Artigarvan PS - New School	62,202	1,009	0	0	0	63,211
Artigarvan PS Meals Kitchen	0	6,185	7,484	809	0	14,478
Greenhaw PS	10,890	68,255	115,824	167,561	26,545	389,075
Greenhaw PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	7,645	5,096	12,741
Gibson PS	13,756	12,429	0	0	0	26,185
Gibson PS- New School	505	0	0	0	0	505
Tempo No 1 PS	10,057	9,425	15,104	346,675	36,209	417,470
Ashlea PS	0	23,200	0	24,594	8,415	56,209
Maguiresbridge PS	27,805	16,281	9,019	29,518	6,141	88,764
Maguiresbridge PS-New School	714	1,230	0	0	0	1,944
Maguiresbridge PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,005	3,005
Irvinestown PS	28,627	14,776	3,686	1,567	1,115	49,771
Irvinestown PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	4,353	69,487	73,840
Enniskillen Model PS	8,269	13,520	89,240	59,178	68	170,275
Enniskillen PS - New School	39,059	24,644	0	4,000	23,824	91,527
Enniskillen Model PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	5,096	5,096
Lack PS	42,318	79,506	21,303	0	0	143,127
Lisnagelvin PS	8,986	79,667	114,520	109,536	9,007	321,716
Lisnagelvin PS - New School	3,835,474	1,082,891	400,895	5,593	0	5,324,853
Lisnagelvin PS Meals Kitchen (new)	0	0	0	0	8,534	8,534
Lisbellaw PS	45,193	0	15,405	19,395	0	79,993
Lisbellaw PS - New School	2,017,258	243,182	32,050	10,672	0	2,303,162
Lisbellaw PS Meals Kitchen	22,000	0	0	0	0	22,000
N'stewart Model PS	34,749	23,654	33,030	18,485	59,717	169,635
N'stewart Model PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	12,774	3,277	16,051
Langfield PS	2,097	7	27,920	21,242	0	51,266
Cumber Claudy PS	99,630	13,788	22,235	99,906	36,123	271,682
Cumber Claudy PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	6,454	0	6,454
Ardstraw PS	24,165	52,697	280	56,490	55,509	189,141
Gortin PS	54,682	25,656	0	2,660	4,614	87,612

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Limavady PS	56,026	37,921	60,114	164,086	193,810	511,957
Sion Mills PS	11,138	22,185	24,750	222,799	25,319	306,191
Sion Mills PS Meals Kitchen	0	6,618	8,719	553	0	15,890
Fountain PS	19,199	14,529	0	38,977	8,985	81,690
Bready Jubilee PS	18,523	28,297	0	0	682	47,502
Drumrane PS	62,167	9,517	0	1,047	68	72,799
Cooley PS	7,721	10,429	16,947	54,306	14,370	103,773
Gaelscoil Neachtain	0	0	0	8,748	478,534	487,282
Rosemount PS	20,066	24,492.89	65,494	1,770	4,753.84	116,577
Rosemount PS Meals Kitchen	4,375	3,551	14,703	12,015	5,239	39,883
Nazareth House PS	18,468	224,179	23,972.32	53,379.43	19,494.90	339,494
Holy Child PS	37,031.11	1,890	26,993	985	0	66,899
Holy Child PS Meals Kitchen	3,507	134	0	0	0	3,641
St Patrick's, Mullanskea	31,203.52	68,442	0	17,461	14,351.66	131,458
Tattygar PS	26,557.68	5,823.89	2,400	0	0	34,782
Tattygar PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,318	3,318
St Tierney's PS	2,676	507.55	0	7,432.08	12,500	23,116
St Mary's PS, N'butler	11,860	161,033.02	56,165.84	7,647.07	4,970	241,676
St Mary's PS N'butler Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,005	3,005
St Patrick's PS, D'gonnelly	42,503	0	1,272.79	0	0	43,776
St Patrick's PS D'gonnelly Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	5,231	5,231
St Mary's PS, E'killen	12,394.15	2,271	0	3,467		18,132
St Ninnidh's PS (Derrylin)	80,331	0	0	38,185.79	5,360	123,877
St Mary's PS, K'sher	73,467	23,674	0	2,104	0	99,245
Corranny PS	17,751	0	0	0	0	17,751
St John the Baptist PS	2,440.22	72,238.86	244	20,337	4,265	99,525
St Mary's PS, Mullymesker	8,932.96	34,937.33	0	768.60	5,360	49,999
Cornagogue PS	0	5,149	3,231.35	0	0	8,380
St Mary's PS, M'bridge	12,873	0	0	0	0	12,873
Killyhommon PS	114,327.84	853.43	2,500	0	4,665	122,346
St Paul's PS	41,302	24,971.52	1,027.78	0	0	67,301
St Paul's PS Meals Kitchen	8,415	2,730	3,670	0	0	14,815
St Ronan's PS	5,740	14,578	237	82,752.14	704	104,011
Glendermott PS	30,430.57	13,471.38	9,265	6,108.82	0	59,276
St Patrick's PS	5,692.96	0	0	0	0	5,693
St Canice's PS, Feeny	4,353	33,485.50	5,360	1,972.85	4,115.89	49,287
St Anthony's PS	33,138.60	0	0	2,603.76	1,164.72	36,907
Craigback PS	5,728	51,718	0	228	0	57,674

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Broadbridge PS	2,952	148,719.80	84,240	19,281	27,938.87	283,132
St Matthew's PS	11,384.09	0	2,926.46	21,555	0	35,866
Termoncanice PS	3,085	0	0	0	346,364.01	349,449
Termoncanice PS Meals Kitchen	24,420	3,854	0	8,120	0	36,394
St Mary's PS, Altinure	76,630	15,592	1,692	0	0	93,914
Magheralough PS	13,545	0	347.65	0	0	13,893
Barrack St Boys PS Meals Kitchen	3,465	0	3,325	10,281.16	18,677.12	35,748
Loreto Convent PS, Omagh	0	203	8,021.38	51,300	23,940	83,464
Loreto Convent PS, Omagh Meals Kitchen	0	4,496	4,464	3,005	0	11,965
St Francis of Assisi PS	147.06	2,303	0	0	0	2,450
Tummery PS	3,905	91,491	0	6,400	0	101,796
St Mary's PS, Killyclogher	32,270	1,970.24	780	51,665	43,413.60	130,099
Knockagor PS	0	3,040.06	210	6,330	0	9,580
Envagh PS	11,632	2,105	0	0	0	13,737
Drumduff PS	16,698	308	0	26,407.50	41,047.31	84,461
St Davog's PS	17,353.50	342	0	325	639.18	18,660
St Patrick's PS, Gortin	36,121	6,864	31,877.88	7,297	5,066.99	87,227
Drumlisk PS	57,857	4,290	1,188.16	0	5,013.16	68,348
St Eugene's PS, Strabane	2,415	0	0	0	0	2,415
St Joseph's PS, Glenmornan	15,366	7,245	170	20,586	0	43,367
St Lawrence's PS	8,326	28,089	24,116	337,128	12,184.42	409,843
St Lawrence's PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	856	70,366	8,898	80,120
St Brigid's PS, Omagh	2,230.41	0	0	0	0	2,230
St Macartan's PS, Omagh	0	18,095	676	0	0	18,771
St Mary's Boys' PS, Strabane	40,441.06	2,655	5,846.86	13,651	-276	62,318
St Mary's Boys PS, Strabane Meals Kitchen	0	42	0	7,164	0	7,206
St Caireall's PS, C'derg	81,887	5,993.17	15,882.05	8,367.64	0	112,130
St Joseph's PS, Drumquin	110,854.05	8,578	0	132	4,858.68	124,423
St Joseph's PS, Drumquin Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,005	3,005
Recarson PS	199,897.10	75,172	594	7,555	0	283,218
St Patrick's PS, Eskra	3,434.91	7,913.30	0	0	0	11,348
Gortnagarn PS	19,545	0	0	0	0	19,545
Sacred Heart PS, Tattyreagh	33,456.45	3,319.84	822	5,439.11	53,015.78	96,053
Sacred Heart PS, Tattyreagh Meals Kitchen	3,484	0	0	0	0	3,484
Altishane PS	6,198	2,291.25	0	0	0	8,489

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Roscavey PS	14,349.75	448	11,835	5,700	9,713.44	42,046
St Columba's PS, Strabane	59,088	9,112.22	0	0	0	68,200
St Teresa's PS,C'more	21,052	48,885	4,860	11,106.14	158,672.34	244,575
St Teresa's PS C'More Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	5,371	5,371
St Mary's Boys' PS,Strabane	54,124	4,361.86	83,046	59,839	5,671.51	207,042
St Mary's Boys PS, Strabane Meals Kitchen	1,797	4,496	0	3,783	3,005	13,081
St Columbkille's PS, C'more	8,326	28,089	24,116	337,128	12,184.42	409,843
St Columbkille's PS C'More Meals Kitchen	0	0	856	70,366	8,898	80,120
Faughanvale PS	20,086	12,390.20	27,259	15,906	0	75,641
Faughanvale PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	4,737	4,737
Mullabuoy PS	564.43	13,630	21,023.85	35,679	179	71,076
St Aidan's PS	2,444	1,233.75	0	0	0	3,678
St Patrick's PS,N'stewart	33,854.20	173,271.63	38,151.79	26,233.84	0	271,511
St Patrick's PS N'stewart Meals Kitchen	0	9,509	722	64,890	3,624	78,745
St John's PS,Bligh's Lane	0	0	0	698	3,328	4,026
St John's PS Blighs Lane Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	3,962	0	3,962
St Canice's PS, Dungiven	8,053	6,714	75,576	7,323.58	33,686.67	131,353
St Canice's PS, Dungiven Meals Kitchen	0	0	6,732	0	3,005	9,737
St Colmcille's PS, Omagh	0	2,415	7,372	5,360	0	15,147
St Colmcille's PS, Omagh Meals Kitchen	0	0	4,496	4,251	0	8,747
St Anne's PS, Londonderry	1,405.03	6,963.25	0	4,414.80	25,441.86	38,225
St Anne's PS, L'derry Meals Kitchen	0	0	977	161,005	2,883	164,865
St Joseph's PS, Ederney	28,771.80	211.28	2,203	370	44,787.73	76,344
St Colmcille's PS, Claudy	45,207.65	36,074.14	970.80	12,352	3,005	97,610
Steelstown PS	178,169	29,692	21,787	33,396	0	263,044
Steelstown PS Meals Kitchen	3,017	3,551	0	0	0	6,568
St Peter's & St Paul's PS	3,591.19	38,225.76	0	5,379.68	3,620	50,817
St Naile's PS	38,598.66	68,222.11	233,172.65	18,932.34	4,473.38	363,399
St Patrick's PS,C'derg	0	12,161.75	5,360	0	13,372	30,894
St Patrick's PS C'Derg Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	5,129	0	5,129
St Mary's PS, B'gorry	18,514	2,996	111,617.93	81,429	19,585.13	234,142
St Mary's Girls' PS,Strabane	79,711.96	44,539.86	9,998.70	3,600	0	137,851

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Mary's Girls' PS , Strabane Meals Kitchen	8,380	0	0	0	0	8,380
St Peter's PS	0	3,017.78	623.74	15,818	2,298	21,758
St Peter's PS Meals Kitchen	0	5,914	0	0	0	5,914
St Martin's PS, Garrison	18,652.50	5,759.93	33,023	1,738	5,360	64,533
St Joseph's PS, Donagh	0	0	7,200	279,271	80,042	366,513
St Joseph's PS, Donagh Meals Kitchen	3,411	0	0	0	0	3,411
St Conor's PS	1,980	58,035.94	9,256	16,506.04	228,457.85	314,236
St Conor's PS, Meals Kitchen	1,155	0	0	0	6,323	7,478
St Brigid's PS, Carnhill	20,868.94	38,483.28	14,968.61	3,459.22	0	77,780
St Brigid's PS Carnhill Meals Kitchen	0	0	3,325	5,922	0	9,247
St Oliver Plunkett PS,S'foyle	37,641	12,216.57	2,699.54	0	0	52,557
St Oliver Plunkett PS, S'Foyle Meals Kitchen	5,559	0	0	0	9,984	15,543
St Finlough's PS	638.74	702	4,502	0	0	5,843
St Scire's PS	101,611	7,590.09	0	0	0	109,201
St Scire's PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	3,005	3,005
St Mary's PS,Teemore	15,872.96	6,457.80	1,897.34	0	7,607.60	31,836
St Dympna's PS	50,273.27	140	82,416.23	3,081	0	135,911
St Dympna's PS Meals Kitchen	5,680	0	0	0	0	5,680
St John's PS,Dernaflaw	272,543.95	44,168	11,732	5,582.16	29,152	363,178
St Columban's PS, Belcoo	5,740	0	0	8,418	0	14,158
Slievemore PS	40,022.95	2,106	0	143	8,709	50,981
St Columba's PS, Newbuildings	12,323.14	1,324	10,819.20	0	0	24,466
St Davog's PS (Belleek No 1)	11,313	7,352	40,660	2,590.76	0	61,916
St Davog's PS (Belleek No 1) Meals Kitchen	0	112	3,700	0	0	3,812
Sacred Heart PS, Londonderry	94,282	68,762.51	116,646.17	22,591.93	0	302,283
Sacred Heart PS, Londonderry Meals Kitchen	0	0	3,891	0	0	3,891
Good Shepherd (Dungiven Rd) PS	38,885.38	32,172	27,020	10,679	9,555.31	118,312
St Oliver Plunkett PS, Beragh	0	0	1,339.60	0	0	1,340
St Oliver Plunkett PS, Beragh Meals Kitchen	0	3,066	0	0	0	3,066
St Mary's PS,Tempo No 2	17,625	12,816.78	2,487	35,908	0	68,837
St Patrick's PS,Donemana	3,306	3,928.08	0	0	8,227	15,461

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Anne's PS, Strabane	37,293.75	0	0	0	0	37,294
St Anne's PS, Strabane Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	5,959	4,425	10,384
Our Lady of Lourdes PS	9,401	0	8,945.82	6,554	1,239.45	26,140
Our Lady Of Lourdes PS Meals Kitchen	574	6,557	345	3,005	146	10,627
Christ The King PS	0	0	35,196	1,852.56	337.38	37,386
Christ The King PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	7,164	7,980	848	15,992
Gortnaghey PS	0	0	14,480	6,418	0	20,898
St Theresa's PS, Glebe	0	8,260	0	648	13,312.18	22,220
St Therese's PS	50,908.19	21,811	70,271	3,141.42	16,441	162,573
Chapel Rd PS	23,729.93	138,459.71	4,200	2,248.18	32,606.36	201,244
Holy Family PS, Londonderry	20,470	89,399.58	53,850	1,193	6,289	171,202
Holy Family PS, Londonderry Meals Kitchen	0	3,331	0	0	8,324	11,655
St Eithne's PS, Ballymagroorty	26,050.18	202,868.05	285.44	1,695	27,758.44	258,657
Long Tower PS	0	0	0	8,120	995	9,115
Long Tower PS Meals Kitchen	128,635.38	3,534.12	45,203.15	39,554	11,694.94	228,622
Hollybush PS	2,396.85	1,514.71	170	78,707	40,391.51	123,180
Hollybush PS Meals Kitchen	0	0	3,325	6,538	0	9,863
St Eugene's PS, Londonderry	47,347.10	36,914	8,603.40	24,351	10,981.30	128,197
All Saints T'sallagh PS	12,438	9,986	318.92	0	0	22,743
Bunscoil Cholmcille	172	9,482	31,127	321	533	41,635
St Patrick's PS, Pennyburn	15,562	56	0	0	4,665	20,283
St Patrick's PS Pennyburn Meals Kitchen	5,223	0	0	1,289	6,140	12,652
Holy Trinity PS	152,825	15,115.95	0	12,590	23,823	204,354
Holy Trinity Key Stage 1	5,441	0	4,875	0	0	10,316
Holy Trinity Key Stage II	0	0	0	0	5,369	5,369
St Macartans PS, A'drumsee	34,518	5,490	1,533,184	353,272	2,595	1,929,059
St Macartans PS, A'drumsee Meals Kitchen	391	878	54,900	833	84	57,086
Holy Family PS, Omagh	3,363	31,740	0	306,157.43	58,871.86	400,132
St Mary's PS, Strabane	0	0	0	181,835.24	63,250.55	245,086
Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh	9,173	26,936.25	15,306	0	0	51,415
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	179,487	214,155.88	63,625.54	4,706.36	3,537.78	465,513
Gaelscoil an Traonaigh Meals Kitchen	2,130	0	0	0	0	2,130

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Gaelscoil na gCrann Meals Kitchen	188	0	0	0	0	188
Enniskillen IPS	156,977.92	1,140	1,200	4,369.10	60,425	224,112
Omagh IPS	33,087.12	44,647.47	70,135.71	413,645.78	4,311	565,827
Oakgrove IPS	4,942.16	0	0	0	0	4,942
Roe Valley IPS	238,213.33	96,277.37	117,744.64	12,926	294,239.06	759,400
Academy NS	4,218	18,136	47,875	107,800	833	178,862
Strathfoyle NS	11,020	1,480	2,002	35,997	116,984	167,483
Lisnagelvin NS	5,023	10,716	52,247	64,083	9,663	141,732
Omagh North NS	2,041	988	0	0	0	3,029
Blighs Lane NS	10,815	5,134	2,327	47,456	18,097	83,829
Carnhill NS	4,334	-4	0	0	0	4,330
Ballycolman NS	2,874	1,990	0	0	28,593	33,457
Galliagh NS	6,871	4,316	0	0	1,288	12,475
Belmont NS	11,164	1,776	3,915	117,954	6,954	141,763
Trench Rd NS	5,701	10,423	0	3,032	4,992	24,148
Enniskillen NS	4,734	575	36,313	103,796	988	146,406
Limavady NS	6,500	239	49,279	77,729	609	134,356
Devenish College-New School	179,509	64,823	182,768	156,482	94,200	677,782
Castledearg Secondary	117,428	59,592	34,729	43,326	6,560	261,635
Castledearg Secondary, Meals Kitchen	7,006	27,844	13,689	0	0	48,539
Faughan Valley HS	2,662	32,099	4,078	0	0	38,839
Lisnaskea HS	55,028	18,598	22,892	413	0	96,931
Lisnaskea High Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	5,129	0	5,129
Omagh HS	61,273	78,413	116,047	87,288	141,676	484,697
Omagh HS, Meals Kitchen	3,465	10,849	21,813	0	8,330	44,457
Dungiven PS Meals Kitchen	3,728	140	0	0	0	3,868
Strabane HS	49,760	82,757	2,163	264,126	25,536	424,342
Limavady HS	49,895	41,023	30,232	24,146	278,383	423,679
Limavady HS, Meals Kitchen	5,559	0	0	35	12,272	17,866
Lisneal College	28,127	43,343	32,897	0	86	104,453
Devenish College	3,465	0	24,450	8,120	0	36,035
St Mary's HS, Limavady	115,071.75	43,300	483,858	12,673	113,223.65	768,126
St Mary's College, Creggan	0	15,826.52	4,995	0	3,050	23,872
St Mary's HS, Enniskillen	7,864.87	22,325	16,390	0	0	46,580
St Fanchea's College, Meals Kitchen	81,596	19,115	155,013	0	13,597	269,321
St Joseph's College, E'killen	886	0	46,513	0	3,949	51,348

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Joseph's College, E'killen Meals Kitchen	114,177.91	29,716	168,307.08	38,629	91,222.33	442,052
St Mary's College, Irvinestown	0	4,496	0	3,670	0	8,166
St Mary's College, Irvinestown Meals Kitchen	0	65,426.66	52,043	0	0	117,470
St Patrick's&St Brigid's HS	0	24,047	0	13,038	0	37,085
St Patricks&St Brigids HS, Meals Kitchen	295,231.62	141,714.71	73,966.21	0	8,212	519,125
St Joseph's Secondary, Westway	0	11,566	0	0	6,479	18,045
St Joseph's Secondary, Westway Meals Kitchen	70,465.99	17,254.65	75,387	5,232.83	0	168,340
Dean Maguirc College	8,127	8,029	0	8,120	0	24,276
Dean Maguirc College Meals Kitchen	3,163	5,722.32	26,552	16,280	106,148.49	157,866
St Patrick's College	28	0	20,310	0	0	20,338
St John's College	22,651	305,601	10,396.08	1,591.18	178,364.34	518,604
St John's College, Meals Kitchen	7,390	0	2,775	2,280	16,158.07	28,603
St Aidan's HS	0	0	3,325	0	0	3,325
St Eugene's College	68,814.49	90,087	352,988.91	47,379	41,175.23	600,445
St Eugene's College Meals Kitchen	1,069.77	13,528.67	1,728	0	0	16,326
St Peter's HS	0	0	367	0	0	367
St Peter's HS, Meals Kitchen	16,737.79	20,084.60	487	0	0	37,309
St Cecilia's College	16,211	0	13,183	753	0	30,147
St Ceciliass College Meals Kitchen	4,700	25,367	0	0	0	30,067
St Comhghall's College	83,001.90	453,871.01	97,002.99	33,809	19,976.14	687,661
St Comhghall's College Meals Kitchen	0	0	15,709	0	0	15,709
St Brigid's College, Londonderry	9,469.28	92,344.71	0	0	0	101,814
Immaculate Conception College Meals Kitchen	0	88,130	8,117	707	8,082.84	105,037
Sacred Heart College	139,937	14,583	33,104.45	17,033.63	22,121.60	226,780
Sacred Heart College Meals Kitchen	3,465.00	2,151	0	0	5,239	10,855
Holy Cross College	14,066.99	3,050	4,995	0	3,050	25,162
Holy Cross College Meals Kitchen	16,304	0	0	0	0	16,304
Oakgrove Integrated College	8,345.01	0	0	0	0	8,345
Erne Integrated College	544,938.96	67,229.96	4,200	8,181	75,893.86	700,444

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Erne Integrated College Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	5,340	0	5,340
Drumragh Integrated College	2,835,114.91	138,800.26	263,393.28	75,036.99	454,813.25	3,767,159
Rossmar Spec School	27,804	38,548	56,902	62,328	32,528	218,110
Rossmar Spec School Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	4,737	4,737
Belmont Hse Spec School	115,923	27,002	90,381	27,365	0	260,671
Belmont Hse Spec School-New School	3,130	151	0	0	4,860	8,141
Belmont Hse Spec School Meals Kitchen	0	0	789	103,852	3,741	108,382
Erne Spec School	57,569	29,913	53,015	68,109	18,429	227,035
Erne Spec School-New School	0	0	0	8,290	70	8,360
Foyleview Spec School	41,998	87,120	66,637	255,727	17,772	469,254
Foyleview Spec School Meals Kitchen	0	0	0	0	5,096	5,096
Knockavoe Spec School	28,452	6,753	14,566	22,239	105,770	177,780
Knockavoe Spec School Meals Kitchen	8,359	0	0	0	0	8,359
Arvalee Spec School- Site 1 (Cranny)	-3	30,340	0	0	0	30,337
Arvalee Spec School - Site 2 (Heatherbank)	84,543	16,848	82,098	1,461,710	243,879	1,889,078
Arvalee Spec School-Proposed New School	0	0	75	0	0	75
Elmbrook Spec School	22,569	40,236	72,306	2,398	0	137,509
Elmbrook Spec School Meals Kitchen	5,844	0	0	0	0	5,844
Collegiate GS	25,062	4,407	25,062	28,848	57,036	140,415
Collegiate GS Meals Kitchen	0	0	17,576	5,331	0	22,907
Limavady GS	244,127	39,279	35,120	169,705	337,666	825,897
Limavady GS Meals Kitchen	34,356	0	16,829	225,518	1,286	277,989
Omagh Academy	41,400	40,681	194,030	148,983	20,980	446,074
Omagh Academy Meals Kitchen	3,465	0	1,919	17,525	0	22,909
Strabane GS	31,001	5,192	502,642	105,846	109,847	754,528
Strabane Academy - New School	7,982	2,795	0	0	0	10,777
Strabane Academy Meals Kitchen	0	0	7,772	503	0	8,275
Mount Lourdes GS	238,581.24	267,776.23	107,618.33	16,624	106,923.24	737,523
Portora Royal School	44,525.75	17,523.91	130,810.17	7,646	23,773.60	224,279
St Michael's College	324,459.91	26,781.16	319,587	32,307	0	703,135

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Thornhill College	26,578	107,307.26	10,034.55	720	41,558.19	186,198
St Columba's College	50,541.30	223,309.30	117,499.70	381,021.76	123,121.68	895,494
Christian Bros GS	375,502	171,974	5,339	48,552.93	32,100	633,468
Loreto GS	55,533.12	118,551	0	0	30,142.52	204,227
Foyle College	14,716,028.83	340,005	215,671.31	601,320	552,429.74	16,425,455
Lumen Christi College	60,957.12	2,927	41,100.35	149,034.61	31,506.19	285,525
Overall Totals	33,535,225.16	9,633,734.97	10,126,238.54	11,213,771.44	9,116,678.72	73,625,648.83

* The WELB has provided expenditure information in relation to the controlled sector and schools meals accommodation in the maintained sector.

** Information relating to capital expenditure in the voluntary sector has been obtained from Departmental records.

*** In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments.

Dunclug High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33854/11-15, where Dunclug High School will accommodate the additional pupils.

(AQW 34154/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that the North Eastern Education and Library Board is currently working with Dunclug College to ensure that the additional pupils can be accommodated from 1 September 2014.

Special Educational Needs

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Education to detail the funding provided per pupil under Article 60 for Special Educational Needs, broken down by school.

(AQW 34209/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The detail of funding provided per pupil under Article 60 for Special Educational Needs is listed, by each ELB, in the tables below in respect of the 2013-14 financial year:

BELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Belfast Hospital School	72	12	0.17
Cedar Lodge	193	86	0.45
Clarawood	19	29	1.53
Fleming Fulton (see note 4)	127	327	2.57
Greenwood Assessment Centre	52	25	0.48
Harberton	206	109	0.53
Mitchell House	83	53	0.64
Park	126	84	0.67
Oakwood School & Assessment Centre	107	48	0.45
Glenveagh	189	105	0.56
St Gerard's ERC	223	122	0.55
Total	1397	1000	0.72

NEELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Rosstulla	170	167	0.98
Thornfield	87	122	1.40

NEELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Castle Tower	268	266	0.99
Hillcroft	112	166	1.48
Kilronan	83	148	1.78
Riverside	48	76	1.58
Roddensvale	95	107	1.13
Sandelford	155	217	1.40
Jordanstown (see note 5)	51	150	2.94
Total	1,069	1,418	1.33

SEELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Ardmore House(see note 6)	2	57	28.50
Beechlawn	159	119	0.75
Brookfield	136	58	0.43
Killard	179	120	0.67
Longstone	145	115	0.79
Clifton	144	102	0.71
Tor Bank	159	122	0.77
Parkview	169	84	0.50
Knockevin	91	119	1.31
Totals	1,190	896	0.75

SELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Sperrinview	102	126	1.24
Lisanally	100	140	1.40
Ceara	122	122	1.00
Donard	76	77	1.01
Rathore	156	135	0.87
Total	556	600	1.08

WELB	No of Pupils in each School	Delegated Budget Allocated from ELB £'000	Funding per Pupil £'000
Arvalee School	103	191	1.85
Belmont School	129	192	1.49
Foyle View School	120	178	1.48
Knockavoe School	116	137	1.18
Rossmar School	88	151	1.72
Willowbridge	130	246	1.89
Total	686	1,095	1.60

Elective Home Education

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education to outline the arrangements for elective home education; and for his assessment of the success of the system in relation to educational achievement.

(AQW 34219/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have advised that the arrangements for elective home education vary across the 5 board areas. However, when notified of children being educated at home, all Boards will make contact with the families.

Boards can then provide a range of support and advice to parents in educating their child at home. This may include, for example, guidance on learning materials and on examination options which are suited to the child's needs, age, ability and aptitude.

In addition, the Boards may seek further information from parents with regard to the suitability of the education being provided, and follow this up with annual contact. If a Board has a concern regarding the adequacy of the education provision the Board's Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) will consider the matter and may undertake a full assessment. If necessary, Boards may also refer the details onto the Educational Welfare Service for follow up.

The Boards have further confirmed that they do not undertake assessments of the achievements and outcomes of children who are educated at home. The Department also has not undertaken an assessment of the system.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DE Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34246/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has spent the following on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

	2009-10 £'000	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000
Heat	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Electricity	4	4	18	21	27
Water	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	17
Total	4	4	18	21	44

Down's Syndrome

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what resources are provided to educate children diagnosed with Down's syndrome in each Education and Library Board area; and whether there are any plans to increase this funding in any of the Board areas.

(AQW 34251/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that children identified with Down's syndrome are ordinarily the subject of a statement of special educational needs (SEN) which will identify the extent of the child's SEN and the additional support programmes required, tailored to meet the individual needs of each child. Whilst the majority of pupils with Down's syndrome are educated within a special school setting, some are educated within a mainstream school or in a Learning Support Centre attached to a mainstream school.

Funding to support this cohort of children, across all ELBs, will continue to be closely linked to the individual needs as ELBs are required to fund the tailored provision identified within a child's statement.

Pupils: Expenditure

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33795/11-15, to detail the total expenditure in 2013-14 in each sector; and the number of pupils enrolled in each sector.

(AQW 34264/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The total expenditure in 2013-14 is not available by sector until the publication of LMS outturn statements in the autumn.

Pupil numbers by sector are listed in the table below:

Sector	FTE
Controlled Nursery Schools	3,276
Maintained Nursery Schools	1,672
Controlled Primary Schools ^{1:3:5}	79,671

Sector	FTE
Maintained Primary Schools ^{1,2,3}	78,944
Controlled Secondary Schools ⁵	32,369
Maintained Secondary Schools ^{2,3}	41,164
Controlled Grammar Schools ⁴	15,416
Voluntary Grammar Schools ⁴	48,917
GMI Primary Schools ¹	5,744
GMI Secondary Schools	9,494
All Sectors Total	316,666

Notes:

- 1 Includes pupils attending Nursery Units within schools
- 2 Includes pupils attending Irish Medium Units within host schools
- 3 Includes Irish Medium Schools
- 4 Includes pupils attending Preparatory Departments within Schools
- 5 Includes Controlled Integrated schools

Educational Welfare Service

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken by his Department and the Education and Library Boards to address the concerns of the Educational Welfare Service (EWS), given that 20,000 children missed more than 15 per cent of their lessons in 2011-12 and less than 4000 have been referred to the EWS for support.

(AQW 34272/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that they have given serious consideration to the recommendations of the NIAO Follow-up Report on Improving Pupil Attendance. They have established a working group which will take forward the key actions that relate to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). This should bring enhanced consistency to the strategies and interventions that are implemented at school based level to support the enhanced attendance of all pupils of compulsory school age.

School Starting Age

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for an update on the work being undertaken to identify potential options to introduce flexibility around the school starting age; and whether flexibility can be applied to pupils due to start school in September 2014.

(AQW 34300/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In order to allow parents to defer their child's entry to primary 1e changes to primary legislation will be required.

My officials are working with the Departmental Solicitor's Office, Education and Library Boards and others to work on matters of detail and it would be my intention to consult on specific proposals towards the end of 2014.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to what extent his Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34301/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is committed to the full implementation of the Programme for Government commitment to integrate social clauses across procurement contracts.

Where DE grant aids the construction work, all schools' capital infrastructure projects are let in compliance with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) guidance relating to social clauses. Departmental supplies and services are generally sourced via CPD as A Centre of Procurement Expertise and as such, where practical, incorporate social clauses.

Education and Library Boards (ELB'S) supplies and services contracts now include, as a minimum, social clauses that cover prompt payment to suppliers, equality and health and safety. Where practical other social clauses such as employment, training and environmental issues are incorporated.

ELB's have integrated social clauses into construction works and related services contracts. Construction works projects incorporate social clauses in respect of employment, training and apprenticeships.

Ballee Community High School

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education (i) how many Ballee Community High School pupils have been placed in other schools for September when the school closes; (ii) how many have yet to be placed; and (iii) what action the North Eastern Education and Library Board is taking to accommodate these pupils into suitable places.

(AQW 34327/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) has provided the following up-to-date position as of 20 June:

- 85 pupils have been placed in other schools including 5 with Statements of Special Educational Needs
- 4 applications are currently being considered by schools
- 5 pupils have either failed to gain admission to their initial choice of school, are SEBD pupils (pupils with behavioural difficulties) and are being assisted by Board officers, are pupils whose parents have not been in contact with the Board and are being followed up by Board Officers, or are pupils who are leaving the jurisdiction.

The NEELB is also continuing to work with schools and parents where there have been applications submitted and pupils are awaiting a reply. With regard to a minority of parents whom Ballee CHS has been unable to contact, the NEELB has sent another letter, made telephone calls and undertaken home visits. Together with all board services, the NEELB is actively seeking appropriate placements in order to meet pupil needs.

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of children referred to the Middletown Centre for Autism in each month of the last three years; (ii) the number who received assistance; and (iii) the nature of the assistance provided; and for his assessment of the referral process.

(AQW 34388/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executive of the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) has advised that the number children and young people referred to the MCA by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in each month of the last three years is as follows:

	Number of Referrals
July 2011	0
August 2011	0
September 2011	0
October 2011	1
November 2011	0
December 2011	0
January 2012	0
February 2012	1
March 2012	1
April 2012	0
May 2012	1
June 2012	0
July 2012	0
August 2012	0
September 2012	1
October 2012	0
November 2012	1
December 2012	2
January 2013	0
February 2013	0
March 2013	1
April 2013	0
May 2013	0

	Number of Referrals
June 2013	2
July 2013	0
August 2013	0
September 2013	3
October 2013	4
November 2013	2
December 2013	6*
January 2014	0
February 2014	2
March 2014	5
April 2014	2
May 2014	3
June 2014	2

Of the 40 children and young people that have been referred to MCA over this period, all of them have received assistance from the Centre.

In terms of the nature of the support provided, these children and young people will have been engaged in a period of intensive assessment and learning support led by the MCA's multi-disciplinary team. This includes the delivery of speech and language assessment, educational psychology assessment, occupational therapy assessment and curriculum focussed assessment in addition to informal assessment practices and the assimilation of information from first level services. The intervention is normally delivered across environments: home, school and community settings where possible.

I am content that the agreed referral process between the ELBs and MCA is effective in enabling the children identified by the ELBs as being suitable for assistance from the Centre to receive this specialist support.

* Following requests from the relevant Education and Library Board, MCA will occasionally deliver their multi-disciplinary learning support and assessment on a whole school basis rather than to specifically referred children. This form of referral allows the Centre to engage with children, staff and parents in order to support a broader range of pupils attending the school with complex autism. The Centre has identified the resources involved in a whole school referral as equating to three pupils that were individually referred. The referrals documented in December 2013 involved two whole school referrals.

St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on the works to be carried out at St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena. (AQW 34416/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The education and library board are progressing a programme of capital minor works for schools in the non-controlled sectors on behalf of the Department.

The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) have agreed with the Department a planned programme of minor works at the school over the current, and the two following, financial years as set out in the table below.

Financial year	Project	Current position
2014/15	Refurbishment works to the canteen/kitchen	Tender approved at £30,972.40. I understand that the pre-start meeting is to take place within the next few weeks.
2014/15	Replacement of 4 mobiles	I am advised by the NEELB, this project will be tendered in Autumn 2014.
2015/16	Fire Risk Assessment works	Business case under consideration
2015/16	New Modular Canteen	Business case under consideration
2016/17	Refurbishment of the Home Economics accommodation	I understand that the NEELB has advised the Department that this project will be planned for commencement in 21016/17.

A further eight applications were received from the school as part of the 2014/15 call for minor works. These will be considered and assessed alongside all other competing priorities.

The school enhancement programme scheme to refurbish and extend the existing convent building to provide a creative and expressive arts facility, including music, drama, art and moving image and media studies have had economic appraisals approved and a design team appointed. Subject to NIEA Requirements, Planning Permission and revised costs it is hoped that work will commence on site March 2015.

Academic Selection

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to list the schools that have phased out academic selection over the last five years; and which schools are in the process of phasing out academic selection.

(AQW 34417/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: St MacNissi's College in Carnlough abandoned academic selection in March 2010 when it amalgamated with two other Co. Antrim schools, St Aloysius' College, and St Comgall's College, to become St Killian's College. Loreto College in Coleraine has been operating successfully as a non-selective grammar school since September 2012. In March this year I approved development proposals for St Michael's Grammar School in Lurgan and St Patrick's Grammar School in Armagh to end the use of academic admissions criteria.

I understand that four other Catholic grammar schools are exploring the possibility of moving in the same direction: Loreto Grammar School in Omagh, Omagh Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Dominican College in Portstewart and St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School in Belfast. However, before any such change can be made, statutory development proposals will need to be published. The statutory two month consultation period provides an opportunity for the public to make their views known and following this I will consider all the pertinent information before making my decision.

Schools

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to outline the difference between a school (i) closing; (ii) discontinuing; and (iii) amalgamating.

(AQW 34422/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is no difference in meaning between a school (i) closing and (ii) discontinuing. The term 'discontinue' is included in the legislation underpinning the Development Proposal process (Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986).

The term (iii) amalgamation is described in the Sustainable Schools Policy which states at section 6.13 that a new school is formed to replace two or more schools of similar size coming together and usually means a new name, uniform etc. An amalgamation is achieved by the closure/discontinuance of two or more schools and establishment of a new school to replace them.

Drumragh Integrated College

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education, given the decision of Mr Justice Treacy in relation to Drumragh Integrated College, what impact the implementation of Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 will have on Area Planning.

(AQW 34448/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department's positive approach to Article 64 is set within a wider statutory framework. I take decisions in relation to the area planning process in line with my policies and priorities which shape the education system and make it fit for purpose to ensure it meets the current and future needs of pupils.

Bangor: School Development Proposals

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the (i) Kilcooley; and (ii) Clondeyboye Primary schools development proposals.

(AQW 34450/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I approved the Development Proposals for Kilcooley and Clondeyboye Primary Schools on 3 June 2014. The approval for Clondeyboye included a modification to the admissions number and implementation date to 31 August 2015.

Details of my decision can be found on my Department's website, using the following link: http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/area-planning/14-schools_estate_devprop_pg/dp_decisions_2014.htm

Holywood: New Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on proposals for new school builds for Holywood.

(AQW 34451/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: From my responses to your previous questions you will be aware that the South Eastern Education & Library Board (SEELB) identified schools in Holywood (Priory College; Holywood Primary School and Holywood Nursery school) along with its other priorities for major capital investment.

The need for clarity on enrolments at Priory College and the potential to increase these above sustainable schools thresholds and for alliances with other secondary schools in the SEELB area in relation to 6th form provision meant that the schools

project for Holywood was not included in my previous announcements. This remained the position when I made my recent announcement on 24 June on a number of further schools to be advanced in planning.

In addition, a protocol was applied to prioritise the potential major works projects which I announced on 24 June. The outcome of this was that Holywood Primary School did not achieve a high enough ranking when the protocol was applied and therefore it was not one of the schools that I was able to include in my announcement.

Garvagh High School

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Education to detail the total cost incurred to date by the North Eastern Education and Library Board since the closure of Garvagh High School in June 2013 on (i) security; (ii) building maintenance; (iii) grounds; and (iv) any other costs associated with keeping the school under the ownership of the Board.

(AQW 34459/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education & Library Board (NEELB) has confirmed that it has incurred the following costs since the closure of Garvagh High School.

Reason for Expenditure	£
(i) Security	21,294.58
(ii) Building Maintenance	10,516.00
(iii) Grounds	990.00
(iv) Any other costs:	
Rates	32,086.00
LPS Fees	784.20
Total Costs	£65,670.78

Note:

The cost for security includes the following: boarding-up of all windows and doors, temporary security ring fence of the building, intruder alarm repairs/maintenance and a security key holding service to react in an event of a break-in.

The NEELB is currently in the process of disposing of Garvagh High School in line with the procedures laid out in the Land and Property Services' document 'Central Advisory Unit – Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland (March 2013)'.

County Hall: Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the annual cost of providing accommodation and services for the North East Education and Library Board at County Hall in Ballymena; and what contingent liabilities are planned in the financial year 2015/16 for the use of this facility.

(AQW 34508/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The annual cost of providing accommodation and services for the North East Education and Library Board at County Hall in Ballymena is listed in the table below in respect of the 2013-14 financial year:

Costs	2013/14 £
Security	75,040
Cleaning & Caretaking	21,925
Water & Sewerage	10,295
Energy	54,288
Rent	146,500
Rates	68,259
Maintenance	109,008
Telephones	56,754
Waste Disposal	2,438
Carbon Reduction Tax	3,076
Admin Charges	23,450

Costs	2013/14 £
Total	571,034

NEELB has advised there are no contingent liabilities.

Minimum School Starting Age

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education for an update on introducing flexibility to the minimum school starting age.
(AQW 34560/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In order to allow parents to defer their child's entry to Primary One changes to primary legislation will be required.

My officials are working with the Departmental Solicitor's Office, Education and Library Boards and others to work on matters of detail and it would be my intention to consult on specific proposals towards the end of 2014.

Head Teachers: Coaching

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has considered the introduction of one-to-one coaching of newly appointed Head Teachers and Principals as a means of improving their professional competence.
(AQO 6423/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Regional Training Unit (RTU) supports the professional development of leaders in all schools in the North. This support includes matching newly appointed principals with a high quality serving head for one-to-one mentoring/coaching support aimed at improving their professional competence.

Cycle Parking Facilities

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to increase cycle parking facilities at schools.
(AQW 34569/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has been working closely with Sustrans, a charitable organisation that is currently funded by the Department for Regional Development and the Public Health Agency, to deliver a three year Active School Travel Programme across the north of Ireland. Part of this programme includes the provision of additional cycle parking facilities at schools. The initiative is now in Year 2 with approximately 54 primary and 13 post primary additional schools joining the initiative in September 2014.

Educational Centre for Speech and Language

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the criteria used by the Southern Education and Library Board when placing children with speech and language difficulties in the Educational Centre for Speech and Language; and whether children with the most severe difficulties receive greater consideration.
(AQW 34570/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has advised that the criteria used to place children with speech and language difficulties in the Educational Centre for Speech and Language address cognitive ability and speech and language skills. Children referred exhibit a significant discrepancy between non-verbal cognitive score and language score.

When a child meets the criteria for admission to the Centre, they are prioritised based on the information provided by Speech and Language Therapists and Educational Psychologists. Speech and language scores used to determine the level of severity of each child's language needs are taken from the most up to date speech and language therapy reports and are ranked in accordance with the Speech and Language Therapy criteria for severe, moderate, mild and average speech, language and communication needs. When demand exceeds the number of places available, the severity and complexity of impairment will be taken into account and children with the most severe difficulties are prioritised.

I am content that the criteria used by SELB are appropriate.

Language and Communication Service

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education how the Southern Education and Library Board is meeting the needs of children with speech and language difficulties who are referred to the their Language and Communication Service.
(AQW 34571/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board has advised that their Language and Communication Service (L&CS) supports children from pre-school through to the end of Key Stage 2 with support being provided, through capacity building for teachers and training for classroom assistants, to assist them in meeting the needs of children with Language and Communication needs. This includes accredited evidence-based programmes which allow teachers and classroom assistants to be trained in specialist programmes to support language such as Makaton Language Programme and Talking Partners@ Primary training.

The Service also provides targeted advice and support at all stages of the Code of Practice. This teacher support includes advice on strategies, preparation of materials, and assistance in Language and Communication specific building resources, including information technologies.

At Stage 3 of the Code of Practice, individual pupil support is provided by the L&CS as considered appropriate by the Board's Educational Psychology Service. This is a more intensive level of support for pupils and teachers and typically children are supported once a week for a year with a programme of work specific to their identified need.

BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Education what support his Department provides for local schools that want to participate in the annual BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition in Dublin.
(AQO 6413/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The promotion of STEM is one of my Department's priorities and I have been taking significant action on a number of fronts to ensure that STEM subjects are seen as exciting, stimulating and fulfilling by our young people.

This includes sponsoring annual competitions and exhibitions such as the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition. However it must be remembered that uptake of competitions and events are essentially a decision for individual schools to determine.

Currently my Department provides funding of £30k per annum to the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, and this is used by BT to assist with accommodation grants, the prize fund and north of Ireland specific marketing activity.

To demonstrate support for the event, my Department promotes the competition directly to schools and I host an annual reception in Parliament Buildings, prior to the finals in Dublin, in recognition of all north of Ireland schools that entered the competition.

I have also reviewed the potential cost barriers associated with schools from the north that qualify for the final in Dublin, and I have recently agreed that my Department will provide an additional 50% of the BT bursary grant to those schools from the north that qualify for the Dublin finals.

In addition my Department also works with BT to maximise media coverage at key points in the competition's calendar; such as at the entry stage and at the time of the finals in Dublin.

I intend to build on this effort to encompass not just the BT Young Scientist Event, but the 'Sentinus Young Innovators', another successful competition that is sparking a passion in STEM subjects among our young people.

Seago Primary School

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Education what are the implications of Justice Treacy's ruling on his decision not to approve an increase in the enrolment of Seago Primary School, Portadown; and whether he has any plans to revisit this decision.
(AQW 34619/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Judge Treacy's ruling provided clarification on the scope of the Article 64 duty and to whom it is owed i.e. integrated schools. The ruling therefore has no implications for Seago Primary School. I have no plans to revisit my decision.

Education and Library Boards: Spending

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how much money has been spent on Education other than at school, in each of the Education and Library Board areas in each of the last five financial years.
(AQW 34623/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The amount of money spent on Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) in each of the Education and Library Board (ELB) areas in each of the last five financial years is as set out below:

Earmarked EOTAS Allocations by Board Area (£,000S)

ELB	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BELB	1929	1970	1930	1962	2224
WELB	973	1226	979	1006	1264
NEELB	834	834	888	955	1153
SEELB	1566	1566	1628	1854	2234
SELB	850	850	855	882	1141
Total	6152	6446	6280	6659	8016

Domestic Violence: Education in Post-primary Schools

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to introduce a programme of education on domestic violence to post-primary schools.

(AQW 34637/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no plans to introduce a programme of education on domestic violence to post-primary schools.

The Department of Education is contributing to the draft joint Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Strategy (led by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Justice). The Department's contribution focuses on teacher skills and quality assurance arrangements to ensure that the preventative curriculum offered in schools is effective.

At post-primary level Learning for Life and Work, which includes Personal Development and Citizenship, offers pupils opportunities to explore the qualities of respectful relationships and develop strategies to promote personal safety.

Primary Schools: Admissions

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many appeals against the failure of an application for admission to a primary school have been lodged against each Education and Library Board in each of the last five years; and how many were successful.

(AQW 34659/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of appeals against decisions of primary schools not to admit children in the admissions process, and the number which were upheld, are set out in the table below:

Primary Schools Appeals 2009/10 - 2013/2014

Board	2009/2010		2010/2011		2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/14	
	Number of Appeals	Upheld	Number of Appeals	Upheld	Number of Appeals	Upheld	Number of Appeals	Upheld	Number of Appeals	Upheld
BELB	1	0	11	1	8	0	22	2	17	0
WELB	8	2	1	0	1	1	6	5	5	1
NEELB	4	1	6	2	16	4	13	6	16	8
SEELB	5	2	1	0	22	4	46	6	40	1
SELB	7	2	5	1	8	1	18	7	15	1
Total	25	7	24	4	55	10	105	26	93	11

The data covers the last five years for which the information is currently available

Bangor Central Integrated Primary School

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed purchase of land at the old Bangor Leisure Centre site to facilitate a new school build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School.

(AQW 34696/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Following my last response the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) made a formal offer to secure part of the former leisure centre site for use by Bangor Central Integrated Primary School. SEELB is currently in negotiations with the Council with a view to acquiring the former leisure centre car park. The Council anticipates a draft contract being provided to SEELB by 31 July 2014.

My officials have advised SEELB that it should prepare a business case setting out how the acquisition of the site provides the best value solution for the school and its pupils. The Department will assess the business case presented and make a decision based on its merits and the availability of capital budget. If acquisition of the site is approved, the Board would then be required to bid for capital funding to purchase the additional land.

Dunclug High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education, following his announcement on a new build for Dunclug High School, whether he has considered the opportunity of developing a split site, utilising the current Ballee Community High School.

(AQW 34704/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The announcement recognises the need for a new school for Dunclug College following the recent approval of a development proposal related to the school. The first step in progressing the newbuild will be the preparation of an Economic Appraisal (EA). All site options will be considered and assessed as part of the normal process of preparing the EA.

Primary School: Belfast City Hospital Site

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the consolidated primary school proposal on part of the City Hospital site in South Belfast.

(AQO 6419/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The responsibility for planning the controlled schools' estate in Belfast lies in the first instance with the Belfast Education and Library Board.

The Board has advised my Department that it is liaising with DHSSPS on this matter and the potential site on the Belfast City Hospital complex remains available for the proposed new south Belfast primary school.

The Board has also confirmed that it has identified two other potential sites. All three will be assessed in an Economic Appraisal in order to determine the preferred option.

Capital investment in a new school building cannot be considered by my Department without a development proposal to amalgamate the three schools involved. The Belfast Board will have to publish a proposal which I will then consider following the statutory consultation period. However to date, no such proposal has been published by the Board.

Any future capital investment will depend on the appropriate approvals being in place and availability of resources.

Racism: Young People

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to target the effects of racism among young people.

(AQO 6420/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: First of all, may I say that the impact of these racist attacks reaches further than the family who have been subjected to them. We have over 10,000 newcomer children in our schools here; an increase of over 900 from this time last year. These pupils bring with them over 70 different home languages.

No matter where these children come from, what language they speak, they are entitled to an education. My Department's Newcomer Policy, published in 2009, supports newcomer pupils to access the curriculum. My Department funds the regional Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) to assist newcomer pupils and their schools. Schools also receive additional funding for all newcomer pupils on their register.

I am concerned about the recent racist attacks and the impact that they have on our newcomer pupils, their families and their friends. I am meeting with the PSNI in the near future to discuss how my Department could be of assistance in any proposed initiatives.

My Department is represented on the Racial Equality Forum (chaired by OFMdfM) and will continue to work with OFMdfM (and other relevant Departments) on the out workings of the Racial Equality Strategy.

Education: Contingency Fund

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education to outline the rationale behind the £9 million contingency fund set up by his Department.

(AQO 6421/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have always been open and transparent with how I utilise the Education budget and I consider it prudent, proactive financial management to set aside funding which enables me to deal with unforeseen pressures that emerge subsequently. In fact, this is a principle recognised in Treasury's own budgeting guidance. To put this in context, the £9m I set aside for 2014-15 represents 0.5% of the overall Education budget.

Ballyclare Primary School

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed new school facility for Ballyclare Primary School.

(AQO 6422/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Currently there are no plans for a new build for Ballyclare Primary School. However a minor works scheme, in two phases, is currently underway to improve facilities and access provision at the school.

Phase 1 is expected to complete this month at a cost of £355,000 comprising a hygiene room, new staff room and toilet facility.

Phase 2, expected to complete in October 2014, is for a new lobby/reception area at a cost of £235,000. This also includes provision of 3 small multi-purpose rooms and refurbishment of toilets.

Department for Employment and Learning

Disability Arts Strategy

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department has had discussions with the Arts Council regarding the development of a disability arts strategy.

(AQW 34014/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Currently my officials are not directly engaged with the Arts Council over the development of a disability arts strategy. However, we are open to engaging with appropriate bodies on this matter and willing to discuss how we, and our delivery partners, may be able to contribute.

My Department delivers a range of services which utilise arts mediums to offer development opportunities for people with disabilities, although not always as a specific targeted group.

While not specifically focussed on young people with a disability, the Executive's 'Pathways to Success' strategy, which my Department leads on, includes input from Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. This strategy features provision for disengaged young people to help them gain employment and includes opportunities in the arts and creative industries.

Eight projects, awarded total funding of over £3.8 million, will utilise arts mediums to assist with project delivery. These projects will assist over 1,700 young people and to date have engaged with over 1,200. For example, one of these, The Appleby Trust Print Room project, has been awarded funding of £262,926 to provide support to 50 young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and has engaged with 32 young people to date.

My Department's Disability Employment Service provides a range of programmes and services to help and support people with disabilities to progress towards and move into employment. It also works closely with many organisations from the local disability sector, many of whom deliver employment support services on behalf of the Department. Officials from the Disability Employment Service are always willing to engage with other stakeholders to develop new ideas and initiatives that will promote employment and career progression for people with a disability.

Further Education Colleges offer some arts and crafts, painting and glass painting courses as part of discrete programmes which form part of their curriculum offer.

Finally, my Department's officials are engaging with colleagues in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure over the contribution that Department and its delivery partners may have in addressing the needs of young people with severe learning disabilities who are transitioning from statutory school provision to adult services.

Academic Underachievement

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for (i) his assessment of; and (ii) statistics relating to the academic underachievement amongst Protestant working-class communities in Upper Bann.

(AQW 34029/11-15)

Dr Farry: I refer to my answer to AQW 32697/11-15 on 17 April 2014; no further information has become available since that date.

Workers' Educational Association

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the recent support his Department provided to the Workers' Educational Association prior to its dissolution.

(AQW 34054/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department had no direct funding relationship with the Workers' Educational Association Northern Ireland (WEA NI), prior to the decision by the organisation to enter into voluntary liquidation.

My Department previously provided funding to WEA NI. However, following legal advice, a decision was taken to end that funding relationship during 2006.

Officials from my Department's Redundancy Advice Service, in partnership with the Social Security Agency, Further Education Colleges, HMRC and other agencies have contacted the WEA and offered to provide advice on alternative job opportunities and access to training courses and a range of other issues such as benefits and taxation.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 33591/11-15, whether extra costs include the use of a car.

(AQW 34099/11-15)

Dr Farry: The travel allowance component of Disabled Students' Allowances is intended to help with any additional travel costs a student may have to pay to attend their Higher Education Institution because of their disability. For example, if a student needs to take either a taxi or private car because their disability prevents them from taking public transport on medical grounds. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance would be the excess between public transport costs and the cost of

the same journey by taxi or private car. Students are not eligible for help with everyday travel costs which any student would expect to pay. The travel allowance does not include the purchase of a car.

Careers: Guide to Service Provision for Ethnic Minority Groups

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will consider providing a guide to service provision, similar to that produced by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with the Equality Commission, Racial Equality in Health and Social Care, for ethnic minority groups who access his Department's careers service.

(AQW 34107/11-15)

Dr Farry: While my Department's Careers Service has no plans to provide a guide to service provision, ethnic minority groups are very much a priority.

The Careers Service social inclusion policy focuses on addressing the needs of young people facing, or vulnerable to, social exclusion, including clients from an ethnic minority background.

DEL's Careers Service currently employs over 100 careers advisers all of whom are professionally qualified to deliver careers services. The careers advisers are members of the Career Development Institute (CDI) and adhere to the CDI's Code of Ethical Practice. This Code states that careers advisers will "promote equality and diversity and help clients to overcome barriers to personal achievement resulting from prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination".

To assist clients from ethnic minority groups overcome possible barriers to understanding careers services on offer, the Careers Resource Centres display posters in several languages and use DEL's Translation Service to assist in the delivery of careers services. Careers Advisers also access UK NARIC to provide comparison statements for clients with international qualifications planning to work or study in the UK.

The Careers Service will be delivering training to careers advisers on the delivery of services to ethnic minority groups this year as part of a Continuous Professional Development Programme.

A formal review of careers policies (including overcoming barriers) and practices in Northern Ireland conducted jointly by DEL and DE will take place during 2014. The aim of the review is to ensure that provision reflects the needs of a 21st century economy in which all individuals (including ethnic minorities) have access to independent, high quality guidance which helps them to maximise their potential and contribute to their community and the NI economy.

We may consider providing a guide to service provision within the review.

Qualifications Equivalence Service

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he plans to improve the promotion of the qualifications equivalence service as recommended by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report on the Economic and Social Mobility of Ethnic Minority Communities.

(AQW 34112/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides a service for non-UK nationals, who have taken up residence in Northern Ireland, to have their qualifications mapped to UK equivalents. This is done using the United Kingdom National Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC) databases, to which my Department subscribes.

The service is available through EURES (the European Employment Services) in Belfast; at Jobs and Benefits Offices in Dungannon, Antrim, Carrickfergus, Limavady, Lisburn, Shaftesbury Square and Portadown; and at careers service offices throughout Northern Ireland.

Details of the qualifications equivalence service are available on both my Department's website and the NI Direct website. The recommendation in the Rowntree report indicates that there is an opportunity for my Department to further promote this valuable service and officials from the Employment Service and Careers Service intend to review the current promotion of the service and agree steps to increase its usage by employers and jobseekers.

Unemployment Statistics: Fermanagh District Council Area

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) sought occupations; and (ii) usual occupations of people who are unemployed, from April 2013, in the Fermanagh District Council area.

(AQW 34213/11-15)

Dr Farry: Officials from my Department have analysed the preferences for jobs recorded by unemployed clients in the Fermanagh District Council area on their personal Jobseekers Agreements and I can confirm that the main occupation sought from April 2013 is Sales/Retail assistants, followed by the following sectors:-

Office/Clerical workers; Carpenters/Joiners; Cleaners/Domestic assistants; Van drivers; Bricklayers/Masons and Farm workers.

The usual occupations of the unemployed clients closely reflects the sought occupations, and if they remain unemployed beyond 13 weeks, they are advised to widen their jobsearch by considering additional occupational areas. As a result Sales/Retail assistants, Van drivers and Labourers/Construction are the most common sectors selected as second preferences.

There has been an approximate reduction of over 10% unemployed clients in the Fermanagh area since April 2013 but the change in profile from April 2013 to June 2014 has been minimal.

South West Regional College

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 31013/11-15, (i) to provide a copy of the correspondence sent to the South West Regional College; (ii) the date he sent the correspondence; and (iii) whether there has been an acknowledgement or any further correspondence received since, including an intention to respond and supply the relevant information.

(AQW 34243/11-15)

Dr Farry: I attach as requested at (i) a copy of the correspondence sent to the Director of South West College.

Regarding (ii), the correspondence was dated and sent by officials on 27 February 2014 and received by the Director on 28th February 2014.

Regarding (iii), I can advise that officials have confirmed that no copy of a reply was received from South West College, as requested in the letter of 27th February. As a matter of urgency, officials contacted the Director to determine the current situation regarding the information requested on the original assembly question AQW 31013/11-15. The Director has confirmed that, unfortunately, the reply had been overlooked. However, I can confirm that the information requested by you has now been sent by post to you directly, dated 20 June.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Annex A.

Adelaide House,
1st Floor,
Adelaide House,
39/49 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8FD.

27/2/2014.

Mr Malachy McAleer,
Director South West College,
Omagh Campus,
2 Mountjoy Road,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone.
BT79 7AH

Dear Malachy,

Lord Morrow (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) has asked Minister Farry to detail (i) the amount paid to South West Regional College to supply tutors for specialist classes in special needs schools, in each of the last three years; and (ii) the current hourly rate for these staff.

As we do hold the requested information Minister Farry has replied, copy attached and I would ask you to reply directly to Lord Morrow with the information requested by this member.

I would appreciate a copy of your reply for our records and information.

Yours sincerely,

Harriet Ferguson.

Head of FE Curriculum and Essential Skills

Room 107
1st Floor
Adelaide House
Belfast BT2 8FD
02890 257425
Email: Harriet.ferguson@delni.gov.uk
20 June 2014

Lord Morrow MLA
19 Church Street
Drumcoo
Dungannon BT71 6AB

Dear Lord Morrow

Assembly Question:**AQW 31013/11-15**

I may have overlooked supplying some additional information you requested in AQW 31013/11-15; apologies if that is the case.

Currently, SWC provides 20 hrs/annum "Supply" teaching to special schools in the Dungannon area i.e. SWC teachers delivering in the special schools. I have also attached the overall provision to Special Schools over the last three years.

The salary of the teachers varies depending on the pay scale point and their promotions. However, as an indicator, the part-time hourly rate would be £22/hr.

Yours sincerely

Malachy McAleer

Director

cc Stephen Smyth DEL

Number of Pupils from Special Schools on Entitlement Framework Provision at South West College

2011/12 to 2013/14 Academic Years

Special School	AY Year		
	11/12	12/13	13/14
Arvalee School and Resource Centre	44	36	34
Kilronan Special School	11	14	8
Knockavoe School and Resource Centre	9	1	
Sperrinview Special School	13	24	22
Willowbridge College (formerly Erne Special School & Elmbrook)	38	42	41
Total	115	117	105

Notes:

- * Only those students at the ENR stage code i.e. status 1 have been included
- * Figures provided are a distinct count of pupil numbers regardless of the number of courses/qualifications they have enrolled on

Heat, Electricity and Water: DEL Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34249/11-15)

Dr Farry: Expenditure incurred by this Department on heat, electricity and water in each of the last five years has been as follows:

Financial Year	Heat	Electricity	Water
2013/14	£38,499	£168,853	£2,493
2012/13	£34,972	£160,958	£2,903
2011/12	£35,718	£160,526	£2,999
2010/11	£26,387	£124,292	£7,335
2009/10	£36,716	£146,777	£2,094

Zero-hours Contracts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of zero hour contracts.

(AQW 34319/11-15)

Dr Farry: Information on the number of zero-hours contracts in Northern Ireland and the variety of forms that these contracts can take is imprecise. Given the public interest in this issue I launched a consultation on 23 June 2014 that seeks to determine the extent of the use of zero-hours contracts and to provide a clearer picture of their benefit or impact within our economy. The consultation period will run from 23 June 2014 until 29 September 2014.

In parallel to the public consultation I have also commissioned quantitative and qualitative research to provide a better understanding of the numbers of zero-hours contracts and where they are most prevalent.

The consultation and parallel research will allow me to determine whether there is a need to bring forward legislative proposals or clearer information, advice and guidance for employers and employees availing of these contracts.

European Business Network Congress

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the amount paid to each of the guest speakers at the European Business Network Congress from 29 to 31 May 2013; and (ii) the amount of funding provided by his Department for this event.

(AQW 34442/11-15)

Dr Farry: The European Business Network Congress was organised by the Northern Ireland Business Innovation Centre or NORIBIC as it is more commonly known. My Department therefore does not hold any information on the amount paid to each guest speaker.

However, as a Northern Ireland Executive Department involved in the Barroso Taskforce, my Department was approached by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister for a sponsorship contribution. As the event was adjudged to provide opportunities for consortia-building and was a platform for highlighting the work of my Department, and indeed the Northern Ireland universities, to an international audience, we contributed £4,500 for this event.

Unemployment: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to reduce unemployment levels, through training and apprenticeships, in North Down.

(AQO 6432/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department is committed to reducing unemployment across Northern Ireland, irrespective of where an individual lives.

Bangor Job Centre offers a range of services, initiatives and programmes to help jobseekers in the North Down area find employment or improve their employability skills; in the period June 2013 to May 2014, 1,046 people move into work.

In addition to the current provision of Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI, my officials are examining vocational training provision at level 2; the aim is to ensure that any future offer enables those who are capable, to progress to an apprenticeship at level 3, a level 3 further education programme, or into employment.

The review will seek to ensure that the future youth training programme enables young people across Northern Ireland, including those in North Down, to access training opportunities that will allow them to progress into further training and make a successful start to their future career.

Cross-border Mobility: Students

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his Department's efforts to address mobility problems for undergraduate students across the island of Ireland.

(AQO 6430/11-15)

Dr Farry: In implementing Graduating to Success, my Department has established a project group to facilitate cross-border co-operation and student mobility. Membership includes representation from the Higher Education Authority and the Institutes of Technology.

A key part of this project is addressing the relevant recommendations from the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation and the Confederation of British Industry Joint Business Council's study of obstacles to cross-border undergraduate education.

In particular, my Department's Careers Service continues to build the knowledge of its advisers to ensure that students are fully informed about opportunities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. A Professional Development day on cross border opportunities is planned later this year.

Careers advisers, together with careers teachers, also attend the annual Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association Conference. In November 2013, this event was sponsored by Dublin City University and included information from Sligo, Galway-Mayo and Dublin Institutes of Technology, Trinity College Dublin and the National University of Ireland, Galway.

An anomaly in relation to student finance has been resolved and, since 2013, students from Northern Ireland studying in the Republic of Ireland have had access to a repayable Student Contribution loan and other financial support.

The Department of Education is in the lead regarding

A Level and Leaving Certificate equivalences. The Irish Universities Association continues to consider the position at a strategic level, and a number of individual universities are considering interim measures to attract Northern Ireland students.

Dublin City University recently launched the McAleese Scholarships, providing up to forty scholarships for our students, and Trinity College Dublin is also considering an access programme.

My officials are working with officials in the Department for Education and Skills to research and analyse cross border student flows. A joint report, which will inform policy development, is scheduled for completion in the autumn.

Queen's University: Centre for Doctoral Training

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the new Centre for Doctoral Training at Queen's University, Belfast.

(AQO 6431/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am pleased that my Department has been able to facilitate this Centre for Doctoral Training, led by Queen's University and a number of significant industry partners, including Seagate Technology.

This is a good news story for Northern Ireland and a strategically important development as we strive to ensure that we develop the scientists, engineers and researchers of tomorrow.

This Centre is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. Due to its involvement with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research, Queen's will benefit from a variety of opportunities open to their full portfolio of Centres for Doctoral Training, such as information exchanges.

The first student intake will be in October this year and, in terms of actual numbers, this new Centre will support a cohort of 50 future scientists and engineers over the next five years. Its focus will be on nanofabrication and photonic integration, both recognised areas of skills shortage.

This Centre therefore provides an exciting opportunity that is not only of regional benefit to Northern Ireland but, in my view, will also become a strategically important resource for the United Kingdom.

This new Centre will help create new working cultures; these will present the ideal environment for our future PhDs to carry out high quality, significant research while also developing the skills that are crucial for themselves and for the wider economy. This will help increase the international profile of our higher education research base.

For Queen's University and the other partners, involvement in such a Centre will also act as a catalyst for further industry and academic linkages. It will also provide leverage in relation to other areas of funding, such as EU programmes. This is particularly important, given the tightening fiscal climate in which our Higher Education Institutions are working.

Migrant Community

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department engages with people from the migrant community.

(AQO 6433/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are a number of ways in which the Department engages with the migrant community. The Department is a Board Member of the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership which was set up in 2011 to fulfil a strategic leadership, advisory and co-ordination role for migration in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership works to ensure that Northern Ireland is a welcoming place for migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in a way that supports their retention and integration and contributes to economic growth.

The Department is also represented on a number of other groups which have been set up to address issues experienced by migrant workers/communities, including the Racial Equality Forum's Immigration Sub-group which is chaired by the Law Centre, the Belfast City Council's Migrant Workers Forum, and the Department of Justice's Organised Crime Task Force, Immigration and Human Trafficking Sub-Group.

In 2012 the Department introduced free English classes for speakers of other languages, specifically for asylum seekers and their dependants in recognition of their vulnerable position in our society.

My Department's Employment Service provides a wide range of services to its customers, including members of the migrant community.

Specific support is available to help to overcome barriers that might prevent members of the migrant community access the labour market including specific provision to address language barriers, and specialist help to compare international qualifications. Members of the migrant community may also avail of translation and interpretation services in any of the 35 Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentres throughout Northern Ireland.

Literacy and Numeracy

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the assistance available for unemployed people over the age of 30 to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

(AQO 6434/11-15)

Dr Farry: Essential Skills is my Department's primary programme to help people gain literacy and numeracy skills, including those who are unemployed.

Individuals can, and do, enrol directly onto Essential Skills courses. In addition, many of my Department's programmes, including further education, identify people with low levels of literacy and numeracy. These individuals are either required or encouraged, depending on the programme they are on, to follow an Essential Skills course.

For example, Essential Skills needs are addressed through employment programmes such as Steps to Work, and the Local Employment Intermediary Service. These provide entry level tuition within community organisations for unemployed adults living in areas of high unemployment, to prepare them for participation on essential skills courses.

Employment Service frontline staff are trained to identify if clients' literacy or numeracy skills are a barrier towards employment. If so, referrals are made to Employment Service Support for an Essential Skills Assessment, which is carried out by contracted providers. This service is available to clients irrespective of age.

Those aged 50 or over may also undertake an Essential Skills qualification within the Step Ahead 50+ employment initiative.

The Learner Access and Engagement programme provides support to "hard to reach" adults to undertake suitable further education, including Essential Skills.

The recent OECD International Survey of Adult Skills showed that, in Northern Ireland, only adults in the 35-44 and 55-65 age bands had statistically significant improvements in literacy performance since the previous survey in 1996.

In 2012-2013, the last academic year for which full data are available, there were 4,297 enrolments of unemployed or economically inactive people in the 30 plus age-group in Essential Skills courses. In the current year, so far, there have been around 3,000 enrolments of those who are either unemployed or economically inactive in the 30 plus age group.

Education: Rural Areas

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department meets the needs of those living in rural areas who wish to pursue Further and Higher Education.

(AQO 6435/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am committed to ensuring that further and higher education opportunities are available to all who have the ability, regardless of their background or location.

Further education colleges offer a varied further education curriculum, which people can access through their main campuses and network of approximately 500 community outreach centres.

My Department offers a range of financial incentives to encourage further education participation in rural areas. These include a home to college transport scheme for full-time students aged up to 19; for students aged 19 and over, means-tested college hardship funds and further education awards are available which, together, can award a student up to £3,500 per annum in total, plus assistance with childcare costs.

I support the delivery of higher education in the further education colleges, as it provides opportunities for "close-to-home" study. Since December 2011 I have approved an additional 377 full-time higher education places in the colleges.

There are also around 6,500 part-time higher education enrolments in further education. My Department does not place a cap on part-time higher education places; expansion of part-time provision within existing budgets therefore offers colleges another route to widen higher education in rural areas.

In Graduating to Success, my Department's strategy for Higher Education, I am committed to making higher education more accessible by offering wider geographical access. In co-operation with the higher and further education sectors, my Department is developing pilot schemes for the creation of university bases at two further education colleges. This will provide the opportunity for higher education students to undertake distance learning with access to university materials and resources they need on a planned basis. The pilots will take place in the 2014/15 academic year and, subject to the outcome of a review of the pilots, other colleges will provide access to university resources in subsequent years.

Capital Projects

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the current capital projects being considered by his Department in this financial year.

(AQO 6436/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have considered a range of projects for funding in 2014-15.

The following projects have been allocated funding or will be allocated funding subject to the provision of an agreed business case.

The Further Education projects are:

The South Eastern Regional College's Performing Arts and Technology Innovation Centre in Bangor;

The Southern Regional College's Armagh and Banbridge campus developments;

The North West Regional College's Springtown campus refurbishment; and

Colleges' Minor Works funding for a range of projects.

The following Higher Education projects will be undertaken.

The Queen's University Ashby building refurbishment for the Faculty of Engineering; the enhancement of the University infrastructure to stimulate new ways of learning to improve the student experience; the refurbishment of the health sciences building; and the main site masterplanning which includes the Lynn Building.

The University of Ulster will continue its estates refurbishment; develop its provision of a data centre & disaster recovery facility; rationalisation of the Coleraine campus; and upgrades to the telephony system.

Stranmillis University College will carry out the Stranmillis House disability project; improvements to the central building foyer; and removing asbestos from the main building.

St Mary's University College have commenced the installation of a biomass heating system; upgrade of its network infrastructure; and a programme of windows replacement.

There are numerous small capital projects across the Department and its Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Training for Success

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to the Training for Success programme, whether students who completed a Level 1 qualification last year and are currently on the first year of their Level 2 qualification will be able to complete their Level 2 qualification in 2014/15.

(AQO 6437/11-15)

Dr Farry: Training for Success offers a guarantee of 104 weeks training for all unemployed 16 and 17 year old school leavers.

In June 2013 my Department issued new contracts for the Training for Success provision. Arrangements were included within the new programme to allow for students who had achieved qualifications at level one, under the old programme, to progress to provision at level two within the new programme.

Under these progression arrangements, the minimum target for achievement for students is the attainment of 37 credits drawn from the Knowledge-Based qualification on the specified apprenticeship framework at level two.

This target is in addition to qualifications in Essential Skills.

According to Ofqual, the qualifications regulator, one credit will usually take ten hours of learning. It is my Department's view that 52 weeks is sufficient to cover the qualification requirements outlined for this cohort.

Employment Law Reform

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when he intends to present his proposals for employment law reform to the Executive.

(AQO 6438/11-15)

Dr Farry: Having completed analysis of responses to public consultation on the employment law review, Departmental officials gave a presentation to the Employment and Learning Committee on 4 June. The presentation included a number of options on the way forward. My intention was to take the Committee's views before moving to seek Executive agreement.

Having reviewed the Committee's feedback, it is now my intention to bring a paper to the Executive following the summer recess.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Invest NI

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the financial or other forms of support Invest NI has provided to (i) Emersons; (ii) Scotts; (iii) Mulhollands; (iv) RMC; (v) Lagan; and (vi) Walls in the last five years.

(AQW 34006/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): In the five year period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2014 the support to the listed companies has been offered as follows:

Company	Financial Assistance Offered
(i) Norman Emerson & Sons Ltd (Emersons)	£50,234
(ii) Northstone (NI) Ltd (formerly known as Scotts)	£49,500
(iii) A E Mulholland & Sons and Mulholland Bros. (B&S) Ltd (Mulhollands)	£0
(iv) Cemex (NI) Ltd (formerly known as RMC)	£0
(v) Lagan Cement (Lagans)	£17,600
(vi) P&J Walls (Walls)	£0

Hospitality: DETI

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) her Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013-14.

(AQW 34079/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The total cost of hospitality provided by the Department in 2013-14 was £15,520.
- (ii) The total costs of hospitality provided by the arms length bodies in 2013-14 was £534,502.

Jobs Fund: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of jobs (i) promoted; and (ii) created from the Jobs Fund in North Down in the last 12 months.

(AQW 34084/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The most recent figures available for a full twelve month period are from the 2012-13 financial year. Invest NI is currently working on the presentation of jobs promoted at sub-regional level in 2013-14, including North Down. It intends to publish the information once the figures have been fully validated.

In 2012-13 the Jobs Fund (i) promoted 74 jobs and (ii) created 23 jobs in North Down.

Please note that projects are implemented across a period of several years. Therefore a proportion of the jobs created during this 12-month period relate to jobs which were promoted in an earlier period.

An example of a business supported by the Jobs Fund in North Down during this period is Mango Direct Marketing which received support to promote 55 new jobs.

Energy Prices

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact on energy prices of the increased use of energy from wind and other renewable sources.

(AQW 34167/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Although generation from renewables (mainly onshore wind) rarely sets the price of wholesale electricity, it does influence the price on a continual basis. At peak demand times, wind can offset more expensive peaking plant. Also, if there is a lot of wind on the system, then remaining demand will be met by conventional generators with the more efficient and cheaper being despatched next.

Invest NI

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, of the 11,000 jobs promoted by InvestNI in 2013-14, to detail the number of these promoted in the (i) aerospace and defence; (ii) education and training; (iii) materials handling; (iv) business and professional services; (v) financial services; (vi) food and drink; (vii) security, ICT and electronics; (viii) connected health, renewables and energy; (ix) creative industries; and (x) tourism and life sciences sectors.

(AQW 34352/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI records job data according to the sector groupings listed in Table 1 below. The table breaks down the jobs promoted in 2013/14 apart from those promoted through the Regional Start Initiative (RSI), delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Northern Ireland, as we are unable to allocate these by sector.

Table 1: Invest NI Jobs Promoted by Sector (2013-14)

Sector	New Jobs Promoted
Business Services	4,437
Clothing	139
Computer Software & Services	738
Construction Products	380
Creative	128
Electrical & Electronics	241
Engineering	322
Financial Services	479
Food & Drink	573

Sector	New Jobs Promoted
Furniture	51
General Manufacturing	159
Horticulture	29
Life Sciences	85
Materials Handling/Quarry Plant	198
Printing & Packaging	154
Renewable Energy Products	43
Telecoms	176
Tourism	169
Transport	468
Total Sector	8,969
Unallocated	66
Regional Start Initiative	1,765
Total	10,800

Notes

- 1 New Jobs represents the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 2 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.
- 3 Unallocated refers to projects that have not been allocated a sector classification.

Invest NI: Foreign Direct Investment

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, of the 4,760 Foreign Direct Investment jobs promoted by InvestNI in 2013-14, to detail the number of these promoted in the (i) aerospace and defence; (ii) education and training; (iii) materials handling; (iv) business and professional services; (v) financial services; (vi) food and drink; (vii) security, ICT and electronics; (viii) connected health, renewables and energy; (ix) creative industries; and (x) tourism and life sciences sectors. **(AQW 34365/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: Invest NI records job data according to the sector groupings listed in Table 1 below. The table breaks down the jobs promoted by externally-owned customers in 2013/14.

Table 1: Invest NI Externally-Owned Jobs Promoted by Sector (2013-14)

Sector	New Jobs Promoted
Business Services	3,119
Clothing	64
Computer Software & Services	432
Construction Products	6
Electrical & Electronics	109
Engineering	80
Financial Services	350
Food & Drink	50
General Manufacturing	10
Life Sciences	6
Materials Handling/Quarry Plant	19
Printing	7
Telecoms	165

Sector	New Jobs Promoted
Transport	343
Total	4,760

Notes

- 1 New Jobs represents the number of jobs expected to be created by the project.
- 2 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

Department of the Environment

Waste: Exports to Spain

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether waste from Northern Ireland is being exported to Spain for incineration; and if so (i) how much waste is being exported; (ii) how much of the waste is estimated to be renewable; (iii) how much is being paid to export the waste; (iv) what is the duration of the contract to export the waste; (v) how much waste must be supplied; and (vi) why is the waste being exported.

(AQW 33768/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I can confirm that Refuse Derived Fuel waste (European Waste Catalogue Code 19 12 10) is being exported from Northern Ireland to Spain destined to an Energy from Waste thermal treatment plant located in Mallorca.

Under the requirements of the European Waste Shipment Regulations 1013/2006 my officers in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have consented to 15 shipments totalling 30,000 tonnes over a 12 month period in conjunction with the Spanish Competent Authority.

The waste being exported is composed of residual municipal waste which has undergone further treatment at a material recycling facility to produce a refuse derived fuel. Residual municipal waste contains a significant proportion of materials like food and wood (biogenic material) and energy from this proportion is considered renewable. The treatment process at the recycling facility includes mechanical segregation and manual positive sorting (hand picking of recyclates). Although this will involve the removal of some biogenic material it will also involve the removal of fossil sourced waste. It is therefore estimated that between 45% and 65% of the energy produced from the waste is renewable.

The finances involved in exporting this waste is a commercial issue between the parties involved and is not something that is disclosed nor is required to be disclosed to my Department.

The Agencies' consents for the export of this waste to Mallorca, Spain, are valid from 29/05/2014 until 31/03/2015. Commercial contracts may be in place for a longer period of time; however as such commercial contractual obligations between relevant parties are not required to be disclosed to the Competent Authorities, my Agency does not hold this information.

The maximum amount of waste that can be exported under the NIEA's approval cannot exceed 30,000 tonnes over the 12 month period. If the facility has agreed to a certain volume of waste being provided by the supplier this will be detailed in contractual arrangements which have not been disclosed or required to be disclosed to my Agency.

The Landfill Directive sets increasingly strict limits on the amount of waste that Member States can send to landfill. In Northern Ireland this takes effect through the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowances Scheme which restricts the amount of waste that individual councils can send to landfill. Any waste over and above councils' allowances must be disposed of by other means. There are currently no energy from waste facilities in Northern Ireland, leaving councils no option but to send residual waste, which cannot be recycled or disposed of to landfill, elsewhere for recovery.

Climate Bill

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment when he will introduce the Climate Bill to the Assembly; and for the estimated timeline for the passing of this legislation.

(AQW 34002/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As I stated in the Assembly debate on the impacts of flooding in February 2014, I want to make Northern Ireland a leader in carbon reduction, and I am fully committed to ensuring that we play a full part in minimising our greenhouse gas emissions. Although I see the benefits of a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill, and have been mandated by the Assembly to take this forward, I also recognise that there are concerns about how we tackle this issue and at what cost. I am therefore currently considering the best way forward, in terms of immediate and longer term actions, required to best meet the shared challenge, to grow a more sustainable, productive, low carbon economy and to ensure a cleaner, healthier, sustainable future for us all.

Government cannot meet this challenge alone. That is why I have taken time to meet with a range of stakeholders to hear their views and build on a successful partnership approach to tackling climate change. I want us to work together in a way in which we will begin to make the transition towards a more resource-efficient, sustainable society. When I have concluded my considerations with interested parties I will bring my proposals to Executive colleagues.

Listed Buildings: Glens of Antrim

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment to list the listed buildings in the glens area of Antrim; and to detail the spend on each of these buildings in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34046/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Information on Northern Ireland's listed buildings is held on the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, on a Council and Ward basis.

This information has been cross checked against the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust map of the Glens area, to help identify the relevant wards.

A large amount of information has been produced to answer this question; therefore it has been placed in the Assembly Library. You should note that this information on 'spend' relates solely to grant aid provided by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Any expenditure that may have been incurred by the private owners of properties or other agencies or bodies is not recorded by the Department and has not been included.

Financial Yr.	HB Ref.	Address	Amount Pd.
2009/10	HB5/4/21	Magherintemple, 51 Churchfield Road, Churchfield, Ballycastle	£10,140.00
2010/11	HB6/2/71	St Patrick's Church, The Cloney, Glenarm	£30,220.00
2011/12	HB6/1/11	Bridge and steps, Harbour Road, Carnlough	£1,940.00
	HB6/1/34	Carnlough Harbour	£4,435.00
	HB6/2/1B	Former coach house, courtyard buildings, Glenarm Castle	£4,500.00
	HB6/2/1O	Castle Farm, 3 Castle Lane, Glenarm	£10,600.00
	HB6/2/28	22 Altmore St. Glenarm	£28,905.00
	HB6/3/11	Ballygally Castle	£48,025.00
2012/13	HB5/2/28	Former Northern Bank, 3 Shore Street, Cushendall	£5,555.00
	HB5/4/21	Magherintemple, 51 Churchfield Road, Churchfield, Ballycastle	£19,200.00
2013/14	HB6/2/1A	Glenarm Castle, Glenarm	£5,775.00 (paid to date)

NI Buildings Database

Listed Buildings in the Glens area of Antrim

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB04 05	– Ballyhoe & Corkey			
HB04/05/002	2 Corkey Road	B1		School
	Loughguile			
	Ballymoney			
	Co. Antrim			
HB04/05/004	121 Corkey Road	B1		House
	Corkey			
	Ballymena			
	Co. Antrim			
	Hb05/01- Glenariff			
HB05/01/003	Ardclinis Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ardclinis T1			
	Glenariff			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/007	Church of St. Patrick and St. Brigid	B		Church
	Garron Road			
	Milltown			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/010	Greenaghan Cottage	B		House
	Glen Road			
	Greenaghan			
	Glenariff			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/012	Kilmore House	B1		House
	Kilmore			
	Waterfoot			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/020	Bridge	B		Bridge
	Main Street			
	Waterfoot			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/021	Red Arch	B		Tunnel
	Red Bay TI			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/022	Layd Schoolhouse	B		School
	Culbidag			
	Glenariff			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/023	"Rose Cottage" and Walling	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	43 Middle Park Road			
	Gortaclee			
	Cushendall			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/01/025	70 Coast Road	B2		House
	Cushendall			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
	Hb05/02 - Glanaan			
HB05/02/001	Turnly's Tower	B+		Tower
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB05/02/002	3 Mill Street	B1		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/003 A	Cake Shop	B2		Shop
	5 Mill St.			
	Kilnadore			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/003 B	7A Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/003 C	7B Mill St.	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/004	9 Mill Street	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/005 A	11 Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/005 B	13 Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/005 C	15 Mill St.	B2		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/005 D	17 Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/006	The Sweet Shop	B		Shop
	19 Mill Street			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/007	21 Mill Street	B2		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/008	23 Mill Street	B1		Public House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/009	St. Mary's Club	B		Hall
	Mill Street			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/010	St. Mary's R C Church, Gates,	B		Church
	Railings and Walling			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/011	Layde Parish Church, Gates and	B		Church
	Walling			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/013	24 Mill Street	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/014	22 Mill Street	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/015 A	20A Mill St.	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/015 B	20B Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/015 C	20C Mill St.	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/016	18 Mill Street	B1		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/017	16 Mill Street and Post office	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/018	14 Mill Street	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/019 A	8 Mill St.	B2		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/019 B	10 Mill St.	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/019 C	12 Mill St.	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/020	6 Mill Street	B2		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/021	4 Mill Street	B2		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/022	2 Mill Street	B1		Shop

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 A	1-3 Bridge St.	B		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 B	The Lourig Bar	B		Public House
	5 Bridge St.			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 C	Central Bar	B1		Public House
	7 Bridge St.			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 D	9 Bridge St.	B1		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co Antrim			
HB05/02/023 E	11 Bridge St.	B2		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 F	2 Bridge St.	B2		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 G	4 Bridge St.	B2		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/023 H	6 Bridge St.	B2		Shop
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/024	Bridge	B		Bridge
	Bridge Street			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/025	Lynns Shop	B		Shop
	2 Coast Road			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/026	Kilnadore House, Gates and	B1		House
	Walling			
	1 Coast Road			
	Cushendall			
	Co Antrim			
HB05/02/027	3 Coast Road, Gates, Railings and	B1		House
	Walling			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB05/02/028	Northern Bank(Ex), Gates, Railings and Walling 3 Shore St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		House
HB05/02/029 A	14 Shore St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B2		House
HB05/02/029 B	16 Shore St Cushendall Co.Antrim	B2		House
HB05/02/030	Cushendall Presbyterian Church Shore Street Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		Church
HB05/02/031	Former School, Gates, Railings and Walling 14 High St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B1		House
HB05/02/032	20 High Street Cushendall Co.Antrim	B1		House
HB05/02/033 A	1 High St (Including 2 Shore Street) Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		Shop
HB05/02/033 B	3 High St Cushendall Co.Antrim	B2		House
HB05/02/034 A	5 High St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		House
HB05/02/034 B	7 High St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		House
HB05/02/034 C	9 High St. Cushendall Co.Antrim	B		House
HB05/02/035	Sundial House, (Inlcuding Gate and Walling) 11 High Street Cushendall Co.Antrim	B1		House
HB05/02/036 A	13 High St.,	B		House - Terrace

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/036 B	15 High St.,	B		House - Terrace
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/036 C	17 High St.,	B		House - Terrace
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/036 D	19 High St.	B		House - Terrace
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/037	Glenburn House and Gate Screenb1			House
	Ballyemon Road			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/038	21 Gault's Road	B		House
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/02/041	Telephone Kiosk	B2		Telephone Kiosk
	High Street			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
	(Beside Turnly's Tower)			
HB05 03	- Glendun			
HB05/03/002	Glenville House	B2		
	Glenville/Leamore			
	20 Layde Road			
	Cushendall			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/003	Mc Donnell Memorials	B1		Memorial
	Layd Graveyard			
	Moneyvart			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/004	35 Knocknacarry Road	B1		House
	Cushendun			
	Co Antrim			
HB05/03/006	Cushendun Guest House	B		Hotel
	Cushendun Hotel			
	Strandview Park			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/007	Glendun Hotel	B1		Hotel
	Strandview Park			
	Cushendun			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/010	Mc Bride's	B		Public House
	2 Main Street			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/011	4 Main Street	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/013	3 Main Street	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 A	1 The Square,	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 B	2 The Square,	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 C	3 The Square,	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 D	4 The Square,	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 E	5 The Square,	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 F	6 The Square	B1		House
	Main Street			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/014 G	7 The Square	B1		House
	Main Street			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/015	6 Main Street	B2		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/016	8 Main Street and Walling	B2		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/017	10 Main Street	B		House
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/018 A	1 Maud Cottages,	B		House
	Cushendun			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/018 B	2 Maud Cottages, Cushendun	B		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/018 C	3 Maud Cottages, Cushendun	B		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/018 D	4 Maud Cottages, Cushendun	B		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/019	Cushendun Parish Church Cushendun	B1		Hall
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/020	Glenmona Lodge, Piers, Pillars and Gateway Cushendun	B		Country House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/021	Glendun Lodge Cushendun	B		Country House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/023	Rockport Lodge, Gates and Railings Cushendun	B+		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/024	Cross Skreen Ballyteerim Cushendun	B		Memorial
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/025	116 Tromra Road Mullarts Cushendun	B2		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/026	Glendun Viaduct Irragh/Clegnagh TIs Glendun	B+		Viaduct
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/028	St. Patrick's R C Church Ardicoan Cushendun	B		Church
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/030	Agolagh House 30 Knocknacarry Road Cushendun	B2		House
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/03/033	Telephone Kiosk	B2		Telephone Kiosk

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	(Opposite The Square)			
	Main Street			
	Cushendun			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05 04	- Glenshesk			
HB05/04/001	Corratavey Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ballypatrick TI			
	Glenshesk			
	Ballymoney			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/002	Altheela Bridge Ballypatrick	B		Bridge
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/003	Bush Burn Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ballypatrick TI			
	Glenshesk			
	Ballymoney			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/004	Altadreen Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ballypatrick TI			
	Glenshesk			
	Ballymoney			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/005	'Drumnasoal'	B		House
	7 Glenmakeeran Road			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/006	Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ballypatrick/			
	Ballyvennaught TI			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/009	Lime Kiln	B		Rural Industry
	Bighouse			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/011	Murlough Farm, Outbuildings	B		House
	and Walling			
	10 Murlough Road			
	Knockbrack			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/014	The Bothy	B		House
	15 Murlough Road			
	Murlough Bay			
	Goodland			
	Ballycastle			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/015	Murlough Cottage	B		House
	17 Murlough Road			
	Goodland TI			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/016 A	38 Fairhead Road	B1		House
	Coolanlough			
	Cross			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/016 B	39 Fairhead Road	B1		House
	Coolanlough			
	Cross			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/016 C	40 Fairhead Road	B1		House
	Coolanlough			
	Cross			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/016 D	41 Fairhead Road	B1		House
	Coolanlough			
	Cross			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/017	Ballyvoy Bridge	B		Bridge
	Ballyvoy/			
	Ballynagard TIs			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/019	St. Patrick's R C Church	B		Church
	Barnish			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/020	Culfeightrin Church	B		Church
	Ballynaglagh TI			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/021	Magherintemple, Lodge Gate,	B1		Country House
	Screen and Outbuildings			
	51 Churchfield Road			
	Churchfield			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/023	Ballyverdagh	B		House
	69 Churchfield Road			
	(Including Walling)			
	Ballycastle			
	Co.Antrim			
HB05/04/024	Bath Lodge	B1		House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	16 Carrickmore Road			
	Broughanlea			
	Ballycastle			
	Co. Antrim			
HB05/04/026	Drumahaman Bridge	B		Bridge
	Drumavoley/Drumahaman TIs			
	Ballycastle			
	Co. Antrim			
HB05/04/027	Glenshesk Bridge	B		Bridge
	Clare Mountain/			
	Craigban TIs			
	Ballycastle			
	Co. Antrim			
HB05 05	- Armoy			
HB05/05/001	Limepark	B1		House
	37 Drones Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
	Bt53 8Xj			
HB05/05/002	Armoy Presbyterian Church	B1		Church
	Church Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/003	Road Bridge	B1		Bridge
	Church Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/004	Northern Bank	B2		Bank
	27 Main Street			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
	Bt53 8SI			
HB05/05/006	3 Main Street	B2		Shop
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
	Bt53 8Rq			
HB05/05/007	'New Bridge'	B2		Bridge
	Drones Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/009	Turnarobert House	B1		House
	185 Glenshesk Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
	Bt53 8Rj			
HB05/05/010	St Patrick's C of I Church	B1		Church
	Glenshesk Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/012	St Olcan's Rc Church	B+		Church
	160 Glenshesk Road			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/013	Stone Walling	B2		Walling
	Main Street			
	Armoy			
	Ballymoney			
	County Antrim			
HB05/05/017	Pump At	B1		Pump
	3 Drones Road			
	Armoy			
	Co Antrim			
HB05 12	- Kinbane			
HB05/12/005	86 Moyarget Road	B		House
	Turraskin			
	Ballycastle			
	Co. Antrim			
HB06 01	- Carnlough			
HB06/01/004	St John's School,	B2		Hall
	Bay Road			
	Carnlough			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/01/005	21 Marine Road,	B2		House
	Carnlough			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0He			
HB06/01/007	Mcauley's Hotel,	B2		Public House
	2 Bridge Street			
	Carnlough			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Et			
HB06/01/008	Londonderry Arms Hotel	B2		Hotel - Terrace
	20-24 Harbour Road			
	Carnlough			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Eu			
HB06/01/009	26-28 Harbour Road,	B2		Public House - Terrace
	Carnlough,			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Eu			
HB06/01/010	30/32 Harbour Road,	B2		House - Terrace
	Carnlough			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Eu			
HB06/01/011	Bridge and Steps	B1		Bridge
	Harbour Road			
	Carnlough			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/01/014	58 High Street	B2		House
	Carnlough,			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ep			
HB06/01/015 A	Bridge,	B2		Bridge
	High Street,			
	Carnlough,			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/01/015 B	Lime Kiln,	B2		Rural Industry
	Herbert Street,			
	Carnlough,			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/01/020	Lemnalary House,	B+		House
	88 Largy Road,			
	Carnlough,			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Jj			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB06/01/021	St Mary's Church of Ireland Church, Largy Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B1		Church
HB06/01/022	Burnside Bridge, Garron Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B2		Bridge
HB06/01/023	Lodge and Gate Screen To Drumnasole House, 70 Garron Road Carnlough Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Jn	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
HB06/01/025	Drumnasole House, 8 Tower Road, Carnlough Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Jw	B+		Country House
HB06/01/027	St Macnissi's College 25 Tower Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Jw	B1		School
HB06/01/033 A	85 Garron Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Ju	B2		House - Terrace
HB06/01/033 B	87 Garron Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Ju	B2		House - Terrace
HB06/01/033 C	89 Garron Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Ju	B2		House - Terrace

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB06/01/033 D	91 Garron Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B2		House - Terrace
HB06/01/034	Carnlough Harbour, Harbour Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B1		Harbour/ Pier
HB06/01/035	Telephone Kiosk, Harbour Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B2		Telephone Kiosk
HB06/01/038	St Macnissi's College Chapel, 25 Tower Road, Carnlough, Ballymena Co Antrim	B1		Church
HB06/01/055	House Near No 156 Ballymena Road Carnlough Co Antrim Bt44 0Lb	B2		House
HB06 02	- Glenarm			
HB06/02/001 A	Glenarm Castle (off Straidkilly Road) Glenarm Demesne Glenarm Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Bd	A		Country House
HB06/02/001 B	Former Coach House, Courtyard Buildings and Gate Screen Glenarm Castle (off Straidkilly Road) Glenarm Ballymena Co Antrim Bt44 0Bd (Also Known As 1, 2&3 Castle Demesne)	B1		Estate Related Structures
HB06/02/001 C	Greenhouse and Store At Glenarm Castle Glenarm Demesne (off Straidkilly Road)	B1		Estate Related Structures

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bd			
HB06/02/001 D	4-5 and 6 Castle Demesne	B2		House
	Glenarm Castle			
	(off Straidkilly Road)			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bd			
HB06/02/001 E	South Courtyard	B2		Outbuildings
	Castle Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/001 G	Barbican Lodge	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	Glenarm Castle			
	Glenarm Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Aj			
HB06/02/001 H	Barbican Bridge	B1		Bridge
	Castle Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/001 I	Gate At Town Lodge	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	Altmore Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/001 J	Ice House	B2		Ice House
	Glenarm Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/001 L	1 Castle Lane	B1		House
	Glenarm Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	County Antrim			
	Bt44 8Bq			
HB06/02/001 M	Former Bull's House	B2		Office
	8 Castle Demesne			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Glenarm Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	County Antrim			
	Bt44 0Aj			
HB06/02/001 N	Cottage In Glenarm Castle Estate ('Lord Antrim's Cottage')	B2		House
	Great Deer Park			
	Glenarm			
	County Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bd			
HB06/02/001 O	Castle Farm	B2		House
	3 Castle Lane			
	Glenarm Demesne			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bq			
HB06/02/001 Q	Gardener's House At Glenarm Castle	B1		House
	Glenarm Demesne			
	(off Straidkilly Road)			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bd			
HB06/02/005	Former Primary School	B1		House
	Castle Street			
	Glenarm			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0At			
HB06/02/007 C	16 Castle Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0At			
HB06/02/008 A	7 Castle Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0At			
HB06/02/008 C	11 Castle Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Bt44 0At			
HB06/02/015	19 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/016	21 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/017	23 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/019	27-29 Altmore Street	B+		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/021	Town Lodge	B1		House
	38 Altmore Street			
	Glenarm			
	County Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/023	36 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/024	Presbyterian Church	B2		Church
	34 Altmore Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/025 A	28 Altmore Street	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/025 B	30 Altmore Street	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/025 C	32 Altmore Street	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/026	26 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/027	24 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/028	22 Altmore Street	B1		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/029	20 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/030	16-18 Altmore Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/032 A	10 Altmore Street	B1		Hotel
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/034	6 Altmore Street	B2		Shop
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ar			
HB06/02/037	Former Court House (Now Glenarm Baptist Church)	B+		Church
	43-45 Toberwine Street			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/038	39-41 Toberwine Street	B1		Shop
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/039	35-37 Toberwine Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/042	27 Toberwine Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/050	'The Coast Road Inn' Public House	B2		Public House
	3 Toberwine Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/053	10-12 Toberwine Street	B1		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/062	50 Toberwine Street	B1		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/064	Former Antrim Arms Hotel	B2		House
	54 Toberwine Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/065	56 Toberwine Street	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	County Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/066	62 Toberwine Street	B1		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ap			
HB06/02/068 A	1-3 The Vennel	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0An			
HB06/02/068 C	11 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	County Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 D	13 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 E	15 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House - Terrace
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 F	17 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 G	19 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 H	21-23 Vennel Street (The Vennel)	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0As			
HB06/02/068 P	14 The Vennel	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Bt44 0An			
HB06/02/068 Q	16 The Vennel	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0An			
HB06/02/068 V	24 The Vennel	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0An			
HB06/02/068 W	26-28 The Vennel	B2		House
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0An			
HB06/02/070	Church of The Immaculate Conception (Rc)	B2		Church
	New Road			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 Oaa			
HB06/02/071	St Patricks ((C of I) Parish Church	B+		Church
	The Cloney			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Ab			
HB06/02/073	Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church	B1		Church
	Straidkilly Road			
	Cloney			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Bt44 0Aj			
HB06/02/080	Owencloghy Bridge	B2		Bridge
	Deer Park Road			
	Deer Park Farms			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/082	House At 53 Deerpark Road	B+		House
	Drumcrow			
	Glenarm			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0Bh			
HB06/02/083	Mccartney's Bridge	B2		Bridge
	Drumcrow Road			
	Aughaboy			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/084	Feystown Rc Church	B2		Church
	Feystown Road			
	Deer Park Farms			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/086	Glenarm Harbour	B2		Harbour/ Pier
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/087	Telephone Kiosk	B2		Telephone Kiosk
	Near 13 Altmore Street			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/099	Milepost	B2		Milestone
	Munie Road			
	Demesne Upper			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/100	Milepost	B2		Milestone
	Munie Road			
	Munie South			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/02/102	Former Rectory	B1		House
	60 Munie Road			
	Glebe			
	Glenarm			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt44 0BI			
HB06 03	- Carncastle			
HB06/03/001	Blackcave Tunnel	B2		Tunnel

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Coast Road			
	Blackcave North			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/003	179 Coast Road,	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	Carnfunnock			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Lf			
HB06/03/004	184 Coast Road	B2		House
	Carnfunnock			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qg			
HB06/03/005	Ice House At Carnfunnock Country Park	B1		Ice House
	Ballygally			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/007	186 Coast Road,	B1		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	Cairndhu,			
	Ballygalley,			
	Larne,			
	Co Antrim,			
	Bt40 2Qg			
HB06/03/008	Cairndhu	B1		Hospital Building
	Ballygalley			
	Larne,			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/009	Stables At Cairndhu	B2		Outbuildings
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/010 A	2 Coastguard Cottages	B2		House - Terrace
	Coast Road			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qy			
HB06/03/010 B	3 Coastguard Cottages	B2		House - Terrace
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Bt40 2Qy			
HB06/03/010 C	4 Coastguard Cottages	B2		House - Terrace
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qy			
HB06/03/010 D	5 Coastguard Cottages	B2		House - Terrace
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qy			
HB06/03/010 E	6 Coastguard Cottages	B2		House - Terrace
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qy			
HB06/03/011	Ballygally Castle,	A		Hotel
	274 Coast Road			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Qz			
HB06/03/016	St Patrick's C of I Church	B1		Church
	Carncastle			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/017	Wheyburn	B1		House
	10 Weyburn Road			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Rd			
HB06/03/021	Lodge At Hillmount	B2		Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
	357 Old Glenarm Road			
	Drains			
	Carncastle			
	Larne, Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Lg			
HB06/03/022	Hillmount	B2		House
	357 Old Glenarm Road			
	Drains			
	Carncastle			
	Larne, Co Antrim			
	Bt40 2Lg			
HB06/03/024	Victorian Railings	B2		Railings

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Coast Road			
	Blackcave North			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/027	Bridge Near Millvale	B2		Bridge
	Croft Road			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB06/03/033	Fountain	B2		Fountain
	Opposite Junction of Carncastle and Coast			
	Roads			
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co. Antrim			
HB06/03/035	Pump Situated Opposite 316 Coast Road	B2		Pump
	Ballygalley			
	Larne			
	Co Antrim			
HB07 05	- Slemish			
HB07/05/006	"Cleggan Lodge"	B		House
	Ballymena			
	Co. Antrim			
HB07/05/008	Glencairn (Now Carncairn Lodge)	B1		House
	40 Carnlough Road			
	Broughshane			
	Co. Antrim			
HB07 11	- Glenwhirry			
HB07/11/003	St. Patrick's C of I Church	B		Church
	Moorfields Road			
	Ballymarlagh T1			
	Ballymena			
	Co. Antrim			
HB07/11/004	Rock Bridge Over The Kells Water	B2		Bridge
	Tully Road			
	Tawnybrack/Ross T1			
	Ballymena			
	Co. Antrim			
HB07/11/008	Moorfields Bridge Over The	B2		Bridge
	Glenwhirry River			
	Speerstown Road			
	Moorfields			
	Ballymena			

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
	Co.Antrim			
HB07/11/009	Battery Bridge Over The Glenwhirry River	B1		Bridge
	Collin Road			
	Kinnegalliagh T1			
	Moorfields			
	Ballymena			
	Co.Antrim			
HB07/11/012	Marlagh Lodge 71-73 Moorefields Road	B1		House
	Ballymarlagh			
	Ballymena			
	Co Antrim			
	BT42 3BU			

Significant Cultural Interest Items: Protection

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment what process the new councils must follow in order to preserve buildings or items of significant cultural significance.

(AQW 34059/11-15)

Mr Durkan: New councils can write at any time to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency seeking the protection of a building or item of significant cultural interest. The Agency will acknowledge this request and investigate the case. It will then assess the information relative to published criteria and determine if further detailed research is justified. The Council will be informed of this decision. If protection as a listed building is proposed, the Council will also be consulted as a statutory consultee before a final decision on protection is made.

From April 2015, councils will also have the power, under Article 81 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to issue a Building Preservation Notice. This will protect a building, as if it were listed, for a period of six months while NIEA considers if permanent listing is justified. A notice can only issue if it appears to the council that the building:

(a) is of special architectural or historic interest; and

(b) is in danger of demolition or of alteration in such a way as to affect its character as a building of such interest,'

Furthermore, consideration is also being given to putting in place strategic planning policy that will enable councils to draw up a 'community list' of buildings of architectural or historic interest that do not quite meet the test for statutory protection. This process referred to elsewhere in the UK as 'local listing', has recently been subject to public consultation as part of work to bring forward a new Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (page 34 refers). Responses are currently being considered. Guidance on the process that councils should follow in order to designate such assets is also currently being developed by NIEA. The designation will allow the interest of these features to become a material consideration in the planning system.

In regard to buildings or fixed items of significant cultural significance already designated, councils will have the power to protect these from inappropriate change through the planning process and, if listed, through listed building consent process. The detail of this process will be finalised once the outcome of the current consultation on: *'Planning Reform and Transfer to Local Government: Proposals for Subordinate Legislation'* has been concluded.

Bituminous Coal

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what assessment has he made of the impact the burning of bituminous coal has in built up areas on air quality and human health; and whether he has considered taking any action to mitigate against any damage.

(AQW 34081/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The burning of bituminous coal in built up areas can contribute significantly to poor air quality – in particular due to raised levels of particulate matter and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

Results from a national PAH monitoring network, which measures levels across Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, shows that annual mean levels of PAHs monitored in Northern Ireland are frequently among the highest recorded.

A report commissioned by my Department and published in 2012, showed that the high levels of PAHs monitored here are most likely the result of a higher proportion of households in Northern Ireland using bituminous coal for domestic heating.

While the health effects of air pollution from burning bituminous coal have not been studied in Northern Ireland, two reports give estimated human mortality levels resulting from exposure to particulate matter (which is produced from road vehicle emissions, solid fuel combustion and power generation):

- 1 COMEAP (Committee for Medical Effects of Air Pollution) (2010) – New Calculations Of The Effects Of Air Pollution On Health In The UK – estimates a six-month reduction in average UK life expectancy as a result of exposure to particulate matter.
http://www.comeap.org.uk/images/stories/Documents/Reports/COMEAP_Mortality_Effects_Press_Release.pdf
- 2 Public Health England (2014) – Estimating Local Mortality Burdens associated with Particulate Air Pollution – estimates that in 2012, 3.8% of total deaths in Northern Ireland were attributable to exposure to very fine particulate matter:
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/Environment/PHECRCEReportSeries/PHECRCE010/>

This percentage of deaths attributable to exposure is less than that estimated for Scotland (3.9%), Wales (4.3%) and England (5.6%).

At the North South Ministerial council on 10th July 2013, Terms of Reference were agreed for a joint North-South study to examine policy options for dealing with air pollution from bituminous coal and solid fuel combustion across the two jurisdictions. The main tasks which have been undertaken for this research are:

- gathering evidence on current air pollution from the residential heating sector;
- examining policies and regulatory measures;
- examining the solid fuel market;
- examining fuel poverty;
- examining public health impacts from solid fuel burning;
- looking at examples of regulation of solid fuel use in other EU Member States;
- engaging with stakeholders for their views on this policy area, and to obtain information or data which may be relevant to the study.

This study will go on to look at policy options for consideration in tackling air pollution in this area. It is anticipated that a final report will be published in September 2014.

Planning Fees

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment whether Section 4.1 d of the Planning Fees Explanatory Notes for Applicants applies to churches seeking to develop or replace facilities which would improve their work in the community.
(AQW 34120/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has sought legal advice on this issue and, in light of this, considers that Churches are not eligible for the exemption.

Hospitality: DoE

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.
(AQW 34138/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The total cost of hospitality provided by my Department in 2013-14 was £38,146.31. The total cost of hospitality provided by my Department's arm's-length bodies for 2013-14 was £11,035.34.

Taxi Drivers: Fare History

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33568/11-15, how long taxi operators are required to retain records of fare history.
(AQW 34141/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Taxi operators are required to retain records of fare history for not less than six months following the date of the last entry.

Ravenhill Rugby Ground

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33569/11-15, whether 50 percent of the test purchases carried out at Ravenhill Rugby Grounds on 23 August 2013 were not recorded by the taxi operator; and if so, (i) how this was rectified; (ii) whether provision exists for extensions in these circumstances; (iii) whether an extension of time to locate records was granted; and (iv) who granted this extension.
(AQW 34142/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All records assessed in relation to the test purchases carried out at Ravenhill Rugby Ground on 23 August 2013 were deemed to comply with Regulation 9 of the Taxi Operator Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 in that they contained all the prescribed particulars.

Ravenhill Rugby Ground

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 31206/11-15, (i) to state the dates and times of the stated visits to Ravenhill Rugby Ground; (ii) the job titles of those who carried out the visits; and (iii) to provide the same information for any subsequent visits.

(AQW 34143/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) AQW 31206/11-15 confirms that two examinations of booking records were carried out in respect of the provision of private hire taxi services at Ravenhill Rugby Ground. These did not involve a visit to Ravenhill Rugby Ground but rather to the operator's premises where the records were kept. The first visit was conducted on 3 October 2013 with a general compliance audit being carried out on 6 February 2014.
- (ii) The first visit was conducted by a Higher Professional and Technical Officer and a Senior Traffic Examiner. The general compliance audit was carried out by two Traffic Examiners.
- (iii) No subsequent visits have been carried out at the operator's premises.

Taxi Drivers: Fixed Penalty Notices

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to taxi drivers who are given a fixed penalty notice by Driver and Vehicle Agency Enforcement for an alleged regulation breach, (i) whether they can contest or appeal the notice; (ii) whether these notices can be rescinded; and if so, (iii) who has the discretion to rescind.

(AQW 34144/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) A taxi driver who is issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for an alleged regulation breach can contest or appeal the FPN within 21 days of issue of the notice. In the majority of cases the offence identified on the FPN will then be reported to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) with a view to prosecution.
- (ii) FPNs can only be rescinded in exceptional circumstances where an administrative error becomes apparent.
- (iii) FPNs are generally only rescinded with the authority of the Chief Enforcement Officer.

Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates

Mr Agnew asked Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32872/11-15; (i) why his Department granted Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) certificates to unregulated mineral extraction developments that require, but have not yet received, planning permission; and (ii) how the granting of these certificates equates to his previous answer to AQW 32086/11-15 where he stated that under the ALCS criteria, unauthorised sites did not receive an ALCS certificate, and therefore were ineligible to apply for a rebate from HMRC on the levy payable.

(AQW 34149/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) In each case where an ALCS application was received, the relevant regulating authority was contacted. In each case where an ALCS Certificate was granted the regulating authority (including Planning Service) were satisfied that there were no issues surrounding the application.
- (ii) In each case where a Certificate was granted under the ALCS Scheme, the ALCS criteria as set out in the Code of Practice was followed.

Springfarm Rath, Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment who is responsible for cutting grass at Springfarm Rath, Antrim; and when the grass will be cut.

(AQW 34150/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Springfarm Rath is one of 190 Monuments in State Care, owned by the Department of the Environment. The NIEA is responsible for maintenance of this monument. The Grounds Maintenance Contract which provides this service is at tender and so maintenance is currently being undertaken by local NIEA staff.

The grass at Springfarm Rath was cut on Friday 13th June.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the performance against the target for greenhouse gas reductions; and what revisions have been made concerning the ability to meet the target to reduce greenhouse gas source emissions by 35 per cent by 2025.

(AQW 34163/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Executive has a target to continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35 per cent on 1990 levels by 2025. My department's latest statistical bulletin on emission figures (1990-2012¹), published on 10 June 2014, shows a decrease of 16 per cent in 2012 in Northern Ireland emissions since the base year (1990).

My department's statistical analysts use a projection tool to estimate reductions based on the latest figures. A 2012-based projection figure will be available in December 2014. However, the 2011-based projection figure for Northern Ireland is a 27.6 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2025.

It is good to see that there is a long term reduction since the base year of 1990. However, it is clear that progress towards long term reductions, including to the Programme for Government target, will be uneven due to factors beyond our control. Natural climate/weather variations and economic factors greatly impact on results.

I would hope that the long term reduction trend is evidenced in coming years as significant local low carbon policies on renewables, energy efficiency, resource efficiency, sustainable transport and agriculture make a positive impact.

The Cross Departmental Working Group on Climate Change's third annual progress report, published on 11 June 2014², contains action plans that show there is considerable activity across government that will help to reduce emissions and highlights proposals to increase the range of measures.

1. <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/ghg-inventory-statistical-bulletin-2012.pdf>

2. http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/climate_change/ni_greenhouse_gas_emissions_annual_progress_reports.htm

Minerals Permissions Legislation

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) who will be responsible for the review of old minerals permissions following the devolution of planning to councils; (ii) whether the liability for any past failure by his Department in adhering to environmental or planning legislation will transfer to local councils when planning powers are devolved; and (iii) how new councils will undertake reviews of old minerals permissions if such permissions were not issued in the first instance.

(AQW 34187/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) When commenced, Section 129, and the provisions introduced by Schedules 2 and 3 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011, will enable councils to start a process resulting in an initial review of all mineral permissions granted in Northern Ireland, thereby ensuring that their conditions meet modern expectations and current environmental standards. The provisions also prevent dormant sites from reopening without a review of the conditions attached to their permissions. A further duty is placed on councils to instigate additional periodic reviews of all mineral sites. Although the majority of these functions will fall to councils, the Department will be able to require that certain applications for review are referred to it.
- (ii) Any liabilities arising from any failure by the Department of the Environment to adhere to environmental or planning legislation will remain with the Department and will not be transferred to local government on 1 April 2015. The local councils will, of course, take responsibility for any failures of such a nature that arise after they have responsibility in these areas from 1 April 2015.
- (iii) The proposed Review of Old Mineral Permissions (ROMPs) legislation sets out a means for reviewing long standing minerals permissions and it follows that the legislation is not relevant if no permission exists.

Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Lignite

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33482/11-15, what investigation has been undertaken to determine whether lignite has been disturbed from the bed of Lough Neagh Special Protection Area as part of the process of unregulated sand extraction.

(AQW 34188/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has not undertaken any investigations to determine if lignite has been disturbed by sand extraction in Lough Neagh.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to halting National Parks draft legislation in November 2013, to outline how opportunities have been sought to better manage Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including how he proposes to identify such opportunities.

(AQW 34210/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Management Plans have been drawn up for the majority of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), some covering a period of ten years. I am delighted with the long term commitment that has been made by the various stakeholders who are working in partnership to actively deliver projects that promote and conserve our AONB landscapes.

My Department continues to provide a broad range of services and support to the various bodies that manage AONBs in Northern Ireland. These include financial assistance, participation in management bodies and other areas of work which assist with the conservation and protection of these valuable assets. Such services and support provide opportunities to better manage AONBs.

For example the Natural Heritage Grant Programme has provided £2.5 million during the previous three financial years to these management bodies. This support is a critical catalyst which enables them to draw down other funding from a variety of sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

I am fully aware that the natural beauty of our environment has the potential to create prosperity through tourism, industry and sustainable agriculture and promote wellbeing through clean air and water and through outdoor recreation. My Department has worked with other partners including Sport NI and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to develop the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan. I am fully supportive of this Plan which identifies strategic objectives needed to develop outdoor recreation opportunities over the next seven years thereby helping to achieve health, well being, economic outcomes, and appreciation of our environment. NIEA officials also chair the interdepartmental Wildfire Stakeholders Group which is engaging with and provides the opportunity for AONB management bodies to promote awareness and for sharing learning in seeking to prevent wildfire damage to our countryside.

My Department has also taken the opportunity to engage with DARD to inform the new Agri Environment Schemes which can help deliver for our natural environment. We are developing partnerships to seek to draw down EU funding and engaging with other groups to explore how best we can work together to maximise the benefits and draw down from other sources of funding.

Planning Applications: Target Times

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration is being given to replacing target times for processing planning applications with time limits.

(AQW 34263/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are no plans to replace target times for processing planning applications with time limits.

Article 11 of the Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993 specifies time periods for the processing of planning applications following which a non determination appeal under Article 33 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) 1991 may be made to the Planning Appeals Commission.

In the last few years, DOE Planning has had a strong focus on improving timescales for reaching planning decisions and on ensuring our statutory and other consultation processes operate effectively, to ensure that relevant planning issues are identified and addressed early in the decision making process.

We are also now focused on ensuring a smooth transfer of responsibility for most planning decisions to the new councils next April. In support of this a number of specific initiatives are being pursued to improve the policy, operational, procedural and legislative framework within which the planning system operates and which will impact on how the councils operate their new planning powers from next April. These include initiatives to improve and shorten the response times for planning consultees, preparing a new simplified single planning policy statement, and introducing new guidelines to facilitate pre application discussions especially for major projects.

Illegal Waste: Arney

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32200/11-15, how disclosing the volume of illegal waste discovered at Arney, County Fermanagh could prejudice future legal proceedings, given that he has disclosed the volume of illegal waste at Mobuoy Road, Derry; and whether his disclosing of this information regarding the Mobuoy site has prejudiced those proceedings.

(AQW 34415/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The disclosure of an estimated waste tonnage for the Mobuoy Road site is not evidential, but it is a generalised, 'broad brush' figure placed in the public domain, given the exceptional circumstances with this particular case, to illustrate the unique nature of the Mobuoy site in light of the sheer volume of waste found, the licence revocation and the effect on local council waste contracts.

My predecessor obtained detailed legal advice prior to the disclosure of any information about the Mobuoy situation in general in order to avoid any prejudice to legal proceedings.

Evidence that will form part of likely criminal proceedings will not be disclosed prior to consultation of legal proceedings. My Department issues press releases following operational activity which contain as much information as possible in order to inform the public, protect the rights of those being investigated and ensure that a fair trial can result. Press releases are also issued at the conclusion of proceedings which contain further information and this is the proper route for the handling of such information.

Illegal Waste: Total Volume

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for an estimate of the total volume of illegal waste making up the 26 priority sites that are currently being investigated by the Environmental Crime Unit of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. (AQW 34480/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The sites in question are part of Operation Toothfish. As outlined in my response to the Mills Report, DOE is pursuing a number of activities, ranging from waste reduction initiatives with business, new partnerships with local councils and improvements in the regulation of waste. Operation Toothfish is part of the enforcement component of this strategy.

NIEA is now investigating 37 priority sites under 'Operation Toothfish' and not all these cases involve a fixed amount of waste as such. I am, therefore, not in a position to provide such an estimate at the present time, or indeed in the foreseeable future.

There are various factors behind these particular investigations with a major impetus being the suspected level of criminality. Due to the varied waste management and illegal disposal methods, it is not always possible nor helpful to quantify volumes of waste.

To stop the waste offending activity as quickly as possible, officers must by necessity prioritise other elements of these investigations. In addition, in the case of landfills in particular, a considered assessment must be made as to the environmental conditions surrounding the waste. In some cases, digging up the site – which is the only accurate way of assessing the amount there – may cause more damage in the short term.

GAA HQ: Owenbeg

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to outline the actions taken by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency at the GAA HQ at Owenbeg on Friday 20 June 2014; (ii) whether any offences were detected; and (iii) what cognisance was given to the number of young people present. (AQW 34624/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) enforcement officers visited Owenbeg GAA HQ on 20 June 2014 to carry out road safety inspections on buses being used to transport passengers to and from the opening ceremony of the Féile na nGael competition. Taking account of circumstances on the day, officers decided not to proceed with the inspection.

Woodburn Forest: Oil and Gas

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether fluid will be used to fracture sub-surface rock as part of the oil and gas exploratory drilling proposed by InfaStrata in Woodburn forest. (AQW 34692/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department received a request on the 28 August 2013 from InfraStrata to carry out exploratory drilling at Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus. The Department has been advised that the exploration activities are for the exploration and recovery of conventionally extractable hydrocarbons. The Department has not been advised that any fluid will be utilized at the site to fracture sub-surface rock.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Healthcare Staff: Incorrect Pay

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of the percentage of health care staff in each constituency that have been paid incorrectly due to the payroll system glitch. (AQW 33781/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): It is not possible to provide this information by constituency. However, the percentage of healthcare staff by HSC trust that have been paid incorrectly due to issues with the payment of enhancements (overtime, allowances etc) and the incorrect deduction of National Insurance Contributions is estimated as follows:

HSC Trust	% total errors to total number of payments processed ⁽¹⁾
Western	0.89%
Belfast	1.75%

HSC Trust	% total errors to total number of payments processed⁽¹⁾
Southern	0.31%
South Eastern	2.17%
Northern	0.96%
NIAS	15.82%(2)
	1.43%

Notes:

(1) For the period Sept-13 to May-14. (2) NIAS errors were due to incorrect NIC deductions in the April payruns. A systems fix has been implemented to prevent this from recurring – this issue is therefore resolved.

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

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

Care Packages

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people, in each quarter of the last three years, were assessed as requiring (i) residential care packages paid for in full by the Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) residential care paid for by the individual, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 33982/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not collected centrally and was requested from the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses are detailed below:

(i) Belfast HSC Trust

The Belfast HSC Trust stated that no clients were assessed as requiring residential care packages paid for in full by the Trust as all clients contribute to their care, albeit this may be through their social security benefits. The number of partially Trust funded residential care packages in the last 3 years is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Partially Trust Funded Clients *

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	61	37	31	20	149
2012/13	60	41	37	48	186
2011/12	70	56	47	42	215

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

* Figures exclude respite/ temporary admissions.

Northern HSC Trust

The Northern HSC Trust indicated that the requested information could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, information on clients receiving Trust funded residential care packages at 31 March in each of the last 3 years is detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Trust Funded Clients *

2014	20
2013	29
2012	38

Source: Northern HSC Trust

* Snapshot at 31 March.

South Eastern HSC Trust

In the last 3 years, 43 people were assessed as requiring Trust funded residential care packages in Adult Disability services, which cannot be broken down by quarter. Information for permanent clients in Elderly, Elderly Mentally Infirm and Mental Health services is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Trust Funded Clients *

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	16	5	7	15	43
2012/13	19	16	10	6	51
2011/12	14	22	6	14	56

Source: South Eastern HSC Trust

* Figures refer to permanent clients in Elderly, Elderly Mentally Infirm and Mental Health services.

Southern HSC Trust

The average number of clients assessed as requiring Trust funded residential care packages during each quarter in the last 3 years is presented in Table 4 below. These quarterly figures cannot be summed over a year.

Table 4: Trust Funded Clients * # ^

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
2013/14	466	478	475	483
2012/13	487	466	462	465
2011/12	483	469	480	485

Source: Southern HSC Trust

* Figures represent those clients who were assessed as paying a basic charge with the balance paid by the Trust.

Figures are based on the average number for each quarter.

^ Figures refer to all programmes of care excluding children's.

Western HSC Trust

The number of clients assessed as requiring fully Trust funded residential care packages is presented in Table 5 and the number of clients assessed as requiring partially funded residential care packages is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 5: Fully Trust Funded Clients * #

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	32	32	17	26	107
2012/13	17	24	25	30	96
2011/12	22	17	27	33	99

Source: Western HSC Trust

* Figures are based on new care episodes.

Paid in full by the Trust.

Table 6: Partially Trust Funded Clients *

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	152	141	71	68	432
2012/13	163	134	56	65	418
2011/12	155	117	98	72	442

Source: Western HSC Trust

* Figures are based on new care episodes.

(ii)

Belfast HSC Trust

The number of clients assessed as requiring self funded residential care in the last 3 years is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Self Funded Clients * #

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	14	10	6	11	41
2012/13	16	8	8	13	45
2011/12	18	5	10	13	46

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

* Figures refer to clients who pay the full cost.

Figures exclude respite/ temporary admissions.

Northern HSC Trust

The Northern HSC Trust stated that the information could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, information on clients receiving self funded residential care at 31 March in each of the last 3 years is detailed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Self Funded Clients * #

2014	1,022
2013	1,075
2012	1,069

Source: Northern HSC Trust

* Snapshot at 31 March.

Figures include respite, temporary and permanent clients.

South Eastern HSC Trust

In the last 3 years, 1 person was assessed as requiring self funded residential care in Adult Disability services. Information for Elderly and Elderly Mentally Infirm services is detailed in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Self Funded Clients *

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	5	4	4	4	17
2012/13	6	3	8	1	18
2011/12	8	5	2	0	15

Source: South Eastern HSC Trust

* Figures refer to permanent clients in Elderly and Elderly Mentally Infirm services.

Southern HSC Trust

The average number of clients assessed as requiring self funded residential care in the last 3 years is presented in Table 10 below. These quarterly figures cannot be summed over a year.

Table 10: Self Funded Clients * #

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
2013/14	119	114	113	119
2012/13	98	96	105	109
2011/12	119	110	108	99

Source: Southern HSC Trust

* Figures are based on the average number for each quarter.

Figures refer to all programmes of care excluding children's.

Western HSC Trust

The number of clients assessed as requiring self funded residential care in the last 3 years is presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Self Funded Clients *

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2013/14	25	12	9	5	51
2012/13	13	10	12	11	46
2011/12	10	10	13	14	47

Source: Western HSC Trust

* Figures are based on new care episodes.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time between referral and beginning a course of cognitive behavioural therapy, in each of the last five years; and the target waiting time.

(AQW 34080/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information was requested from the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses are detailed below.

Belfast HSC Trust

Year	Average waiting time (weeks)
2010	9-10
2011	11-12
2012	12-13
2013	12-13
2014*	13-14

* Current waiting time is 13-14 weeks.

Northern HSC Trust

Year	Average waiting time (days)
2009/10	-
2010/11	-
2011/12	81 days
2012/13	80 days
2013/14	87 days

'-' denotes information cannot be provided by the Trust.

South Eastern HSC Trust

For the period between March 2009 to beginning of 2013 the waiting list time for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy offered by both Clinical Psychologists and CBT Therapists from referral received to first appointment was 13 weeks. From early to mid 2013 onwards the waiting list time has fluctuated between 16 and 35 weeks.

Southern HSC Trust

The Trust is confident that the current waiting time target from point of referral to CBT Intervention of 13 weeks is met on an on-going basis. It is not possible to provide exact figures as the Trust has no available statistics of this nature prior to 2010 and to collate subsequent years figures would be a significant piece of work as these are not routinely requested.

Western HSC Trust

Year	Average Waiting Time (days)
Sept 2010 – Dec 2010 *	81
2011	84
2012	81
2013	93
2014	83

* Prior to September 2010 waiting list figures for CBT were integrated with those for Adult Psychological Therapies Service.

For 2014/15, the target waiting time between referral and beginning a course of cognitive behavioural therapy is 13 weeks (91 days).

Health Service Employees: Salaries and Expenses

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33422/11-15, (i) what assurances he can give that the problems encountered in relation to payments of salaries and expenses to Health Service employees are now resolved; (ii) to outline any further cost implications required to ensure that the system is fit for purpose; and (ii) what steps can be taken to ensure there are no further failures in the system.

(AQW 34092/11-15)

Mr Poots: There have been three key payroll issues: firstly regarding the receipt of enhancements (such as overtime), secondly incorrect National Insurance deductions and finally the incorrect application of emergency tax codes.

In terms of addressing the issues involving the enhancements to basic pay, the new payroll system puts an emphasis on employees and managers submitting claims for additional payments in a timely and appropriate way. The BSO and Trusts are therefore continuing to re-emphasise the importance of adhering to these protocols and providing further training and support. In addition to this, we have also recently approved further expert support for the HSC payroll functions over the coming months. There is also on-going training and awareness work with managers who complete and submit timesheets, and work is well underway preparing for the release of a more robust electronic timesheet.

All employees affected by incorrect NIC contributions have received payments to address this issue and a corrective fix has been applied to the system to prevent this issue from recurring.

In terms of the application of emergency tax codes, the HMRC has reviewed the tax codes for all affected staff and, where appropriate, has revised the tax codes in time for the May pay run. The HMRC has confirmed that some staff will still remain on an emergency tax code in line with normal business – these are being considered on a case by case basis.

Looking forward, a range of continuous improvement measures will be introduced to both stabilise and enhance services. This will include the consideration of moving all staff to monthly payroll cycles to improve efficiency and also reduce the opportunity for errors. This is coupled with a robust management and governance structure underpinning the BSTP project.

Parkinson's Disease: Specialist Nurses

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of nurses specialising in Parkinson's disease in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34133/11-15)

Mr Poots: The current number of Parkinson's disease specialist nurses as at June 2014 is shown in the table below.

Health & Social Care Trust	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Belfast	1	1.0
Northern	1	1.0
South Eastern	1	1.0
Southern	1	1.0
Western	2	1.8

Notes:

1 These figures were provided by the Health & Social Care Trusts, and have not been validated by the Department.

Diabetes: Training and Resources for Children in Schools

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what work his Department has been undertaken with Education and Library Boards to provide training and resources in schools for children with diabetes.

(AQW 34134/11-15)

Mr Poots: Training for teachers and school staff regarding specific health conditions is provided by the relevant Health and Social Care Trust.

Following the diagnosis of diabetes in a school age child, a paediatric diabetic specialist nurse will liaise with the child's school and school health team and provide training for staff in the management of diabetes which may include insulin administration and will be in line with the pupil's individual healthcare plan.

The guidance "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs" (2008) was developed jointly by my Department and the Department of Education. The aim of the guidance is to provide schools and educational establishments with assistance in drawing up policies on managing medication, where teachers and staff are willing to assist in the administration of medication.

At present time, a "Best Practice Guidelines to Support Children and Young People with Diabetes in Schools" has been drafted and is being finalised for use in the HSC Trusts.

At the request of the Minister for Education, a booklet "What Diabetes Care to Expect in Schools" has been developed. This was co-ordinated by Diabetes UK in association with the Education and Library Boards and paediatric diabetes specialist nurses. It is anticipated that this booklet will be launched in Autumn 2014 with a target audience primarily of parents of children with diabetes.

D-Nav Insulin Self-management System

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what potential exists for the use of the new handheld D-Nav insulin self-management system by diabetic patients, as piloted by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34135/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of this device and have been apprised of its potential to improve the management of diabetes and optimise outcomes in patients.

The device has been piloted at the Ulster Hospital with an initial cohort of approximately 150 patients. Around one quarter of the cohort dropped out. However the evaluation reported by Consultant Diabetologist Dr Roy Harper is that there have been substantial improvements in blood sugar control amongst those remaining, with a realistic prospect of future decreases in complications from diabetes such as heart and kidney disease. The evaluation concluded that;

- The system provided a powerful and effective approach to managing insulin therapy;
- Patients need to be supported, particularly in the early stages of using the technology;
- There was a slight but expected weight gain in some participants;
- Patients were likely to experience increased mild hypoglycaemic episodes;
- This product shows promise in delivering real value from insulin therapy.

The system has now been commissioned by the SEHSCT and Hygeia who manufacture the device are currently providing a service to approximately 500 patients across the Trust area through the diabetes care team and community based GP surgeries.

Skin Camouflage Services

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have accessed skin camouflage services in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34153/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people who have accessed skin camouflage services in the last three years is not collected centrally by the Department and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Supported Living Schemes: North Down

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the provision of Supported Living Schemes is progressing in North Down.

(AQW 34176/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has provided the following information:

Disability Services

Over the past 2 years the following Supported Living schemes have been developed by the Learning Disability Programme within the Trust:

- An extension of Bangor Supported Living scheme for 8 people
- A new build of 10 single person apartments in the Newtownards area, which are shortly to become occupied

- 8 new Supported Living placements in Stricklands, with a further 2 due for occupation in July and another 1 in December 2014.

A submission has also been made to extend the Positive Futures East Coast scheme by 3 and the Portavogie scheme by 6. Project groups have been established to review provision at Croft Community and the Praxis Kimberley scheme.

Mental Health Services

In partnership with contracted independent sector organisations, PRAXIS and the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH), 2 additional places have been secured this year in the NIAMH Enterprise Court scheme and a further 4 places in the PRAXIS Carmen Lane scheme.

Older Peoples Services

The Trust is developing an Outline Business Case with the Ark Housing Association for a Supported Housing facility on the former Ravara House site in Bangor. At this stage the Trust has agreed an outline design brief which is being progressed.

Prescriptions: Number Issued

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of prescriptions issued in (i) 2009; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 34200/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of prescription items for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in (i) 2009 and (ii) 2013 is shown in table 1 below.

Figures relate to prescriptions which were dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment during the period. Not all prescriptions issued are subsequently dispensed and presented for payment, so the number of prescriptions issued is not known centrally.

The figures shown are presented by the calendar year in which the prescription was paid to the pharmacist; it should be noted that there may be a time lag where prescriptions have been dispensed by the community pharmacist in a particular year but paid the following year. The data provided only covers drugs dispensed in primary care, as drugs prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems

Table 1: The number of prescription items for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in (i) 2009 and (ii) 2013.

Calendar Year	Number of prescription items
2009	33,379,217
2013	38,661,481

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Pregnancies: Guidance on Terminations

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for an update on the guidance for the termination of pregnancy; (ii) whether he will commit to a timeframe to bring this forward; and (iii) whether this guidance will go out to consultation.

(AQW 34221/11-15)

Mr Poots: I intend to bring revised guidance to the Executive for agreement this summer. The revised guidance will not be issued for public consultation.

Crossroads Care: North Down and Ards

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what level of commitment of resources his Department can provide to Crossroads Care in the North Down and Ards area.

(AQW 34276/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has provided a core revenue grant to Crossroads Caring for Carers for a number of years. In 2013/14 this amounted to £57,576. A decision on the 2014/15 budget will be made shortly. I am also advised that the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust provided support of £260,847.15 during 2013/14 and has provided £31,418.46 so far in 2014/15.

My Department's grant is awarded as a contribution to the salary costs of the organisation's Chief Executive Officer and Finance Officer. The grant also supports the organisation's core functions of promoting and supporting the delivery of high quality services for carers and people with care needs.

Children with Eating Disorders: Professional Services

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional services are available for children under 12 years of age who are diagnosed with eating disorders.

(AQW 34281/11-15)

Mr Poots: Eating Disorder Services are provided by specialist community-based teams in each Health and Social Care Trust area. The Belfast Trust provides these services for the South Eastern Trust.

Inpatient care for children and adolescents with eating disorders is usually provided at Beechcroft, the Regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Inpatient Unit. The Unit provides inpatient care for children and young people up to the age of 18.

However, if a patient's condition is primarily physical, clinicians may decide that the best place for treatment is an acute hospital setting. In this case, acute paediatric medical and CAMHS eating disorders services work in partnership.

If a patient requires intense specialist treatment for an eating disorder, Trusts can access beds in England, Scotland and Ireland through the Extra Contractual Referral (ECR) process. Developments in local Eating Disorder Services in recent years have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of children and young people having to be referred outside Northern Ireland for treatment.

Out-of-hours Service: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the out-of-hours service in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, given the views expressed by staff in a report into these services; and what steps he will take to improve the service and patient safety.

(AQW 34284/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of the recent media reports concerning the GP OOHs service in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Trust is currently reviewing its GP OOHs services in light of the increased pressure on the service in the last year. The Trust has already taken action to address issues around the delivery of GP OOHs services such as on-going recruitment for GPs, flexible working arrangements, enhanced payment rates for difficult to fill shifts and the phased introduction of skilled nurses, including advanced nurse practitioners. The Trust has also run a series of workshops open to all staff in the GP OOHs service through which staff were encouraged to share their views on the service now and in the future. Following these workshops a confidential report was compiled which highlighted areas of concern which senior staff within the Southern Trust area currently working to address.

The Trust takes all views of the service extremely seriously and is committed to working with all staff in looking at changes needed and working through the suggestions and recommendations discussed at the workshop. The work will be taken forward in partnership between the Trust, GPs and OOHs staff, the Local Commissioning Group and the Health and Social Care Board to ensure a safe and effective service continues to be provided for all patients across the Southern Trust.

The HSCB meets regularly with the Trusts to review performance and will continue to explore opportunities to improve OOHs services. It has already provided additional funding to the Southern Trust in order to address the issues of GP recruitment and retention as well as the provision of staff training.

I am aware that there has been an ever increasing demand for OOHs services and the challenges this brings and I recently approved the HSCB's Regional Strategic Framework for GP OOHs services which focuses on:

- Simplifying access;
- Improving organisational efficiency; and
- Improving alignment with other healthcare services.

In implementing the changes in the framework the HSCB will work with providers to ensure high standards in the handling of calls from patients; maintaining the safety and quality of services currently provided, both during the transition to, and in delivery of, the new working arrangements.

Fire Officers: Wicking T-shirts

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why wicking T-shirts are no longer issued to fire officers; and whether the replacement shirts meet the same health and safety standards.

(AQW 34296/11-15)

Mr Poots: The contract for the supply of wicking tee shirts to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has expired. During a review of the technical specification, it was found that the wicking T-shirts issued were compromised by the addition of an embroidered corporate badge. As a result NIFRS issued a replacement tee shirt which meets Health and Safety Requirements.

Omagh Fire Station

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the new fire station in Omagh has met all the safety requirements of such a building; and whether a valid fire certificate has been issued.

(AQW 34297/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have been advised by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service that the new Omagh Community Fire Station has met all the safety requirements and that all the necessary certification is in place to allow the safe use of the building.

Fire Certificates are no longer issued on any premises since the enactment of Part iii of The Fire and Rescue Services (NI) Order 2006 which came into force on 15 November 2010.

Central Register: Children and Adults

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will set up a central register for children and adults with (i) Down's syndrome; and (ii) other learning disabilities.

(AQW 34304/11-15)

Mr Poots: I do not presently plan to establish a central register for children and adults with Down's syndrome or other learning disabilities.

Health and Social Care Trusts currently monitor voluntary lists of people with a Learning Disability for planning purposes. These detail client level data on each person in contact with the Trust under the Learning Disability programme of care, the number of contacts and the services that have been, and continue to be, delivered to them.

I am advised that a central register, which would require constant updating, would not necessarily add sufficient value to planning processes to be worth the expenditure of effort and resource. A central register is not considered to be the most efficient way to gather information on the health needs of this group, or to be used as a basis of allocating resources. Additionally, concern has been expressed that a register can be seen to stigmatise people, as other groups with specific needs do not need to be on a register to get services.

Rather, the focus is on refining and improving existing services and sources of information, and particularly the Directed Enhanced Services for people with learning disabilities - delivered through primary care and GP practices. This, and related initiatives, should assist in general health promotion, early detection and monitoring of conditions, and improve access to health services generally for people with learning disabilities.

Statutory Care Homes: New Admissions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has the power to issue a policy direction to the Health and Social Care Trusts to lift the restraints on new admissions to statutory care homes.

(AQW 34318/11-15)

Mr Poots: At a public meeting on 12 June the Board of the HSC Board considered and approved the post consultation report on 'Making Choices: Meeting the Current and Future Needs of Older People'. The report, available on the HSC Board's website at: http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/Previous%20Consultations/index.html#P-1_0, outlines final criteria which will be used to evaluate statutory residential homes for older people.

I have already reassured existing residents that they can remain in their residential home for as long as their needs can safely be met there. In this context I believe that the HSC Board's process, which will see HSC Trusts asked to review admission policies in respect of homes where the evaluation indicates a strong case for the continued provision of residential care, is an appropriate way forward.

Flooding: Northern Health and Social Care Trust Hospitals

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any occasions of serious flooding in Northern Health and Social Care Trust hospitals in the last three years.

(AQW 34320/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Basement of Causeway Hospital flooded with approximately 3-4 inches at the deepest level on the 22 June 2012 following an extreme heavy rain fall.

Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the recruitment of a specialist neuromuscular nurse for adults.

(AQW 34325/11-15)

Mr Poots: In my answer to AQW 30086/11-15 I advised that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust was unable to identify the necessary resources to recruit a neuromuscular nurse specialist post for adults. I instructed my officials to raise this matter directly with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

The HSCB advised that it has secured funding to appoint two neurological care advisors during 2014/15. These care advisors will provide advice, support, and information to people living with neurological conditions including Muscular Dystrophy. This is in line with Recommendation 3 in the McCollum Report which asks the NI Executive to ensure that the care advisor post in Northern Ireland is secured long-term within HSC, and takes urgent steps to create more of these posts.

Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults: Funding

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the funding provision of a specialist neuromuscular nurse for adults.

(AQW 34326/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the member to my answer to question AQW 34325/11-15.

Maghaberry Prison: Psychiatric Care

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the extent of psychiatric care available to inmates at Maghaberry prison.

(AQW 34328/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Mental Health Team was established by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust in HMP Maghaberry in November 2012. It is comprised of a mental health lead Nurse, Community Psychiatric nurses, Home Treatment Team, Specialist Occupational Therapist, Personality Disorder Practitioner, Registered Mental Health Nurses with an interest in Addictions, Dual Diagnosis Worker and Consultant Psychiatrist.

There is a process in place for early identification of new committals with a diagnosis of severe mental illness or who were previously known to Community Mental Health Services. Within HMP Maghaberry, Community Psychiatric Nurses provide services equivalent to those provided in the community. The Home Treatment Team, an integrated Multi-Disciplinary Team, provides a service to those prisoners experiencing an acute crisis and/or severe mental health difficulties and requiring same day assessment and intervention.

Learning Disabilities Complex: Oakridge, Dungannon

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update for the business case submitted by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the development of a centre for adults with complex learning disabilities at Oakridge, Dungannon.

(AQW 34496/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department has considered this business case and has passed its comments to the Southern Health and Social Care Trust who are now in the process of making the necessary revisions. The business case will also need to be assessed and approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel before DHSSPS approval can be given.

Timing of any development will then still be subject to the budget process for 2015/16 onwards and its relative priority against all other Trust and regional capital proposals.

Department of Justice

Appeals Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33729/11-15, as the body in question is government funded and tribunals fall under his remit, to detail (i) why he will not answer this question directly; and (ii) whether he will raise this matter with all agencies under his Department's remit.

(AQW 34041/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Department for Social Development (DSD) is statutorily responsible for The Appeals Service (TAS) including the provision of all funding. The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is administratively responsible for TAS under a Service Level Agreement with the DSD.

The President of the Appeal Tribunals is statutorily responsible for the training of panel members who are judicial office holders and therefore independent of Government. All questions relating to the compliance of appeal tribunals with legislative obligations can only be addressed by the President.

All agencies within the Department of Justice are aware of their obligations within the Human Rights Act 1998 (the Act) and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and of the requirement on all public authorities to comply with their obligations under section 6 of the Act.

Legal Aid Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33730/11-15, in light of Mr Justice Gillen's ruling, whether some or all of the Legal Aid costs will be recouped from those who brought the case.

(AQW 34072/11-15)

Mr Ford: As previously advised Article 24 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (NI) Order 1981 precludes the release of information in relation to civil cases in which legal aid has been granted.

I am advised by the Legal Services Commission that it is their policy to seek to recover costs on behalf of the Legal Aid Fund in all cases where the Civil Legal aid Certificate has been revoked.

Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Booklet

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33666/11-15, when the current Supporting Prisoner at Risk booklet was last updated and amended; and to detail the number of previous versions of the booklet.

(AQW 34127/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Supporting Prisoners at Risk booklet was last updated and amended in 2012. There have been two previous versions.

European Arrest Warrants

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been returned to Northern Ireland pursuant to a European Arrest Warrant in each year since the scheme has been in operation, broken down by member state; and to detail the average time for execution of European Arrest Warrants where the individual has returned to Northern Ireland, broken down by member state.

(AQW 34168/11-15)

Mr Ford: In total 37 people have been extradited to Northern Ireland on European Arrest Warrants since the scheme has been in operation. Details of the member states where the individuals who are the subject of an arrest warrant have been returned from is as follows: -

- Republic Of Ireland - 26
- Spain - 5
- Germany - 1
- Lithuania - 1
- Gibraltar - 1
- Poland - 1
- Sweden - 1
- Portugal -1

The average time to arrest and return individuals to Northern Ireland who have been subject to a European Arrest Warrant is not recorded.

European Arrest Warrants

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice how many European Arrest Warrants issued in Northern Ireland are outstanding, broken down by member state or nationality of the suspect.

(AQW 34170/11-15)

Mr Ford: At present there are 11 European Arrest warrants that were issued in Northern Ireland outstanding. A breakdown of the suspects' nationalities and the state to which the warrant was issued is as follows: -

Member state EAW issued to	Nationality
Republic of Ireland - 9	1 x Cameroonian, 4 x Irish, 1 x Lithuanian, 2 x British/Irish, 1 x Chinese
Lithuania - 1	Lithuanian
Portugal -1	Portuguese

Dungannon Courthouse: Car Park

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will liaise with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to ascertain their assessment of the overcrowding of vehicles around Dungannon Courthouse car park on 11 June 2014, which caused difficulty for an attending ambulance to manoeuvre due to the lack of space.

(AQW 34181/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service has confirmed with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service that the ambulance which attended Dungannon Courthouse on 11 June 2014 had no difficulty accessing the patient or gaining entry to or manoeuvring within the car park due to lack of space.

G4S Proposed Contract Undercharging

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33805/11-15, whether his Department has been made aware of an issue of proposed contract undercharging by G4S from any other Department; and if so, to detail the date.

(AQW 34182/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department has not been made aware of an issue of proposed contract undercharging by G4S from any other Department.

G4S Staff Keyholders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33900/11-15 and in respect of staff safety, and taking into consideration dissident republican activity and the close proximity court staff have with its supporters, to detail (i) the procedures that are put in place if a member of G4S is under threat as confirmed by the PSNI; (ii) whether his Department is notified of a threat against a staff member in order to ensure not just the safety of the individual but also co-workers, court staff and the public; and (iii) whether support is provided by his Departmental or G4S when an individual is under threat.

(AQW 34244/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department does not comment on personal security matters.

Counterfeit Tobacco Products

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions for the sale or distribution of counterfeit tobacco products, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 34253/11-15)

Mr Ford: Tackling the issue of excise evasion on tobacco or alcohol is primarily a matter for HMRC and Border Force.

HMRC has figures from 2010. It has advised that in 2010-11 there were 6 convictions relating to tobacco, in 2011-12 there were none, in 2012-13 there were 12 convictions and in 2013-14 there were 12 convictions. These are convictions for evasion of duty, but will include cases relating to counterfeit products.

There have been no standalone alcohol convictions for the period but HMRC advises that the cases listed may involve both tobacco and alcohol, as they are prosecuted under the same legislation.

Counterfeit Cosmetic Products

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions for the sale or distribution of counterfeit cosmetic products, in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 34257/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Trading Standards Service has advised that there has been 1 conviction, in 2010, in relation to counterfeit cosmetic products.

Police Service: Voluntary Early Retirement

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the sum of money agreed, on a per capita basis, between his Department, the Prison Service and the Police Rehabilitation Trust for the retraining of Prison Officers leaving the service on Voluntary Early Retirement; (ii) the number of officers who have left the service under the scheme; (iii) the number who opted for retraining; (iv) the total cost for training under the scheme to date; and (v) the total amount of money not yet used for training under the scheme and whether this money will continue to be held by his Department.

(AQW 34387/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service launched a Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme on 8 November 2011, with a re-training package secured through the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT). PRRT provided six core courses aimed at coaching and training staff to improve their chances of securing a new job at a cost of £1,500 per person. In addition to these core courses, a bursary of £3,500 per person was available to allow staff to purchase courses to help improve their employment goal.

A total of 520 staff left the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme. 214 of these staff attended one or more core modules with PRRT, and 181 staff were granted funding from the bursary for courses provided by PRRT or other external providers. To date a total of £224,916 has been spent on re-training.

There is currently £100,000 in the budget for 2014/15 to pay for re-training. This will be reviewed throughout the year to ensure that the allocation is adequate.

Policing Board: Adult Survivor Award Applications

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Policing Board taking over a year to review its procedures for dealing with Adult Survivor Award applications, following an adverse finding by a Medical Appeal Tribunal on 31 May 2013, whilst applicants await decisions.

(AQW 34400/11-15)

Mr Ford: Applications for Adult Survivor awards are made under the Injury Benefit legislation. The administration of the Injury Benefit Scheme is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the independence of the Board and am therefore not in a position to comment on its review of procedures for dealing with Adult Survivor Award applications.

Prison Officers: Retraining

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33899/11-15, whether Prison Officers opting for retraining under the terms agreed by his Department, the Prison Service and the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust were permitted to avail of a fifteen week period in which to decide on suitable retraining courses with a further two years to complete such courses; and to detail the rationale for the authorisation of fifteen weeks as the timescale to make these decisions.

(AQW 34429/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prison Officers leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were invited to register with the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT). There was an option to avail of six core training courses over a 10 week period to create a strong foundation of knowledge to assist individuals in making an informed career choice. Up to four one-to-one coaching sessions were also available between weeks one and 13 to explore career, employment, and self-employment options that matched their strengths, interests, and personal circumstances. This structured approach enabled individuals to make a decision about their alternative career goal and develop an action plan with the careers and training professional staff by the end of the 15 week period. Approved training courses could then be completed over a two year period.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DoJ Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34444/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice occupies a mixture of Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) owned, leased and DOJ owned property.

DFP Properties Division (PD) is responsible for paying utility bills associated with multiple occupancy buildings. As PD hold the energy budgets for core government departments, figures supplied in the DFP response will include utility costs associated with both DFP and other core departments, including DOJ, who occupy buildings in multiple occupancy capacity, as well as the costs for buildings solely occupied by DFP.

The following figures are for those buildings, which are owned and leased by the DOJ since the Department's creation in 2010 and fall outside the remit above and as such are not included in the DFP return.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Heat	£23,087	£23,212	£17,905	£18,849	£83,053
Electricity	£92,512	£79,440	£81,389	£83,263	£336,604
Water	£3,941	£3,699	£3,833	£3,541	£15,014
Total	£119,540	£106,351	£103,127	£105,653	£434,671

Legal Aid: Preliminary Enquiry Fees

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) the current composite Legal Aid fee for representation/attendance at preliminary enquiries for (a) solicitor; and (b) counsel; and (ii) in cases where counsel is assigned, whether a fee is paid to solicitor and counsel for appearing for the preliminary enquiry.

(AQW 34470/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current fees payable for preliminary enquiries are as follows:

- a Solicitor - £820
- b Counsel - £800

The standard fee is supplemented by an additional fee of £200, which is payable for each additional day required for the proceedings.

From the 26 June an additional fee of £410 for solicitors and £400 for counsel will apply in cases which include more than 750 pages of prosecution evidence.

In cases which have been certified for counsel, by virtue of the case being unusually grave or difficult, both solicitor and counsel are entitled to their respective fees for appearing in the committal proceedings.

Legal Aid: Solicitor Advocate Fees

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether a solicitor advocate receives a different level of the composite Legal Aid fee to a solicitor; and if so, (i) whether this is comparable with counsel fees; and (ii) to detail the figures for each.

(AQW 34473/11-15)

Mr Ford: A solicitor advocate can act as a solicitor; as a solicitor advocate with a separate solicitor instructing him/her; or as a solicitor advocate with sole carriage of the case.

The solicitor advocate does not receive any more than a solicitor when performing solicitor's duties. If a solicitor advocate exercises his right of audience in the Crown Court, (instructed by another solicitor and in place of counsel), he is entitled to an enhanced fee, equivalent to the standard fee that a sole junior counsel would be entitled to, subject to having the required three years standing. If the solicitor has less than three years standing he is entitled to fifty percent of the fee payable to sole junior counsel. Where the same solicitor prepares the case and conducts the advocacy the enhanced fee is reduced by 10%. The various fees payable to counsel in the Crown Court are set out in tables of fees in the Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Legal Aid: Fees

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the current composite Legal Aid fee for representation/attendance at preliminary investigations and/or mixed committals for (a) solicitor; and (b) counsel; (ii) whether the fee is absolute or payable on a per day basis; and (iii) in cases where counsel is assigned, whether a fee is paid to solicitor and counsel for appearing for the preliminary investigations and/or mixed committals.

(AQW 34476/11-15)

Mr Ford: The standard fees payable for committal proceedings, including preliminary enquiries, preliminary investigations and mixed committals, are as follows:

- a Solicitor - £820
- b Counsel - £800

I recently introduced an Additional Committal Preparation Fee of £410 for solicitors and £400 for counsel in cases which include more than 750 pages of prosecution evidence.

Where proceedings last more than one day an Additional Hearing Fee of £200 per day is payable.

In cases which have been certified for counsel, by virtue of the case being unusually grave or difficult, both the solicitor and counsel are entitled to their respective fee for appearing.

Prison Officers: Retirement

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Officers have retired in the last five years due to being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

(AQW 34512/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not possible to confirm how many Prison Officers have retired in the last five years due to being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Occupational Health Service (OHS) confirms if an employee meets the criteria for retirement on medical grounds. The OHS does not confirm the nature of the employee's medical condition as this information is confidential.

Legal Highs: Dangers

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had discussions with the Minister of Education on how young people in school can be warned about the dangers of legal highs.

(AQW 34526/11-15)

Mr Ford: The availability of counterfeit, sub standard and unlicensed medicines, particularly via the internet, is a global issue and regulatory bodies recognise that a multi-faceted approach is essential to ensure any illegal activity is countermanded.

Within a Northern Ireland context, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, through the Medicines Regulatory Group, is working with partner agencies including police and border authorities to act against those illegally importing or selling such medicines.

Whilst 'counterfeit' medicines are periodically detected, it is those medicines falling within the more general description of 'unauthorised' or 'unlicensed' that are more commonly encountered here and for which DHSSPS has statutory investigative responsibility under medicines legislation.

The figures available from the Medicines Regulatory Group indicate that there have been 16 convictions in relation to the illegal importation, possession or supply of unlicensed or unauthorised medicines over the last 10 years. During the same period, however, there have been interceptions of significant quantities of high value illegal medicines which have been destroyed before reaching their intended recipient in Northern Ireland.

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the talks that have taken place, or will take place, between his Department and his Executive colleagues with regard to securing the full operation of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland. (AQW 34706/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have brought the issue of the National Crime Agency to the Executive previously and there was no agreement. I plan to do so again after a further exchange with interested bodies and parties on a revised possible model within which the National Crime Agency could operate within the devolved arena.

Department for Regional Development

Car Parks: Off-street

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the current valuation of all off-street car parks. (AQW 33993/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The current valuation of all off-street car parks, as at the financial year end 31 March 2014, is some £46 million.

Residents Parking Schemes: Outside Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the residents' parking schemes that are planned for outside Belfast. (AQW 33998/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Legislation governing all Residents' Parking Schemes is currently being finalised with the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO). As you will appreciate it is extremely important that my Department drafts the first residents' parking legislation correctly, as it will provide a template for all future schemes. The legislation needs to cover the intricacies of each proposed Residents' Parking Scheme. This task has proven to be fairly complex, particularly as there are may be differences between the requirements of each specific scheme, due to local needs and circumstances.

At present, officials aim to have the draft legislation ready for the first schemes by autumn 2014, with the formal consultation stage following as soon as possible thereafter. Subsequently, scheme implementation will depend upon the outcome of the consultation process, particularly whether objections are received.

The first Residents' Parking Schemes to be formally consulted upon are in Antrim, Londonderry and within Belfast. The first two schemes to be advertised will be several streets in the Lower Malone area, that is, Malone Avenue, Eglantine Avenue, Wellington Park, Wellesley Avenue and linking streets, and in the Rugby Road/College Park Avenue area. The schemes in Antrim and Londonderry will be advertised shortly afterwards.

These initial schemes, once implemented, will have to be monitored for a period to gauge their success or otherwise. If these initial schemes prove to be successful, further consideration will be given to schemes outside Belfast.

Drainage: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the work planned to upgrade the drainage system in the Wakehurst Park area of Ballymena to prevent serious flooding such as that on 8 June 2014; (ii) the investigations that are now ongoing following the flooding incident; and (iii) the work that has been completed on the drainage system in this area in the last five years. (AQW 34008/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Wakehurst area of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in the area.

In light of the recent flooding, NI Water will be carrying out a detailed inspection of the sewer network to ensure there are no issues that it is currently unaware of, that could affect the operational effectiveness of the sewers. This work will be completed in the next two weeks. Transport NI has also checked the road drainage system in Wakehurst Park and found it to be clear of any blockages.

Work on the drainage systems in this area during the last five years has been limited to routine maintenance operations.

I have also requested that the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, urgently examines what can be done to help reduce the risk of flooding in the area.

Drainage: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development what work has been completed on the drainage system in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas of Ballymena to prevent serious flooding from occurring, such as that in 2008; and to detail why the system failed on 8 June 2014 and the investigations that will take place following the failure.

(AQW 34011/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Queen Street and Toome Road areas of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in the area.

As part of the Drainage Area plans for this area NI Water has identified a number of structural sewer defects in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas. A scheme to rectify these issues including relining some sections of the sewer and replacement of a number of manholes to prevent ingress of water from a local watercourse into the sewer, was scheduled to commence in August 2014. However, I have asked NI Water to bring this scheme forward and it will now commence before the end of June 2014 with completion due during September 2014.

In light of the recent flooding, Transport NI has checked the road gullies and transfer pipes in these gullies and these were found to be working properly. In addition, NI Water will be carrying out a detailed inspection of the sewer network to ensure that there are no other, previously unidentified issues that could affect the operational effectiveness of the sewers. This work will be completed within the next two weeks.

Work on the drainage systems in this area has been limited to routine maintenance operations.

I am advised that the planned repairs may not significantly impact on the capacity of the sewer network and I have therefore asked the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, to urgently examine what can be done to help reduce the flood risk in this area.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of Freedom of Information requests he has received in each of the last three financial years; and of these, how many have been considered under Regulation 12 of the Environmental Information Regulations, rather than the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(AQW 34067/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the last three financial years, my Department has received a total of 990 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). Of these, 224 were processed under the EIR. Following consideration of the public interest in each case, information was withheld under Regulation 12 exceptions on 27 occasions.

The table below summarises the position.

Financial Year	Number of Requests	EIR	Reg. 12 Exceptions
2011-2012	358	22	9
2012-2013	325	89	12
2013-2014	307	113	6

It should be noted that it is possible for more than one exception under Regulation 12 to be engaged for a single request.

Information regarding requests made under FOI and EIR to NICS Departments is collated and published in a series of FOI Annual Reports on a calendar year basis. The last three published reports (2010, 2011 and 2012) 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 2013 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be regarded as validated until the publication of the 2013 FOI Annual Report.

Drainage: Ballymena

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what age is the below ground drainage infrastructure serving the Toome Road; Queen Street; and Wakehurst areas of Ballymena.

(AQW 34075/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The NI Water sewer networks in the Queen Street, Toome Road and Wakehurst areas of Ballymena were laid by previous providers of water and sewerage services and some of the records that transferred to NI Water are incomplete.

The main combined sewer in Toome Road was laid in the early 1950's. Two smaller sewers in Toome Road are believed to have been laid prior to 1950 but NI Water cannot be more specific about the actual installation date. Similarly, it is believed that the combined sewer in Queen Street was laid prior to 1950. The main combined sewer in Wakehurst Road was laid in 1961.

Transport NI has advised that no records are available in relation to the exact age of the road drainage systems in these areas of Ballymena, which were inherited from Antrim County Council in the early 1970's.

Drainage: Ballymena

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development why the below ground drainage infrastructure serving the Toome Road; Queen Street; and Wakehurst areas of Ballymena cannot cope during heavy rainfall.

(AQW 34076/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Toome Road, Queen Street and Wakehurst areas of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in these areas.

However, in light of the recent flooding, NI Water will be carrying out a detailed inspection of the sewer network to ensure there are no issues of which it is currently unaware, that could affect the operational effectiveness of the sewers. This work will be completed within the next two weeks.

Transport NI has checked the road gullies and transfer pipes in these areas and these were found to be working properly.

I have also requested that the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, urgently examines what can be done to help reduce the flood risk in these areas.

Drainage: Ballymena

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade the below ground drainage infrastructure serving the Toome Road; Queen Street; and Wakehurst areas of Ballymena so that it can cope with heavy rainfall.

(AQW 34078/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cause of the recent flooding in the Queen Street and Toome Road areas of Ballymena is currently being investigated. At present it appears that the sheer volume of heavy rainfall in a very short period overwhelmed the capacity of the drainage infrastructure in the area.

In light of the recent flooding, Transport NI has checked the road gullies and transfer pipes in these gullies and these were found to be working properly. In addition, NI Water will be carrying out a detailed inspection of the sewer network to ensure that there are no other, previously unidentified issues that could affect the operational effectiveness of the sewers. This work will be completed within the next two weeks.

As part of the Drainage Area plans for this area NI Water had already identified a number of structural sewer defects in the Toome Road and Queen Street areas. A scheme to rectify these issues including relining some sections of the sewer and replacement of a number of manholes to prevent ingress of water from a local watercourse into the sewer was scheduled to commence in August 2014. I have asked NI Water to bring this scheme forward and it will now commence before the end of June 2014, with completion due during September 2014.

I am advised that this planned work may not significantly improve the capacity of the sewer network and I have therefore asked the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, to urgently examine what can be done to help reduce the flood risk in this area.

Road Safety Measures

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed road safety measures for the A48 Newtownards Road and Cotton Road junction.

(AQW 34100/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has a proposed scheme involving the provision of two sections of footway along the A48 Newtownards Road, at the junction of Bailie Terrace and improvements to sightlines at the junction. Whilst the scheme is

included in the current Minor Improvement programme for the Ards area and scheduled to commence during the 2015/16 financial year, progression will be dependent upon the successful acquisition of land from a number of individual landowners.

Councils: Services Develoved to New Councils

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the services his Department will be devolving to the new councils.

(AQW 34102/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In order to implement one of the Executive's proposals under the Review of Public Administration (RPA), to create stronger local government in Northern Ireland, my Department will shortly be seeking views on the content of a draft Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill.

The Executive's proposal is to transfer ownership of all off-street car parks from my Department to the councils, with the exception of park and ride and park and share parking places, which would remain the responsibility of my Department.

The Bill would empower the 11 new councils, with effect from 1 April 2015, to employ traffic attendants and to operate and manage all off-street car parks. Councils would also become responsible for setting tariffs and enforcing parking contraventions in those car parks.

Responsibility for Donaghadee Harbour will also transfer to the new councils.

Footway Upgrading and Repair: Belfast North Section Office

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33865/11-15, for a breakdown of the locations of spend on footway upgrading and repair in the Belfast North Section Office area in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34156/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the footway resurfacing and reconstructions schemes completed by my Department in the last five years in the Belfast North Section Office area are provided in the following tables. In addition, my Department has completed over 147,000 repairs to footways in the Belfast North Section Office area during the same period, however, it would not be practicable to list every location at which works have been undertaken.

2009 to 2010

Carlisle Walk	Carlisle Terrace
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2010 to 2011

Dhu Varren Parade	Dhu Varren Crescent	Dhu Varren Park
Westway Grove	Wolfhill Avenue South	Wolfhill Drive
Whitewell Crescent	Springmartin Road	Carlisle Road
Carlisle Terrace	Carlisle Square	Floral Road
Dunbar Street	Hesketh Road	Wolfend Drive
Crumlin Road		

2011 to 2012

Whitewell Crescent	Dhu Varren Crescent	Springmartin Road
Glenside Drive	Glenside Parade	Dunlambert Park
Dunlambert Avenue	Dunlambert Gardens	Alexander Park Avenue
Inver Avenue	Rockmore Road	Lyndhurst Park
Cavehill Road	Dayton Street	Townsend Street
Lynhurst Parade	Castle Avenue	Dunbar Street
Crumlin Road	Pinkerton Walk	

2012 to 2013

Joanmount Park	Preswick Park	Coombehill Park
Westland Estate	Divis Drive	Cliftonville Avenue

2013 to 2014

Ballygomartin Road	Westland Estate	Blackmountain
Whiterock Gardens	Whiterock Parade	Brittons Drive
Whiterock Crescent	Brittons Parade	Whiterock Drive
Shore Road (Fortwilliam Park to Skegoneil Avenue)	Shore Road (Mount Vernon to Donegall Park Avenue)	Shore Road (No 824 to No 924)
Benmadigan Park		

Flooding: Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Flood Investment and Planning Group will coordinate an investigation into the recent flooding incident in Wakehurst Park in Ballymena.

(AQW 34159/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that the interdepartmental Flood Investment Planning Group, led by my Department, will coordinate an investigation into the recent flooding in Wakehurst Park, Ballymena to examine what can be done to reduce the risk of flooding in the area.

A6 Derry to Dungiven: Dualling Scheme

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development when a response will be made to the Inspector's Report on the public inquiry into the A6 Derry to Dungiven dualling scheme.

(AQW 34172/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the public inquiry into the proposed dualling of the A6 between Londonderry and Dungiven, the Inspector has produced a report comprising a number of recommendations. I am currently considering a response to these recommendations and will issue the Departmental Statement in due course, when I am satisfied that all issues have been appropriately reviewed.

Sewerage Works: Greystown and Sicily Park

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed improvements to sewerage works in the Greystown and Sicily Park area of Belfast.

(AQW 34173/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water completed a short term scheme in this area in September 2013 when over £100,000 was invested to improve and rehabilitate existing infrastructure and assist Rivers Agency to identify additional utility services within undesignated culverts in the area.

NI Water's business case for the medium/long term solution, which involves a multi-agency project to reduce the risk of flooding in South Belfast (including Sicily Park and Greystown Avenue) is nearing completion.

It is anticipated that the Business Case will be completed by the end of July 2014 and will then be submitted to my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval.

Construction: Lower Carbon Materials

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what efforts have been made by his Department to source lower carbon materials for construction.

(AQW 34186/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Transport NI uses best practice and UK-wide standard documentation for road construction and maintenance activities, developed on a whole life performance basis, with specifications which permit the reuse of recycled materials.

A range of options exist to design and specify a process that results in reduced need for material and energy intensive construction and maintenance methods. Potential options for re-use/recycling construction materials and by-products are applied, where feasible.

Within the quarry products sector, reductions are ongoing in our carbon footprint with energy efficiency being a key priority, this includes:

- the use of cold and warm mix asphalt which requires no, or less, heating prior to use, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the manufacturing and application processes;
- Bitumen emulsions for use in spray injection patching machines and cold applied edge sealer in asphalt concrete reinstatements. These materials require less heat input compared to hot applied materials, again reducing the carbon footprint both during the manufacturing and application processes;

- the use of reclaimed aggregates and asphalt, where aggregates and hot applied asphalt concretes have recycled materials incorporated into the product mix; and
- thinner or more durable road surfaces as a way of using less material per kilometre of road.

Public Private Partnerships and Design and Build procurement have also been used to promote greener procurement methods that adopt whole life costing and life cycle analysis.

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) encourages the sourcing of lower carbon materials for construction by including Low Carbon Design as a requirement within the Design Consultants fee agreement. NIW also re-uses and recycles a significant quantity of materials on site, thereby reducing carbon generated from transportation and manufacturing processes. The sourcing of materials from renewable and sustainable locations is assessed as part of NIW's environmental reporting process. Going forward, the use of energy efficient processes and plant will be assessed as part of NIW's tender assessment when appropriate.

Currently all of Translink's construction projects over £1million in value are BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) assessed, which is an accredited environmental rating scheme for buildings. As part of this assessment, the materials used are rated using 'The Green Guide'. This data is set out as an A+ to E ranking system, where A+ represents the best environmental performance/least environmental impact, and E the worst environmental performance/most environmental impact. Translink is committed to achieving high BREEAM ratings and can confirm that all of its qualifying projects aim to score as high as possible within the 'Green Guide' in sourcing sustainable materials.

Hospitality: DRD

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013-14.

(AQW 34204/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The amount spent on hospitality by my Department and its arm's-length bodies in 2013-14 is detailed below:

Year	Department £'000	NITHC £'000	NI Water £'000	Total Cost £'000
2013 / 14	38	21*	18	77

* The figures above do not include expenses claimed by Translink executives, if claimed through payroll systems. To extract such information would involve disproportionate cost.

Sewerage and Drainage Systems: Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps will be taken to upgrade the sewerage and drainage systems in the Ballymagroarty and Foyle Springs areas of Derry.

(AQW 34269/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water is aware of the flooding issues in the Ballymagroarty and Foyle Springs area of Londonderry and the impact this has on its customers.

Investigations carried out by NI Water in this area have included CCTV surveys and flow modelling of the sewerage system in order to develop options for reducing the risk of flooding. A preferred option has been identified and a business case has been approved which represents a capital investment of £825,000.

NI Water is presently developing a detailed design for the scheme and subject to obtaining all the necessary approvals and reaching agreement with landowners, it is anticipated that construction will commence towards the end of this calendar year with a construction period of six months.

Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on plans for residents parking schemes in the Massereene Street and Clarke Court areas of Antrim.

(AQW 34280/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Legislation governing all Residents' Parking Schemes is currently being finalised with the Departmental Solicitor's Office. It is extremely important that my Department drafts the first residents' parking legislation correctly, as it will provide a template for all future schemes. The legislation needs to cover the intricacies of each proposed Residents' Parking Scheme. This task has proven to be fairly complex, particularly given the differences between the requirements of each specific scheme, due to local needs and circumstances.

At present, my officials aim to have the draft legislation ready for the first schemes by autumn 2014, with the formal consultation stage following as soon as possible thereafter. Subsequently, scheme implementation will depend upon the outcome of the consultation process, particularly whether objections are received.

The first Residents' Parking Schemes to be formally consulted upon include both Massereene Street and Clarke Court. The first two schemes to be advertised will be several streets in the Lower Malone area, that is, Malone Avenue, Eglantine

Avenue, Wellington Park, Wellesley Avenue and linking streets, and in the Rugby Road/College Park Avenue area. The schemes in Antrim at Massereene Street and Clarke Court will be advertised shortly afterwards.

Resurfacing: Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of resurfacing the road and footpaths in the Dellmount area of Bangor.

(AQW 34285/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department carried out carriageway resurfacing and footway reconstruction work to a value of £380,000 in the Dellmount area of Bangor during the 2013/14 financial year.

Resurfacing: Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what footpath resurfacing schemes are planned for the Towerview area of Bangor.

(AQW 34288/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of my Department's work programmes for 2014/15 will be published in the Transport NI Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. Once completed, the Council Reports for the 2014/15 financial year will be placed on my Department's internet site.

Road and Traffic Schemes: West Belfast

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) traffic calming; (ii) traffic management; and (iii) resurfacing work schemes due to take place in the West Belfast constituency in the current financial year.

(AQW 34291/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of my Department's work programmes for 2014/15 will be published in the Transport NI Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. Once completed, the Council Reports for the 2014/15 financial year will be placed on my Department's internet site.

Gifts or Hospitality: Civil Servants

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to civil servants in his Department receiving gifts or hospitality in 2013/14, whether there have been any declarations of gifts or hospitality in excess of £250; and if so, to detail the declarations.

(AQW 34313/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department maintains registers which detail all offers of gifts or hospitality received by staff from third parties. These registers show the actual or estimated value of each such offer and indicate, in each case, whether the offer was accepted (with management approval) or declined.

The entries in the registers show that, during the 2013/14 financial year, one declaration in excess of £250 was made in DRD. The offer was received and accepted by a member of the Senior Civil Service on a personal basis and, as registers for DRD Departmental Board Members and Senior Civil Service staff are published, details can be accessed from the DRD website at <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=9444>

No declarations in excess of £250 were made within DRD's arm's length bodies, Northern Ireland Water and Translink.

Environmental Pollution: Kinnegar Sewage Works

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development why there has been a delay in the commencement of the scheme to stop the environmental pollution at Kinnegar sewage works in Holywood.

(AQW 34353/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water is currently investing £3.5 Million in a two phased project to help resolve the sewerage pollution issue at Kinnegar Lagoons in Holywood. The first phase of the project is progressing well, however procurement issues during the tendering process have delayed the anticipated commencement on-site. The construction contract has been tendered and is expected to be awarded to a successful contractor in early July 2014, with commencement on-site soon afterwards. The work is expected to be completed by late Spring / early Summer 2015.

Traffic Light System: Dungannon

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he plans to review urgently the new traffic light system recently installed in Dungannon, given that it is causing traffic gridlock and has had a negative impact on local traders.

(AQW 34379/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You will be aware Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council is currently undertaking a public realm improvement project within Dungannon town centre. This project includes the provision of a new signalised junction at the Market Square Church Street, Scotch Street and Irish Street junction and I assume this is the new traffic light system to which you refer.

The design of this public realm scheme, including the traffic signal design, was carried out by Council appointed consultants, White Young Green, who liaised closely with my officials during development of the scheme. The site is still a "work in progress" and consequently the traffic signals do not currently have the normal vehicle detection system in place to effectively control the timings and operation of the signals. This proposed detection system cannot be provided until all resurfacing works are completed in late August 2014 and until then the signals will not operate at optimum levels.

Upon completion of the scheme, the traffic signals will operate with a modern Microprocessor Operated Vehicle Activation (MOVA) system which should ensure that traffic moves efficiently through the junction. The project is scheduled to be completed at the end of September 2014.

Glencull: Booster Pumping Station

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 32742/11-15, whether the proposed booster pumping station at Glencull Ballygawley will be completed in September 2014.

(AQW 34385/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water is currently fast tracking the scheme to provide the booster pumping station at Glencull Ballygawley. The landowner has agreed in principle to sell the required lands and construction is expected to commence on-site in August 2014 and be completed in late October 2014.

Rural Transport Agencies: Non-core Funding

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development, given that the core funding for rural transport agencies will not be cut, to detail the non-core funding element that has been cut for each of the agencies.

(AQW 34521/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Allocations to the Rural Community Transport Partnerships for 2014-15 issued on the 18 June 2014.

The level of support provided to the Rural Community Transport Partnerships has increased from £3.4M in 2013-14 to £3.6M in this financial year.

Officials are also in discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) (Active Aging Strategy) in an attempt to secure additional funding which could be used by service providers, including the rural partnerships to deliver enhanced services. However at this time no final decisions on funding have yet been made by DARD or OFMDFM. Last year DARD provided additional funding to the Rural Community Transport Partnerships of £100K to partly fund Dial-a-Lift services rather than any specific routes.

DART and the neighbouring Rural Community Transport Partnerships, which together form the Southern Area Partnership, were issued with a letter of offer on 18 June 2014 and have subsequently, requested payment, which is currently being processed.

Lough Cowey: Portaferry

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development whether departmental officials have received any expressions of interest from the public sector with regard to the sale of Lough Cowey in Portaferry.

(AQW 34559/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A total of twenty three redundant reservoirs, including Lough Cowey, are currently being trawled within the public sector by NI Water. Responses from interested parties are required to be returned to the Department of Finance and Personnel's Land and Property Services (LPS) by an extended return date of 27 June 2014, to allow for consideration by the newly elected councils. Any expressions of interest will be passed to NI Water after this date.

DoE/DRD Meeting: December 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33656/11-15, to detail the date in December 2013 that the meeting between senior management from his Department and their counterparts in the Department of the Environment took place.

(AQW 34599/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The meeting referred to, between officials from my Department and the Department of the Environment, took place on 5 December 2013.

Department for Social Development

Housing Executive: Criteria for Defining a Public Sector Body

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what criteria the Housing Executive uses to define a public sector body. (AQW 33850/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has advised that it does not have a definition of what constitutes a public body. This is defined by the Office of National Statistics by reference to the European System of Accounts 1995 in accordance with EU requirements.

Benefit Claims

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many people living in the south of Ireland are currently claiming (i) Employment Support Allowance; (ii) Job Seekers Allowance; (iii) Disability Living Allowance; and (iv) any other benefit, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 33950/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested.

In general a person moving to reside in another EEA country can take the following benefits with them if they have satisfied the conditions of entitlement: State Retirement Pension; Contributory Employment and Support Allowance; Contributory Jobseekers Allowance; Bereavement Benefits; Industrial Injuries benefits; Winter Fuel Payments; Disability Living Allowance (care component) Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance. The right to retain the benefit is tied to conditions specific to each benefit.

Employment and Support Allowance, State Retirement Pension, Bereavement Benefit and Winter Fuel Payments for claimants residing in the Republic of Ireland are maintained by the Department for Work and Pensions International Pensions Centre on behalf of the Social Security Agency. The IT systems used to administer these benefits cannot provide information on the number of people from Northern Ireland receiving benefit and now residing in the Republic of Ireland.

For the remaining benefits, the Social Security Agency administers payments to people who live outside the United Kingdom. There are currently 62 claimants living in the Republic of Ireland who are receiving Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and 25 claimants receiving Disability Living Allowance (care component). There are no recipients of any other benefits residing in Republic of Ireland.

Reform of Local Government: Transfer of Land

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to list the land that will transfer to the control of each new council under the Reform of Local Government.

(AQW 33971/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below details the land that it is currently proposed will transfer to the control of each new council under the Reform of Local Government.

Londonderry & Strabane

- Newmarket Street Londonderry BT48 6EB
- Clooney Base Limavady Road Londonderry BT47 6LR
- Clooney Playing Fields, Clooney Park East, Limavady Road, Londonderry BT47 6LB
- Lower Fountain Hill Site 69 Spencer Road Londonderry BT47 6AE
- Clondermot School Site 17 Irish Street Londonderry BT47 2DD
- Foyle Embankment Site Londonderry BT48 6QPL
- St. Augustines Site 25 Bishop Street, Londonderry BT48 6PR
- Former City Hotel Site 2 Foyle Street Londonderry BT48 6QP
- William Street Site, 22 William Street, Londonderry BT48 6EP
- 40 Spencer Road Waterside Londonderry BT47 6AA
- Galliagh Linear Park Heather Road Londonderry BT48 8GP
- Jacqueline Way, Londonderry BT49 9PQ
- Fort George 144 Strand Road Londonderry BT48 7PW
- Score Site Canal St/Dock St Strabane BT82 8EE
- Gateway Site 2 Dock Street Strabane BT82 8EE
- The Diamond, Castlederg
- Section of Riverbank, Plumbridge, Co Tyrone

Belfast

- Ravenhill Reach 1
- Ravenhill Reach 2
- Queens Quay
- Queens Quay II
- Middlepath Street / Bridgend Car Park
- Albert Bridge/Lagan Walkway (Maysfield Pathway)
- Lanyon Place
- Lanyon Place Plot 1
- Lower Ormeau
- Tomb Street
- Corporation Square
- Queens Quay - Station Street Car Park
- Station Street/Queens Quay
- Waring St Open Space
- Gordon Street/Dunbar Link Open Space
- Hanover Quay
- Little Patrick Street
- Custom House Square Open Space
- Donegall Quay - Open Space Amenity
- Northside Vesting
- 46-50 Kent Street
- Land at Millfield
- Land at Samuel Street
- Writers Square Belfast
- Blackstaff Square Belfast
- Bank Square, Belfast
- 38-42 Bank St
- Plots 2, 3 & 4 - Custom House Square
- Girdwood Army Base
- Girdwood Army Barracks
- 37 Edward Street
- 40-46 Edward Street
- Dunbar Link Plots 1-4
- Aeration Unit - Stranmillis Embankment and Stranmillis Weir
- Laganside Fishing Stands - Annadale Embankment
- Revetments
- Pottingers Quay Plot D - Short Strand Belfast BT5 4AS
- Donegall Quay - Obel Development and Basement Car Park
- Custom House Square plot 1
- 184 North Queen Street Belfast Derelict Property
- 232 Newtownards Road - Vacant Property
- 15-15aGreenland Street Belfast Vacant Site
- 102 Mayo Street - Vacant Site
- Former Nicholl Engineering Vacant Site
- 275 Albertbridge Rd Belfast - Cleared Site
- 2-6 Bellevue St &1a Sugerfield Vacant Site
- 50-58 York Rd Belfast Vacant Site
- 30-34 Oldpark Rd Belfast Vacant Site
- 277 Albertbridge Rd Belfast - Cleared Site
- Cooke St/River Terrace Belfast Vacant Site
- 8 Castlereagh Street, Belfast - Cleared Site
- 286-294 Shankill Rd - Vacant Site
- 93-107 Shankill Rd Vacant Site
- Land at 294-296 Crumlin Rd Vacant Site
- 20 Oldpark Rd Belfast - Vacant Site
- 44-50 Carrs Glen Park - Vacant Site
- 35-55 Carrs Glen Park - Vacant Site
- 28 Duncairn Gardens - Vacant Site
- 36-38 Oldpark Rd - Vacant Site
- Ballysillan Pk/Carrs Glen Pk Vacant Site
- 141 Shankill Rd - Vacant Site
- Land at 1-3 Bellevue St Belfast Vacant Site
- Land at 52-126 Ormeau Rd
- 970-976 Shore Rd Vacant Building
- 143-145 Shankill Rd - Vacant Site
- Sites A&B Springfield Rd - Vacant Site
- Sites C&D Springfield Rd - Vacant Site
- 1a Stormount Lane Belfast - Derelict Property
- 3 Stormount Lane
- 16/18 Castlereagh St - Vacant Property
- 98/98a Templemore Ave - Cleared Site
- 20/24 Castlereagh St Belfast - Vacant Property
- Bogtown Glen - Open Space
- Colin Way - Open Space
- Stewartstown Road - Open Space
- Land Adjacent to Old Colin Wood - Open Space
- Land Adjoining Dairy Farm - Open Space
- Woodvale Campus Site Vacant Site
- 284 - 296 Shankill Road - Vacant Site
- Springfield Dam - Pond/Millrace
- Pani Site Springfield Parade Vacant Site
- Paisley Park - Open space
- Land at Forthriver Valley- Woodland
- 118-120 Antrim Road - Vacant Site
- Property 128-138 Peters Hill - Cleared Site
- 308 Shankill Road , Belfast - Vacant Site
- 312 Shankill Road Belfast - Vacant Site
- 310 Shankill Road Belfast - Vacant Site
- Roe Street Belfast - Building
- 155-157 Newtownards Road - Cleared Site
- 2A Adam Street Belfast - Vacant Site
- 301-303 Donegall Road Occupied building
- Merkland Way- Vacant Site
- Land at Alliance Road / Glenbryn- Vacant Site
- 25 Rydalmere Street Belfast Vacant Site
- 10 Castlereagh Street Belfast- Cleared Site
- 2,4 & 6 Castlereagh Street - Cleared Site
- 10 York Road - Cleared Site
- 52/56 Clandeboye Street - Cleared Site
- 139/141 Albertbridge Road - Cleared Site
- 130-138 Castlereagh Street - Cleared Site
- Land at Ballysillan Park- Vacant Site

- 278-282 Shankill Road- Vacant Site
- 519 Falls Road- Cleared Site
- Armagh House, Ormeau Road - Vacant Property
- 22-28, 40 Old Park Road – Vacant Site
- 42-44 Old Park Road - Vacant Site
- 12 York Road Belfast - Cleared Site
- Land at Alliance Crescent - Vacant Site
- Land at North Howard Link - Vacant Site
- 42-48 Shankill Road Vacant Site
- 141 Shankill Rd (Land to the rear) - Vacant Site
- Beresford St, Belfast Vacant Site
- Craven St Youth Club Occupied building
- 12-14 Castlereagh St - Cleared Site
- Ainsworth Community Centre -Cleared Site
- Land at Denmark St, Belfast Vacant Site
- 183-191 Beersbridge Rd - Cleared Site
- 211-217 Beersbridge Rd - Cleared Site
- 2 Connswater St - Vacant Property
- Land at Denmark Link - Vacant Site
- St Mary's Gardens - Derelict Site
- 9-11 Welland Street - Vacant Property
- 273 Albertbridge Road - Vacant Property
- 57-63, Templemore Ave - Vacant Property
- 61-63 Donegall Pass - Cleared Site
- 14 York Road - Cleared Site
- 269 Albertbridge Road - Vacant Property
- 136-152 Beersbridge Road - Vacant Property
- Bell Steel Road Community Garden
- Laural Glen Shops - Commercial & Residential Units
- North Boundary/Denmark Street
- 279 Albertbridge Road
- Alliance Drive/Alliance Gardens
- 20-32 Ormeau Road

Causeway Coast and Glens

- Linenhall Street Ballymoney
- Car Park, Coleraine

Mid and East Antrim

- Rodgers Quay, Carrickfergus
- Upper North Street, Carrickfergus

Antrim

- Ulster Bar Corner, Antrim

Fermanagh

- Grosvenor Military Barracks
- Slaters Cross, Belleek
- Main Street, Belleek
- Car Park at Cliff Road
- Old Customs Post, Tullyhommon
- Tullyhommon - Landscaped area
- Main Street Carrickmore

Mid Ulster

- Roadway, Stewartstown
- Footpath, Main Street, Clougher
- Coalisland - Former Railway Track
- 34 Union Place, Dungannon
- 11 Market Square, Dungannon
- 5 Sites at Union Street, Dungannon
- Car Park, Cornmill

Armagh Banbridge Craigavon

- Land at Lakeview road

Newry & Mourne

- North St, Newry
- Site at Forkhill

North Down and Ards

- Vennel Car Park, Bangor
- Queens Parade, Bangor
- 17 Southwell Road, Bangor
- 16 King Street, Bangor
- 13 Southwell Road, Bangor
- 11 Southwell Road, Bangor

Please note that by the transfer date the above list may be subject to change.

Migrants: Housing

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what steps his Department has taken to ensure that new migrant arrivals are provided public and social housing equally across areas classified or regarded as unionist and nationalist. (AQW 34023/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not classify housing areas as unionist or nationalist. Access to public/social housing is via the Housing Selection scheme. An applicant makes an application to the waiting list or presents as homeless to one of the Housing Executive offices.

The Housing Executive has a statutory duty to ensure that an applicant who is a Person from Abroad is eligible for an allocation of accommodation and homelessness assistance.

When an applicant is determined to be eligible for an allocation of accommodation they are required to select two areas of choice where they would prefer to live and are registered on the waiting list. Allocations are made under the rules of the Housing Selection Scheme and each dwelling which becomes available is offered to the applicant on the list with the highest number of points for that area.

The selection of areas made is a personal decision by the applicant. Advice and support can be given to inform this decision if requested by the applicant. Foreign Nationals, Black and Minority Ethnic families and Migrant Workers make housing choices for a range of reasons which often have no bearing on the religious or political composition of the area they wish to live in. The Housing Executive facilitates this choice through the application of the Housing Selection scheme without actively directing families to specific areas. However, recent research has shown that families from Europe and beyond now live in public housing across all of the Housing Executive's districts.

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installations: Upper Bann

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties in Upper Bann have had a carbon monoxide alarm installed in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34037/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the information is not available in the format requested. The figures below detail the number of properties in Craigavon and Banbridge which have had a carbon monoxide alarm installed within the last three years.

Year	Number of alarms installed
2011/12	1,651
2012/13	103
2013/14	148

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.

Common Landlord Areas

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development to list the Common Landlord Areas in each Housing Need Assessment Area in East Antrim.

(AQW 34045/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has provided, in the table below, a list of the Common Landlord Areas in East Antrim, broken down by Housing Need Assessment Area.

NIHE District Office	Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
Carrickfergus	Carrick Central	Carrick Central
		Davy's Street
		Greenedge/Scotch Quarter/McKeens Avenue
		Windmill Hill
	Carrick North	Castlemara
		Dunloskin Central
		Glenfield
		Upper Woodburn
	Eden	Eden
	Greenisland	Greenisland
Lower Woodburn	Lower Woodburn	

NIHE District Office	Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
	Sunnylands	Drumhoy/Salia/Ederny
		Sunnylands
	Victoria	Taylor's Avenue
		Victoria
Whitehead	Whitehead	
Larne	Linn Road	Craighill/Antiville
	Ferris Park	Ferris Park
	Sallagh Park	Sallagh Park
	Riverdale	Riverdale
	Larne Town	Larne Town
	Old Glenarm Road/ Seacourt	Old Glenarm Road/Seacourt
	Millbrook	Millbrook
	Glynn	Glynn
	Ballymacarry	Ballymacarry
	Glenarm	Glenarm
	Carnlough	Carnlough
	Glenoe/Mounthill	Glenoe/Mounthill
	Islandmagee	Islandmagee
	Magheramourne	Magheramourne
Newtownabbey 1	Whiteabbey	Abbeyglan
		Glenville
	Bleachgreen	Bleachgreen
Newtownabbey 2	Monkstown	Monkstown
Ballycastle	Cushendun	Cushendun
	Cushendall	Cushendall
	Waterfoot	Waterfoot

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Appeals Service: Staffing

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has examined the possibility that temporary on-going transfers within the Civil Service could be used to ensure that Appeal Services offices are operating with the necessary number of staff.

(AQW 34055/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As of 16 June 2014 there were no outstanding vacancies within The Appeals Service. Where vacancies do arise within my Department they are filled in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Service vacancy management policy, which includes the potential for permanent and temporary transfers of staff.

Appeals Service: Staffing

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of staff employed in each appeals service office; and the number of cases that each office has handled over the last 12 months.

(AQW 34056/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Appeals Service has offices in Belfast and Omagh. There are 96 staff employed in the Belfast office and there are 49 staff employed in the Omagh office. The number of appeals handled by each office is detailed in the table below.

Appeals Service Office	01/06/2013 – 31/05/2014
Belfast Office	12,953
Omagh Office	8,260
Total	21,213

Work Capability Assessments

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, given that the definition of persons placed in the Employment Support Allowance Support Group is sufficiently impaired to prevent them making any steps towards moving into work, why they are required to complete further Work Capability Assessment forms, particularly in cases of severe impairment where there remains no improvement in condition or any prospect of an improvement.

(AQW 34074/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) is a functional assessment, and is based on the premise that eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance should not be determined by the description of a person's disability or health condition, but rather by how their ability to function is affected.

All claimants of Employment and Support Allowance, including those in the Support Group, are subject to reassessment of their work capability in order to ensure that they are receiving the correct amount of benefit and support, as it is accepted that over time medical conditions can improve or decline with treatment. Under the reassessment policy, all claimants, irrespective of their impairment, are asked to complete the medical questionnaire ESA 50 to give details of their medical condition. The Healthcare Professional will then consider the information

and evidence provided by claimants to determine whether they can be assessed based solely on this information, whether further evidence from their doctor is needed, or whether there is a need to arrange a face-to-face medical assessment.

Based on the outcome of the WCA reassessment, claimants may be continue to be placed in the Support Group, or may be removed from that group and placed in the Work Related Activity Group. The assessment will also include the consideration a new reassessment date that can range from three months to three years, depending on the medical condition

In his 'Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment – year 4' Dr Paul Litchfield has recommended that consideration is given to a new reassessment period extending to five years in the Support Group for people who have very severe incapacity resulting from brain disorders that are degenerative or which will not realistically improve. The Department is carrying out a policy impact assessment to determine if there are any policy or legalisation implications before moving forward with this recommendation.

Employment Support Allowance: Appeals

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Employment Support Allowance appeals have taken place in the last two years.

(AQW 34104/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below details the number of Employment Support Allowance appeals that have taken place in the last two financial years, which reached a final outcome.

Year	Final Outcome Reached
2012/13	8,559
2013/14	12,193

Social Housing: Allocation

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average waiting time for allocation of social housing in (i) North Down; and (ii) Ards, in each of the last three years; and how this compares to the Northern Ireland average.

(AQW 34130/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table attached details the average waiting times for the allocation of social housing in the Housing Executive's North Down and Newtownards local offices and for Northern Ireland as a whole over the last two years. The Housing Executive has advised that the information is not available for 2011/12 as they were implementing a new Housing Management system during that year.

NIHE Office	Allocations to 31/03/13	Mean average months	Median average months	Allocations to 31/03/14	Mean average months	Median average months
North Down	257	19.65	10.00	314	20.27	10.00
Newtownards	495	19.38	11.00	360	16.72	8.00
N. Ireland	8,134	18.79	11.00	8,809	19.79	12.00

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Atos Healthcare

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of medical examinations currently carried out by Atos Healthcare for one benefit impacting on another benefit; and whether the unit administering Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance share such information.

(AQW 34183/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Social Security Agency makes benefit award decisions. Atos Healthcare has been providing medical advice to support the Social Security Agency to make benefit award decisions since June 2011 on the following benefits:

- Attendance Allowance;
- Child Maintenance and Enforcement referrals;
- Compensation Recovery referrals;
- Disability Living Allowance;
- Employment and Support Allowance;
- HMRC – Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Tax Credits;
- Industrial Injuries Benefits;
- Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Overseas cases where reciprocal agreements in place.

The Agency's decision makers take into account all available evidence, which includes medical advice provided by Atos Healthcare and information provided by the claimant when making the benefit award decision. Although Employment and Support Allowance Centre and Disability and Carers Service do not currently share such medical information, there are no legislative barriers to prevent information sharing and claimants are able to submit the same medical information in support of a claim for both benefits.

Employment Support Allowance: Withdrawals

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people who have had Employment Support Allowance withdrawn following a work capability assessment by Atos Healthcare, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34190/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The following table details the number of people who failed to meet threshold at a Work Capability Assessment in each financial year from June 2011 to February 2014. The figures provided are those Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have undergone a Work Capability Assessment as part of the re-referral process which is provided for under the legislation.

Year	Fail WCA
June 2011 - March 2012	2730
April 2012 - March 2013	4090
April 2013 - February 2014	3270

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.

Affordable Homes

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, of the 2,000 new homes proposed for the 2014-15 financial year, how many will be affordable homes.

(AQW 34191/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The 2,000 new homes proposed for the year 2014/15 are all social homes.

In addition to these social homes, 500 affordable homes are planned to be delivered in 2014/15.

Glen 10 Development Group

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the members of the Glen 10 Development Group, including who they represent.

(AQW 34192/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Glen Road Development Framework (GRDF), which was commissioned by my Department, recommended the establishment of a Delivery Executive to formulate an agreed workplan that leads to the development potential of the Glen Road area being realised. Full membership of the Delivery Executive has not yet been established. However, officials from my Department and Belfast City Council (BCC) have brought together a number of stakeholders to advise on the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the final membership of the Delivery Executive – a list of the stakeholders is below. At a meeting last month, it was agreed that officials from my Department and BCC should engage Planning Service with regard to adopting the GRDF as a statutory document before making any further decisions on the ToR or membership. It is envisaged that local landowners, Members of the Local Assembly and other stakeholders will be considered to join the Delivery Executive.

Membership

Mary McCartan	Belfast Regeneration Office (Co-Chair)
Cathy Reynolds	Belfast City Council (Co-Chair)
Geoff Beattie	Belfast Regeneration Office
Beverley Bigger	DSD Housing Division
Seamus Anderson	Invest NI
Sam Kendal	DOE Planning Service
Stephen Creagh	Department of Education
Philip Robinson	DRD Roads Service
Bill Pauley	DHSSPS
Karen Brookes	BHSC
Jim Carlin	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Alistair Pyper	DETI
Geraldine McAteer	West Belfast Partnership Board
Gerry Lundy	CCMS
Paul Maskey MP	West Belfast MP
Cllr Tim Attwood	Upper Falls
Cllr Arder Carson	Upper Falls
Cllr Caomhin MacGiolla Mhin	Upper Falls

Affordable Housing: Definition

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's definition of affordable housing as contained in the consultation on developer contributions.

(AQW 34193/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Affordable housing, as contained in the Developer Contributions consultation, is defined as both social rented housing and intermediate housing for eligible households. This definition is set out at Section 2 of the consultation document.

Social Rented Housing is housing provided at an affordable rent by the NIHE or Housing Association which is registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development as a social housing provider. Social rented accommodation should be available to households in housing need and is offered in accordance with the Common Selection Scheme, administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which prioritises households who are living in unsuitable or insecure accommodation.

Intermediate Housing consists of shared ownership housing provided through a Housing Association (e.g. the Co Ownership Housing Association) and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but that are not able to afford to buy a property outright. The property is split between part ownership by the householder and part affordable renting from the Housing Association. The proportion of property ownership and renting can vary depending on householder circumstances and preferences. It will also incorporate other forms of housing products to ensure houses are retained for affordability in the long-term and below open market rates.

Jobseeker's Allowance: Breaching Regulations

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development how many people on Jobseeker's Allowance have been reported as breaching regulations by officials from the Department of Employment and Learning.

(AQW 34194/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not available. Staff from both the Department for Employment and Learning and the Social Security Agency can refer Jobseekers Allowance claimants to a Decision Maker where a doubt has arisen concerning their entitlement to benefit. The IT systems used to record these referrals cannot distinguish between referrals made by Department for Employment and Learning and Social Security Agency staff.

Charity Commission

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development whether the criteria used by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in deciding to carry out a statutory inquiry has been the subject of any audit or review; and if so, whether he will publish the findings.

(AQW 34195/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The process used to decide on the opening of a statutory inquiry, including the criteria, has been subject to review by the Department for Social Development's Internal Audit, who found the process was satisfactory. The Department for Social Development does not publish Internal Audit reports.

It should also be noted that charities have the right to appeal the decision to open a statutory inquiry to the Charity Tribunal, which includes a review of the decision.

Charity Commission: Investigations

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development when the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland will update its website to set out how it carries out a risk-based approach to investigations, as has been done in England and Wales.

(AQW 34196/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is currently developing a new, updated, version of its website, expected to be launched later this year. As part of this update, the Commission will consider the content.

Charity Commission

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the costs incurred by charities in responding to investigations from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and how some funding generated by grants and money raised by donations is now being diverted from providing frontline services to engaging with these investigations .

(AQW 34197/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have not made an assessment of the costs incurred by charities in responding to investigations from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. It would certainly not be appropriate for grant funding to be diverted from its intended purposes and used for the handling of an inquiry by the Commission. That should be a matter of concern to the relevant funding body. Statutory inquiries are not entered into lightly and can be necessary to protect the charity or its assets, for example where there is evidence of misconduct and mismanagement by trustees.

Hospitality: DSD

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his department and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 34205/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below provides a breakdown of my Department's and its arm-length bodies' spend for the total cost of hospitality in 2013-2014.

Year	Department spend	Arm's-length bodies' spend
2013-2014	£37,066	Charities Commission for Northern Ireland £3,150 Northern Ireland Housing Executive £4,168
Total	£37,066	£7,318

Housing Stress: Ballymena Area

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of (i) people considered to be in housing stress in the Ballymena area; (ii) social housing development proposals which have planning permission, funding and support of a housing association which are under consideration by the Housing Executive in the Ballymena area; and (iii) social housing units under consideration within such proposals.

(AQW 34214/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) At March 2014, there were 880 applicants in housing stress in Ballymena Borough.
- (ii) The table below shows the schemes currently programmed for delivery in the Ballymena area in the 2014/15 to 2016/17 Social Housing Development Programme.

Year	Association	Scheme	Units	Scheme Type	Need Group
2014/15	Ark	Templemoyle, Kells	6	NB	General Needs
2014/15	Oaklee	18 Waveney Road Ballymena	14	NB	General Needs
2014/15	Triangle	Mill House Re-provision Ballymena	21	NB	Homeless
2014/15	Trinity	St Mary's Primary School, Larne Rd, Ballymena	74	NB	General Needs/ Category 1 Elderly
2014/15	Trinity	Market Road, Ballymena	27	NB	General Needs
2015/16	Clanmil	125-127 Larne Road, Ballymena	32	NB	General Needs
2015/16	Fold	Cushendall Road, Ballymena	60	NB	General Needs
2016/17	Fold	Phoenix Fields, Railway Street, Ballymena	22	NB	General Needs

At this stage none of these schemes have secured planning approval. In order to obtain Housing Association Grant (HAG), Associations are required to submit applications for project approval (effectively application for HAG funding) to the Housing Executive's Development Programme Group (DPG). Applications have not yet been submitted to DPG.

- (iii) There are a total of 256 new social housing units proposed for the eight planned schemes.

While the schemes listed above will contribute to meeting housing need, there remains an unmet housing need across the Borough. These locations are listed in the unmet housing need prospectus (see link below) and housing associations are encouraged to find sites in these locations.

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/unmet_social_housing_need_prospectus.pdf

Housing Stress: Ballymoney Area

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of (i) people considered to be in housing stress in the Ballymoney area; (ii) social housing development proposals which have planning permission, funding and support of a housing association which are under consideration by the Housing Executive in the Ballymoney area; and (iii) social housing units under consideration within such proposals.

(AQW 34215/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) At March 2014, there were 192 applicants in housing stress in Ballymoney Borough.
- (ii) Detailed below are the schemes programmed for delivery through the Social Housing Development Programme (2014-17) for the Ballymoney area.

Year	Association	Scheme	Units	Scheme Type	Need Group
2014/15	Ark	Balnamore, Ballymoney	3	NB	General Needs
2014/15	Triangle	2A Garryduff Road, Ballymoney	9	RI	Learning Disabilities

Housing Associations are currently drawing up their planning applications for submission for these schemes. In order to obtain Housing Association Grant (HAG), Associations are required to submit applications for project approval (effectively application for HAG funding) to the Housing Executive's Development Programme Group (DPG). Applications have not yet been submitted to DPG.

(iii) A total of 12 new social housing units are proposed for delivery through the two planned schemes.

Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total paid in redecoration grants as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows in housing association properties, broken down by housing association.
(AQW 34229/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Of the current 24 registered Housing Associations only Apex has advised that it paid out £2,201.79 in redecoration grants as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows.

Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total number of homes that have received a redecoration grant as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows in housing association properties.
(AQW 34231/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Of the current 24 registered Housing Associations only Apex has advised that six of its properties received a redecoration grant as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows.

Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total number of ineligible applicants for a redecoration grant as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows in housing association properties.
(AQW 34232/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Of the current 24 registered Housing Associations only Apex advised that one applicant was ineligible for a redecoration grant as a result of the installation of double-glazed windows.

Housing Executive: Double-glazed Windows

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development what steps he has taken over the last 3 years to ensure that all Housing Executive properties have double-glazed windows; and when this will be achieved.
(AQW 34233/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In line with the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government commitment to improve the thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock and ensure full double glazing in its properties, the Housing Executive has developed and implemented a programme to upgrade any of its properties which have single or partial double glazing to full double glazing.

In 2012/13 there were 8,856 dwellings started but none in 2013/14 as the Housing Executive was in the process of appointing contractors to deliver the programme. The contractors have now been appointed and the remaining programme, which is estimated to be 7,809 properties, is underway.

The Housing Executive has advised that the remaining programme is due to be completed by the end of March 2015 in line with the Programme for Government commitment.

Medical Assessments

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are awaiting a medical assessment for (i) Employment Support Allowance; and (ii) Disability Living Allowance, as a result of the current backlog.
(AQW 34238/11-15)

Mr McCausland: At close of business on Friday 13 June 14, the numbers of claimants currently awaiting a medical assessment is:

- (i) Employment and Support Allowance - 5384; and
- (ii) Disability Living Allowance - 736.

This includes claimants waiting for an appointment to be scheduled.

The Agency would normally expect to have a normal backlog within both the Employment and Support Allowance or Disability Living Allowance process of around three weeks. The current figures within Employment and Support Allowance equates to a six week backlog of work. Whilst the increased backlog in Employment and Support Allowance does not adversely impact on claimants as

they are continuing to receive their benefit payment; the Agency is working closely with our medical service provider to address the increased backlog.

Victims and Survivors: Gateway Process

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development what steps his Department has taken to ensure that any money received by victims and survivors through the gateway process will not impact upon their benefit entitlement.

(AQW 34240/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has been liaising closely with officials in OFMDFM as proposals for payments by the Victims and Survivors Service are further developed. Payments under Financial Assistance (Scheme 6) are being disregarded in full for benefit purposes in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development how many of the Programme for Government 2011-15 target of 8,000 social and affordable homes have been built.

(AQW 34254/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Programme for Government 2011-15 committed to delivering 8,000 new social and affordable housing starts. This was broken down into 6,000 new social starts and 2,000 new affordable starts.

In 2011/12, the target was to deliver 1,900 new homes (1,400 social and 500 affordable). A total of 2,053 were delivered (1,410 social and 643 affordable).

In 2012/13, the target was to deliver 1,825 new homes (1,325 social and 500 affordable). A total of 2,336 were delivered (1,379 social and 957 affordable).

In 2013/14, the target was to deliver 1,775 new homes (1,275 social and 500 affordable). A total of 2,522 were delivered (1,299 social and 1,223 affordable).

In 2014/15, the target is to deliver 2,500 new homes (2,000 social and 500 affordable). Housing Associations are working towards delivery of this target by 31st March 2015.

Atos Healthcare

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have had their incapacity benefit withdrawn after a work capability assessment by Atos Healthcare, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34258/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The benefit assessment process involves an Atos Healthcare Professional making a recommendation on a claimant's fitness for work and, on receipt of this information, a social security decision-maker will then consider the opinion of the healthcare professional, along with all available evidence, to make a decision on whether the claimant has limited capability for work or for work related activity and is eligible for benefit.

The table below details the number of people who had their incapacity benefit disallowed on reassessment following a work capability assessment.

Year	Assessed as Fit for Work
1 June 2011 - March 2012	4990
April 2012 - March 2013	9600
April 2013 - March 2014	3950

Statistical information is only available from June 2011, the start of the contract with Atos Healthcare.

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Reid and Wright Printers: Former Site

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development what steps his Department has taken to secure the former site of Reid and Wright Printers adjacent to Clifton Street Orange Hall in Belfast to prevent the site from becoming a focus for disturbances.

(AQW 34260/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department does not own the site in question and therefore cannot take steps to fence it off. A derelict building, which previously was a source of urban blight on the site, was demolished as part of a wider environmental improvement scheme funded by my Department and carried out by Belfast City Council ahead of the Giro d'Italia cycle race in May 2014.

Social Housing: Hollywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what social housing areas of Hollywood have yet to have double glazing installed.

(AQW 34283/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that there are currently 178 dwellings in Hollywood which require double glazing. They are all included in the same scheme which is scheduled to commence in September 2014. A breakdown by area is as follows:-

- Loughview 54 dwellings
- Redburn 43 dwellings
- Spencer Street 60 dwellings
- Strand/Kinnegar 8 dwellings
- Woodlands 13 dwellings

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Victims and Survivors: Housing

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has considered introducing a points award for victims and survivors as part of the housing selection scheme.

(AQW 34368/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The housing selection scheme awards points to eligible applicants in respect of their current needs. The scheme is under review and any proposed changes will be subject to consultation.

Urban Development Grants

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many project applications, that were submitted by the 1 August 2013, were awarded an urban development grant; and to detail the value of each grant.

(AQW 34375/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There were 10 applications for Urban Development Grants submitted between 1 April 2013 and 1 August 2013. To date 6 have been awarded grants. The value of each grant was; £44,041, £45,000, £103,313, £130,400, £136,728 and £188,550.

Urban Development Grants

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development when all the urban development grants for 2013-14 were allocated.

(AQW 34377/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There were 38 urban development grants awarded in 2013-14. All of these were made between 16 April 2013 and 13 March 2014.

Urban Development Grants

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development when the responsibility for the urban development grant scheme passed to local councils.

(AQW 34380/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Local councils do not have responsibility for the urban development grant scheme. The scheme is currently administered by the Department for Social Development.

From April 1 2015 powers currently available to DSD will be extended to Councils to assist them, where necessary, in addressing issues related to social need and to take forward regeneration within their areas. The decision to operate an Urban Development Grant scheme will be for the new Councils to make.

Urban Development Grants

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development when funding under the urban development grant scheme can be administered and allocated by local councils.

(AQW 34381/11-15)

Mr McCausland: From 1 April 2015 the relevant budgets and powers currently available to DSD will be extended to Councils to assist them, where necessary, in addressing issues related to social need and to take forward regeneration within their areas. From this date a new Council could choose to administer an Urban Development Grants scheme in their area.

Affordable Warmth Scheme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 32641/11-15, for an update on the work of the Project Group overseeing the pilot affordable warmth scheme in relation to its liaison with local councils.

(AQW 34390/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The affordable warmth scheme project group was established to monitor the progress of the affordable warmth pilot and to plan for the delivery of the targeted area based approach to tackling fuel poverty across all council areas. Representatives from all 26 councils have been meeting regularly to plan the implementation of the affordable warmth scheme. The Department proposes to work in partnership with local councils and the Housing Executive to target households most at risk of fuel poverty, it is anticipated that this new affordable warmth scheme will commence across all councils from 1 September 2014.

The existing warm homes scheme contract has been extended to 31 March 2015. This will allow councils more time for the planning and implementation of the new affordable warmth scheme.

Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Warm Homes Scheme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to outline the difference between the affordable warmth scheme and the warm homes scheme which ended on 18 June 2014; (ii) when the affordable warmth scheme will come into operation; and (iii) what is the criteria and process for accessing the scheme.

(AQW 34420/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The warm homes scheme is a self-referral scheme aimed at owner occupiers and people who rent their home from a private landlord. Two scheme managers, Bryson Energy and H&A Mechanical Services, deliver the warm homes scheme on behalf of the Department. To qualify for the warm homes scheme, the applicant must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit. If the application is successful, a warm homes scheme manager will arrange for the property to be surveyed and appropriate energy efficiency improvements to be installed. The warm homes scheme was due to end on 18 June 2014 but has now been extended until 31 March 2015. This will allow a gradual ramp up of the affordable warmth scheme which is expected to commence on 1 September 2014.

Under the new affordable warmth scheme my Department will provide each council with the addresses of those privately owned and privately rented homes which are considered to be most at risk of fuel poverty. Councils will target these properties to complete a short survey regarding the tenure of the property and the householder's income. This information will then be passed to the Housing Executive to complete a technical survey. Once energy measures are approved, householders can arrange for an installer of their choice to install the measures. Once council Building Control inspect and approve the completed works the Housing Executive will arrange for payment to be made direct to the installer. Qualification for the affordable warmth scheme will be based on householder income as opposed to a qualifying benefit; it will also include additional energy efficiency measures.

Whilst identified households in severe/extreme fuel poverty will be the primary target for the affordable warmth scheme, other eligible households will still be able to access the scheme via a number of routes including referral from a health care professional such as a GP, Community nurse, Social Worker, Citizens Advice Bureau or Environmental Health Officer.

Queen's Parade, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the progress of the Queen's Parade development in Bangor.

(AQW 34452/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is taking the lead to progress proposals for the comprehensive development of the Queen's Parade. Over recent months good progress has been made and the Department has agreed the purchase on a number of properties required to complete the proposed site boundary and negotiations to acquire the remaining property are ongoing with owners. In March DSD appointed Turley Associates to work with officials to develop a planning application and attain planning permission for the Queen's Parade scheme by March 2015.

A series of engagement events to seek the views of the public, local businesses and Council on what they would like to see developed on this prominent site have been undertaken. It is these views that have informed a number of proposed options for the site which are being presented to the public for their consideration from 16 June 2014 to 30 June 2014.

Hollywood: Public Realm Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding will be going into the Hollywood public realms scheme.

(AQW 34453/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is investing £1.4 million and Council is investing £1 million in the Hollywood public realm scheme. On-site construction works recently commenced and the works will address all aspects of street design including paving, kerbstones, street furniture, lighting and planting.

Double Glazing: New Schemes

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33385/11-15, to detail the current stage of the two indicative schemes for consideration for new double glazing.

(AQW 34483/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that both retro-fit schemes are included in the 2015/16 programme. The schemes at Garvaghy/Rurals, for 89 dwellings and Clounagh/Ulsterville for 256 dwellings are due to be briefed in December 2014 with an onsite date of June 2015.

Housing: Monkstown

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the current housing need in Monkstown.

(AQO 6445/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am pleased that Monkstown has undergone substantial transition in recent years; from in the 1980s being an estate which was difficult to let, to an estate in which people now wish to live.

In March 2014 there were 119 applications for social housing whose first preference was Monkstown, of which 72 were deemed to be in housing stress.

In the 12 months to March 2014, there were 55 social housing allocations. In addition, two schemes were completed by Connswater Housing Association in Monkstown Gardens (May 2012) and Ards Drive (April 2013) delivering a total of 18 units.

The combination of increased allocations and recent new build has met the social housing need in this area.

Although there are no new schemes planned for Monkstown over the next three year period the Housing Executive will continue to monitor the waiting list for the area, and if need begins to emerge, suitable schemes will be added to the social housing development programme.

Alcohol: Minimum Pricing

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on proposals for minimum pricing schemes for alcohol.

(AQO 6446/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is responsible for the law regulating the sale and supply of alcohol in Northern Ireland. The Department of Health takes the lead in addressing alcohol misuse and trying to reduce overall consumption levels.

I have been working closely with Health Minister Poots on considering the need for introducing minimum unit pricing of alcohol in Northern Ireland.

Following the outcome of a joint consultation in 2011 between my Department and the Health Department, research has been commissioned in collaboration with the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland to model the likely impact of introducing a minimum unit price of alcohol in each jurisdiction.

I understand that this research, which will be used to help inform any policy decision in this area, is nearing completion and will be presented to Minister Poots and me for our consideration over the summer months.

Early indications show that introducing a minimum unit price of, for example, 50p would result in a significant impact on public health in Northern Ireland. I await with interest the findings to be presented in the final report.

My officials also continue to monitor the developments in other jurisdictions, including Scotland, where I understand the introduction of minimum unit pricing is currently subject to legal challenge.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

MLAs: Office Accommodation

Mr Hussey asked the Assembly Commission what steps have been taken, under welfare at work provisions, to provide suitable office accommodation for Members with physical disabilities.

(AQW 34123/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): At the beginning of each new mandate the Director of Facilities allocates a block of accommodation in Parliament Buildings to each political party for use by Members and party support staff. Allocation of the individual offices within the block is managed by the party.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations state that employers must provide 'suitable and sufficient' welfare facilities for the well-being of their employees while at work including toilets, washing and changing facilities and somewhere clean to eat and drink during breaks. These are all well catered for in Parliament Buildings.

The regulations also cover ventilation, temperature, lighting, cleaning, room dimensions and workplace furniture and fittings.

Building Services Branch deals with requests relating to office accommodation on a daily basis and staff are on call to discuss in confidence any issues a building user may have with their office.

Any Member who has a physical disability that may require any special provision or alterations to their allocated accommodation should speak in confidence with the Director of Facilities in the first instance.

It is also important that anyone with a physical disability working in an office in Parliament Buildings completes a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan so that an evacuation plan can be put in place.

Please let me know if you require anything further, I would be happy to meet with you to consider any specific concerns that you may have.

MLAs with a Disability

Mr Hussey asked the Assembly Commission what reasonable adjustments have been made in relation to Members with a disability who have to attend the Assembly Chamber in a specified timeframe, when the only suitable travel arrangements are lifts. **(AQW 34124/11-15)**

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Director of Facilities allocates a block of accommodation in Parliament Buildings to each political party for use by Members and party support staff. Allocation of the individual offices within the block is managed by the party.

Members' offices are located on the second and third floors of Parliament Buildings and access to the Assembly Chamber on the Ground Floor is available via passenger lifts located at the west side (2 lifts), east side (2 lifts), north and south of the building.

Any Member who has a disability that may require any special provision relating to accommodation or building services should speak in confidence with the Director of Facilities in the first instance.

Please let me know if you require anything further, I would be happy to arrange a meeting with you to consider your concerns.

Parliament Buildings: Official Invitations

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission whether Her Majesty The Queen was invited to visit Parliament Buildings during her upcoming visit to Northern Ireland. **(AQW 34494/11-15)**

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Official invitations to visit Parliament Buildings are issued by the Speaker in his representative role, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly. By convention and protocol the Speaker does not comment on the issuing of invitations or the status thereof. The member will be aware that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited the grounds of Parliament Buildings during her last visit to Northern Ireland, as part of the Diamond Jubilee.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 4 July 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mrs Dobson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether model aircraft enthusiasts will regain permission to use the Maze/Long Kesh site in Lisburn.

(AQW 30992/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): There is no current agreement on Maze/Long Kesh. We continue to discuss a way forward.

Shared Future Strategy

Mr I McCrea asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how events such as the Giro d'Italia contribute to their shared future strategy.

(AQO 6135/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Together: Building a United Community Strategy outlines a vision of a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

We recognise that sport is a powerful tool in bringing people together and the Strategy commits to supporting initiatives that use sport to build good relations. We know and have seen at first hand that sport can play a central role in breaking down divisions in society and can provide a mechanism to encourage sharing, learning and friendship, especially among young people.

For our people and neighbourhoods to begin to see the real tangible benefits of better good relations, we must all play our part in addressing division, intolerance, hate and separation. We are fully committed to this agenda and to driving forward on the commitments outlined in Together: Building a United Community. We are all too aware that a united community does not only bring social benefits but also economic advantages, such as increased tourism and investment opportunities.

The success of the Giro cannot be questioned and can only further strengthen the competitive position of our tourism industry and contribute to the economy in both the short and long term. Attracting the Giro to our shores has the potential to contribute significantly to the economy, through attracting additional visitors, including out of state visitors, and generating additional tourism revenue. However, perhaps most importantly, it has shone a positive light on our community and demonstrated the unity that can be created when we all work together for the benefit of all our people.

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what financial, or other, support is available from their Department for religious and ethnic minority groups.

(AQW 33877/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF), managed by the Racial Equality Unit, has been providing support for voluntary and community organisations working with minority ethnic people and groups since 2003.

The fund, worth £1.1m per annum, is currently supporting approximately 30 projects.

The Racial Equality Unit also provides day to day assistance and guidance to individuals and groups in respect of their funding awards.

Social Investment Fund

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the allocation of the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 6285/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Fund has been allocated across the nine Social Investment Fund Zones as follows:-

- Belfast North £9 million
- Belfast South £8 million
- Belfast East £8 million
- Belfast West £12 million
- Londonderry/Derry £9.5 million
- Northern £9 million
- Western £8 million
- Southern £8.5 million
- South Eastern £8 million

Flooding: Defence Measures

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have received a report from the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit on flood defence measures in 2013/14.

(AQW 34175/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) provided a report to the Executive, dated September 2012, entitled 'Review of Response to Flooding on 27 and 28 June 2012'. This report included a recommendation to review flood defence expenditure priorities. This action was allocated by PEDU for consideration by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department for Regional Development, working with their respective agencies.

Energy Efficiency

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their commitment to bring forward proposals to boost economic activity through the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in homes.

(AQW 34211/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since this commitment to develop proposals was made in November 2012 steady progress has been made in exploring the potential for this initiative. A market testing exercise, completed in May 2014, indicated strong demand for the delivery of an energy retrofit programme. Plans are now in place for a series of pre-market engagement events with the industry, in the coming weeks, which will help to provide further clarity around the potential aims and objectives of this initiative.

The development of operational plans for potential delivery will continue in parallel with this pre-market engagement process.

All of this preparatory work will allow us to make decisions on proceeding to implementation, based on a clear view as to overall demand, market capacity, alignment to other programmes, realistic implementation timetable and available finance.

Victims and Survivors Service

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the sub-budgets are allocated to the Victims and Survivors Service for Schemes 1-6 targeting individual victims/survivors via the gateway process.

(AQW 34225/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 2014-2015 opening budget for Schemes 1-6 has been set as £4m, with £1.8m allocated to Financial Assistance Scheme (Scheme 6) and £2.2m allocated to schemes 1-5. These are initial allocations and may need to be amended in line with client demand and Ministerial priorities.

Victims and Survivors: Offer Letters

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail a timeline of when offer letters will be issued to victims/survivors offering support under Schemes 1-6.

(AQW 34226/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Expressions of Interest for schemes 1-5 are currently being processed to ensure that when the schemes and budgets are opened for 2014-2015, the Service will be in a position to respond with minimum delay.

The Financial Assistance Scheme (Scheme 6) was opened to the seriously injured on the higher care component of Disability Living Allowance in April 2014. Payments have already been issued. The Scheme opened to remaining clients on 2 June 2014 and will close on 30 June 2014. Applications will be processed and payments made after this date.

Victims and Survivors: Benefit Entitlement and Taxation

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps they have taken to ensure that any monies received by victims/survivors through the Gateway Process will not impact on their benefit entitlement or taxation responsibilities.
(AQW 34228/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have been liaising with the Department for Social Development to ensure that monies issued to victims/survivors for Financial Assistance (Scheme 6) are in keeping with guidelines. The Department for Social Development has issued guidance to ensure that Financial Assistance (Scheme 6) payments are disregarded in relation to means tested benefits. HMRC have responsibility for advising on taxation issues.

Victims and Survivors: Funding Cycle

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) what work has been undertaken on the preparation for the new funding cycle commencing 31 March 2015; (ii) whether there will be any new tendering process introduced in respect of Health and Wellbeing provision; and (iii) to detail the contractual period for group funding under the new funding cycle.
(AQW 34250/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In going forward there is a need to ensure funding continues to be directed to those victims most in need of support and services. To support this, the Commission for Victims and Survivors is commissioning research to evaluate the effectiveness of the funding Programme 2013-2015. The recommendations from this report will inform funding for victims and survivors from April 2015 onwards.

OFMDFM, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Health and Social Care Board officials are working on a suitable approach for the provision of acute mental health services and physical aids within the health and social care system to develop an effective and sustainable cross-sectoral approach to treating psychological trauma.

It is expected that contractual arrangements with groups will cover a period of at least two years.

Victims and Survivors: Funding Allocation

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how the £1.3m June monitoring round bid for victims and survivors funding will be allocated if the bid is successful.
(AQW 34290/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: If the bid for £1.3m in the June Monitoring round is successful, it will enable the Victims and Survivors Service to maintain the existing level of service provision to the victims sector which includes £4m for Individual Needs Reviews and £5.9m for the Victims Support Programme.

Delivering Social Change

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how the £6m June monitoring round bid for Delivering Social Change will be allocated if the bid is successful.
(AQW 34293/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There is currently a £14m resource budget allocation in 2014/15 for the Delivering Social Change Programme. However, the total current requirement in respect of the programme is some £20m.

The £20m programme requirement can be broken down as follows:

■ 6 Signature Programmes	£13.20m
■ Social Investment Fund	£ 2.40m
■ Childrens Hospice	£ 0.40m
■ Bright Start	£ 1.00m
■ Playboard	£ 0.33m
■ OFMDFM Support Cost	£ 1.27m
■ SIB DSC Delivery Unit	£ 0.50m
■ Northern Ireland European Regional Forum	£ 0.18m
■ Play and Leisure Programme	£ 0.50m
■ Other	£ 0.22m
■ Total	£ 20.00m

Heat, Electricity and Water: OFMDFM Spend

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much their Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.
(AQW 34342/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Finance and Personnel is responsible for paying most of the heating, electricity and water costs for our Department and will include these in their reply.

Departmental costs not covered by the DFP reply are detailed in the table below.

Year	Heat £	Electricity £	Water £
2009-2010	3348	7495	Nil
2010-2011	3264	12942	48
2011-2012	3670	10756	197
2012-2013	2540	11415	215
2013-2014	3109	10407	210

Social Investment Fund: Capital Projects

Mr Easton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the capital Social Investment Fund projects to extend community houses in North Down and Ards to accommodate the training needs of the community.

(AQW 34389/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: This project is currently being processed through the economic appraisal process. Following initial consideration, we have agreed with the Steering Group a two stage approach; first stage to complete a scoping study to ascertain the potential to improve the community houses identified and what works can feasibly be progressed; the second stage to fund the resulting works identified.

Funding for both stages is subject to approval of the economic appraisal which we expect to determine over the summer and final costs resulting from the scoping study.

Good Relations Grants

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the (i) Good Relations grants awarded in 2013/14; (ii) dates on which applications were called for; (iii) dates on which applications were received; (iv) dates on which awards were made; (v) outcomes of these grants; (vi) process for awarding Good Relations grants in 2014/15; (vii) the Good Relations grants awarded in 2014/15.

(AQW 34628/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 2013/14 Central Good Relations Fund provided funding for 36 groups the names of which are listed below.

- Active Communities Network
- An Gaelaras
- Ardoyne Youth Club
- Ards Dev and Community Network
- Arts for All
- Ballybeen Mens Motivational Group
- Belfast Interface Project
- Cara-Friend
- Cathedral Youth Club
- Charter NI
- Cinemagic
- Co-operation Ireland
- Corcrain Redmanville Community
- Corrymeela Centre
- Craigavon Intercultural Programme
- Early Years
- Edgarstown Residents Association
- Falls Community Council
- Football in the Community
- Groundwork NI
- Intercomm
- Killicomaine Residents Group
- Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group
- North Belfast Community Development and Transition Group
- NI Children's Enterprise
- NICS Sports Association (NICSSA)
- Peace Players International NI
- Poleglass Community Association
- Rectory Rangers Football Club
- Shankill Parish Caring Assoc
- Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group
- Somme Heritage Centre
- Springboard
- Tides Training
- Training for Women Network

Women Into Politics The 2013/14 Central Good Relations Fund opened for applications on 4 October 2013 and the closing date for applications was 22 November 2013. Decisions regarding funding were made in January 2014 and applicants were informed of decisions.

A wide range of activities were covered by the 36 groups awarded funding. All of the activities were designed to improve good relations outcomes. The activities included capacity building, cross community sporting and arts activities, shared activities on a cross community basis, programmes of volunteering and training for young people and building community cohesion

The Central Good Relations Fund for 2014-15 closed for applications on 10 February 2014. Preliminary consideration of the applications was carried out in advance of a selection panel meeting. The selection panel then agreed the first tranche of funding to be released and successful applicants were advised. Twelve applicants to date have been advised that they will receive Central Good Relations Funding and the names of the groups are listed below.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Cinemagic | ■ Saint James Forum |
| ■ Community Relations in Schools | ■ Sandy Row Residents Association |
| ■ Co-operation Ireland | ■ Somme Heritage Centre |
| ■ Intercomm | ■ Sport Changes Life |
| ■ John Paul II Youth Club | ■ Springboard |
| ■ Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group | ■ Suffolk Lenadon Interface Group |

It should be noted that the Central Good Relations Fund is a small central scheme designed to distribute funding in year when and if it becomes available. We primarily fund good relations work through the Community Relations Council and local Councils. The fund does not and will not replace mainstream core or project funding.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will announce the Revenue projects that will be funded by the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 6409/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 10 February we announced that £33 million will be invested in 23 projects, aimed at tackling poverty and deprivation through improved community-based services and facilities. This included 11 revenue projects.

Details of these 23 projects, along with the projects which are currently within the funding allocation for each zone and which are subject to approval through the economic appraisal process are available at

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/social-investment-fund/sif-projects.htm> .

We intend to issue letters of offer for all projects as soon as possible.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Telephone Enquires: System Failures

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of occasions that the telephone helpline service experienced system failures preventing callers from contacting the office in the last 12 months.

(AQW 34351/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I am not aware of any failures by my Department's telephone helpline service during the last 12 months.

Live Export Sales: Current Restrictions

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the current restrictions relating to live export sales; and whether she intends to relax these restrictions to enable local producers to increase export sales.

(AQW 34395/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am not aware of any restrictions currently affecting live export Sales. Since the lifting of the European Commission's ban on the export of live cattle to other EU member states in May 2006, over 278,000 cattle have been exported from the north of Ireland to Europe.

Live exports take place on a regular basis from both premises of origin and EU Approved Assembly Centres (EACs) throughout the north. Animals entering the EAC must fulfil the requirements of Council Directive 64/432/EEC (cattle) and Council Directive 91/68/EEC (sheep/goats), as required by EU legislation.

A new EU Animal Health law proposal is currently being negotiated in Europe which considers some relaxation of conditions for cross border movement of animals with other landlocked Member States in accordance with the assessment of risk. My officials have been feeding into the development of the new EU Regulation in consultation with DEFRA in Britain and DAFM in the south. This provides us with an opportunity to frame the EU Regulation in a way that would facilitate the objectives of the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy and allow us to reach an agreement to achieve the free movement of animals within the island.

Cattle Movement: Local Marts

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she intends to provide guidance to livestock auctioneers relating to the display of cattle movements at local marts.

(AQW 34396/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Animal Public Health Information System (APHIS) holds data on herd keepers' animal movements from birth to death. The collection of information held on APHIS is in accordance with Regulation 1760/2000 of the European Parliament establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products. Member States are obliged to set up a database with the intention of providing an open and transparent method of traceability from "farm to fork".

The display of cattle movement data at local marts by livestock auctioneers occurs as part of a commercial transaction entered into between the seller and buyer of an animal. This therefore falls outside my Department's remit.

Ulster Farmers' Union

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the dates in 2014 when she has met the Ulster Farmers' Union; and the subject matters discussed at each meeting.

(AQW 34398/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I met with representatives from the UFU on 21 January, 4 March and 13 May 2014 where we discussed a range of key agricultural issues including CAP reform, the Rural Development Programme, and the future potential of the agri-food industry.

I also attended the UFU Annual Dinner on 28 March.

Going for Growth Strategy

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she will answer the question asked in AQO 6372/11-15.

(AQW 34505/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I meet regularly with the DETI and DFP Ministers at Executive meetings, where a range of issues are discussed.

As outlined in my answer to the House on 17 June 2014, the DETI Minister and I jointly submitted proposals to the Executive in relation to Going for Growth in December 2013. I am delighted that the Executive has now agreed its response to Going for Growth; and has also agreed to support my proposals for a Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 of up to £623million. This funding will help us deliver on the aims and objectives in Going for Growth, including the Farm Business Improvement Scheme. Having received the Executive's approval, my Department will bid for up to £250million of additional funds to deliver the proposed 'Farm Business Improvement Scheme' as part of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme.

We intend to finalise and publish the formal Executive Response to Going for Growth on relevant websites over the coming weeks.

Conference Attendance

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she or a representative from her Department attended the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs conference on poor farm gate prices.

(AQW 34603/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that Defra recently hosted a seminar for officials, which among other things looked at the global and British and north of Ireland consumer markets and the implications for trade and prices. I understand a senior representative from AFBI attended.

Obviously, I share the concerns of farmers about the recent drop in prices. I want to see a strong, profitable agri-food sector here in the north and that can only be achieved if farmers see a fair return for their high quality, traceable produce.

The price farmers receive for their produce is a commercial matter which is not within my remit. However, I hope that industry can work together to get a mutually agreeable resolution on pricing that will ensure a sustainable local agri-food industry focused on export-led growth. My Department and I will continue to work with all elements of the supply chain to help them to achieve those results.

Reservoirs Bill: Full Cost Recovery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 34119/11-15, whether she has gained approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel not to pursue a full cost recovery for sections contained in the Reservoirs Bill.

(AQW 34647/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) approval is not required in relation to including clauses in the Reservoirs Bill which would enable my Department not to pursue full cost recovery where considered appropriate. However,

in accordance with the Department's charging policy, DFP approval will be sought, as required, in advance of any decision not to recover full costs if and when such circumstances arise after the legislation is in place.

Tri-council Fisheries Group

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the work programme of the Tri-Council Fisheries Group for the last five years; (ii) the origin and extent of the funding made available to the group; (iii) the personnel who comprise the group; and (iv) the forward work plan recently agreed by the group.

(AQW 34742/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Tri-Council Fisheries Working Group is a group formed and administered by, Ards Borough Council, Down District Council and Newry and Mourne District Council. My Department has no role in its functions and therefore the Group itself, or the Councils are probably best placed to advise on the matters you have raised.

Pesticide and Planting Restrictions

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what guidance her Department can offer to farmers to explain the pesticide and planting restrictions, in relation to buffer strips running along watercourses.

(AQW 34783/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Agri-environment agreement holders can opt to manage marginal areas along watercourses as ungrazed grass margins 'or 'riparian zones'. These act as buffer strips where pesticide use is prohibited. They also help to prevent pollution of the adjacent waterbody by organic and inorganic fertilisers. An additional 'riparian zone – native tree planting' option is available at suitable sites where planting along the waterway will not cause overshadowing of the watercourse. DARD Countryside Management Unit provides guidance on these options at the commencement of the agreement and within the relevant scheme booklet, received by all agreement holders. Further advice is available from local Countryside Management Advisers.

All Single Farm Payment and Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowance claimants are bound by Cross Compliance Statutory Management Rule 9 which states that 'plant protection products ('pesticides') must be used in accordance with the principles of good plant protection practice'. The Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products can be read at or downloaded from the DARD website together with the Code of Good Agricultural Practice (COGAP) for the prevention of Water, Air and Soil, which also gives advice on the implementation of buffer zones.

Single Farm Payment: Appeals

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many single farm payment appeals have been submitted in the last five calendar years; and of those appeals, to detail (i) how many have been upheld by the appeals panel; (ii) how many successful appeals have been paid; and (iii) how many payments have been withheld including the reasons for withholding payment.

(AQW 34876/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department operates a two-stage Review of Decisions process. The first stage involves an internal review and the second an External Panel. At Stage 2 the Panel make a recommendation, with the Head of the DARD Paying Agency making the final decision in all cases.

In the last 5 calendar years (i.e. 2009 – 2013), 1,817 applications for Review were submitted at Stage One and 325 at Stage Two, which comes to a total of 2,142.

- (i) Of the 325 Stage 2 applications received, 216 have been finalised and, in 54 of these cases, the Department changed its original decision either in whole or in part.
- (ii) In some of these cases, depending on the circumstances of the claim and the out workings of the change to the original decision, a refund of recovery may result. If this is the case, any monies due will have been repaid to the applicant.
- (iii) In the remaining 162 Stage 2 cases finalised, the Department's original decision remained unchanged. These decisions relate to a variety of issues relating to non-compliance with the scheme rules and include claims being made on ineligible land, duplicate field claims and cross-compliance breaches. In some other cases, where the Department's decision has been changed, the result will be a requirement to recover monies from the applicant, for example a penalty may result.

Hospitality: Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what has been the expenditure by the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission on hospitality in 2013-14.

(AQW 34972/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total expenditure by the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (the Loughs Agency) on hospitality in 2013-14 was £9,963.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ballyshannon: ESB Dam

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the impact on migratory fish stocks, such as eel and salmon, caused by the ESB Dam at Ballyshannon.

(AQW 33689/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The ESB dams at Cathaleen's Fall and Cliff at Ballyshannon represent a significant barrier to the passage of migratory fish, including wild Atlantic salmon and the European eel, through the Erne system. ESB is required by European law to take steps to minimise the impact on migratory fish.

Salmon smolts must make their way through the dams in their migration to the sea, and ESB estimates that around 90% of smolts survive passage through the turbines.

Both dams have a fish ladder, which extend from the power station tailrace over the dam into the head waters and consists of around 70 pools with a difference of one and a half feet between successive pools that allow adult salmon to navigate past the dam and into Lough Erne and its tributaries to spawn.

Another fish pass at Cathaleen's Fall allows eels to ascend the dam into a holding tank, where they are collected and transported by my inland fisheries staff for release into the Erne system.

While these are good aids to fish passage, it should be noted that no type of fish pass is 100% effective and my officials have regular meetings with colleagues in ESB and Inland Fisheries Ireland to monitor the operation of the fish passes and address any issues that may arise. This is particularly pertinent given the recent loss of around 100kg of elvers and I can assure you that I have made clear to my counterpart in the South the need for ESB to ensure the uninterrupted passage of fish through the facilities.

Walled City Tattoo: Londonderry

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the assistance available for (i) organising; (ii) holding; and (iii) promoting the Walled City Tattoo in Londonderry on 27 to 30 August 2014.

(AQW 34613/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department provided a grant of £100,000 to contribute to costs associated with delivering The Walled City Tattoo in August 2014, additional funds to The Walled City Tattoo are part of a bid to DFP in the June Monitoring Round.

Department of Education

Elective Home Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in light of the intention to further regulate Elective Home Education, how many adverse incidents from this sector have been identified in the last three years.

(AQW 33973/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): There is no intention to further regulate home education at the present time. The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have directly prepared guidance in relation to home education which reflects their existing legislative responsibilities and are currently consulting on that guidance. The outcome of the consultation process will be of assistance in informing any future proposals in this regard.

In terms of adverse incidents relating to the educational provision for home educated children, the Boards have advised that they are aware of less than 15 incidents.

Board	Adverse Incidents
South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)	Less than 5* adverse incidents in the last three years
North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB)	Less than 5* adverse incidents in the last three years
Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)	Less than 5* adverse incidents in the last three years
Western Education and Library Board (WELB)	None recorded [^]
Southern Education and Library Boards (SELB)	None recorded [^]

* This figure is suppressed in order to protect the anonymity of children

[^] The WELB and the SELB have advised that they do not currently undertake monitoring of children and young people who are educated at home

The Boards have confirmed that they do not undertake assessments of the achievements and outcomes of children who are educated at home and the adverse incidents referenced by the Boards relate to the suitability of the education provided to home educated children.

Capital Funding: South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how much capital funding has been allocated to each school in the South Eastern Education and Library Board in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34305/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not allocate capital funding to schools. At the beginning of the financial year capital funding is allocated to each of the five Education and Library Boards who are responsible for capital projects in the controlled sector.

Estate Operations Team (EOT) within the Department is allocated a capital funding minor works budget for the non-controlled sectors. EOT recently made a call for applications for capital minor works schemes. When submitted each application is assessed on its merits. Grant aid is allocated to successful schemes.

The following table details capital expenditure in all schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) area in each of the last five financial years:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Abbey PS	104,384.37	91,948.44	114,322.18	84,875.41	15,461.61	410,992.01
Academy PS	122,548.13	0.00	51,443.73	44,221.69	69,270.65	287,484.20
Alexander Dickson PS	35,122.28	20,000.00	570.41	0.00	126,101.09	181,793.78
All Childrens Integ PS	4,941.65	1,968.64	332,752.18	555,562.87	47,905.52	943,130.86
Anahilt PS	0.00	57,968.46	6,756.15	-3,500.92	631.30	61,854.99
Andrews Memorial PS	69,189.19	34,416.71	300,174.92	56,941.52	4,257.34	464,979.68
Annsborough Integ PS	0.00	0.00	3,363.81	8,188.80	410.14	11,962.75
Ardmore House Spec School	18,096.21	0.00	58,670.57	1,036.35	58,095.55	135,898.68
Assumption GS	4,022,330.05	1,404,449.05	271,167.58	13,718.12	433,199.66	6,144,864.46
Ballycarrickmaddy PS	468.02	0.00	3,689.00	-38.02	50,762.24	54,881.24
Ballyholme PS	184,645.08	23,142.89	25,184.83	9,328.90	9,114.76	251,416.46
Ballymacash PS	30,816.51	438,506.77	83,610.22	97,253.46	113,607.99	763,794.95
Ballymacrickett PS	80,452.00	60,807.00	15,337.00	58,319.93	0.00	214,915.93
Ballymacrickett PS Meals	29,180.84	0.00	4,535.20	505.95	0.00	34,221.99
Ballymagee PS	47,337.80	9,180.93	34,659.76	54,459.35	96,198.17	241,836.01
Ballynahinch PS	154,803.32	70,588.15	30,580.96	2,010.83	0.00	257,983.26
Ballyvester PS	0.00	0.00	11,481.53	64.52	10,791.14	22,337.19
Ballywalter PS	4,350.00	0.00	54,944.21	18,316.04	3,199.45	80,809.70
Bangor Central Integ PS	0.00	48,001.09	287,082.64	45,906.85	72,182.45	453,173.03
Bangor GS	166,859.41	6,177,006.00	7,414,502.00	9,413,616.41	398,692.55	23,570,676.37
Bangor NS	0.00	0.00	8,242.77	0.00	250.37	8,493.14
Barbour NS	71,923.68	9,910.35	99,369.00	-8,377.79	2,000.00	174,825.24
Beechlawn Spec School	122,193.97	0.00	173,903.23	239,667.52	407,366.89	943,131.61
Belvoir Park PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	235,229.98	47,162.00	259,691.21	160,511.92	33,199.62	735,794.73
Blackwater Integ College	82,027.00	4,113.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	86,140.00
Bloomfield Road PS	115,507.55	102,801.66	81,912.87	189,676.27	263,861.72	753,760.07
Branial PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	127,519.79	22,149.47	-1,535.27	19,700.98	52.37	167,887.34

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Brookfield Spec School	191,692.18	23,870.00	21,857.23	0.00	6,833.43	244,252.84
Brooklands PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	291,392.19	0.00	21,876.97	604.98	3,058.00	316,932.14
Brownlee PS	217,239.44	19,254.54	3,335.00	314,059.99	281,033.93	834,922.90
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche Meals	0.00	88,083.05	0.00	0.00	-1,450.00	86,633.05
Cairnshill PS	113,887.05	11,467.61	0.00	15,817.68	205,192.37	346,364.71
Carr PS	0.00	5,290.00	7,794.40	64.51	13,487.42	26,636.33
Carrickmannon PS	-3,901.00	0.00	26,713.73	20,268.97	6,424.73	49,506.43
Carrowdore PS	41,219.96	0.00	15,430.54	-2,270.83	49,768.79	104,148.46
Carryduff PS	24,017.91	19,332.00	26,912.31	2,859.57	103,968.00	177,089.79
Castle Gardens PS	10,292.60	0.00	0.00	7,929.38	-9.54	18,212.44
Castlereagh NS	6,686.10	16,029.24	6,773.31	8,980.81	174.18	38,643.64
Castlewellan PS	7,155.30	0.00	60,058.56	4,944.81	-9.54	72,149.13
Cedar Integ PS	21,199.00	0.00	9,083.04	0.00	0.00	30,282.04
Christ the King PS Meals	0.00	0.00	8,404.00	8,100.50	0.00	16,504.50
Christ The Redeemer PS	0.00	415.00	0.00	0.00	4,523.04	4,938.04
Christ The Redeemer PS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,337.50	5,035.00	14,372.50
Clandeboyne PS	115,692.13	51,620.61	11,503.62	14,475.29	179.00	193,470.65
Clifton Spec School	37,837.82	10,370.95	415,245.06	21.14	3,111.00	466,585.97
CLOSED Drumbo PS	1,579.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,579.27
CLOSED Hilden Int PS	2,704.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.25	2,717.53
CLOSED Hillhall PS	1,800.77	0.00	-248.70	0.00	0.00	1,552.07
CLOSED Lambeg PS	5,654.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,654.91
CLOSED Lisnasharragh HS	2,121.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	225,283.00	227,404.59
CLOSED Newtownbreda PS	69,109.99	4,986.12	0.00	0.00	537.59	74,633.70
Comber PS	50,947.24	0.00	0.00	8,484.00	237.70	59,668.94
Conlig PS	-30,050.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-30,050.00
Convent Of Mercy PS D'patrick	25,420.00	0.00	660,980.00	0.00	0.00	686,400.00
Convent Of Mercy PS D'patrick Meals	9,933.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,933.85
Crawfordsburn PS	231,807.39	6,000.00	3,094.51	22,902.05	17,696.20	281,500.15
Cregagh PS	0.00	5,015.88	478.11	107.93	3,058.00	8,659.92
Cumran PS	162,859.67	46,881.11	0.00	0.00	3,171.17	212,911.95
De La Salle HS	115,805.62	1,607.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	117,413.17
De La Salle HS Meals	11,812.99	0.00	0.00	3,005.00	228,273.10	243,091.09
Derriaghy PS	15,161.63	0.00	0.00	761.82	0.00	15,923.45
Derryboy PS	123,339.77	90,204.92	-1,981.39	1,120.03	197.22	212,880.55
Donaghadee HS	741,495.41	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	741,495.41
Donaghadee PS	88,708.36	0.00	137,787.94	9,770.10	86,867.28	323,133.68

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Down Acad(Blackwater Integ fr01.09.08)	4,250.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,250.39
Down HS	190,715.68	28,384.88	61,133.17	318,577.27	269,394.19	868,205.19
Downpatrick NS	23,028.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	176.91	23,205.71
Downpatrick PS	-900.00	12,320.18	49,749.42	9,674.28	6,421.94	77,265.82
Downshire PS Hillsborough	27,475.21	3,842.62	12,942.49	0.00	7,794.77	52,055.09
Dromara PS	45,140.65	4,277.00	23,368.00	0.00	52,471.98	125,257.63
Drumlins Integ PS	71,988.38	46,220.66	53,876.00	13,950.00	853,547.36	1,039,582.40
Dundonald HS	505,685.12	105,461.26	95,419.45	-3,354.10	126.83	703,338.56
Dundonald PS	93,048.73	0.00	9,853.43	232,051.74	50,067.07	385,020.97
Dunmurry HS	46,857.05	0.00	0.00	142,699.11	3,163.37	192,719.53
Dunmurry PS	27,000.00	92,177.55	15,904.08	11,986.91	40,453.21	187,521.75
Fort Hill Integ College	379,327.76	9,435.04	549,206.55	264,006.13	372,472.06	1,574,447.54
Fort Hill PS	27,647.12	0.00	13,410.00	24,418.95	78,422.96	143,899.03
Friends School	182,627.70	79,981.00	81,334.08	26,845.14	125,961.06	496,748.98
Gilnahirk PS	80,151.46	138,110.03	211,587.48	13,980.47	5,215.50	449,044.94
Glasswater PS	44,884.69	10,000.00	3,169.11	104,518.76	171,011.32	333,583.88
Glastry College	457,000.00	83,099.13	132,260.68	46,665.44	203,787.22	922,812.47
Glenbrook Road NS	82,324.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,187.81	84,512.21
Glencraig Integ PS	11,953.00	36,811.86	35,014.59	140,589.56	-3,439.56	220,929.45
Glenlola Collegiate	102,821.68	4,148.14	22,183.41	40,835.51	97,592.89	267,581.63
Good Shepherd NS	89,681.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	89,681.91
Good Shepherd PS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,080.50	0.00	15,080.50
Grange Park PS	12,578.18	16,610.66	77,279.46	282,851.28	67,364.70	456,684.28
Greyabbey PS	0.00	3,887.00	87,618.91	524.92	85,024.31	177,055.14
Harmony Hill PS	36,006.36	10,229.84	94,172.66	8,548.37	12,732.90	161,690.13
Holy Family PS	45,744.03	0.00	170.00	29,886.28	0.00	75,800.31
Holy Family PS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,371.80	0.00	9,371.80
Holy Trinity NS	35,024.00	12,013.00	14,093.18	0.00	0.00	61,130.18
Hollywood NS	133,471.03	-2,485.71	98,748.11	-9,124.84	0.00	220,608.59
Hollywood PS	1,426.98	51,936.96	401,322.39	207,411.50	60,799.06	722,896.89
Kilcooley PS	35,600.18	0.00	0.00	5,743.00	9,195.56	50,538.74
Killard House Spec School	2,121.63	131,534.93	21,471.37	3,384.10	51,047.06	209,559.09
Killinchy PS	6,807.20	0.00	9,372.65	-523.16	18,167.96	33,824.65
Killowen PS	142,103.69	9,490.60	29,483.91	95,828.21	165,442.11	442,348.52
Killyleagh PS	6,532.87	0.00	52,221.66	-414.57	0.00	58,339.96
Kilmaine PS	60,691.89	4,315.00	62,660.93	17,694.94	11,368.13	156,730.89
King's Road NS	415.00	0.00	2,000.00	-66.90	6,549.23	8,897.33
Kircubbin Community NS	8,794.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,794.69
Kircubbin Integ PS	588,696.60	41,270.07	373,422.20	73,271.19	98,981.51	1,175,641.57
Kirkistown PS	13,479.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	119,249.69	132,729.23

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Knockbreda HS	796,000.00	122,956.94	92,843.09	2,176.57	0.00	1,013,976.60
Knockbreda NS	78,454.01	5,611.89	53.14	6,132.04	163.15	90,414.23
Knockbreda PS	22,426.37	33,764.79	305,948.52	351,163.25	14,731.18	728,034.11
Knockevin Spec School	389,034.93	8,858.77	181,865.84	147,567.83	17,344.38	744,671.75
Knockmore PS	0.00	3,553.20	16,822.28	15,976.17	6,355.00	42,706.65
Lagan College	516,482.42	406,117.00	0.00	85,445.06	63,601.80	1,071,646.28
Largymore PS	518,052.89	38,716.68	129,731.90	19,238.13	3,650.84	709,390.44
Laurelhill Community Coll	194,253.38	83,475.86	46,941.25	38,318.48	246,400.89	609,389.86
Leadhill PS	7,900.37	0.00	7,282.00	-4,935.49	4,486.83	14,733.71
Legamaddy PS	0.00	18,940.00	0.00	0.00	453,206.00	472,146.00
Legamaddy PS Meals	0.00	0.00	9,540.33	0.00	0.00	9,540.33
Lisburn Central PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	20,339.82	0.00	2,282.00	64.51	3,047.83	25,734.16
Lisnagarvey HS	137,661.24	129,124.19	55,018.33	221,271.70	10,741.69	553,817.15
Lisnasharragh PS	128,785.47	10,028.70	294,131.38	14,596.25	19,921.55	467,463.35
Londonderry PS	0.00	60,923.39	3,949.54	283,853.80	504,397.71	853,124.44
Longstone Spec School	244,431.09	89,214.02	66,723.32	-778.48	208,438.27	608,028.22
Loughries PS	4,421.00	0.00	0.00	179.00	227.24	4,827.24
Loughview Integ PS	134,655.45	3,195.00	84.50	0.00	0.00	137,934.95
Lower Ballinderry PS	1,079,000.00	64,609.06	10,882.04	14,165.90	23,414.08	1,192,071.08
Maghaberry PS	67,190.53	95,147.76	21,521.36	23,272.49	35,741.19	242,873.33
McKinney PS Dundrod	19,189.69	0.00	3,000.00	-1,841.48	21,239.05	41,587.26
Meadowbridge PS	13,724.50	0.00	7,631.00	18,191.35	226.96	39,773.81
Millennium Integ PS	39,633.10	2,190.00	67,883.98	0.00	29,701.03	139,408.11
Millisle PS	41,524.52	55,362.45	136,907.51	-2,715.17	92,104.82	323,184.13
Moirá PS	203,915.37	3,448.12	24,605.53	10,128.84	7,208.08	249,305.94
Moneyrea PS	116,294.20	0.00	158,017.06	1,566.09	20,502.37	296,379.72
Movilla HS	339,949.29	15,817.34	4,254.72	0.00	58.70	360,080.05
Newcastle PS	30,591.32	3,360.00	153,386.96	-78,222.67	115,489.61	224,605.22
Newport PS	1,516.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,516.77
Newtownards Model PS	31,789.76	0.00	495,315.41	215,902.83	42,256.22	785,264.22
Newtownards NS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	72,464.06	72,464.06
Newtownbreda HS	4,667.00	132,381.31	211,826.28	444,958.92	520,734.83	1,314,568.34
Oakwood Integ PS	4,149.76	21,501.66	20,688.00	19,252.68	0.00	65,592.10
Old Warren PS	0.00	11,932.94	95.96	9,704.08	142,785.50	164,518.48
Our Lady & St Patrick's College	162,374.96	36,246.40	21,890.25	15,594.35	0.00	236,105.96
Our Lady & St Patrick's PS	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,325.00	876.00	2,201.00
Our Lady & St Patrick's PS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,230.00	0.00	8,230.00
Our Lady Queen of Peace PS	4,168.00	0.00	7,695.30	92,510.00	4,970.00	109,343.30

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Parkview Spec School	729,942.17	101,588.10	20,418.14	234,109.10	83,384.04	1,169,441.55
Pond Park NS	0.00	0.00	84,862.63	47,664.03	314.23	132,840.89
Pond Park PS	486,900.81	-34,000.00	10,310.81	8,014.82	2,982.19	474,208.63
Portaferry Integ PS	-3,365.88	0.00	6,133.00	0.00	0.00	2,767.12
Portavogie PS	0.00	7,559.18	3,000.00	-1,247.48	283,294.95	292,606.65
Priory Integ College	28,400.37	40,572.83	119,541.95	59,534.62	0.00	248,049.77
Rathmore PS	131,724.16	0.00	130,015.28	364.80	72,329.74	334,433.98
Redburn PS	12,703.51	27,498.41	211.38	67,284.87	85.25	107,783.42
Regent House	137,624.46	19,597.43	164,397.14	44,654.94	651,854.94	1,018,128.91
Riverdale PS	7,166.92	4,544.58	3,146.00	23,150.75	3,186.40	41,194.65
Rowandale IPS	12,152.71	23,848.00	1,390,389.60	196,735.80	806,500.53	2,429,626.64
Sacred Heart PS	30,698.00	3,018.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	33,716.07
Saintfield HS	53,655.60	39,025.21	395,113.24	41,442.97	35,310.04	564,547.06
Scoil Na Fuisseoige	5,115.00	120,573.00	1,290,590.00	610,700.00	18,385.00	2,045,363.00
Scoil Na Fuisseoige Meals	-10,625.86	2,125.25	38,500.00	38,500.00	0.00	68,499.39
Seymour Hill PS	12,354.53	51,215.02	-3,335.50	19,263.40	1,384.50	80,881.95
Shimna Integ College	968,339.43	114,770.00	28,654.00	552,500.00	531,134.20	2,195,397.63
Spa PS	0.00	0.00	241,036.53	434,568.05	2,251.70	677,856.28
St Aloysius PS	73,019.09	142,277.19	253,023.81	41,316.51	6,683.26	516,319.86
St Aloysius PS Meals	0.00	0.00	9,650.30	4,234.54	0.00	13,884.84
St Anne's PS, Donaghadee	8,305.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,305.68
St Bernard's PS	99,100.04	164,233.00	46,002.00	2,315.00	56,365.65	368,015.69
St Bernard's PS Meals	40,567.63	4,486.80	702.35	10,477.85	125,117.00	181,351.63
St Brigid's PS	2,934.07	0.00	30.00	12,122.36	0.00	15,086.43
St Colman's HS	0.00	588.00	0.00	171,348.00	0.00	171,936.00
St Colman's HS Meals	9,869.64	0.00	0.00	3,005.00	7,027.00	19,901.64
St Colman's PS Lisburn	94,323.00	73,057.00	1,747,320.00	853,767.00	272,420.00	3,040,887.00
St Colman's PS Lisburn Meals	4,138.20	0.00	217,099.67	113,275.80	0.00	334,513.67
St Colmcille's HS	68,607.00	184,672.00	0.00	299,225.59	15,825.00	568,329.59
St Colmcille's HS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,005.00	14,400.00	17,405.00
St Colmcille's PS Downpatrick	8,640.75	6,435.00	106,699.83	872.00	118,029.00	240,676.58
St Colmcille's PS Downpatrick Meals	0.00	11,795.00	0.00	3,005.00	0.00	14,800.00
St Colm's HS	1,131.00	1,316.00	44,226.00	13,488.00	0.00	60,161.00
St Colm's HS Meals	9,732.39	0.00	0.00	149,550.26	-4,620.00	154,662.65
St Columbanus College	147,083.00	235,983.00	24,353.00	369,954.39	704,792.26	1,482,165.65
St Columbanus College Meals	0.00	8,114.47	9,436.87	15,853.56	24,497.76	57,902.66
St Columba's College	167,811.89	6,636.00	3,418.19	0.00	0.00	177,866.08
St Columba's College Meals	8,926.17	0.00	20,933.82	2,283.80	3,005.00	35,148.79

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Finian's PS	82,789.00	48,993.00	4,882.00	1,709.00	0.00	138,373.00
St Finian's PS Meals	0.00	0.00	25,550.41	3,111.99	0.00	28,662.40
St Francis PS	0.00	0.00	1,005.00	187,061.66	18,179.38	206,246.04
St Ita's PS	121,332.00	0.00	20,728.00	48,651.00	20,379.94	211,090.94
St Ita's PS Meals	8,435.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,435.22
St Joseph's PS Carnacaville	94,777.39	0.00	2,860.29	300.00	0.00	97,937.68
St Joseph's PS Carnacaville Meals	0.00	0.00	8,404.00	0.00	0.00	8,404.00
St Joseph's PS Lisburn	195,743.00	195,987.00	117,189.63	13,020.18	241,379.47	763,319.28
St Joseph's PS Lisburn Meals	9,520.85	0.00	7,631.00	0.00	0.00	17,151.85
St Joseph's PS, Carryduff	33,479.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	33,479.28
St Joseph's PS, Crossgar	1,528.00	24,868.00	0.00	0.00	249.00	26,645.00
St Joseph's PS, Killough	58,749.00	44,004.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	102,753.00
St Kieran's NS	0.00	10,765.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,765.23
St Kieran's PS Meals	9,858.51	0.00	0.00	13,877.50	0.00	23,736.01
St Louis GS	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,433.00	0.00	3,433.00
St Luke's NS	0.00	0.00	7,389.97	0.00	0.00	7,389.97
St Luke's PS	41,373.00	0.00	240.00	70,270.80	0.00	111,883.80
St Luke's PS Meals	9,760.68	0.00	0.00	11,139.50	0.00	20,900.18
St Macartan's PS	0.00	2,180.00	0.00	0.00	2,739.22	4,919.22
St Malachy's HS	1,721.00	36,727.00	13,098.94	0.00	0.00	51,546.94
St Malachy's HS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,005.00	0.00	3,005.00
St Malachy's PS Bangor	0.00	4,006.00	0.00	223,283.45	0.00	227,289.45
St Malachy's PS Bangor Meals	0.00	0.00	28,277.53	-3,763.97	3,005.00	27,518.56
St Malachy's PS C'wellan	13,395.00	2,087.00	97,786.00	17,502.50	267,930.38	398,700.88
St Malachy's PS C'wellan Meals	9,954.31	0.00	0.00	11,105.50	5,035.00	26,094.81
St Malachy's PS, Downpatrick	0.00	7,452.00	0.00	74,147.00	0.00	81,599.00
St Malachy's PS, Newry	11,162.50	16,838.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	28,000.50
St Mark's PS	4,289.02	24,497.00	16,306.00	1,446.00	0.00	46,538.02
St Mark's PS Meals	0.00	0.00	9,103.80	21,443.70	0.00	30,547.50
St Mary's HS	25,372.03	129,433.00	30,468.00	18,443.00	70,368.95	274,084.98
St Mary's HS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	130,428.43	2,556.59	132,985.02
St Mary's PS Kircubbin	110,956.95	0.00	105,675.00	71,734.00	3,604.33	291,970.28
St Mary's PS Kircubbin Meals	0.00	8,258.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,258.00
St Mary's PS N'castle (Junior)	15,379.00	67,840.18	1,790,588.00	1,328,852.00	162,888.00	3,365,547.18
St Mary's PS N'castle Meals (Junior)	3,499.59	5,000.00	230,000.00	149,000.00	1,296.00	388,795.59
St Mary's PS Portaferry	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,115.98	59,445.44	63,561.42

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Mary's PS Portaferry Meals	0.00	0.00	9,573.54	0.00	0.00	9,573.54
St Mary's PS, Ardglass	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,071.55	0.00	6,071.55
St Mary's PS, Aughlisnafin	14,144.00	3,354.60	78,104.00	0.00	0.00	95,602.60
St Mary's PS, Comber	6,209.00	48,163.00	5,764.00	1,453.52	0.00	61,589.52
St Mary's PS, Killyleagh	0.00	12,899.00	240.00	0.00	29,672.64	42,811.64
St Nicholas' PS Meals	0.00	0.00	13,895.94	3,005.00	0.00	16,900.94
St Parick's GS	288,195.10	22,427.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	310,622.10
St Patrick's HS	1,552.50	0.00	23,107.00	17,739.80	208,179.72	250,579.02
St Patrick's HS Meals	0.00	0.00	6,428.00	6,445.88	0.00	12,873.88
St Patrick's PS H'wood	184,000.00	63,415.00	23,760.00	0.00	249.00	271,424.00
St Patrick's PS H'wood Meals	0.00	0.00	50,739.52	600.30	0.00	51,339.82
St Patrick's PS, C'wellan	0.00	0.00	9,247.00	2,100.00	1,871.00	13,218.00
St Patrick's PS , Downpatrick	75,109.00	30,222.00	18,657.00	2,676.00	0.00	126,664.00
St Patrick's PS Saul	15,732.00	57,894.00	246.00	25,472.52	0.00	99,344.52
St Patrick's PS Saul Meals	228.45	0.00	0.00	9,137.20	0.00	9,365.65
St Patrick's PS, Portaferry	62,118.99	10,969.30	670.00	95,804.26	86,555.78	256,118.33
St Pat's PS P'aferry Meals	0.00	0.00	9,868.38	2,527.21	0.00	12,395.59
St Pat's PS B'nahinch	24,798.17	143,283.00	90,832.14	48,400.81	18,423.30	325,737.42
St Pat's PS B'nahinch Meals	0.00	0.00	9,139.31	-348.31	0.00	8,791.00
St Therese NS	0.00	623.00	444.36	0.00	0.00	1,067.36
Strangford College	85,200.00	29,079.00	2,444.00	0.00	0.00	116,723.00
Sullivan Upper	836,816.26	144,030.89	38,016.36	670,668.78	165,282.23	1,854,814.52
The High School B'nahinch	154,942.19	56,531.13	-9,326.33	59,031.93	115,119.36	376,298.28
Tonagh PS	6,165.45	86,236.62	77,555.17	60,279.10	89,955.19	320,191.53
Tor Bank Spec School	11,401.42	758.63	8,258.05	12,786.14	0.00	33,204.24
Towerview PS	602,000.00	95,610.00	49,999.53	-39,178.53	6,923.77	715,354.77
Trinity NS	13,876.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,598.81	21,475.61
Tullycarnet PS	15,662.15	0.00	8,404.00	0.00	67,532.68	91,598.83
Tyrella PS	403.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	403.24
Victoria PS Ballyhalbert	4,101.39	0.00	0.00	6,635.23	1,622.13	12,358.75
Victoria PS Newtownards	1,700.00	0.00	10,801.00	20,150.94	1,286.59	33,938.53
Wallace HS	158,730.85	90,865.51	56,607.32	137,236.23	108,925.50	552,365.41
Westwinds PS	85,391.62	0.00	9,435.79	0.00	58.70	94,886.11
Overall Totals	24,367,860.45	14,300,923.99	25,940,753.77	23,610,869.12	14,796,757.61	103,017,164.94

* The SEELB has provided expenditure information in relation to the controlled sector and schools meals accommodation in the maintained sector.

** Information relating to capital expenditure in the voluntary sector has been obtained from Departmental records.

*** In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments.

Schools: Maintenance and Repairs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on maintenance and repairs in each school in the South Eastern Education and Library Board, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34475/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details expenditure on maintenance and repairs in Controlled, Voluntary Maintained and Irish Medium Schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area in each of the last five financial years:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Bangor NS	16,160.39	455.53	6,135.63	-3,844.64	4,590.01	23,496.92
Barbour NS	10,509.31	15,483.89	3,003.95	12,612.74	6,911.74	48,521.63
Castlereagh NS	32,344.54	20,540.04	-13,828.55	40,598.66	6,459.05	86,113.74
Downpatrick NS	18,934.16	5,831.67	3,957.81	4,333.05	8,346.07	41,402.76
Glenbrook Road NS	8,794.72	10,639.27	1,771.47	31,461.20	6,939.25	59,605.91
Hollywood NS	5,353.63	3,166.88	3,602.21	620.81	29,389.12	42,132.65
Knockbreda NS	5,827.42	15,719.49	8,056.65	3,314.32	6,653.11	39,570.99
Newtownards NS	7,333.39	14,888.74	928.63	1,644.55	1,313.31	26,108.62
Pond Park NS	2,188.73	12,837.34	2,607.65	9,162.25	14,836.50	41,632.47
Trinity NS	8,435.89	19,656.55	21,844.33	24,049.50	20,091.42	94,077.69
King's Road NS	23,028.16	-1,845.69	3,149.71	65,615.01	-1,583.17	88,364.02
Convent Of Mercy NS	15,258.40	13,708.94	10,927.42	1,515.74	18,172.29	59,582.79
Good Shepherd NS	2,559.79	2,606.27	26,425.39	1,854.65	4,376.72	37,822.82
Holy Trinity NS	14,826.10	7,700.97	5,426.02	19,549.31	6,651.38	54,153.78
St Colmcille's NS	14,251.05	11,667.90	4,735.86	851.36	3,594.07	35,100.24
St Kieran's NS	37,113.92	3,926.33	1,685.27	1,118.75	2,431.49	46,275.76
St Luke's NS	25,500.29	3,960.47	7,723.94	-271.81	2,322.31	39,235.20
St Therese's NS	3,429.64	2,079.47	2,140.59	12,492.55	21,108.00	41,250.25
Kircubbin Community NS	1,133.67	5,407.16	-11.75	46.44	2,062.18	8,637.70
Abbey PS	28,944.05	27,319.40	49,540.50	11,094.65	23,539.74	140,438.34
Academy PS	9,169.31	48,973.53	20,142.46	177,651.32	23,784.96	279,721.58
Alexander Dickson PS	22,779.60	13,314.55	9,197.35	11,385.12	12,614.07	69,290.69
Anahilt PS	5,146.69	17,925.75	22,652.44	16,491.11	6,529.41	68,745.40
Andrews Memorial PS	27,565.47	104,771.70	24,797.80	69,003.08	66,900.27	293,038.32
Ballycarrickmaddy PS	27,430.66	18,921.77	7,330.36	3,943.27	7,180.87	64,806.93
Ballycloughan PS	12,736.68	3,701.65	1,478.73	319.92	146.26	18,383.24
Ballyholme PS	12,553.49	17,250.49	21,422.19	15,515.99	29,782.74	96,524.90
Ballykeigle PS	19,925.07	3,427.91	8,348.34	7,742.60	270.00	39,713.92
Ballymacash PS	25,670.17	28,363.07	8,668.30	57,509.44	137,698.59	257,909.57
Ballymagee PS	29,643.64	46,196.48	21,559.77	9,767.88	10,726.76	117,894.53
Ballynahinch PS	68,446.92	-914.20	23,501.25	36,851.57	8,679.03	136,564.57
Ballyvester PS	14,549.37	8,927.55	8,165.31	6,765.64	6,686.67	45,094.54
Ballywalter PS	14,613.14	32,279.42	13,155.29	106,144.54	-19,181.94	147,010.45
Belvoir Park PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	90,914.70	32,341.01	12,039.63	64,579.47	27,824.55	227,699.36
Bloomfield Road PS	79,231.92	35,872.60	5,146.81	32,219.18	5,931.48	158,401.99

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Braniel PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	98,945.13	8,497.76	7,905.74	200,462.97	29,250.90	345,062.50
Brooklands PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	35,740.90	19,984.47	11,548.69	22,608.59	38,076.89	127,959.54
Brownlee PS	14,921.04	33,444.37	32,493.27	51,735.87	77,237.03	209,831.58
Cairnshill PS	62,380.57	23,809.00	8,136.78	4,082.49	136,677.68	235,086.52
Carr PS	6,731.38	8,003.60	17,029.28	13,586.82	10,136.38	55,487.46
Carrickmannon PS	10,364.91	9,295.48	9,970.17	7,052.01	7,257.34	43,939.91
Carrowdore PS	21,030.52	8,217.71	43,289.29	24,864.94	19,944.60	117,347.06
Carryduff PS	75,642.11	57,557.37	7,873.56	75,830.68	58,397.86	275,301.58
Castle Gardens PS	90,323.60	34,302.18	23,185.59	7,577.40	21,383.41	176,772.18
Castlewellan PS	22,244.66	15,777.06	17,411.82	9,093.05	20,881.19	85,407.78
Charley Memorial PS	264.91	586.26	-28.14	0.00	74.98	898.01
Clandeboyne PS	24,399.55	40,964.24	37,428.85	5,744.72	17,597.10	126,134.46
Comber PS	66,959.41	43,831.17	12,064.27	63,113.22	7,388.38	193,356.45
Conlig PS	72.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	72.00
Crawfordsburn PS	45,381.13	10,340.98	4,511.78	45,073.96	19,848.17	125,156.02
Cregagh PS	9,566.34	17,224.23	6,121.82	10,985.79	8,847.86	52,746.04
Crossgar PS	13,851.97	463.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	14,315.91
Derriaghy PS	33,387.22	31,424.34	668.00	0.00	1,575.00	67,054.56
Derryboy PS	8,112.58	12,287.76	6,242.21	13,374.04	13,447.55	53,464.14
Donaghadee PS	32,344.34	59,294.44	23,041.05	34,686.98	123,953.10	273,319.91
Downpatrick PS	11,603.41	46,070.45	10,777.35	21,459.11	64,317.68	154,228.00
CLOSED Downshire PS Dundrum	488.44	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	1,088.44
Dromara PS	25,658.25	23,787.09	21,208.71	18,403.81	6,473.77	95,531.63
CLOSED Drumbo PS	820.59	143.25	545.68	1,642.50	0.00	3,152.02
Dundonald PS	21,983.61	26,864.60	22,242.55	22,350.36	36,675.53	130,116.65
Dunmurry PS	21,344.43	14,832.66	63,488.06	5,568.17	16,853.01	122,086.33
Fort Hill PS	31,850.51	36,250.09	10,322.02	11,244.95	14,188.37	103,855.94
Gilnahirk PS	56,355.50	-3,628.16	15,036.84	29,203.17	24,172.50	121,139.85
Grange Park PS	11,506.42	8,185.56	29,131.99	101,895.29	118,353.95	269,073.21
Greyabbey PS	18,442.13	12,141.00	9,905.40	6,692.80	22,807.27	69,988.60
Harmony Hill PS	58,379.83	54,303.66	21,087.33	71,986.64	64,137.56	269,895.02
CLOSED Hillhall PS	205.78	2,138.25	-220.17	0.00	0.00	2,123.86
Hollywood PS	12,512.23	11,035.60	5,373.18	92,293.09	16,616.12	137,830.22
Kilcooley PS	79,169.21	72,659.07	73,895.06	25,735.74	35,351.68	286,810.76
Killinchy PS	32,463.56	34,462.58	9,729.94	18,450.15	61,611.17	156,717.40
Killowen PS	22,798.98	28,631.50	60,996.71	104,429.09	30,804.01	247,660.29
Killyleagh PS	10,922.80	9,258.88	10,394.16	11,828.10	8,564.72	50,968.66
Kilmaine PS	17,405.27	12,135.41	18,923.31	7,432.51	26,024.31	81,920.81
Kirkistown PS	15,847.12	6,285.10	11,386.43	31,396.63	6,319.35	71,234.63

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Knockbreda PS	30,073.52	74,284.59	4,433.39	3,125.50	12,466.57	124,383.57
Knockmore PS	45,253.68	17,084.79	7,410.11	1,810.78	42,767.11	114,326.47
CLOSED Lambeg PS	13,052.63	3,988.62	1,751.84	244.87	0.00	19,037.96
Largymore PS	15,941.26	22,672.03	10,459.20	20,400.04	34,114.69	103,587.22
Leadhill PS	21,336.58	45,310.35	-5,864.36	17,784.24	29,359.17	107,925.98
CLOSED Legacurry PS	0.00	56,271.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	56,271.60
Lisburn Central PS (Inc Nursery Wing)	18,878.18	60,334.54	52,859.65	8,142.72	26,429.19	166,644.28
Lisnasharragh PS	158,383.98	47,562.30	62,696.78	120,976.14	14,429.63	404,048.83
Londonderry PS	27,317.19	51,992.78	40,760.33	142,691.30	8,503.98	271,265.58
Loughries PS	5,728.60	33,735.60	-5,903.48	15,894.29	15,861.92	65,316.93
Lower Ballinderry PS	7,524.28	5,971.30	8,206.50	7,028.99	12,445.28	41,176.35
Maghaberry PS	14,968.67	19,218.57	3,235.58	5,340.40	22,460.81	65,224.03
McKinney PS Dundrod	25,667.11	22,027.25	15,587.13	48,336.14	7,994.83	119,612.46
Millisle PS	22,901.39	14,386.87	8,238.32	21,292.94	19,003.73	85,823.25
Moirá PS	32,861.82	27,287.28	10,561.21	37,639.51	35,676.44	144,026.26
Moneyrea PS	17,440.47	11,255.99	10,491.96	12,638.81	13,137.32	64,964.55
Newcastle PS	51,356.80	51,458.76	36,711.82	21,189.97	19,052.67	179,770.02
N'ards Model PS	12,733.76	31,164.87	26,620.02	9,131.91	40,288.26	119,938.82
CLOSED Newtownbreda PS	2,686.54	2,728.79	3,527.63	77.60	102.51	9,123.07
Old Warren PS	56,022.91	13,795.83	4,794.40	58,523.31	-24,022.45	109,114.00
Pond Park PS	5,917.61	4,893.73	8,525.14	13,739.82	18,343.12	51,419.42
Portavogie PS	15,151.20	24,351.11	18,554.36	42,912.45	26,782.85	127,751.97
Rathmore PS	12,313.37	40,741.53	37,180.87	115,161.64	48,460.64	253,858.05
Redburn PS	848.10	13,460.10	762.35	5,826.42	0.00	20,896.97
Seymour Hill PS	10,053.30	25,408.94	7,990.36	29,419.53	65,483.91	138,356.04
Spa PS	16,442.71	12,955.78	16,448.80	26,586.61	31,050.67	103,484.57
Tonagh PS	15,218.82	9,574.43	52,417.23	8,287.33	31,090.28	116,588.09
Towerview PS	240.48	3,369.69	8,002.53	3,936.10	20,143.70	35,692.50
Tullycarnet PS	12,539.56	8,880.57	32,477.01	3,914.87	17,180.17	74,992.18
Tyrella PS	1,844.85	11,199.32	-7,470.47	1,537.73	25,213.98	32,325.41
Victoria PS Ballyhalbert	2,180.75	2,305.66	2,348.66	3,309.23	3,162.01	13,306.31
Victoria PS N'ards	10,924.75	39,295.98	8,897.58	16,954.28	12,697.90	88,770.49
Westwinds PS	16,842.63	44,666.28	9,842.97	2,507.59	84,978.92	158,838.39
Downshire PS Hillsborough	16,627.55	25,928.70	21,188.00	12,440.59	29,337.37	105,522.21
Cumran PS	17,623.69	24,367.50	9,431.42	9,941.36	15,145.60	76,509.57
Riverdale PS	16,816.93	5,938.62	14,829.86	7,330.98	16,028.24	60,944.63
Meadowbridge PS	13,581.92	5,276.26	3,970.35	4,944.99	22,789.11	50,562.63
Glasswater Primary School	1,655.49	12,068.00	20,053.52	10,597.79	30,631.17	75,005.97
St Mary's PS Aughlisnafin	6,134.91	6,320.97	3,284.89	3,945.71	15,901.76	35,588.24
Ballymacricket PS	4,607.36	-1,405.90	10,975.65	6,687.79	5,617.91	26,482.81

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Ballymacward PS	12,259.97	4,257.14	4,279.78	9,059.48	19,051.36	48,907.73
Christ the Redeemer	34,954.03	17,978.89	19,012.35	27,863.22	30,300.95	130,109.44
Convent Of Mercy PS	13,628.51	36,007.69	-2,849.52	-3,895.14	0.00	42,891.54
St Caolan's PS	5,553.98	5,040.80	1,334.02	3,289.43	17,349.93	32,568.16
CLOSED Drumaghilis PS	349.29	636.91	454.56	-57.14	0.00	1,383.62
Christ the King PS	12,959.32	21,609.41	6,591.81	6,799.77	9,436.56	57,396.87
St Francis' PS	13,329.98	7,587.24	7,466.64	3,697.95	24,395.78	56,477.59
Good Shepherd PS	42,088.10	14,529.82	5,825.91	123,123.82	7,890.23	193,457.88
Holy Family PS	10,232.32	20,963.69	22,186.23	17,807.57	14,925.94	86,115.75
Legamaddy PS	47,629.26	18,834.94	33,496.93	27,537.05	11,360.02	138,858.20
Sacred Heart PS	10,924.93	24,334.66	21,107.80	14,052.91	17,781.23	88,201.53
Scoil Na Fuisseoige	86.64	17,451.20	3,983.45	551.86	4,831.83	26,904.98
St Aloysius PS	30,919.22	22,935.76	35,451.21	141,976.40	151,999.96	383,282.55
St Anne's Convent PS	5,172.29	19,860.23	2,133.55	573.53	6,779.65	34,519.25
St Bernard's PS	148,768.77	31,866.99	25,947.73	77,780.03	107,439.59	391,803.11
St Brigid's PS	37,259.68	24,084.36	18,739.41	31,958.95	70,389.35	182,431.75
St Colman's PS Lisburn	902.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,014.55	1,916.55
CLOSED St Colman's PS Moira	377.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	377.28
St Colmcille's PS -D'patrick	42,465.57	109,447.10	31,800.90	3,438.07	25,564.46	212,716.10
St Comgall's PS - Bangor	33,130.12	12,086.32	10,938.05	8,834.53	14,059.35	79,048.37
St Finian's PS	67,063.23	35,134.36	7,933.10	4,045.86	103,122.07	217,298.62
St Joseph's PS Ballycruttle	37,189.20	5,769.46	1,319.44	6,013.02	6,967.40	57,258.52
St Joseph's PS Carnacaville	49,901.17	27,941.73	9,301.61	25,791.56	9,585.27	122,521.34
St Joseph's PS Carryduff	15,906.96	3,216.49	644.98	635.03	2,461.87	22,865.33
St Joseph's PS Crossgar	6,208.61	5,400.29	2,520.90	9,550.79	4,861.89	28,542.48
St Joseph's PS Killough	47,651.79	35,598.62	402.85	21,363.66	15,231.77	120,248.69
St Joseph's PS Lisburn	41,263.03	45,814.46	33,285.36	16,022.89	66,762.25	203,147.99
St Joseph's PS Strangford	38,216.95	1,790.26	960.77	984.24	12,238.58	54,190.80
St Joseph's PS Tyrella	13,928.77	38,682.14	3,724.64	13,573.24	10,366.54	80,275.33
St Kieran's PS	70,853.10	61,938.32	13,651.28	69,521.03	25,446.22	241,409.95
St Luke's PS	115,764.19	-11,237.85	27,855.21	102,555.80	-1,141.28	233,796.07
St Macartan's PS	7,080.37	25,855.60	7,697.51	17,579.22	23,065.08	81,277.78
St Malachy's PS Bangor	617.67	38,176.77	14,308.47	27,011.91	61,511.21	141,626.03
St Malachy's PS C' wellan	132,714.93	31,881.59	14,792.69	26,516.71	58,324.88	264,230.80
St Malachy's PS Kilclief	7,299.71	-1,795.45	1,264.73	1,254.19	6,964.48	14,987.66
St Malachy's PS Kilcoo	25,735.20	11,258.18	13,577.94	301.67	22,442.46	73,315.45
St Mark's PS	58,732.94	16,315.51	126,036.62	10,688.22	26,494.96	238,268.25
St Mary's PS Ardglass	37,200.24	11,689.49	5,741.93	8,105.10	8,413.77	71,150.53
St Mary's PS Ballygowan	876.30	18,413.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	19,289.54
St Mary's PS Comber	16,019.24	4,318.10	1,429.47	2,444.09	4,939.16	29,150.06

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Mary's PS Killyleagh	57,291.01	-2,074.45	42,289.33	93,104.04	11,395.35	202,005.28
St Mary's PS Kircubbin	49,479.80	37,819.66	21,617.26	3,697.31	59,735.02	172,349.05
St Mary's PS Portaferry	80,968.36	33,083.50	116,699.68	26,421.66	19,493.40	276,666.60
St Mary's PS Saintfield	11,028.25	11,159.54	9,752.28	4,449.78	9,387.34	45,777.19
St Nicholas' PS	44,000.34	91,630.66	45,278.43	177,522.11	-20,672.51	337,759.03
St Pat's Boys' PS D'patrick	28,584.11	33,023.06	-19,908.13	0.00	0.00	41,699.04
St Patrick's PS B'nahinch	66,693.61	45,063.87	101,206.92	24,051.02	58,642.44	295,657.86
St Patrick's PS C' wellan	7,435.69	5,350.31	2,470.19	1,172.20	9,543.13	25,971.52
St Patrick's PS Holywood	49,622.48	13,748.03	4,799.79	10,582.90	36,346.74	115,099.94
St Patrick's PS Portaferry	27,790.04	4,486.57	8,203.09	1,102.68	21,024.64	62,607.02
St Patrick's PS Saul	5,125.44	5,156.69	4,884.09	1,733.90	11,462.06	28,362.18
Our Lady Queen of Peace PS (inc Nursery Unit)	5,082.15	9,075.00	5,006.84	12,283.23	17,880.29	49,327.51
St Mary's PS Newcastle	-1,899.33	15,671.53	7,785.40	1,978.54	4,973.89	28,510.03
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	33,310.20	5,313.89	7,527.20	27,337.74	-2,334.67	71,154.36
St Ita's PS	21,667.84	15,656.60	25,933.31	22,400.87	23,313.92	108,972.54
Our Lady & St Patrick's PS	0.00	0.00	48,575.37	148,523.61	61,820.16	258,919.14
All Childrens Int PS	8,668.75	10,864.82	6,535.18	4,314.96	12,631.90	43,015.61
Annsborough Int PS	11,217.00	15,357.01	3,769.64	5,241.05	2,837.09	38,421.79
Hilden Int PS	144.21	3,330.94	2,316.02	179.92	15,515.45	21,486.54
Portaferry Int PS	22,291.07	31,741.90	1,758.28	5,711.63	17,545.05	79,047.93
Bangor Central Int PS	252,849.55	129,906.36	25,683.26	64,638.44	78,647.19	551,724.80
Kircubbin Int PS	22,818.66	36,395.19	4,485.31	3,211.74	35,903.51	102,814.41
Glencraig Int PS	77,774.43	40,466.84	14,995.43	10,472.19	22,331.78	166,040.67
Nendrum College	346.50	434.85	173.53	67.00	74.07	1,095.95
Donaghadee HS	13,615.50	940.57	0.00	1,191.55	0.00	15,747.62
Dundonald HS	42,761.33	163,933.59	111,765.99	30,969.12	23,639.87	373,069.90
Dunmurry HS	81,953.68	115,486.63	17,966.77	14,604.01	0.00	230,011.09
Glastry College	44,389.70	96,800.82	43,790.78	50,143.10	115,744.41	350,868.81
Knockbreda HS	8,718.23	47,891.05	61,116.88	43,430.89	37,405.22	198,562.27
Laurelhill Community Coll	58,347.23	54,950.81	36,645.11	40,509.78	44,926.68	235,379.61
Lisnagarvey HS	144,575.17	80,824.33	103,423.60	35,088.06	145,302.72	509,213.88
CLOSED Lisnasharragh HS	43,196.09	7,360.70	1,841.10	3,089.91	10,627.47	66,115.27
Movilla HS	84,998.88	57,531.67	97,568.96	109,702.71	60,373.88	410,176.10
Newtownbreda HS	115,666.99	99,104.04	54,020.42	42,589.26	121,834.23	433,214.94
Saintfield HS	33,593.90	59,336.39	22,406.89	19,596.49	46,897.34	181,831.01
The High School B'nahinch	17,956.07	92,010.72	47,266.92	18,189.06	129,048.90	304,471.67
Bangor Academy	2,669.97	2,813.85	-894.00	67.00	239.91	4,896.73
De La Salle	296,856.27	63,918.37	58,224.20	28,711.31	53,667.07	501,377.22
St Colman's HS	146,523.39	26,925.83	17,356.32	269,409.64	51,237.94	511,453.12

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Colmcille's HS	26,559.99	40,455.99	19,824.74	28,544.80	41,553.87	156,939.39
St Colm's HS	88,925.19	77,321.93	218,773.01	136,495.22	86,612.86	608,128.21
St Columbanus' Coll	61,070.22	37,656.03	61,084.35	86,410.65	110,455.91	356,677.16
St Columba's HS	105,039.63	31,231.88	21,685.55	7,837.48	83,883.88	249,678.42
St Malachy's HS	69,730.45	88,079.53	61,447.82	95,653.99	39,169.01	354,080.80
St Mary's HS	40,337.39	68,766.61	89,525.44	52,337.90	154,298.87	405,266.21
St Patrick's HS	48,913.77	49,174.93	22,877.65	25,657.12	277,794.13	424,417.60
Fort Hill Int College	199,499.95	9,191.62	34,772.37	195,060.22	267,947.40	706,471.56
Priory Int College	21,724.08	37,874.00	64,950.63	126,542.31	92,249.96	343,340.98
Down HS	261,750.75	141,272.25	95,415.92	426,472.06	181,136.81	1,106,047.79
Glenlola Collegiate	31,086.98	21,223.96	22,402.08	16,782.93	53,600.76	145,096.71
Regent House	48,206.21	46,311.56	12,915.46	34,783.36	41,868.88	184,085.47
Ardmore House Spec School	14,797.10	29,499.40	60,507.29	22,858.31	24,373.61	152,035.71
Beechlawn Spec School	104,164.98	72,980.89	27,799.36	18,948.05	53,922.98	277,816.26
Brookfield Spec School	7,651.68	8,734.52	12,388.04	26,473.74	35,174.27	90,422.25
Killard House Spec School	45,433.91	63,144.87	23,917.29	18,477.08	42,627.71	193,600.86
Longstone Spec School	29,126.93	24,944.33	46,772.04	36,163.87	22,139.00	159,146.17
Clifton Spec School	33,050.81	15,060.72	9,961.61	28,576.22	21,160.17	107,809.53
Tor Bank Spec School	111,213.75	26,714.89	19,471.90	4,011.80	0.00	161,412.34
Parkview Spec School	79,236.40	43,381.28	43,168.07	10,119.13	27,235.93	203,140.81
Knockevin Spec School	23,749.38	28,765.29	18,333.28	11,793.55	123,806.60	206,448.10
Overall Totals	7,405,018.74	5,710,049.51	4,283,518.30	6,533,687.85	6,661,820.51	30,594,094.91

* In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments.

Information regarding Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools has not been included as this information is not held by the Department.

Elective Home Education

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how many children in the Southern Education and Library Board area receive elective home education.

(AQW 34486/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has advised that, at 1st January 2014, 58 children and young people were registered with the SELB as being home educated. However, the Department recognises there may also be other young people who are being home educated at home who are not currently registered with the SELB hence the actual figure may be higher.

Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy Requests

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how his Department works to respond to requests for voluntary redundancy from teachers; and what is the timescale for dealing with such requests.

(AQW 34618/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not offer a voluntary redundancy scheme for teachers, rather my Department has provided for a Cost Based Teaching Redundancy exercise to assist schools to reduce their cost base through a reduction in their full-time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers.

Guidance was issued to all Employing/Funding Authorities on 10 February 2014 advising of the process, with applications to be submitted to the Department by 16 April 2014 after the relevant Employing Authorities had completed their due diligence in respect of the applications they received.

During May 2014 my Department scrutinised the applications against the criteria; however, due to the difficult financial environment that the Executive is facing, the decision on the approval of teaching redundancy applications was delayed. On 28 May 2014 my Department advised Employing/Funding Authorities of the applications which were deemed not to meet the criteria after strict prioritisation (based on need) was applied and invited them to submit any further evidence that would support these applications. This additional information was scrutinised by my Department during June 2014 and each application placed in order of priority based on need.

I made my funding decision regarding the 167 applications for teaching redundancies on Thursday 19 June 2014, having considered the latest information available in respect of the overall funding position for both my Department and the Executive. Funding Authorities and CCMS were advised of my decision on 20 June 2014. Initially, 46 applications were approved and on Thursday 26 June a further tranche of 30 applications was subsequently approved.

As you are aware, I have bid in June Monitoring, for £10m in respect of severance.

The Executive has not yet agreed the June Monitoring paper.

School Maintenance and Repairs

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent on maintenance and repairs in each school in the Southern Education and Library Board, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34620/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details expenditure on maintenance and repairs in Controlled, Voluntary Maintained and Irish Medium Schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area in each of the last five financial years:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Abercorn PS	19,754.25	9,783.82	5,672.45	14,913.50	30,147.34	80,271.36
Aghavilly PS	12,990.88	4,078.25	1,538.30	3,020.70	1,199.00	22,827.13
Anamar PS	6,240.66	12,749.41	4,606.10	9,731.95	7,985.50	41,313.62
Annaghmore PS (Portadown)	852.60	0.00	4,819.88	0.00	61.07	5,733.55
Annalong PS	32,701.67	14,479.71	9,914.14	22,620.55	14,333.90	94,049.97
Ardmore PS (Lurgan)	337.44	2,011.95	2,341.51	0.00	0.00	4,690.90
Armagh Christian Brothers' PS	20,272.68	36,167.42	18,259.67	14,107.28	36,356.14	125,163.19
Ashgrove NS	1,899.04	5,565.55	3,455.19	1,112.59	2,099.13	14,131.50
Aughamullan PS	4,300.18	3,684.04	8,512.69	38,862.21	23,179.48	78,538.60
Augher Central PS	1,527.29	10,438.24	26,085.28	42,840.17	3,804.48	84,695.46
Aughnacloy College	55,186.13	15,801.56	59,845.63	36,693.65	206,124.80	373,651.77
Aughnacloy PS	14,176.54	12,485.83	32,886.80	87,062.90	26,618.49	173,230.56
Ballydown PS	33,195.26	10,781.38	23,943.39	22,864.16	35,418.05	126,202.24
Ballyholland PS	1,082.28	4,693.00	4,421.10	2,513.89	24,897.25	37,607.52
Ballylifford PS	2,607.43	7,848.08	4,945.06	7,732.32	103,333.49	126,466.38
Ballyoran PS	33,953.22	12,481.40	29,930.73	56,070.45	32,525.07	164,960.87
Ballytrea PS	6,269.44	8,686.96	3,945.81	5,129.16	8,282.48	32,313.85
Banbridge Academy	80,023.93	91,111.32	71,420.15	81,784.21	96,120.32	420,459.93
Banbridge HS	48,982.58	67,699.25	25,593.75	64,406.63	57,496.70	264,178.91
Banbridge NS	21,013.60	5,464.17	2,320.17	1,920.95	8,286.75	39,005.64
Benburb PS	1,437.87	1,491.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,929.02
Bessbrook PS	8,565.76	21,043.76	10,330.25	13,543.01	215,707.13	269,189.91
Birches PS	7,794.16	19,009.23	2,701.12	83,810.24	5,774.72	119,089.47
Bleary PS	9,213.27	7,494.96	16,341.85	10,059.01	14,592.66	57,701.75
Blessed Patrick O'Loughran PS	2,565.05	12,309.86	4,309.52	2,559.51	4,710.29	26,454.23

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Bocombra PS	24,407.03	19,051.84	11,999.24	31,640.60	11,877.11	98,975.82
Brackenagh West PS	5,358.07	9,158.13	9,257.39	16,365.32	5,880.44	46,019.35
Bronte PS	12,813.01	21,763.09	17,249.42	5,386.42	6,829.43	64,041.37
Brownlow College	40,588.24	39,863.87	36,753.09	40,321.70	73,784.64	231,311.54
Bunscoil an Luir	4,930.68	5,253.29	1,588.89	1,949.76	4,195.83	17,918.45
Bush PS	13,243.81	9,984.22	34,665.45	13,428.21	21,268.60	92,590.29
Carntall PS (Clogher)	4,877.44	14,421.92	19,205.67	7,646.83	7,928.51	54,080.37
Carrick PS (Lurgan)	33,578.52	18,307.32	21,017.12	47,001.40	52,003.08	171,907.44
Carrick PS (Warrenpoint)	4,129.14	4,873.95	3,463.87	3,381.02	3,870.95	19,718.93
Churchill PS	22,508.48	7,557.49	5,281.92	5,615.52	6,556.42	47,519.83
Churchtown PS	3,264.58	4,867.35	3,376.96	3,454.97	7,072.99	22,036.85
Clare PS	4,162.58	9,008.16	8,617.37	11,433.38	7,750.84	40,972.33
Clay PS	5,367.20	18,845.92	4,751.74	6,933.99	15,086.64	50,985.49
Clintyclay PS	5,243.20	3,310.42	7,674.21	2,443.66	1,965.00	20,636.49
Clogher Regional PS	3,805.50	2,561.10	1,851.21	2,216.04	0.00	10,433.85
Cloghoge PS	23,828.70	19,280.94	13,502.86	13,974.26	35,387.49	105,974.25
Clonalig PS	6,856.83	8,070.62	9,299.46	16,040.15	21,638.28	61,905.34
Clontifleece PS	7,332.24	1,521.29	7,500.58	18,921.98	2,416.54	37,692.63
Clounagh Junior HS	52,374.51	42,866.57	196,215.66	110,663.97	95,803.63	497,924.34
Coagh PS	8,726.34	4,905.86	20,923.51	4,829.08	3,782.95	43,167.74
College Farm NS (Armagh)	3,808.94	3,357.73	5,083.42	3,326.61	3,961.48	19,538.18
Collone PS	1,613.20	1,645.44	1,913.65	1,661.88	1,661.88	8,496.05
Cookstown HS	99,753.59	70,779.12	146,833.73	220,214.37	116,914.47	654,495.28
Cookstown NS	4,406.40	8,558.43	3,018.35	7,609.55	5,264.56	28,857.29
Cookstown PS	37,217.34	27,529.04	56,299.26	60,898.17	41,388.63	223,332.44
Cortamlet PS	3,274.57	9,262.04	10,012.21	9,429.71	19,310.16	51,288.69
Craigavon Senior HS	34,501.63	89,464.99	38,149.10	68,924.85	132,528.02	363,568.59
Crievagh PS	3,490.09	4,206.95	8,893.54	1,788.13	3,583.91	21,962.62
Darkley PS	4,148.69	4,845.71	30,669.70	8,005.67	9,633.92	57,303.69
Derrychrin PS	11,241.96	6,081.11	5,850.94	20,941.60	3,371.64	47,487.25
Derryhale PS	7,176.70	3,755.34	8,578.98	1,871.81	23,124.11	44,506.94
Derrylatinee PS	3,085.07	10,793.53	1,795.92	1,014.22	8,401.15	25,089.89
Dickson PS (Lurgan)	21,554.75	13,414.46	23,683.32	20,566.53	15,320.36	94,539.42
Donacloney PS	12,364.24	7,703.54	13,495.00	10,201.13	25,521.31	69,285.22
Donaghey PS	17,086.35	21,248.90	3,061.42	6,648.39	4,715.98	52,761.04
Donaghmore PS (Dungannon)	10,277.63	6,141.16	14,838.81	39,798.01	7,436.74	78,492.35
Downshire NS	5,026.86	7,868.68	5,240.79	17,543.25	5,926.09	41,605.67
Dromintee PS	3,609.46	2,437.31	687.27	1,460.04	14.68	8,208.76
Dromore (New Nursery)	7,362.32	4,998.04	7,773.23	3,895.26	2,502.48	26,531.33
Dromore Central PS	10,241.31	15,306.55	58,625.83	14,225.09	8,165.47	106,564.25

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Dromore HS	61,573.50	36,350.62	39,461.84	126,925.94	86,400.06	350,711.96
Dromore Road PS	2,645.41	3,874.06	5,441.89	4,999.52	8,061.60	25,022.48
Drumadonnell PS	23,220.68	6,882.71	22,679.18	5,002.47	6,502.62	64,287.66
Drumcree College (Portadown)	55,372.98	34,712.17	48,638.67	34,249.33	40,941.30	213,914.45
Drumglass HS	0.00	590.00	0.00	362.25	570.00	1,522.25
Drumgor PS	27,358.13	37,578.19	21,920.75	55,182.00	16,119.11	158,158.18
Drumhillery PS	6,939.08	17,909.01	5,101.00	6,971.20	5,293.41	42,213.70
Drumsallen PS	14,751.43	6,702.39	25,056.74	17,793.72	5,420.74	69,725.02
Dungannon NS	3,227.43	2,146.52	2,363.79	1,272.75	3,174.70	12,185.19
Dungannon PS	26,311.23	17,738.89	18,994.81	10,293.60	15,225.38	88,563.91
Edenderry NS	6,601.73	1,731.46	2,566.85	1,432.33	1,427.52	13,759.89
Edenderry PS (Banbridge)	12,732.53	20,742.87	16,544.03	19,802.63	28,535.12	98,357.18
Edenderry PS (Portadown)	32,815.17	11,610.91	8,937.77	16,121.35	38,837.61	108,322.81
Edendork PS	11,705.63	6,096.12	8,386.04	18,761.22	4,898.77	49,847.78
Eglisk PS (Dungannon)	1,585.20	2,539.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,124.69
Fair Hill PS	6,668.33	11,043.16	13,843.90	14,209.48	7,590.73	53,355.60
Fivemiletown College	48,125.37	45,671.98	45,652.51	44,725.03	86,932.80	271,107.69
Fivemiletown PS	23,858.67	22,352.58	8,711.08	14,402.27	16,612.71	85,937.31
F'miletown NS	2,219.94	3,223.94	1,577.22	2,096.87	5,610.57	14,728.54
Foley PS	20,684.82	4,784.63	10,249.56	12,462.58	62,120.18	110,301.77
Gaelscoil Aodha Rua	0.00	0.00	114.05	202.85	70.56	387.46
Gaelscoil Eoghain	0.00	0.00	0.00	122.00	5,621.08	5,743.08
Gaelscoil na mBeann	0.00	0.00	0.00	838.04	8,509.04	9,347.08
Gaelscoil Ui Neill	3,302.27	9,291.27	24,662.26	8,569.73	8,960.66	54,786.19
Gilford PS	25,405.61	11,163.98	25,152.77	21,012.49	14,013.51	96,748.36
Grange PS (Kilkeel)	2,701.14	8,426.23	10,715.77	8,284.59	5,667.09	35,794.82
Grove NS	16,977.67	11,645.90	4,268.44	4,918.88	37,397.45	75,208.34
Hamiltonsbawn PS	6,738.22	3,002.18	1,882.54	5,533.29	41,809.37	58,965.60
Hardy Memorial PS	9,122.88	30,592.48	9,898.57	13,191.27	17,320.22	80,125.42
Harrison NS	13,949.12	6,564.75	6,103.42	9,335.98	2,812.10	38,765.37
Hart Memorial PS	25,943.88	13,599.20	50,579.97	32,369.16	102,757.09	225,249.30
Holy Cross PS (Attical)	10,162.84	8,109.52	6,816.66	17,361.96	7,790.52	50,241.50
Holy Trinity College	93,246.97	20,398.14	57,850.88	34,437.67	120,705.61	326,639.27
Holy Trinity PS (Cookstown)	23,532.10	26,706.61	49,606.46	53,728.33	42,450.22	196,023.72
Howard PS	10,937.58	11,435.20	9,809.73	12,459.57	18,437.52	63,079.60
Iveagh PS	9,102.80	26,124.45	10,756.69	19,800.95	12,876.46	78,661.35
Jonesborough PS	748.65	14,481.54	5,676.46	5,576.31	17,066.94	43,549.90
Keady PS	3,644.86	5,306.52	4,654.65	7,592.87	664.58	21,863.48
Kilbroney PS	3,765.75	7,650.72	6,268.80	24,186.28	25,652.82	67,524.37
Kilkeel HS	56,349.12	74,082.73	53,103.35	66,193.66	41,516.18	291,245.04

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Kilkeel NS	10,283.02	5,283.57	5,283.64	4,151.60	4,447.60	29,449.43
Kilkeel PS	6,811.20	7,996.69	19,165.32	17,404.90	16,043.28	67,421.39
Killeen PS	40,800.43	5,741.46	4,239.14	12,911.96	31,770.56	95,463.55
Killicomaine Junior HS	57,189.17	108,383.52	19,783.47	31,245.32	201,450.61	418,052.09
Killowen PS	2,617.44	2,656.49	48,620.73	6,180.05	7,587.78	67,662.49
Killylea PS	6,952.80	5,406.53	16,497.00	13,958.68	12,236.18	55,051.19
Killyman PS	8,674.01	18,212.14	10,406.24	29,674.54	12,745.12	79,712.05
Kings' Park PS	54,215.10	27,994.59	68,350.73	44,038.37	235,972.66	430,571.45
Kingsmills PS	2,344.48	11,944.97	2,925.20	3,097.51	15,547.65	35,859.81
Laghey PS	2,900.96	5,539.61	1,400.60	6,118.32	4,225.12	20,184.61
Lisfearly PS	6,285.38	8,332.43	6,732.71	19,093.57	13,312.94	53,757.03
Lismore Comprehensive School	122,165.44	161,844.92	123,778.83	144,409.60	60,713.40	612,912.19
Lisnadill PS	4,445.14	5,867.33	5,198.02	5,181.91	10,144.61	30,837.01
Lissan PS	5,225.13	8,179.15	6,305.42	15,018.41	7,307.19	42,035.30
Little Flower NS	4,203.47	3,120.60	2,893.46	1,575.71	1,061.73	12,854.97
Lurgan College	83,133.34	65,798.73	58,722.01	119,884.19	61,629.82	389,168.09
Lurgan Junior HS	66,133.06	71,224.47	56,349.01	134,395.69	127,468.65	455,570.88
Lurgan Model PS	30,405.98	39,909.74	9,191.19	20,668.75	26,977.57	127,153.23
Maralin Village PS	6,910.55	7,663.92	5,796.25	13,172.45	14,716.80	48,259.97
Markethill HS	72,581.40	65,419.51	38,777.35	105,115.72	186,947.40	468,841.38
Markethill PS	26,063.64	27,453.63	7,304.34	7,985.35	252,697.32	321,504.28
Millington NS	15,725.83	6,495.35	9,517.58	8,663.45	17,865.24	58,267.45
Millington PS	58,370.68	17,728.89	34,500.41	134,620.15	210,394.91	455,615.04
Milltown PS	3,854.92	7,429.01	3,834.14	8,643.36	6,957.57	30,719.00
Minterburn PS	1,085.56	2,068.85	1,619.95	2,700.39	1,954.12	9,428.87
Moneydarragh PS	3,307.45	2,134.64	1,746.45	69,175.79	13,841.88	90,206.21
Moneymore PS	26,665.41	16,511.72	29,809.19	12,430.28	5,244.92	90,661.52
Mount St Catherine's PS	18,035.78	29,123.53	5,912.11	23,774.61	208,033.79	284,879.82
Mountnorris PS	6,925.65	7,254.84	5,772.01	5,208.69	9,596.56	34,757.75
Moy Regional PS	27,561.80	40,701.05	8,187.33	22,061.58	31,091.77	129,603.53
Moyallon PS	5,481.60	7,290.40	17,202.18	5,198.59	11,285.07	46,457.84
Mullaglass PS	3,264.56	14,214.13	6,514.60	8,643.21	11,540.52	44,177.02
Mullavilly PS	8,755.77	5,846.42	15,013.52	20,669.06	3,925.88	54,210.65
Newmills PS	4,338.09	9,700.84	2,337.94	5,501.01	13,787.96	35,665.84
Newry HS	20,297.62	39,692.76	180,378.54	157,766.68	135,935.82	534,071.42
Newtownhamilton HS	20,716.30	43,651.06	21,562.02	9,974.61	141,367.79	237,271.78
Newtownhamilton PS	4,395.80	6,285.03	468.17	1,274.20	1,655.24	14,078.44
North Lurgan NS	6,286.53	20,068.05	3,311.25	3,079.05	11,338.42	44,083.30
Orchard County PS	-11,631.47	7,920.18	5,875.58	32,515.53	8,307.59	42,987.41
Orritor PS	14,603.89	12,535.59	5,887.25	38,020.92	44,700.09	115,747.74

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Our Lady's PS (Tullysarran)	7,192.35	4,610.06	4,409.63	6,945.21	6,561.87	29,719.12
Our Ladys/St Mochuas PS	8,772.77	23,663.13	13,550.78	4,432.20	23,572.19	73,991.07
Portadown College	84,847.12	70,445.78	87,002.94	139,397.61	108,648.42	490,341.87
Poyntzpass PS	4,102.06	11,095.68	8,078.72	19,152.52	16,144.45	58,573.43
Presentation PS (Portadown)	29,649.34	14,581.97	13,702.38	13,852.87	15,785.46	87,572.02
Primate Dixon Memorial PS	34,989.29	15,134.41	23,760.61	25,174.96	12,349.62	111,408.89
Queen Elizabeth II PS Pomeroy	9,093.38	2,467.33	2,701.84	2,262.56	2,542.15	19,067.26
Railway Street NS	3,802.11	3,802.48	3,150.94	4,287.05	8,420.75	23,463.33
Rathfriland HS	41,135.70	35,384.96	39,982.80	69,036.05	27,773.75	213,313.26
Richmond PS	3,074.13	3,754.77	2,388.34	3,042.88	2,018.47	14,278.59
Richmount PS	-7,002.68	4,870.75	4,179.22	31,828.40	-11,902.03	21,973.66
Roan PS	9,229.64	21,935.86	8,379.27	7,604.62	7,869.08	55,018.47
Sacred Heart PS (Rock)	10,339.65	10,151.99	6,064.40	11,732.82	15,901.30	54,190.16
Scarva PS	19,371.66	4,995.48	4,013.42	19,080.75	117,303.48	164,764.79
Seagoe PS	20,401.93	23,893.92	18,034.71	19,042.43	38,725.59	120,098.58
Seaview NS	4,374.12	5,629.75	4,218.01	6,218.95	5,345.29	25,786.12
St Anthony's PS	30,472.24	15,317.56	17,900.25	38,713.50	41,883.71	144,287.26
St Brendan's PS	24,327.97	17,625.18	13,861.92	26,997.58	38,488.29	121,300.94
St Brigid's Boys' High (Armagh)	24,883.65	17,064.42	27,522.87	33,082.11	30,335.22	132,888.27
St Brigid's PS (Augher)	3,744.83	3,790.20	9,071.00	14,176.58	18,681.29	49,463.90
St Brigid's PS (Drumilly)	5,980.86	8,588.43	11,321.90	8,868.89	14,127.52	48,887.60
St Brigid's PS (Glassdrummond)	6,018.56	5,540.18	9,403.05	52,517.66	7,818.24	81,297.69
St Brigid's PS (Mountjoy)	10,110.50	6,893.14	7,130.05	7,382.21	11,797.45	43,313.35
St Bronagh's Primary	2,091.28	3,305.22	3,295.48	1,649.83	6,188.53	16,530.34
St Catherine's Coll	121,597.71	74,142.65	110,459.98	194,760.72	93,728.95	594,690.01
St Ciaran's High (Ballygawley)	137,868.93	133,612.47	121,732.98	74,478.14	51,577.54	519,270.06
St Clare's Convent PS (Newry)	47,397.33	11,779.33	30,905.29	15,415.64	14,542.46	120,040.05
St Colman's Abbey PS (Newry)	24,582.07	10,249.97	36,853.84	12,964.23	12,845.42	97,495.53
St Colman's PS (Annaclone)	4,641.38	4,870.92	6,804.60	14,139.83	7,598.61	38,055.34
St Colman's PS (Dromore)	2,865.34	4,503.75	3,544.10	10,991.60	24,420.35	46,325.14
St Colman's PS (Kilkeel)	42,996.50	8,792.13	12,286.91	29,858.07	13,886.60	107,820.21
St Colman's PS (Laurencetown)	40,906.01	7,244.75	8,369.08	8,943.74	7,950.37	73,413.95
St Colman's PS (Saval)	9,695.03	6,788.24	14,450.11	5,831.77	8,008.19	44,773.34
St Colmcille's PS (Armagh)	607.70	655.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,263.68
St Columban's Coll (Kilkeel)	31,350.60	12,905.75	10,174.48	23,599.05	14,803.59	92,833.47
St Dallans PS	11,746.53	27,023.16	12,847.50	9,442.92	12,267.43	73,327.54

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Francis of Assisi (Keady)	5,454.96	9,688.31	10,516.28	31,083.05	23,437.53	80,180.13
St Francis PS (Aghaderg)	8,029.98	14,674.60	11,627.96	10,560.58	11,747.02	56,640.14
St Francis PS (Lurgan)	60,279.66	12,863.20	56,089.51	122,820.13	44,260.20	296,312.70
St James PS (Drumatee)	3,933.42	5,201.69	3,017.97	3,778.55	2,679.67	18,611.30
St Jarlath's PS	31,966.85	6,228.31	13,532.22	6,747.83	18,919.17	77,394.38
St John The Baptist NS	2,017.12	3,316.82	7,714.47	3,626.36	9,187.63	25,862.40
St John The Baptist PS	53,436.19	-4,542.77	13,116.91	18,505.69	22,281.61	102,797.63
St John's New PS (Middletown)	14,118.29	4,721.14	4,501.96	7,787.17	4,632.91	35,761.47
St Johns PS (Eglish)	4,247.95	12,004.51	4,221.35	8,598.16	2,351.23	31,423.20
St John's PS (Gilford)	35,982.60	12,385.44	16,545.71	23,676.31	4,378.43	92,968.49
St John's PS (Glenn)	1,624.16	1,469.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,093.35
St John's PS (Kingsisland)	9,981.68	20,350.49	6,024.18	10,058.91	13,504.99	59,920.25
St John's PS (Moy)	10,329.65	8,275.74	6,363.79	6,509.11	16,111.03	47,589.32
St Josephs and St James PS Poyntzpass	7,634.69	5,351.05	6,457.11	4,511.17	5,479.70	29,433.72
St Joseph's Boys' High (Newry)	128,260.69	104,746.95	58,834.59	65,194.93	32,318.76	389,355.92
St Joseph's Convent PS (Newry)	38,656.43	36,907.76	35,410.19	18,054.71	9,531.84	138,560.93
St Joseph's High (C'maglen)	28,838.21	37,458.97	28,899.06	43,555.11	65,897.96	204,649.31
St Joseph's High (Coalisland)	65,499.62	65,534.62	61,464.61	64,133.70	23,134.32	279,766.87
St Joseph's PS (Ballymartin)	890.64	18,898.79	14,858.28	7,313.56	7,068.89	49,030.16
St Joseph's PS (Bessbrook)	10,043.94	11,497.97	37,090.21	13,998.82	23,026.21	95,657.15
St Joseph's PS (Caledon)	3,881.64	3,502.42	7,335.20	4,703.92	4,347.97	23,771.15
St Joseph's PS (Galbally)	18,549.05	21,216.98	12,195.28	10,770.26	32,208.06	94,939.63
St Joseph's PS (Killeenan)	5,753.81	40,899.13	22,357.51	19,590.31	11,558.13	100,158.89
St Joseph's PS (Madden)	7,621.20	5,671.02	1,590.20	4,222.32	923.68	20,028.42
St Joseph's PS (Meigh)	11,505.35	3,727.55	15,417.98	48,146.64	50,879.26	129,676.78
St Joseph's PS (Poyntzpass)	7,187.34	3,044.62	-630.73	2,055.00	713.90	12,370.13
St Laurence's PS (Belleeks)	2,677.11	6,381.37	6,807.98	11,797.88	11,356.94	39,021.28
St MacCartan's Convent PS	8,581.95	14,146.35	2,527.98	2,719.41	4,685.75	32,661.44
St Malachy's NS	7,101.83	6,100.30	7,752.11	4,208.71	2,533.91	27,696.86
St Malachy's PS (Armagh)	4,834.75	10,272.69	6,656.49	5,613.53	22,580.96	49,958.42
St Malachy's PS (Ballymoyer)	2,979.36	4,964.84	14,521.58	2,284.56	3,431.54	28,181.88
St Malachy's PS (Carnagat)	22,152.53	17,536.74	8,161.63	15,222.31	58,949.38	122,022.59
St Malachy's PS (Carrickcroppan)	13,260.77	25,298.22	17,869.84	7,189.80	14,021.78	77,640.41
St Malachy's PS (Drummullan)	9,485.98	6,212.88	7,094.64	5,117.79	19,697.85	47,609.14
St Malachy's PS (Glencull)	10,757.78	9,381.97	17,201.22	2,198.47	22,984.18	62,523.62

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Mark's High (W'point)	52,792.49	94,909.27	47,034.72	44,270.86	136,947.38	375,954.72
St Mary's Boys' PS (Rostrevor)	670.63	62.07	6,388.32	1,001.92	1,086.03	9,208.97
St Mary's Girls' Junior HS (Lurgan)	32,058.27	17,536.62	34,293.55	43,035.96	32,003.51	158,927.91
St Mary's High (Newry)	72,660.96	101,384.45	79,742.54	58,923.25	28,073.33	340,784.53
St Mary's PS (Aughnacloy)	17,383.24	6,176.55	11,528.46	14,242.11	15,826.70	65,157.06
St Mary's PS (Ballygawley)	5,427.66	6,355.60	2,579.33	3,898.97	9,155.96	27,417.52
St Marys PS (Banbridge)	7,634.17	22,845.73	23,083.41	9,566.78	21,925.36	85,055.45
St Mary's PS (Barr)	1,631.86	16,425.10	23,323.06	3,737.20	5,886.59	51,003.81
St Mary's PS (Cabra)	21,220.26	2,015.82	2,894.12	3,810.26	14,713.24	44,653.70
St Mary's PS (Derrymore)	15,162.45	9,557.33	2,906.23	18,549.41	107,666.46	153,841.88
St Mary's PS (Derrytrasna)	5,757.51	4,874.64	6,026.68	3,658.81	11,130.39	31,448.03
St Mary's PS (Dunamore)	3,109.33	17,453.69	70,996.29	28,084.20	21,729.34	141,372.85
St Mary's PS (F'miletown)	12,798.03	8,080.49	4,266.17	5,226.00	14,888.79	45,259.48
St Mary's PS (Glassdrumman)	3,995.07	6,405.44	7,045.32	12,929.22	11,846.98	42,222.03
St Mary's PS (Granemore)	31,510.84	8,045.73	8,631.87	10,209.27	14,268.18	72,665.89
St Mary's PS (Lisbuoy)	3,093.99	7,275.16	3,917.54	2,110.90	9,194.75	25,592.34
St Mary's PS (Maghery)	5,001.72	6,480.74	4,418.97	3,270.24	3,466.13	22,637.80
St Mary's PS (Mullaghbawn)	7,878.45	13,121.47	41,070.03	66,019.75	83,156.77	211,246.47
St Mary's PS (Pomeroy)	17,334.11	18,067.18	6,820.48	7,323.74	17,407.06	66,952.57
St Mary's PS (Rathfriland)	10,016.24	18,108.73	13,236.44	6,869.57	6,460.14	54,691.12
St Mary's PS (Stewartstown)	27,200.76	11,964.17	20,020.28	12,651.21	12,853.86	84,690.28
St Marys PS Dechomet	7,611.75	8,030.09	2,195.25	2,564.70	3,546.68	23,948.47
St Matthews PS (Magheramayo)	4,459.65	7,037.42	2,104.30	3,063.34	12,882.25	29,546.96
St Michael's PS (Clady)	13,180.38	2,910.94	2,909.29	4,534.00	4,463.00	27,997.61
St Michael's PS (Finnis)	3,581.45	4,317.34	11,661.84	17,431.36	6,694.06	43,686.05
St Michael's PS (Newtownhamilton)	14,885.83	1,754.43	9,207.40	10,152.85	4,027.17	40,027.68
St Oliver Plunkett's PS (Ballyhegan)	12,191.03	28,829.03	57,970.81	8,482.15	74,570.32	182,043.34
St Oliver Plunkett's PS (Forkhill)	5,575.66	6,353.12	1,617.57	3,193.57	-767.42	15,972.50
St Olivers PS (Carrickrovaddy)	6,962.63	1,863.26	1,538.27	18,343.44	10,435.62	39,143.22
St Patrick's (B'bridge)	31,174.71	36,835.75	44,186.11	158,772.31	367,679.04	638,647.92
St Patrick's Coll (D'gannon)	31,763.53	35,884.61	40,072.36	43,634.38	34,300.34	185,655.22
St Patrick's High (Keady)	55,816.31	42,669.34	38,767.89	64,724.02	35,460.03	237,437.59
St Patrick's PS (Aghacommon)	16,295.53	19,543.68	18,440.60	21,093.48	13,301.64	88,674.93
St Patrick's PS (Annaghmore)	29,258.39	4,929.40	6,370.11	23,401.38	7,443.21	71,402.49

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
St Patrick's PS (Armagh)	38,567.89	14,182.75	25,723.40	17,062.95	28,834.10	124,371.09
St Patricks PS (Aughadarragh)	30,563.18	2,665.03	5,125.95	3,999.09	6,427.05	48,780.30
St Patrick's PS (Ballymaghera)	23,618.44	9,415.48	16,540.95	44,428.41	13,530.74	107,534.02
St Patrick's PS (Crossmaglen)	44,388.87	25,954.08	20,580.85	26,881.32	187,846.43	305,651.55
St Patrick's PS (Cullyhanna)	20,088.19	18,752.88	23,062.54	29,162.00	40,619.06	131,684.67
St Patrick's PS (Derrynaseer)	15,969.55	16,725.10	5,141.13	17,949.49	7,265.89	63,051.16
St Patrick's PS (Donaghmore)	3,036.59	5,994.51	5,713.51	6,377.83	4,660.23	25,782.67
St Patricks PS (Drumgreenagh)	6,021.22	4,060.57	9,411.69	1,537.52	6,650.28	27,681.28
St Patrick's PS (Dungannon)	59,048.50	31,217.60	36,213.60	56,539.59	68,593.46	251,612.75
St Patricks PS (Loup)	4,756.29	8,031.91	13,499.78	4,077.13	69,056.84	99,421.95
St Patrick's PS (Maralin)	10,020.10	6,762.27	6,925.98	6,558.95	4,379.93	34,647.23
St Patrick's PS (Mayobridge)	4,481.61	12,675.88	36,563.95	7,800.66	9,293.42	70,815.52
St Patrick's PS (Moneymore)	24,711.46	18,940.11	24,934.46	9,870.92	12,898.04	91,354.99
St Patrick's PS (Mullinahoe)	3,147.51	8,115.38	38,789.71	3,873.54	4,283.63	58,209.77
St Patrick's PS (Newry)	18,452.15	22,016.09	56,506.89	49,868.83	12,350.41	159,194.37
St Paul's High (B'brook)	85,558.75	61,075.29	42,818.67	54,971.49	78,896.71	323,320.91
St Paul's High (Lurgan)	55,868.96	17,979.05	44,027.79	70,178.43	21,038.39	209,092.62
St Paul's PS (Cabra, R'friland)	8,269.33	4,119.28	7,007.65	6,614.28	4,780.34	30,790.88
St Peter's PS (Cloughreagh)	658.30	1,931.36	2,330.69	8,693.23	5,609.30	19,222.88
St Peters PS (Collegelands)	7,976.55	22,484.94	15,756.69	6,925.11	7,824.89	60,968.18
St Peter's PS (Moortown)	10,670.13	10,540.21	43,192.37	8,473.27	232,650.86	305,526.84
St Ronan's PS (Newry)	18,179.50	16,699.83	10,361.13	28,832.99	32,468.23	106,541.68
St Teresa's PS (Lurgan)	11,581.52	33,397.34	23,587.10	23,235.04	7,991.17	99,792.17
St Teresas PS, Tullyherron	1,710.11	4,494.16	7,232.80	30,662.80	6,708.48	50,808.35
Stewartstown PS	19,999.49	10,551.49	3,853.29	25,731.24	8,160.78	68,296.29
Tamnamore PS	672.96	89.14	175.82	0.00	0.00	937.92
Tandragee Junior HS	43,087.49	21,503.82	34,978.21	87,996.99	49,134.57	236,701.08
Tandragee NS	10,914.40	13,061.92	4,600.73	8,048.60	4,717.26	41,342.91
Tandragee PS	10,233.04	19,028.19	12,207.24	48,071.19	32,045.40	121,585.06
Tannaghmore PS	35,963.21	16,128.80	38,738.08	24,401.11	11,254.76	126,485.96
The Armstrong PS	34,502.20	16,472.25	27,399.08	31,353.20	54,868.72	164,595.45
The City Of Armagh HS	31,090.80	32,332.03	22,777.59	37,839.77	26,138.71	150,178.90
The Cope PS	7,709.80	7,378.19	19,494.32	6,594.74	195,187.07	236,364.12
The Drelincourt PS	5,291.52	3,352.62	3,826.63	3,666.87	7,363.43	23,501.07
Tullygally PS	23,988.98	26,941.18	32,962.30	34,707.12	23,651.69	142,251.27

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Tullymacarette PS	165.69	58.59	0.00	44.37	0.00	268.65
Walker Memorial PS	13,895.33	5,800.11	7,813.07	29,500.53	11,091.76	68,100.80
Waringstown PS	11,825.39	10,643.92	12,287.57	24,230.11	13,529.98	72,516.97
Windsor Hill PS	6,029.17	5,233.81	3,374.82	4,896.41	58,985.53	78,519.74
Woods PS	8,828.82	8,600.78	9,971.13	7,359.87	8,383.32	43,143.92
Overall Totals	5,461,444.69	4,901,735.12	5,445,534.05	6,806,076.06	8,910,829.47	31,525,619.39

* In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments

Information regarding Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools has not been included as this information is not held by the Department.

Illuminate

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education for an update on the introduction of Illuminate for pupils and students who are unable to attend due to illness.

(AQW 34680/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Illuminate is an online collaboration tool, incorporating video streaming, which is available to all of our schools and has been used successfully for some time. Illuminate should not be considered the only appropriate e-Learning tool that can be used to help pupils who are based at home due to illness; it is just one of a number of available e-Learning tools.

The Joint Working Party (which is comprised of representatives of the teaching unions and employing authorities) set up a working group to develop a protocol on Home to School e-Learning. This protocol is currently in draft and it is expected that it may be finally approved in the Autumn (2014).

Examinations: Irregularities

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of schools where irregularities in the examinations process are alleged to have taken place; and what action was taken in each case.

(AQW 34709/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the January 2014 and June 2014 examination series, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has dealt with 51 irregularities (instances of alleged malpractice) originating from 32 centres, including 1 centre in England. 40 of these relate to alleged candidate malpractice and 11 to alleged teacher malpractice or centre maladministration.

Each instance has been, or is currently being, investigated and managed by the CCEA Malpractice Committee in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) policies and procedures.

Of the 40 allegations of candidate malpractice, 24 cases have been closed and penalties were imposed in 20 of these. Details are shown in the table below.

Penalty	No. of Candidates
Written Warning	9
Loss of all marks for the Unit	10
Disqualification from the Unit	1

Only one of the cases of alleged teacher malpractice or centre maladministration has been closed, with no sanction being applied.

Schools: Capital Funding in North Down

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education (i) to list the schools in North Down that sought capital funding for new school buildings; (ii) what each school scored in each of the criteria against which the proposals were judged; (iii) each school's total score; and (iv) the score of the lowest scoring school to receive capital funding, as announced in his statement on Tuesday 24 June 2014.

(AQW 34710/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board, having consulted with School Authorities, forwarded the following schools for consideration as potential new build projects in North Down:

(i)

Primary Schools	Post Primary Schools
Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	Priory College
Crawfordsburn Primary School	St Columbanus College
Grange Park Primary School	Sullivan Upper School
Hollywood Primary School	
Rathmore Primary School	

(ii) and (iii) As outlined in my Statement on Tuesday 24 June each proposed project on the list was taken through the protocol process and hence was subject to a number of 'Gateway Checks' including ascertaining any sustainability or outstanding area planning issues. Any schools deemed to have unresolved 'gateway' issues were not considered further. Priory College and St Columbanus College did not pass the gateway checks.

The scores for the remaining schools are set out below:-

Name of School	Rationalisation	Operating on Split Sites	Condition of Accommodation	Suitability of Accommodation	Reliance on Temp Accommodation	% of SEN registered pupils	% of pupils eligible for FSM	School Enhancement Project	Total
Bangor Central PS	0	0	1.10	12.45	5.00	0.48	5.96	0	24.99
Crawfordsburn PS	0	0	0.77	12.23	5.88	2.70	2.21	0	23.80
Grange Park PS	0	0	4.63	12.99	1.25	0.58	2.55	0	21.99
Hollywood PS	10	0	2.79	7.17	2.86	1.45	3.35	0	27.62
Rathmore PS	0	0	6.89	3.49	1.48	0.59	2.15	0	14.60
Sullivan Upper School	0	0	0.51	16.00	1.06	0.76	0.01	-5	13.35

NB: Rounding of individual scores may result in some lack of correspondence in row totals.

(iii) The score of the lowest scoring school to receive capital funding in the Primary school sector was 44.63 and in the Post Primary sector was 31.00.

Buddy Up Programme

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to secure the future of the Buddy Up programme between Holycross Nursery, Boys Primary and Girls Primary Schools, Edenderry Nursery School, Glenwood Nursery School, Wheatfield Primary School and Community Relations in Schools; and how can they involve the participations in the future roll-out of the Buddy Scheme as part of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.[R]

(AQW 34711/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education has not contributed to the 'Buddy Up' programme supported by Community Relations in Schools (CRIS).

The Education and Library Board led Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Enhancement scheme provides funding for cross community work in statutory nursery, primary and post-primary schools. In the absence of other sources, the schools may be able to apply under the terms of the scheme although the level of funding is limited.

The Department of Education is taking forward the commitment set out in Together Building a United Community to roll out a buddy scheme in all publicly funded nursery and primary schools.

Department of Education officials met with Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) representatives in late 2013 to discuss the CRIS programme. They have also engaged with the Education and Library Boards colleagues to discuss how a buddying scheme might be delivered across the North. Officials are developing a business case and no model to deliver the programme has been agreed.

Schools: Capital Building East Londonderry

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education, further to his Statement on the School Capital Building programme on 24 June 2014, when a new school in the controlled sector will be commenced in the East Londonderry constituency.

(AQW 34718/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Only one school, Ballykelly Primary School, from East Derry constituency was identified as a priority for new build by its managing authority, Western Education & Library Board (WELB).

A protocol was applied to prioritise the potential major works projects announced on 24 June. The outcome of this was that Ballykelly Primary School did not achieve a high enough ranking when the protocol was applied and therefore it was not one of the schools included in the announcement.

The protocol can be viewed at:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/protocol_for_selection_for_the_selection_of_major_capital_works_-_24_june_2014__pdf_290kb_.pdf

Teachers: Redundancies

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education when was it known that 93 teacher applicants had not met the criteria for redundancy approval; and why this information was not immediately conveyed to the individuals and schools affected.

(AQW 34755/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I made my funding decision regarding the 167 applications for teaching redundancies on Thursday 19 June 2014, having considered the latest information available in respect of the overall funding position for both my Department and the Executive. Funding Authorities and CCMS were advised of my decision on 20 June 2014. Initially, 46 applications were approved and on Thursday 26 June a further tranche of 30 applications was subsequently approved.

Schools: Solar Panels

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education (i) what funding has been set aside for installing solar panels on schools; (ii) who controls this funding; (iii) what body decides which schools should receive solar panels; and (iv) to outline the tendering and contracting processes.

(AQW 34764/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) I have agreed to invest up to £10 million to fund a range of energy efficiency measures across the schools' estate in 2014/15. The installation of solar panels is one aspect of this programme. Other energy efficiency measures which will be considered under the programme include the conversion of heating systems from oil to gas; boiler upgrades; replacement of single glazed windows with double glazing; roof insulation and the installation of energy and water monitoring systems. Under the programme £1 million has been allocated to each Education and Library Board (ELB) for works on controlled schools; with a further £1 million being made available for non-controlled schools in each Board area. The portion of the £10 million programme used for the installation of solar panels will be determined following sifting and scoping applications from the schools.
- (ii) ELBs will control the funding for controlled schools and the Department will oversee funding for non-controlled schools. A Programme Board will be established to provide strategic oversight of the programme.
- (iii) The Department, ELBs and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) are currently assessing the applications to ensure each school is viable and sustainable. The list will then be passed to the relevant ELB who will proceed with scoping each school site. This will inform the decision on whether a school will receive solar panels. ELBs will make the decision in respect of controlled schools while the Department will make the decision for non-controlled schools.
- (iv) ELBs will manage the procurement process for both the professional services to scope and design the works, and the work to procure and install the equipment. This will be through an invitation to tender process or using existing Term Service Contract, as deemed appropriate by the ELBs. These services are supplied by the ELBs to non-controlled schools under the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between the ELBs and the Department.

Abbey Community College

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Education where the new build for Abbey Community College will be built; and for an estimated time period for this work to be completed.

(AQW 34765/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The location of the school will be a matter for consideration in the economic appraisal that will be prepared for the capital project.

In my Statement of 24 June I said that different projects will progress at different speeds and given the likely timescales required to complete the economic appraisal, design and procurement processes, significant spend is unlikely before financial year 2016/2017. Progression of this project to construction stage is also dependent on the availability of capital budget however the school should have a valid expectation that construction will follow within a reasonable timescale.

CCEA: Industrial Action

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what assurances he can give that the stop-gap measures taken to mitigate against the ongoing industrial action with staff in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) have not compromised, and will not compromise, the integrity of CCEA examination results.

(AQW 34767/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have received assurances from CCEA that its summer series examinations will not be adversely affected by the action being taken. The industrial action does not apply to its contracted teams of expert examiners. Therefore, marking will continue as normal and grades issued as scheduled.

The action is being taken by a small group of staff who provide support to the examining teams and contingency plans are in place to ensure that the examining teams continue to receive the support they need to undertake and complete this very important work.

Elective Home Education: Regional Strategy Group

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to list the attendees at meetings of the Regional Strategy Group when the issue of Elective Home Education has been discussed.

(AQW 34768/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chairperson of the Regional Strategy Group on Special Educational Needs has confirmed that the attendees at meetings of the Group when the issue of Elective Home Education was discussed were as follows:

19 November 2012

- Acting Chief Executive – WELB (Chair)
- Assistant Senior Education Officers – NEELB, SEELB, SELB, WELB
- Principal Educational Psychologists – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, WELB
- Special Education Advisors – NEELB, SELB
- DE – Principal Officer Special Education Team, Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team, Deputy Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team
- 13 May 2013

Chief Executive BELB (Chair)

- Assistant Senior Education Officers – BELB, SEELB, SELB, WELB
- Principal Educational Psychologists – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, WELB
- Special Education Advisor – NEELB
- DE – Principal Officer Special Education Team, Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team, Deputy Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team
- Also in attendance - Principal Officer Area Planning Policy Team and two representatives from Health and Social Care.

3 June 2013

- Chief Executive BELB – (Chair)
- Assistant Senior Education Officers – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, SELB, WELB
- Principal Educational Psychologists – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, WELB
- Special Education Advisors – NEELB, SELB
- DE – Principal Officer Special Education Team, Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team, Deputy Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team
- Also in attendance – one representative from CCEA and three representatives from the Public Health Agency.

3 March 2014

- Chief Executive BELB – (Chair)
- Assistant Senior Education Officers – NEELB, SEELB, SELB, WELB
- Principal Educational Psychologists – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, WELB
- Special education Advisors – NEELB, SELB

7 April 2014

- Chief Executive BELB – (Chair)
- Assistant Senior Education Officers – BELB, NEELB, SEELB, SELB/WELB
- Principal Educational Psychologists – BELB, SEELB
- DE – Principal Officer Special Education Team, Principal Officer Special Education and Inclusion Review Team
- Education and Training Inspectorate – Managing Inspector

Post-primary Places

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many P7 children in each Education and Library Board area have yet to be allocated a post-primary place for September 2014.

(AQW 34770/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that at 26 June 2014, the number of P7 children in each area who have yet to be allocated a post-primary place for September 2014 are as follows:

Belfast ELB	2
Western ELB	12
North-Eastern ELB	2
South-Eastern ELB	10
Southern ELB	5

Teachers: Redundancy Offers

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many schools will be forced into a deficit situation as a result of redundancy offers being withdrawn.

(AQW 34771/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since 2011, I have implemented a strategic cost reduction programme. This was required so that the Education sector could live within its very challenging budget position over the 2011-15 Budget period.

A cost reduction teacher redundancy programme was initiated by the Department in February 2014. All applications have been assessed and prioritised against strict criteria. Of the applications, 76 met the criteria and I have authorised the funding of these redundancies.

The remaining applications have not been approved as they do not meet all of the criteria.

Irish Language: Examinations

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how many children attained Grade A or A* in (i) A-level; and (ii) GCSE in the Irish language, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34775/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The answer is contained in the table below:

	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Year 14 pupils achieving grade A or A* in A-level Irish	167	54.4	155	56.2	142	50.2
Total year 14 pupils with entries in A-level Irish	307		276		283	
Year 12 pupils achieving grade A or A* in GCSE Irish ¹	713	43.1	570	39.6	622	38.5
Total year 12 pupils with entries in GCSE Irish ¹	1656		1441		1615	

Source: RM Education

1 Excludes Gaeilge

Irish-medium Education

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how many children from a (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary Irish medium education background are attaining Grade A or A* at (a) GCSE; and (b) A Level, compared to the number of children from a non-Irish-medium education background.

(AQW 34776/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Based on the format of examination entry information held by the Department, it is not possible to match individual grades awarded at GCSE and A-level to those pupils educated in Irish medium primary schools or Irish medium units in post-primary schools. However, as the format of the data held does enable grades to be attributed at a post-primary school level, the table below presents the requested information for Colaiste Feirste along with all other NI post-primary schools including those with Irish medium units.

Pupils attaining at least one grade A or A* at GCSE or A-level, 2012/13

Number		GCSE		A-level	
		%	Number	%	
All Subjects	Colaiste Feirste	73	93.6	15	33.3
	All other NI post-primary schools ¹	11645	50.5	4859	43.3

Source: RM Education

1 Excludes Colaiste Feirste pupils, but includes those from Irish medium units in other schools.

Schools: Local Produce

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education (i) what was the annual expenditure on food in schools in each Education and Library Board, in each of the last three years; (ii) of this total expenditure, what was the expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether this food is clearly identified as having been produced in Northern Ireland on menus and at point of service.

(AQW 34788/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The expenditure on food costs by each Education and Library Board in the last three financial years is as follows:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BELB	£2,560,688	£2,546,223	£2,922,337
NEELB	£2,765,870	£2,884,918	£3,151,003
SEELB	£2,130,000	£2,477,000	£2,714,000
SELB	£3,900,579	£4,092,721	£4,421,723
WELB	£3,475,000	£3,450,000	£3,734,000
Total	£14,832,137	£15,450,862	£16,943,063

The Boards do not hold records which break down expenditure between food produced in the north of Ireland and food produced elsewhere.

The Boards do not identify at service points or on menus if the food is produced in the north of Ireland.

Teachers: Redundancy Payments

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Education why funding is not available to provide redundancy payments to teachers.

(AQW 34798/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have provided funding for 76 teacher redundancies which were deemed to meet all 4 criteria of the cost reduction school based teaching redundancy process.

The remaining 91 applications have not yet been funded as they are deemed not to meet all 4 criteria of the cost reduction school based teaching redundancy process. Further scrutiny is ongoing in respect of these remaining applications.

Glastry College, Ballyhalbert

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education when the boiler, roof and window replacement work will begin at Glastry College, Ballyhalbert.

(AQW 34804/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As Glastry College, Ballyhalbert, is a controlled secondary school, the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) is responsible for capital works at the school.

The SEELB has advised that a replacement boiler has been ordered and it is anticipated that it will be installed, tested and commissioned by 31 August 2014. Extensive roofing repair works have been designed and are currently being priced with a view to the work being completed by 31 March 2015. Replacement windows are also currently being designed however it is unlikely that the SEELB will be able to carry out the work in the 2014/15 financial year. The SEELB will revisit this project and consider it in conjunction with the competing needs of the whole controlled estate in 2015/16.

Ballee Community High School

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the process for the disposal of the Ballee Community High School, following its closure in August 2014; and whether any agency has indicated an interest in utilising the site.

(AQW 34811/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Before a decision to dispose of any school in the controlled sector is reached, the relevant Education and Library Board (ELB) will ascertain if it has further alternative educational use for the premises. Once confirmed that the ELB no longer needs the premises, it is then established if there is interest from any other educational body. If none is determined, the ELB will commence the formal disposal process, with the approval of my Department.

Disposal is in line with the guidelines in the Land and Property Services' document 'Central Advisory Unit – Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in NI (March 2013)'. These guidelines apply to all Government departments.

Further information regarding the disposal process for all schools and the LPS document can be found at: http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/13-schools_estate_pg/schools-estate-disposals-and-grant-recovery.htm

Ballee Community High School is under the management of the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB). NEELB has not yet formally declared this property surplus to requirements nor has any agency indicated an interest in utilising the site following the school closure.

School Reports: Access by Absent Fathers

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Education what rights absent fathers have to access their childrens' school reports.
(AQW 34812/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The general rights of parents to information on their child's education, including the annual pupil report, are detailed in the Education (Pupil Reporting) Regulations (NI) 2009. These Regulations outline the minimum information that the report must contain along with details on the timing and manner of provision. Individuals involved in disputes in this area may also wish to obtain legal advice on the specifics of their case.

A copy of the Regulations can be accessed at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/2009/nisr_20090231_en_1

Schools: New Capital School Builds in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, further to his Statement on 24 June 2014, for an update on the progress of new capital school builds in North Down.
(AQW 34825/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no new capital school builds in the North Down constituency at the present time.

Schools: Small Works Contracts

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the tender process for contractors for small works in schools, to explain the reasons for the variation between (i) retention percentages; and (ii) the length of time that the retained money is held back from contractors, across the different Education and Library Boards.
(AQW 34841/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Four of the Education and Library Boards use the same figure of 5% for retention percentages for minor works. The same four ELB's release half of this retention at the completion of the work and will normally hold back the remaining 2.5% for 52 weeks.

The Belfast Education and Library Board have two main procurement processes neither of which uses retention. When negotiating its Strategic Partnership Agreement the contract did not extend to include retention. BELB also uses Term Service Short contracts which, as part of their terms, do not include retention.

Down's Syndrome: Expenditure

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 34251/11-15, how much was spent on children diagnosed with Down's syndrome, with a statement of Special Educational Needs, in each Education and Library Board, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 34846/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that they are not able to provide actual spend on pupils with Down's syndrome. As I stated in my response to AQW 34251/11-15 funding is linked to individual needs with each child accessing a range of provision and special educational needs (SEN) services as identified within each child's statement of SEN. It is, therefore, not possible to attribute costs specific to each child.

Down's Syndrome: Statement of Special Educational Needs

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how many children with Down's syndrome were in receipt of a statement of Special Educational Needs in each Education and Library Board area, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 34848/11-15)

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

Number of statemented pupils with Down's syndrome by ELB, 2011/12 – 2013/14

Year	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
2013/14	44	116	114	103	128	505
2012/13	41	108	109	97	128	483
2011/12	41	105	104	96	122	468

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 1 Figures include funded children in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
- 2 Figures refer to the ELB in which the school the pupil attends rather than the ELB in which the pupil is resident
- 3 Figures include pupils at stage 5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice only.
- 4 Pupils in the figures above do not necessarily have a statement because they have Down's syndrome
- 5 Data refers to any special educational need rather than primary need

Entitlement Framework

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education how schools are expected to fulfil the Entitlement Framework in its final implementation stages given the proposed cuts in key stage 4 and 5 according to circular 2014/15 issued on 10 June. **(AQW 34860/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: You will be aware that additional Entitlement Framework funding support has been provided as a contribution to the costs associated with developing an expanded curricular offer at Key Stage 4 and post 16 and that I extended this support to the end of this budget period. It has always been the intention that Entitlement Framework funding would be a transitional contribution rather than a permanent funding stream.

Schools are funded through their core delegated budget to deliver their statutory obligations, including the curriculum. Following full implementation of the Entitlement Framework I expect that the delivery of all aspects of the curriculum, including the Entitlement Framework will be mainstreamed in schools and across all Area Learning Communities. However, I will continue to explore funding in future years if it is available.

Schools: Lisanelly Campus

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether any schools on the Lisanelly campus will have ownership of their sites; and to outline the plans for ownership for the site. **(AQW 34887/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The ownership of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus in Omagh rests with the Department of Education. My officials will work with the relevant school managing authorities regarding any legal arrangements necessary to ensure the effective operation of the individual schools involved on the site.

Schools: Development Proposals

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33626/11-15, to list the (i) decisions made on development proposals in the last twenty four months; and (ii) development proposals outstanding to (a) increase; and (b) decrease places. **(AQW 34888/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: A record of current development proposals and decisions made in the last twenty four months is available on my Departments website.

http://www.deni.gov.uk/14-schools_estate_devprop_pg.htm

Schools: Transformation or Closure

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has advised Education and Library Boards to carry out public consultations on development proposals for the transformation or closure of a primary or post-primary school during the months of July and August. **(AQW 34889/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The Department has no direct role in the Development Proposal (DP) process prior to publication of a DP, and does not determine when Education and Library Boards carry out their public consultations on potential DPs.

The legislation underpinning the DP process, Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, outlines the statutory consultation that must be undertaken before a DP is published. The Board or person making the proposal must consult with the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents of pupils and the Board must also consult with other schools which would, in their opinion, be affected by the proposal. Following publication of a DP there is a two-month period during which comments can be sent directly to the Department.

Teachers: Exemption at Secondary-level Education

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether his Department or the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister plan to carry out a public consultation into changes in teacher exemption at secondary level, now that the introduction of Education and Skills Authority has been postponed for the foreseeable future.

(AQW 34890/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: OFMDFM has responsibility for this legislation, which governs the exception.

Muscular Dystrophy

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary; (ii) post-primary; and (iii) special educational needs school pupils have been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy.

(AQW 35014/11-15)

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

Number of pupils recorded with muscular dystrophy, 2013/14

School Type	Number of pupils
Primary	21
Post-primary	17
Special	15
Total	53

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- 6 Figures include funded children in primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
- 7 Figures include pupils at stages 1-5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- 8 Data refers to any special educational need rather than primary need

Department for Employment and Learning

Developmental Disabilities

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 33777/11-15, to detail the expenditure incurred by his Department to increase the employment opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities in the last three years.

(AQW 34366/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The Department for Employment and Learning provides a range of services, programmes and support options to young adults with developmental difficulties, in order to prepare them for work, and then to directly assist them to progress towards, move into and sustain paid employment.

This provision transcends departmental services, including specialist Careers Advice, Further Education, Skills Development, as well as a number of disability employment and employability programmes.

In addition to the significant human resource and other running costs associated with the direct delivery of these services by departmental staff, the Departmental budget expenditure incurred to increase the employment prospects and opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities in the last three years is as follows:

Disability Employment programmes

Workable (NI)

The expenditure on 16 to 24 year old clients with a learning disability or difficulty on the Workable programme:

- 2011/2012 - £49,880.00
- 2012/2013 - £49,880.00
- 2013/2014 - £49,880.00

Total expenditure on Workable during the three year period was £149,640.00

Access to Work (AtW)

The expenditure on 16 to 24 year old clients with a learning disability or difficulty on the Access to Work programme:

- 2011/2012 - £10,710.24
- 2012/2013 - £43,354.89
- 2013/2014 - £68,752.90

Total expenditure on AtW during the three year period was £122,818.03

Work Connect.

The Work Connect programme commenced in September 2012. Expenditure on 16 to 24 year old clients with a learning disability or difficulty on the Work Connect programme:

- 2012/13 - £19,733.00
- 2013/14 - £5,832.50

Total expenditure on Work Connect during the three year period was £25,565.50

Parkanaur College, Dungannon

Expenditure on the students attending Parkanaur residential vocational training college:

- 2011/12 - £193,584.00
- 2012/13 - £258,286.00
- 2013/14 - £327,974.00

Total expenditure on Parkanaur College during the three year period was

£779, 844.00

Further Education provision and expenditure

The Department currently provides £4.5 million of ring-fenced funding per annum to Further Education (FE) colleges through the Additional Support Fund (ASF). This fund helps provide additional support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD), to enable them to complete a course of study and progress to further study or employment.

The table below shows the most recent available data on the number of student enrolments with moderate to severe learning difficulties and the associated SLDD funding received by the colleges. In addition to the funding below, £2 million was allocated in each of those years through the ASF. As a result of the continued increase in the number of enrolments, the Department has increased the overall ASF allocation by £1 million per annum for 2013/14 and beyond.

Year	Enrolments	£
2010-11	2483	£1,981,278
2011-12	2467	£1,992,982
2012-13	3094	£2,615,832
Total	8044	£6,590,092

Training Programmes

Training for Success

The Training for Success (TfS) programme has four strands and provides a guaranteed training place for all eligible unemployed young people aged 16 and 17, with extended eligibility for those with a disability up to age 22.

Two strands, Skills for your Life and Skills for Work, focus on those young people who have barriers, including learning and other developmental difficulties, and the training and support offered aims to address these and to help the young people to benefit from training.

Disability related funding for TfS

The Department's additional financial support to enable young people with a disability to participate on the TfS programme includes the following:

- A weekly training fee premium to help Suppliers provide significant additional input of resources (e.g. training time, equipment, or support) in order for the disabled participant to benefit fully from the training;
- Taxi costs to and from the Supplier's premises where it is accepted that public transport is not a suitable or viable option for a young person with a disability; and
- Contracted support for the main delivery partners of TfS, provided by a number of local disability organisations who specialise in the area of employment and training for people with learning difficulties and other disabilities.

Expenditure

The figures below represent the amount paid in respect of those participating in Training for Success over the past three financial years, who are recorded as having a disability.

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
£17,462,041	£17,237,133	£14,187,102

Additional Specialist Disability Support

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
£943,847	£856,059	£649,628

Projects funded through the Northern Ireland European Social Fund

Over the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014 the Department has provided funding under Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme to 11 projects that aim to increase employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. The projects target mainly young people with learning disabilities, but may also include older people with learning disabilities among their participant groups.

Priority 1 of the ESF Programme, 2007-2013, is entitled 'Helping people into sustainable employment' and aims to assist unemployed and economically inactive people by helping them to enter, remain, and make progress in sustained employment.

The total funding allocated by the Department to these 11 projects during the three year period was £21,205,797. This amounted to 65% of the total funding received by the projects, whilst the remaining 35% would have been provided through additional public sector match funding. Effectively, the total funding received by these 11 disability projects therefore totalled £32,624,303 over the three year period up to March 2014.

Blast 106: Radio Station

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the contribution that the community radio station Blast 106 has made to the learning experience of young people who have completed work placements with the organisation as part of their course; and the impact on these young people following Ofcom's refusal to renew the station's licence.

(AQW 34479/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides a range of employment programmes that are available to adults of all ages.

The aim of such programmes is to assist the unemployed or economically inactive to find and sustain employment, some of which include periods of work experience. Provision of work experience placement can be within the Private, Public or Voluntary and Community Sectors. Blast 106 has provided a number of valuable placement opportunities for Steps to Work programme participants seeking experience in the media related occupational area. The organisation has also supported participants attain qualifications in film and TV production.

The Steps to Work programme recognises that skills to find employment are more readily obtained by active participation in a work setting with an employer or a voluntary organisation taking into consideration the participant's job goals and work aspirations. Whilst it is regrettable when a business can no longer offer work experience opportunities, my main concern has to be that all programme placements are of the highest quality to equip individual participants with a range of core skills and behaviours to improve their long term prospects of finding and sustaining employment.

North Down Training Ltd

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he is aware of the concerns and reservations of parents and students regarding the proposed movement of training facilities from Dundonald to Newtownards by North Down Training Ltd.

(AQW 34632/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am aware of the concerns and reservations of parents and students involved in this relocation.

North Down Training Ltd is one of the suppliers contracted to provide the Training for Success programme in this area. North Down Training Ltd has given a reassurance to my Department that it will continue to provide the best possible training experience for all programme participants.

Officials from my Department's Careers Service and Training Programmes Branch have spoken with programme participants and their parents to discuss their apprehensions about the move and will continue to do so to give guidance and help with the transition.

Disability Support arrangements for participants are also in place and will continue to be available as required.

The Training for Success Operational Guidelines are explicit about what is expected of all Suppliers in terms of programme content and support given to participants. My Department's Supplier Performance Branch monitors all contracted Training Suppliers to ensure compliance with requirements.

Further Education: Senior Managers

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many non-academic senior managers are employed in each Further Education College and Higher Education Institution.

(AQW 34736/11-15)

Dr Farry: As my Department does not hold this information, officials contacted the Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges.

Please see the attached tables for the breakdown per institution.

Higher Education Institutions

	Number of non-academic senior managers
Queen's University Belfast	9
University of Ulster	3
Stranmillis University College	0
St. Mary's University College	1
Open University	5

Further Education Colleges

	Number of non-academic senior managers
Belfast Metropolitan College	4
Northern Regional College	4
North West Regional College	4
South Eastern Regional College	4
Southern Regional College	4
Southwest College	4

Queen's University

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a breakdown of the community background of teaching staff in the School of English at Queen's University, Belfast.

(AQW 34745/11-15)

Dr Farry: As my Department does not hold the information you have requested you may wish to contact Queen's University Belfast directly on this matter.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students were in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34759/11-15)

Dr Farry: The numbers of full time undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance for the last five academic years (rounded to the nearest hundred) are as follows:

- 2008/09 1,200
- 2009/10 1,200
- 2010/11 1,500
- 2011/12 1,500
- 2012/13 1,700.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to increase the awareness and uptake of the Disabled Students Allowance.

(AQW 34760/11-15)

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

Students and their families can access information by obtaining a copy of the booklet "Bridging the gap: a guide to Disabled Students' Allowances in higher education". It is automatically sent to a student who indicates by ticking the relevant section in their student support application form that they have a disability. The booklet and separate information on Disabled Students' Allowances can be downloaded on the NIdirect website and the student finance NI website. The booklet can also be obtained at University open nights for parents and students. In addition, the Education and Library Boards visit schools and colleges each year to promote the student financial support package.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Tourism: Expenditure

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide a geographic breakdown of her Department's expenditure in relation to boosting tourism, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34237/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): All of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) funding programmes operate on an open call basis.

(i) Tourism Development Scheme (TDS):

District Council Area	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Grand Total
Antrim	£51,606.00	£1,001,341.00	£0	£1,052,947.00
Ards	£0	£38,325.00	£0	£38,325.00
Armagh	£195,922.00	£65,041.48	£0	£260,963.48
Ballymena	£0	£617,682.00	£0	£617,682.00
Ballymoney	£0	£179,730.00	£0	£179,730.00
Banbridge	£45,000.00	£0	£0	£45,000.00
Belfast	£190,000.00	£1,754,181.80	£19,563,462.62	£21,507,644.42
Coleraine	£250,000.00	£4,803,451.60	£0	£5,053,451.60
Londonderry	£222,814.75	£800,000.00	£1,435,692.00	£2,458,506.75
Down	£1,851,380.96	£290,597.54	£27,500.00	£2,169,478.50
Dungannon	£0	£118,857.00	£0	£118,857.00
Fermanagh	£0	£40,670.00	£0	£40,670.00
Larne	£0	£85,305.00	£259,935.19	£345,240.19
Limavady	£31,237.50	£0	£141,545.00	£172,782.50
Newry And Mourne	£139,813.50	£167,947.46	£253,500.00	£561,260.96
North Down	£29,477.27	£257,508.00	£0	£286,985.27
Moyle	£70,500.00	£0	£0	£70,500.00
Omagh	£0	£120,448.00	£0	£120,448.00
Total	£3,077,751.98	£10,341,085.88	£21,681,634.81	£35,100,472.67

(ii) Tourism Events Fund:

District Council Area	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Grand Total
Antrim	£15,000.00	£0	£0	£15,000.00
Ards	£0	£0	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Armagh	£12,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£82,000.00

District Council Area	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Grand Total
Ballymena	£0	£15,000.00	£104,500.00	£119,500.00
Belfast	£458,924.00	£340,500.00	£400,000.00	£1,199,424.00
Coleraine	£71,000.00	£150,000.00	£80,000.00	£301,000.00
Londonderry	£40,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00	£160,000.00
Down	£38,000.00	£0	£45,000.00	£83,000.00
Dungannon	£0	£10,000.00	£0	£10,000.00
Fermanagh	£35,000.00	£90,000.00	£95,000.00	£220,000.00
Larne	£35,000.00	£25,000.00	£15,000.00	£75,000.00
Lisburn	£103,000.00	£207,000.00	£115,000.00	£425,000.00
Magherafelt	£35,000.00	£30,000.00	£15,000.00	£80,000.00
Moyle	£0	£25,000.00	£15,000.00	£40,000.00
Omagh	£0	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£30,000.00
Multiple	£57,000.00	£205,000.00	£55,000.00	£317,000.00
Total	£899,924.00	£1,207,500.00	£1,064,500.00	£3,171,924.00

(iii) Business Support:

Invest NI provides advice and a range of programmes and financial support to help with the establishment and development of tourism accommodation and other commercial tourism businesses.

Invest NI is currently working on the presentation of performance information at sub-regional level for 2013/14. It intends to publish the information once the figures have been fully validated. Detail on Invest NI's spend within companies operating in the Tourism Sector by Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) is provided below, therefore, for the last full three years for which information is available 2010/11 to 2012/13:

Parliamentary Constituency Area	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	Grand Total
Belfast East	41,109	92,986	39,196	173,291
Belfast North	27,306	96,308	68,031	191,646
Belfast South	73,913	26,790	47,543	148,246
East Antrim	0	6,000	0	6,000
East Londonderry	65,389	22,336	16,894	104,619
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	559,501	28,115	254,866	842,482
Foyle	14,054	34,762	48,887	97,703
Mid Ulster	5,000	4,955	31,431	41,386
N/A	4,000	0	0	4,000
Newry And Armagh	5,000	0	0	5,000
North Antrim	104,595	160,817	119,103	384,516
North Down	204	775	290	1,269
South Antrim	4,682	318	8,974	13,974
South Down	3,535	4,000	32,094	39,629
Strangford	0	0	3,730	3,730
West Tyrone	24,582	4,400	0	28,982
Total	932,870	482,561	671,041	2,086,472

Tourism: Upper Bann

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the steps she has taken to boost the tourism potential of Upper Bann, including the (i) details of investment; (ii) dates of investment; (iii) recipients of investment; and (iv) amounts invested in the last three years.

(AQW 34241/11-15)

Mrs Foster: All of NITB's funding programmes operate on an open call basis.

(i) Tourism Development Scheme (TDS):

11 applications were submitted for the Upper Bann area over the last three financial years (April 2011 - March 2014). Of these, 6 projects failed to meet the eligibility criteria, 3 projects subsequently withdrew, 1 was approved and 1 application continues through the approval process.

District Council Area	Financial Year	Assistance Offered	Description of Assistance
Banbridge	2011/12	£45,000	Signature Projects Programme (total project cost £90,000) - Support for relocation and fit-out of Banbridge TIC

(ii) Tourism Events Funding Programme:

Two applications from Upper Bann have been received in the last 3 years. Neither met the eligible criteria.

(iii) Business Support:

Invest NI provides advice and a range of programmes and financial support to help with the establishment and development of tourism accommodation and other commercial tourism businesses.

Invest NI is currently working on the presentation of performance information at sub-regional level for 2013/14, including the Upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA). It intends to publish the information once the figures have been fully validated. Detail on assistance offered in Upper Bann to companies operating within the Tourism sector is provided below, therefore, for the last full three years for which information is available 2010/11 to 2012/13:

Company	Financial Year	Assistance Offered	Description of Assistance
Kilmore Hotels Limited	2010/11	£1,000	Support to improve the company's capability.
Kilmore Hotels Limited	2011/12	£1,608	Energy efficiency review.
Kilmore Hotels Limited	2011/12	£2,621	Improving information systems.
Aventure Consulting	2012/13	£698	Encouraging trade and exports.

Procurement Contracts: DETI

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to what extent her Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34277/11-15)

Mrs Foster: From 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014 DETI awarded 140 procurement contracts for supplies and services work, which included standard Health and Safety and Equality clauses. No Construction contracts were awarded.

Twenty contracts had clauses to encourage participation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to widen the scope of those able to apply and ultimately create new jobs at SME level. Eighteen contracts had sustainability social clauses which included encouraging companies to dispose of waste in an ecologically friendly manner, protect the environment by managing development sustainably, promotion of renewable energy and helping local unemployed set up in business. Eleven contracts contained a requirement for the creation of work placements for 326 training weeks.

Renewables Obligation Certificates

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much was awarded through Renewables Obligation Certificates to individuals generating electricity from renewable sources and who were not connected to the main electricity grid, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34279/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Ofgem Renewables and CHP Register, which my Department uses to obtain data on Renewables Obligation Certificates, does not distinguish between generators connected or not connected to the electricity grid.

Renewables Obligation Certificates

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many individuals, who are generating renewable energy and are not connected to the main electricity grid, are currently receiving payment through Renewables Obligation Certificates.

(AQW 34289/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW 34279/11-15.

Invest NI: Funding

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many applicants supported by Invest NI have sought funding from (i) The Technology Strategy Board/Small Business Research Initiative; and (ii) FP7/Horizon 2020, in each of the last six financial years and the current financial year.

(AQW 34330/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's support to companies making applications to the Technology Strategy Board and EU R&D programmes is both pro-active and reactive. Invest NI classify support as "minor" or "detailed" interactions.

- **Minor Interaction** – An applicant was alerted to the opportunity, has attended an information event that Invest NI has hosted or actively participated in, was signposted to an National Contact Point (NCP) or European Commission Desk Officer, TSB Lead Technologist/Advisor or "_connect" (TSB participant on-line support platform) or has met with an Invest NI R&D Advisor on one occasion;
- **Detailed Interaction** – Invest NI has had a further role, this could be feedback on a draft application, finding a partner or provision of funding for proposal preparation or part-funding for the project.

As tracking minor interactions is not always possible, Invest NI reports, as per its 2011-2015 Corporate Plan, on applications submitted from detailed interactions only.

	FP7 applicants	Horizon 2020 applicants	TSB applicants	SBRI applicants
2008-2009	11**	N/A	16	N/A*
2009-2010	3**	N/A	27	N/A*
2010-2011	15	N/A	21	N/A*
2011-2012	31	N/A	7	N/A*
2012-2013	37	N/A	26	12
2013-2014	4	12	38	7
2014-2015	N/A	25	4	8

N/A - Programme not operating during this period

N/A* - Invest NI had no active role

** Actual number of applicants for 2008-2010 may be higher. Difficulty reporting applicants due to; time lag (successful versus unsuccessful) of official EC statistics and lack of detail (i.e. researcher names) in reporting of universities applicants.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the criteria used by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board when assessing the success of large scale events such as the Giro d'Italia.

(AQW 34360/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The evaluation of large scale events such as the Giro d'Italia is based on ascertaining if the objectives and targets outlined within the original business case were successfully delivered.

These will be different for each event, however on the whole the objectives will be around repositioning Northern Ireland on a global stage, visitor numbers and spend, satisfaction levels and return on investment.

The key objective for the Giro d'Italia was the international media profile and repositioning Northern Ireland on a global stage.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has procured an external and independent company to evaluate and calculate the success of the Giro.

Wind Farms

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what percentage of power is (i) currently generated; and (ii) estimated to be generated from wind farms by the end of 2015.

(AQW 34364/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the 12 month period to the end of March 2014, approximately 18% of all electricity generated was from onshore wind. It is difficult to estimate how much electricity will be generated from onshore wind by the end of 2015 as it will depend on a number of factors including wind availability and future deployment of wind farms. The current Programme for Government includes a target of 20% of electricity consumed to come from renewable sources by 2015.

Research and Development

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to Research and Development Project Definition Support, to detail the number of businesses that have applied for this funding in each of the last four years; and of these (i) how many have been successful; and (iii) how much funding has been allocated, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 34376/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Please see table below which shows the amount of businesses applying and receiving Project Definition support over the last 4 years.

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
No of businesses that have applied for funding	32	57	46	54
No of businesses that were successful	32	56	43	49
Funding approved £m	0.47	1.15	0.72	1.02

Heat, Electricity and Water: DETI Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34404/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has spent the following on heat, electricity and water in the last five financial years

Financial Year	(i) Heat (Gas/Oil)	(ii) Electricity	(iii) Water
2009/10	£51,808	£138,493	£14,091
2010/11	£52,821	£129,569	£16,833
2011/12	£53,034	£144,632	£12,729
2012/13	£63,918	£146,983	£17,571
2013/14	£63,556	£139,629	£17,428

Open Championship: Royal Portrush

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the announcement that The Open Championship will be played in Portrush, what lessons have been learned to better benefit local traders within the town of Portrush, given that the bussing in and out of spectators caused in a fall in footfall within the town during previous international golf events.

(AQW 34405/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Countries choose to host iconic global events such as The Open for the medium to longer term economic benefits such events bring, rather than any shorter term gains.

However, a key lesson from hosting the Irish Open held at Royal Portrush in 2012, is to ensure ticket holders can regain access to the event grounds, therefore enabling them to use the local facilities throughout the day if they choose to do so. The R&A, owners of The Open, have a re-entry policy for ticket holders thus this will not be an issue when the event is hosted here in a few years time.

Indeed I would encourage the local industry to work collectively with the R&A, Royal Portrush Golf Club and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) to capitalise on all the opportunities hosting this major event brings to the local area and to Northern Ireland.

Electricity: Costs

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide a breakdown the cost of a unit of electricity in each year from 1994 to 2004.

(AQW 34406/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not hold this information in the format requested. However, Power NI has provided the following details of cost (pence) per kilowatt hour for domestic customers:

- April 1994 7.75
- April 1995 8.25
- April 1996 8.45
- April 1997 9.16
- April 1998 9.16
- April 1999 9.00
- April 2000 8.60
- April 2001 9.38
- April 2002 9.38
- April 2003 9.38
- April 2004 9.64

European Business Network Congress

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the amount paid to each of the guest speakers at the European Business Network Congress from 29 to 31 May 2013; and (ii) the amount of funding provided by Invest NI for this event.

(AQW 34440/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest Northern Ireland received a request to sponsor the European Business Network Annual Congress from the local organisers, Northern Ireland Business and Innovation Centre (NORIBIC) in February 2013. After assessing the proposal Invest NI agreed to provide NORIBIC with £50,000 plus vat to support the Congress. The overall budget for the event was £375,000.

The aim of the 2013 Congress was to promote collaboration and partnership and use the EBN Europe-wide network of some 200+ Business Information Centres (BIC's) to encourage and facilitate better access to the next round of European funding such as Horizon 2020 (budget of €80billion) and other structural funding.

The Congress took place between 29 and 31 May. This was the first time it had been held in Northern Ireland. As the event organisers, NORIBIC were responsible for the overall programme and for securing an array of international speakers including Steve Wozniak, co – founder of Apple Computer Inc. The details of the fees paid are therefore a commercial matter between NORIBIC and their suppliers/speakers.

As one of three principal sponsors for the 2013 Congress, Invest NI had the opportunity to play a leading role in showcasing Northern Ireland as an important centre for innovation and as a source of collaborative partners for European programmes such as Horizon 2020. Invest NI had an exhibition stand and staff at the event who handled enquiries over the three days and a made a presentation in the main auditorium on its available support.

There were 669 attendees representing 34 countries at the event, of which 313 (46.7%) came from outside Northern Ireland. This attendance represented a figure of nearly three times the average attendance at previous annual Congresses.

Destination Fermanagh

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much has been spent on Destination Fermanagh since its introduction.

(AQW 34464/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has invested substantially within Destination Fermanagh in terms of capital expenditure, destination support, marketing/promotion and events estimated at £3.2million.

Since 2009, Fermanagh has featured strongly in NITB's marketing campaigns, most recently in the Spring 2014 campaign where the Fermanagh Lakelands were used to showcase Northern Ireland's Coasts and Lakes experience. This campaign featured Fermanagh on TV, Radio, Press, Outdoor media and was strongly supported through Digital and Social Media.

Fermanagh hosted the G8 Summit in June 2013 which showcased Fermanagh on a world stage as a destination to visit work and invest. NITB funded an animation, events and infrastructure enhancement programme and a media showcase event as well as a dedicated marketing campaign promoting Fermanagh as a tourism destination.

NITB hosted over hundred international tour operators in Fermanagh in April 2014 to engage in a series of over 4000 business appointments with key Northern Ireland Industry tourism operators as part of their annual Meet the Buyer marketing workshop at the Lough Erne Resort.

Tourism: Signature Projects

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what further investment she plans to provide to the five Signature Projects.

(AQW 34465/11-15)

Mrs Foster: With the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) Signature Projects near completion, focus is now on enhancing the visitor experience, with NITB encouraging and supporting the tourism industry to collaborate together to produce quality visitor experiences that will appeal to both domestic and international visitors.

Experiential tourism will provide a great opportunity for the tourism industry throughout Northern Ireland. A number of new thematic pillars have been created, Coasts & Lakes, Unique Outdoors, Living Legends, Naturally NI and Culture & Creative Vibe.

Destination Fermanagh

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what further investment she plans to provide to Destination Fermanagh in terms of increasing tourism to County Fermanagh.

(AQW 34466/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) continues to support destination development and visitor experience enhancement to all the nine destinations including Fermanagh through its financial assistance schemes such as the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS), Tourism Innovation Fund (TIF) and Events Fund and its wider Industry Development programme.

Through TDS, an allocation of almost £700,000 has been made towards the Heritage Gateway Fermanagh project which aims to develop a world-class visitor centre within the historic grounds of Enniskillen Castle in Fermanagh.

NITB in partnership with Fermanagh District Council, Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism, Tourism Ireland and Waterways Ireland have provided support to the Fermanagh Cruising sector via the establishment of a forum. The initiative has included both development and marketing activities, including a new website and brochure, attendance at overseas exhibitions and a dedicated online marketing campaign in key overseas markets.

Events Funding has secured sponsorship for the 2014 Ulster Rally for £5,400 and an offer has been made to the Enniskillen International Beckett Festival for £405,000 over the next 3 years.

NITB will be supporting and facilitating the future development of visitor experiences through destination led tourism clusters. The clustering and packaging of quality visitor experiences are fundamental to encouraging the visitor to stay longer and spend more thus benefiting the local visitor economy.

Blast 106: Radio Station

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of (i) the impact that the community radio station Blast 106 has had on promoting the nighttime economy and tourist potential of Belfast; and (ii) the impact of the decision by Ofcom to refuse to grant the station renewed licence.

(AQW 34482/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not conduct research into the impact that radio stations have on the night-time economy. Radio in this context does not fall within my Department's remit – this is an issue for DCAL as it relates to broadcasting and not radio for telecommunications purposes.

Cyclists: North Antrim Area

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how the North Antrim area will be marketed to cyclists following the success of the Giro d'Italia 2014.

(AQW 34489/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) through a series of seasonal campaigns promotes specific experience pillars towards key segments. Through the experience pillar of the unique outdoors, cycling will be promoted through advertising campaigns as a distinct outdoor recreation and adventure playground.

From January 2013 NITB has hosted international media of 28 overseas cycling press trips with a total of 82 journalists, photographers and camera crew. These media have covered cycling in Northern Ireland, many referring specifically to the North coast in overseas publications.

In building on the success of the Giro d'Italia, NITB will continue to promote Northern Ireland as a destination for cyclists across a range of social media and digital channels including Facebook, Twitter and You Tube.

NITB produced and promoted a film featuring Irish cycling champion Stephen Roche who spent a day cycling along the Causeway Coastal Route. A second film, featuring a rider performing stunts at various landmarks across Northern Ireland also showcased this area as a key destination for cyclists. These videos attracted over 70,000 views.

A short round-up film of the second day of the Giro d'Italia was also produced and promoted via NITB's digital channels, and showcased the race passing through North Antrim and the surrounding area.

NITB provides funding through an annual Service Level Agreement to Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) to help deliver on the development and marketing of outdoor activities, of which cycling is a part. Specifically there is ongoing work to the dedicated Giro D'Italia section of the CycleNI website with the intention of creating a Giro Legacy that will inspire visitor participation.

NITB has also supported ORNI to organise the Causeway Sportive Cycle event which is run on a section of the Giro route.

Tourism Ireland has been building on the success of the Giro d'Italia 'Grande Partenza' by continuing to highlight Northern Ireland, including North Antrim, as a top cycling and outdoor activities destination in its overseas promotional activity through, for example, publicity; travel trade training events; and at events linked to the Giro such as the Gran Fondo.

Tourism Ireland has also developed a dedicated cycling section on its international website, Ireland.com, which highlights our great cycling routes, all the sights to see along the way and special accommodation offers. In 2013, Ireland.com attracted over 13.5 million unique visitors from around the world.

The Giro d'Italia continues to be highlighted as part of Tourism Ireland's digital 'Northern Ireland Roadtrip' campaign in key markets. The aim of this campaign is to highlight Northern Ireland as a touring destination.

Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme will be launched.

(AQW 34499/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive was launched in November 2012 with the Renewable Heat Premium Payment scheme commencing in May 2012.

DETI is in the process of securing final approvals, processing legislation and putting in place administrative procedures for the domestic RHI which will replace the Renewable Heat Premium Payment scheme. It remains my aim that the scheme will be in place this year.

In the meantime, the Renewable Heat Premium Payment scheme will continue to provide support for domestic customers wishing to install renewable heat systems.

Invest NI: Sandwich Sector

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 33946/11-15, in delivering this level of investment into the sector, for her assessment of how Invest NI have adhered to their 2012 study of the sandwich sector in Northern Ireland and its key recommendation of the avoidance of displacement of jobs and investment.

(AQW 34541/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Following the commissioning of the sandwich sector study in 2012, all cases for support from clients within that sector have been subject to Invest NI's normal appraisal and approval process.

Appraisals of projects from companies within the sector are carried out with particular focus on potential displacement issues in line with the recommendations of the study.

Invest NI is content that any offers of support to the sector have been in support of business expansion and/or gaining new contracts not currently serviced by other Northern Ireland based sandwich companies in export markets or non sandwich sectors and have been consistent with the recommendations contained in the study.

Gas: Licence Area PL1/10

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what information has been provided to her Department regarding the unconventional gas potential of licence area PL1/10 in East Antrim.

(AQW 34580/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As part of its assessment of the overall petroleum prospectivity of Licence area PL1/10, Infrastrata plc, the Licence holder, has assessed the potential for unconventional oil and gas resources in the PL1/10 Licence area.

Based on data currently available, the Company has advised my Department that there is unlikely to be any potential for unconventional shale gas or shale oil production within the PL1/10 licence area.

Danske Bank: Branch Closure

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether Danske Bank consulted with her Department prior to recent branch closures.

(AQW 34591/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Banking is a reserved matter and as such, my Department has no statutory oversight of the banking sector.

Given the challenges facing banking I, along with the Finance Minister, regularly meet all the Northern Ireland Banks. During those discussions we have raised the impacts of restructuring and the need to minimise the impact of any potential closures. However, there was no prior consultation in relation to the recent announcements of Danske Bank branch closures.

Exports

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how exports to (i) Europe; (ii) the Americas; (iii) Asia Pacific; and (iv) India, the Middle East and Africa compare in 2012/13 to 2010/11.

(AQW 34631/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The information you requested is outlined in the table below:

Manufacturing Exports to Invest NI Territories - Comparison of 2010/11 and 2012/13

Invest NI Trade Territory	2010/11 (£m)	2012/13 (£m)	Variance (£m)	% Change
Asia Pacific	560.410	616.680	56.270	10.04%
Europe and Russia	3,436.317	3,377.364	-58.953	-1.72%
India, Middle East & Africa	531.252	620.290	89.038	16.76%
The Americas	1,104.339	991.665	-112.674	-10.20%
Grand Total	5,632.318	5,605.999	-26.319	-0.47%

Notes:

- 1 Manufacturing Exports data is extracted from HMRC's Regional Trade Statistics.
- 2 Further information is available from HMRC's dedicated uktradeinfo website:
<https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Pages/Home.aspx>

Inward Investors: Limavady and Coleraine

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of potential inward investors who visited (i) Limavady; and (ii) Coleraine in each of the last two years.

(AQW 34648/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The inward investment visit statistics for 2013/14 are not as yet in the public domain, but in the figures for previous years are as follows:

- Limavady Borough Council area, 2011/12 none; 2012/13 none.
- Coleraine Borough Council area 2011/12 four visits; 2012/13 three visits

Invest NI promotes Northern Ireland as an attractive and viable location for inward investment opportunities to new investors, along with the parent companies of existing foreign owned investors. Northern Ireland's investment proposition is therefore promoted on the basis of a talented and loyal workforce, advanced telecoms infrastructure, high skilled business clusters, a pro-business environment, competitive operating costs and proximity to major markets.

The requirements will vary depending on the nature of the project, but a company will typically look at existing investors in the same business sector (Invest NI's key target sectors being ICT, business and professional services, financial services and renewables); universities and colleges that offer courses relating to that sector; and suitable, available property.

Areas in which these desired features do not exist, or are not clearly presented, are unlikely to attract the attention of potential investors to visit or locate in the area. In addition, potential investors are often drawn to population centres that they consider will provide the appropriate number of suitably skilled potential employees. Therefore a clear understanding and evidence of skill demographics for any region would greatly assist a potential investor in considering a particular area.

Ultimately the investor will make the decision as to where they visit and locate based on their specific business needs and having considered the options available to them.

Unanswered Questions

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why (i) AQW 32727/11-15; (ii) AQW 32720/11-15; (iii) AQW 32719/11-15; and (iv) AQW 32718/11-15 have not been answered.

(AQW 34690/11-15)

Mrs Foster: These questions have been answered during April 2014.

Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what work Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation has completed with Higher Education Institutes to attract new businesses.

(AQW 34691/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As Invest NI has no financial or operational responsibility for Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation, the organisation is not aware of what work Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation may have completed with Higher Education Institutes to attract new business.

Department of the Environment

Planning Applications: Timeliness

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the average length of time taken by each planning division to process a planning application.

(AQW 34261/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Table 1 below outlines the average processing times in weeks for each planning area, from 2011/12 up to 31 December 2013, which is the latest published information.

Table 1: Average¹ processing time (in weeks) for decided² applications from 2011/12 to the 31 December 2013

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14 (up to the 31/12/2013)	
	Decided applications ²	Average Processing time (weeks) ¹	Decided applications ²	Average Processing time (weeks) ¹	Decided applications ²	Average Processing time (weeks) ¹
Belfast ⁴	3,383	22	3,391	20	2,322	18
Northern ⁵	2,222	16	2,086	14	1,390	14
South Antrim ⁶	1,853	16	1,626	13	1,160	12
Southern ⁷	3,743	32	3,254	22	1,974	17
Strategic Planning	272	42	298	65	113	72
Western ⁸	3,036	14	2,550	12	1,661	13
Total	14,509	21	13,205	17	8,620	15

Notes:

- 1 The median is used to determine the average processing time in order to remove the distorting effect of applications with typically short or long processing times.
- 2 Decided applications do not include withdrawn applications
- 3 Our latest published information is currently up to 31 December 2013. Q1 - Q3 information for 2013/14 is provisional
- 4 Belfast includes Belfast, North Down, Castlereagh, Ards and Lisburn Local Government Districts
- 5 Northern includes Derry, Strabane, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle Local Government Districts
- 6 South Antrim includes Ballymena, Larne, Antrim, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus districts
- 7 Southern includes Craigavon, Armagh, Banbridge, Newry and Mourne, and Down districts
- 8 Western includes Omagh, Fermanagh, Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt districts

Taxi Licensing: Staff Locations

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment where the taxi licensing staff, who will not relocate to Coleraine, will be located. **(AQW 34308/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: All departments have already agreed to apply restrictions on the recruitment, promotion and transfer of staff to posts in the relevant grades to allow for the maximum number of redeployment opportunities to be identified for staff affected by the centralisation of vehicle licensing services in Swansea.

These restrictions will also be used as the basis for identifying suitable redeployment opportunities for staff in the Roads Transport Licensing Division (RTLTD) who do not relocate to Coleraine.

My Department has undertaken an assessment exercise for RTLTD staff to determine if there are any disability or welfare related reasons why their mobility should be restricted and will work with colleagues across departments to identify suitable posts for the redeployment of staff.

Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Jobs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans exist to relocate taxi licensing jobs from Belfast to Coleraine. (AQW 34309/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The taxi driver and operator licensing, together with bus operator licensing, function will be transferred to Coleraine in early autumn 2014. Training for the staff in Coleraine will commence as soon as the winding-up of vehicle licensing has been completed, following the transfer of that function to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea from 21 July 2014.

The exact date for the transfer of taxi and bus licensing will depend on the progress of staff training so as to ensure a smooth transition and no disruption of services for customers.

I will ensure that all customers are kept fully informed as the process develops.

Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Functions

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the relocation of taxi licensing functions from Belfast to Coleraine will have on the taxi industry. (AQW 34312/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) will manage the relocation of functions from Belfast to Coleraine in such a way that the current service levels are maintained, and that there will be minimal impact on the taxi industry.

Taxi driver and operator licensing, together with bus operator licensing, will be transferred to Coleraine in early autumn 2014. Training for the staff in Coleraine will commence as soon as the winding-up of vehicle licensing has been completed, following the transfer of that function to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea from 18 July 2014. The DVA will ensure that customers and licence holders are fully informed throughout the process to ensure a smooth transition and a consistency in service delivery.

Planning Enforcement Cases

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of current planning enforcement cases that have been open for (i) between one and two; (ii) between two and three; (iii) between three and four; (iv) between four and five; and (v) more than five years, broken down by divisional office. (AQW 34331/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Table 1 below details the number of live planning enforcement cases in each divisional office, broken down by length of time in the system.

Table 1: Live Planning Enforcement cases by Planning Division and time in system, as at the end of Quarter 4 2013/14¹

	<=1yr	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3-4 yrs	4-5 yrs	5+ yrs	Total
Belfast	274	53	20	22	22	19	410
Downpatrick	188	56	40	38	36	41	399
Northern	168	59	19	17	8	26	334
South Antrim	191	49	27	4	2	12	285
Southern	391	174	59	43	44	70	781
Strategic Planning	96	83	57	39	29	59	363
Western	196	70	22	8	13	11	283
Total	1,504	544	244	171	154	238	2,855

Notes:

1 The number of live cases is as of the 2nd April 2014.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment to what extent his Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented. (AQW 34341/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has entered into 30 contracts for supplies and services since the Programme for Government commitment took effect. All of the contracts included social clauses in respect of health and safety and equality as performance measures. A number of contracts also included opportunities for graduate trainees and long term unemployed to

gain valuable employment experience in the Department. These opportunities have enabled employees to benefit from their experience by finding permanent employment with other organisations.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DoE Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34343/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The table below details the cost of heat, electricity and water for the years 2009-10 to 2013-14.

YEAR	2009-10 £	2010-11 £	2011-12 £	2012-13 £	2013-14 £
Heat	378,271.76	406,907.44	418,907.02	519,150.58	522,543.93
Electricity	692,183.62	697,031.42	767,498.42	813,661.44	789,803.94
Water	57,638.00	53,494.96	67,760.21	25,886.56	50,830.84

The lower charges for water in 2012-2013 reflect a refund received that year against an earlier overcharge in 2011-12 for water at the Derry Driver and Vehicle Test Centre.

Dereliction Funding Applications

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment when the next successful dereliction funding applications will be announced for local councils.

(AQW 34359/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I made a bid in the June Monitoring Round for £1m for Dereliction Intervention Funding. If that Round provides resources for Dereliction, I will allocate them amongst councils as soon as practicable thereafter.

Councillors: Code of Conduct

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment, given that guidelines on the new Code of Conduct for councillors have not yet been issued, why councillors have been asked to make a declaration of interest under this Code; and when guidelines will be issued.

(AQW 34412/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The new mandatory Code came into force on 28 May following approval by resolution of the Assembly. Councillors must sign up to the new mandatory Code and provide written notification of their personal interests which will be added to a new register of interests which will be maintained by the clerk of each council.

The existing declaration of a councillor on acceptance of office, as contained in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the 1972 Act) has been amended to take account of the new mandatory Code.

Paragraph 4 of Schedule 9 to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 Act) amended that declaration to provide that those councillors elected to the new 11 councils to sign an amended declaration (which includes reference to the new mandatory Code) before they could act as a councillor, at the onset of their term.

In addition, regulation 5 of the Local Government (Transitional, Supplementary, Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 Regulations) also amended the declaration to take account of the new mandatory Code as it would now apply to existing councillors. This amendment required existing councillors to sign up to the new mandatory Code before they could continue to act in the office of councillor.

The Department issued Local Government Circular 26/14 on 23 May which alerted and provided information to councils on the amended declaration as a result of the new mandatory Code.

Section 62 of the 2014 Act provides for the establishment of a register of interests, which will be maintained by the clerk of each council. Part 5 of the mandatory Code provides the rules relating to registration of interests. Councillors must register any personal interests (both financial and otherwise) which may fall within the categories of interests listed.

The mandatory Code states that councillors must register their interests by written notification to their clerk within 28 days of election or appointment to office (if that is later). This 28 day period also applies to any future change required to any existing interest or the registration of any relevant new interests that may arise.

In addition, Part 6 of the mandatory code provides information on the rules relating to the disclosure and declaration of interests. It refers to the current provisions regarding the disclosure and action to be taken in relation to any relevant pecuniary interests contained in sections 28-31 of the 1972 Act, with which most councillors are already familiar. The rules also outline the procedures for any disclosure and action required relating to private or personal non-pecuniary interests, such as those that should be registered under Part 5 of the mandatory Code. Councillors should seek the opinion of their Chief Executive should they have any doubt regarding the registration of an interest.

These rules have provided sufficient information to enable councils and their councillors to supply the necessary information. A number of councils have already provided training on the mandatory Code for their councillors and further training is planned which will include input from the Commissioner for Complaints, the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council.

Section 54 of the 2014 Act provides that the Commissioner may issue guidance on matters relating to the conduct of councillors. The Commissioner has indicated that he will also issue information on the procedures that will apply should someone wish to make a complaint. The Commissioner's office has already created a page on their website which provides information regarding any complaints relating to the conduct of councillors. This will be developed further as the ethical standards framework settles in.

Councillors: Right of Appeal

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment what right of appeal a councillor has against a decision made by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints.

(AQW 34413/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Part 9 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (2014 Act) established the new ethical standards framework for councillor in Northern Ireland.

In that Act, section 59 (Decision following report) permits a councillor who is censured, suspended or disqualified by the Commissioner to appeal that decision, provided the High Court gives leave to do so.

The grounds for such an appeal are set out in subsection (14) of section 59 of the 2014 Act and are as follows-

- that the Commissioner's decision was based on an error of law;
- that there has been procedural impropriety in the conduct of the investigation;
- that the Commissioner has acted unreasonably in the exercise of the Commissioner's discretion;
- that the Commissioner's decision was not supported by the facts found to be proved by the Commissioner; and
- that the sanction imposed was excessive.

Under section 58 (Interim reports) of the 2014 Act, the Commissioner may, if he considers it necessary in the public interest, produce an interim report on an investigation. Under section 60 (Decisions on interim reports), where the prima facie evidence is such that it appears to the Commissioner:

- that the person who is the subject of an interim report has failed to comply with the code of conduct;
- that the nature of that failure is such as to be likely to lead to disqualification; and
- that it is in the public interest to suspend or partially suspend that person immediately,

the Commissioner may give notice to the clerk of the council concerned that that person is suspended or partially suspended from being a councillor for such period and in such way as may be specified in the notice.

Section 60(9) of the 2014 Act permits a councillor, who is the subject of an interim report, to appeal the decision of the Commissioner, provided the High Court gives leave to do so. Subsection (10) of that section states that an appeal in this case can be made

- against the suspension (or partial suspension);
- against the length of the suspension (or partial suspension).

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to review the workings of the Planning Appeals Commission, in particular the decision making processes.

(AQW 34414/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent appellate body under the sponsorship of OFMDFM and it is not within my remit nor would it be appropriate for me to undertake a review into its workings and decision making processes.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Staff

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, following his meeting with the Minister for Social Development on 17 June 2014 on civil service redeployment to assist Driver and Vehicle Agency staff in Coleraine, what further work must be carried out to ensure that the additional temporary positions can be offered promptly.

(AQW 34428/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials are currently in discussions with DSD to ascertain the arrangements that need to be put in place to facilitate the offer of temporary work for surplus staff in Coleraine.

DSD has already visited the proposed site and arrangements are being made for the necessary telephony support. A training schedule is being devised with the intention that surplus staff, for whom other work has not yet been found, will be made available to DSD from the end of July, as soon as all winding up activities for vehicle licensing have been completed.

The surplus staff will be available until they are redeployed to other posts.

Councils: Status

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the process by which new councils gain Borough, District or City status.

(AQW 34434/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All eleven new councils are currently district councils, under the provisions of section 1 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the 1972 Act), as amended by section 3(1) of the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

The Department is currently preparing Regulations to allow the new councils to take the necessary decisions in relation to their district, borough or (if applicable), city status. The Regulations will offer councils the option of:

- a remaining a district council (which will require no action to be taken);
- b retaining the charter of an existing borough within the new council's district (the roll of honorary freemen attached to any outgoing charters will form part of the continuing charter); or
- c petitioning the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for a new borough charter (this option is already provided for by section 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, but the Regulations will allow the roll of honorary freemen of existing charters within the district to form part of any new charter).

These Regulations will also make provision for the continuance of the city status of the current city councils.

The Department will shortly be engaging with councils in relation to the draft Regulations and the proposed processes in relation to borough and city status.

Crawfordsburn Country Park: Access Arrangements

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any plans to change the access arrangements to Crawfordsburn Country Park for the summer of 2014.

(AQW 34437/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) manages visitor access to Crawfordsburn Country Park, and I have been advised that there are no plans at present to change the access arrangements for the summer of 2014.

Vehicular access to the Park is provided in line with the opening and closing hours detailed in Table 1. A no return one-way traffic management system allows vehicles to exit the site after closure of the access barriers. Outside of these hours, visitors can access the site via pedestrian access routes.

The opening hours of Crawfordsburn Country Park are managed by the NIEA and reviewed on an annual basis. I have been advised that there are no plans to change the opening and closing times from those detailed in Table 1.

Opening times for the 2014/15 season are consistent with other NIEA Country Park properties. Outside of these hours, visitors can still access the sites via pedestrian pathways. Only vehicular access is restricted outside of these hours to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour occurring.

Crawfordsburn Country Park: Opening and Closing Times

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any plans to change the opening and closing times of Crawfordsburn Country Park during the summer of 2014.

(AQW 34438/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) manages visitor access to Crawfordsburn Country Park, and I have been advised that there are no plans at present to change the access arrangements for the summer of 2014.

Vehicular access to the Park is provided in line with the opening and closing hours detailed in Table 1. A no return one-way traffic management system allows vehicles to exit the site after closure of the access barriers. Outside of these hours, visitors can access the site via pedestrian access routes.

The opening hours of Crawfordsburn Country Park are managed by the NIEA and reviewed on an annual basis. I have been advised that there are no plans to change the opening and closing times from those detailed in Table 1.

Opening times for the 2014/15 season are consistent with other NIEA Country Park properties. Outside of these hours, visitors can still access the sites via pedestrian pathways. Only vehicular access is restricted outside of these hours to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour occurring.

Listed Buildings: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to list the listed buildings in North Down; and to detail the spend on each of these buildings in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34472/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Information on Northern Ireland's listed buildings is held on the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, on a Council and Ward basis.

A large amount of information has been produced to answer this question; therefore it has been placed in the Assembly Library. You should note that this information on 'spend' relates solely to grant-aid provided by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Any expenditure that may have been incurred by the private owners of properties or other agencies or bodies is not recorded by the Department and has not been included.

Planning Application L/2011/0079/O

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on when a decision will be made on planning application L/2011/0079/O.

(AQW 34484/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This application remains under consideration as further information is required in relation to a number of outstanding issues. This has been requested from the applicant and it has been agreed to defer any decision until the end of August 2014 to allow the agent to submit the necessary reports.

Statutory Off-road Notification (SORN)

Mr I McCreagh asked the Minister of the Environment how vehicles that have had a statutory off-road notification for a number of years and subsequently sold, will be (i) taxed; and (ii) registered.

(AQW 34504/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Indefinite Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) was introduced on 16 December 2013 which removed the requirement for customers to renew a SORN every year. A SORN declaration now remains in force until the vehicle is taxed, sold, permanently exported or scrapped (via an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF)). This change also removed the need to send out renewal reminders for vehicles with a SORN declaration in force.

Customers who purchase a vehicle that had a previous SORN declaration in force can apply to tax and register the vehicle using a 'V10 (NI) – Vehicle Licence Application' form. This service is currently available at selected Post Office® branches, any Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) local motor tax office, or by post to Coleraine.

You will be well aware that the Department for Transport in London is introducing new arrangements for vehicle registration and licensing services in Northern Ireland. After 17 July, the DVA in Northern Ireland will no longer register or tax vehicles. This will become the responsibility of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea from Monday 21 July 2014. From this date customers will be required to tax or register a previously SORNed vehicle using DVLA's online relicensing facility, via their automated telephone system or at any Post Office® branch that offers vehicle relicensing services.

County Hall: Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the annual cost of providing services, for which his Department has responsibility, from County Hall in Ballymena; and what contingent liabilities are planned in the financial year 2015/16 for the use of this facility.

(AQW 34506/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has three functions located at Ballymena County Hall. The table below summarises the functions and the costs of providing the services for 2013-14.

Function	Cost £'000
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division – Road Safety Education Office	154
Local Planning Office – South Antrim	2,051
Driver and Vehicle Agency – Local Vehicle Licensing Office	315
Total	2,520

No decision has been made on the use of this facility for the financial year 2015-16.

Air Quality Research Study

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment whether the outcome of the air quality research study for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will be brought before to Assembly before Christmas 2014.

(AQW 34509/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is anticipated that the Study will conclude in September 2014, and that its final report will be presented to the North-South Ministerial Council in November 2014.

As part of my update to the Assembly on proceedings of the North-South Ministerial Council, I will make a statement to the Assembly regarding the key findings of the study. The report will also be published at this time, and presented to the Environment Committee.

Wildlife Poisoning: Investigation

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment how many specialist trained staff are available for the investigation of wildlife poisoning offences; and within which Government Departments they are employed.

(AQW 34533/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are no specialist trained staff available for the investigation of wildlife poisoning offences in DOE, or in any other Northern Ireland Executive Departments.

My Department has a contract with the police National Wildlife Crime Unit based in Scotland who support DOE NI and the PSNI in tackling serious wildlife crimes of local or national importance.

Eagles: Illegal Poisoning

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what steps have been taken to combat the risk of illegal poisoning of the populations of golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and red kite.

(AQW 34534/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The persecution of birds of prey is illegal under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and is a particularly serious crime.

While incidents and reports of persecution of wildlife are investigated and prosecutions are taken by the PSNI my Departmental officials are available to provide expert advice and guidance. My Department also has a contract with the National Wildlife Crime Unit based in Scotland which investigates serious national and international wildlife crime incidents and provides tactical support to DoE NI and to the PSNI in tackling serious wildlife crime.

Over recent years DOE has grant aided the successful reintroduction of the red kite into Northern Ireland through support to the RSPB and has funded the Raptor Study Group to carry out specialist surveys and monitoring of populations of several species of birds of prey. Grant aid was also provided to the Golden Eagle Trust in Ireland to develop a Raptor Database for Northern Ireland.

The Raptor Study Group was also successful in the Department's 2014 Challenge Fund allocation and delivered two education projects raising awareness of the conservation of birds of prey and highlighting poisoning, shooting and habitat destruction as threats to the species.

Eagles: White Tailed

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the conservation status of the white-tailed eagle, to explain the delay between a white-tailed eagle being found dead in April 2013 and the PSNI announcing that it has been poisoned in May 2014.

(AQW 34535/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, DOE has no power to investigate or prosecute wildlife offences of this nature. These powers lie with the PSNI. As this is the case, my Department does not hold, or is in position to collect, the information requested.

The details requested in your question are held by the PSNI.

Infrastrata Drilling: East Antrim

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment when he will commence the public consultation on the proposals by Infrastrata to drill in East Antrim.

(AQW 34540/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The proposed works by InfraStrata fall under Permitted Development in accordance with Part 16, Class A of the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993. As such the development has planning permission by virtue of the above order and the Department is not required to advertise or seek public comment on the proposal.

Any interested parties can of course obtain details from my officials in Strategic Planning Division.

Pollution Incidents: Muckamore Bridge

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of recent pollution incidents at the combined sewer overflow at Muckamore Bridge on the Six Mile Water River.

(AQW 34566/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Two reports of water pollution at this location have recently been made to the Department. NIEA officers attended both incidents promptly, investigated the potential sources and held discussions with NI Water (NIW) on the required follow up.

In the first incident on 18 April 2014, a sewer blockage was found approximately 500 metres away from a flap valve into the river, causing an overflow from the sewer to the storm water system. Subsequently NIW confirmed that they had also identified a lesser contributory blockage which had also been cleared. Based on the actual impact on the river, this incident was assessed as 'low' severity.

The second incident on 1 May 2014 was again assessed as being of 'low' severity, as upon investigation it was found that the water flowing out of the flap did not appear to be polluted and there was no visible plume in the river.

Departmental officials met representatives from the Six Mile Water anglers on 1 May 2014, when a number of issues including these incidents were discussed in detail. This matter was also discussed at length at the Lower Neagh Bann Stakeholder Meeting (which includes the Six Mile Water catchment) held in Randalstown on 6 May 2014, attended by Departmental Officials and NIW staff.

In conclusion, the pollution incidents at this location comprised two 'low' severity incidents which were promptly responded to by the Department and NIW and were rectified. Departmental officials continue to check this outfall at regular intervals but are not aware of any recurrence of pollution since the incident on 1 May 2014. The Department and NIW remain aware of wider contributory factors, such as sewer misconnections by third parties and are cooperating closely to deal with these issues.

Red Kites: Katesbridge Area

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to investigate the recent deaths of three Red Kites in the Katesbridge area.

(AQW 34567/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, DOE has no power to investigate or prosecute wildlife offences of this nature. These powers lie with the PSNI. As this is the case, my Department does not hold, or is in a position to collect, the information requested.

The details requested in your question are held by the PSNI.

Marine Bill

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Crown Estate regarding the Marine Bill (NIA 5/11-15).

(AQW 34600/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have had no discussions with The Crown Estate regarding the Marine Bill, which came into operation on 18 September 2013, and is now the Marine Act (NI) 2013. However, I would refer the Member to the Answer given to his AQW 8970/11-15, which outlined the consultation my Department has had with The Crown Estate on a number of marine issues, including the Marine Bill.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether planning application E/2013/0093/F includes a full Environmental Impact Statement and a Health Impact Assessment; (ii) if not, why this is the case; (iii) whether the application includes seeking permission for any hydraulic fracturing; and (iv) whether an Article 31 Inquiry is anticipated.

(AQW 34606/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials are nearing completion in assessing the need for such a statement to accompany this planning application.

This application does not propose unconventional hydraulic fracturing. However at the testing phase a conventional stimulated fracture is proposed.

This application, consisting of an exploratory borehole, does not meet the criteria for an Article 31 Inquiry.

Lough Neagh: Sand Extractors

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he or his officials have had any meetings, conversations, or correspondence with the Lough Neagh sand extractors or their representatives in the last twelve months; and what was the outcome of those discussions.

(AQW 34617/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's Minerals, Management and Compliance team (MMC) currently has a live investigation into the unauthorised working of sand from the bed of Lough Neagh.

MMC team has in the last 12 months had a meeting with the Quarry Products Association (QPANI) on 6 February 2014 and a meeting with Shaftesbury Estate's solicitors on 26 February 2014 to obtain further information on the dredging operators, the operations and any permission held by them.

Ongoing discussions have taken place with QPANI to arrange a suitable inspection date for the shore based and Lough based activities and operations.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) held a meeting on 12 June 2014 with QPANI representatives.

There was discussion around the requirements of environmental legislation including the Habitats Directive and the need to bring the activities of the sand and gravel operators into the regulatory framework. The NIEA is to detail information required to fully assess potential impacts of the dredging on the Lough and liaise with Planning and QPANI.

Planning Application J/2011/0081

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment when he will make a decision on planning application J/2011/0081. (AQW 34668/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is my intention to visit this site at the request of local representatives from Strabane District Council and thereafter I will make my final decision.

Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (NI) 2000

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether explosives required for blasting associated with mining are considered a hazardous substance for the purpose of the Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (NI) 2000. (AQW 34693/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 amended by The Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 include a number of named substances in Schedule 3, Part A and a number of classifications in Part B.

Explosives used at mines can vary in type and quantity and may be included in either Part A or Part B.

Each named substance in Part A and each classification of substance in Part B has an applicable threshold.

Storage of substances above their respective thresholds will require Hazardous Substances Consent from the Department [Article 53 of The Planning (NI) Order 1991], subject to applicable exemptions.

Lough Neagh: Mineral Extraction

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33458/11-15, whether he intends to permit unregulated mineral extraction from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area to continue; and if so, how this conforms with the precautionary principle. (AQW 34712/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As indicated in my previous response, my Department's Minerals, Management and Compliance team (MMC) is currently investigating the unauthorised working of sand from the bed of Lough Neagh. Once this investigation is complete, my officials will be in a position to take the appropriate course of action.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether planning application E/2013/0093/F will be subject to a full health impact assessment. (AQW 34728/11-15)

Mr Durkan: While all issues concerning public health are routinely assessed in processing any planning application, my officials are concluding an Environmental Impact Assessment determination on this application. Should the outcome of this determination require the submission of an environmental statement, all significant impacts identified including health will require consideration.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, in the event of planning application E/2013/0093/F gaining approval, whether a baseline study into health, water quality and air quality will be conducted in Ballinlea ahead of any work taking place. (AQW 34733/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials are currently assessing potential impacts on health, air and water quality. No decision has been taken in relation to this proposal at this stage.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the proposals relating to the shale reservoir within planning application E/2013/0093/F. (AQW 34799/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The application seeks permission for the temporary works of drilling an exploratory borehole to approx 2700m depth to investigate underground strata for hydrocarbon exploration under DETI licence PL3/10 issued to Rathlin Energy Ltd.

Rathlin Energy's primary objective is to test the Carboniferous sandstones but it does intend to assess the underlying Carboniferous shales.

The mini fall-off test will not allow the company to ascertain the viability of unconventional shale gas resources in the area although it will give it information about the character of the shales that would be relevant to an assessment of their unconventional resource potential.

Planning Application E/2013/0093/F

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment when a decision will be made on planning application E/2013/0093/F. (AQW 34801/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The application is currently under consideration. At this time my officials do not have a time frame for issuing any decision.

Ballinlea 1 Test Well

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether hydraulic fracturing has taken place at the Ballinlea 1 test well; and whether there are any plans for this process to take place. (AQW 34831/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am not aware of any previous or future testing in relation to hydraulic fracturing at the Ballinlea 1 test well.

Lough Neagh: Habitats Regulation Assessment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has carried out a Habitats Regulation Assessment for the unregulated sand extraction taking place from the Lough Neagh Special Protection Area. (AQW 34896/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Habitats Directive requires member states to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment when considering the authorisation of plans or projects. NIEA carries out a Habitats Regulations Assessment to ensure that the proposal will not have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites (including SPAs). As the Department has never been consulted on active applications for abstraction within Lough Neagh the Habitats Directive has not been applied.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on his progress in achieving a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35 per cent on 1990 levels by 2025, as per the commitment in the Programme for Government 2011-15. (AQO 6453/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Executive has a target to continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35 per cent on 1990 levels by 2025. The latest inventory published on 10 June 2014, for the 1990-2012 period, shows a reduction of 16 per cent in 2012 in emissions since the base year of 1990.

My department's analysts use a projection tool to estimate reductions in 2025 based on the latest inventory. A projection figure based on the 2012 figures will only be available in December 2014. However the 2011-based projection figure shows a 27.6 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2025.

Environmental Crime Unit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment for an overview of the work programme of the Environmental Crime Unit. (AQO 6460/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As you may be aware, NIEA's Environmental Crime Unit (or ECU) was set up in December 2008 following recommendations made by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate. Its role is to investigate and prosecute serious and persistent, commercial-scale illegal environmental activities, crimes driven by the considerable financial gains that can be made from avoiding legitimate landfill taxes, VAT etc.

ECU's work is intelligence-led, maximising resources towards tackling the worst offenders who continue to flout our environmental regulations and cause considerable damage to our world-renowned landscape, while at the same time depriving our economy millions of pounds that could be put to the collective good through hospitals, infrastructure and schools.

It is critical to view the work programme of the ECU in the context of the direction I have set for waste management in the North. In my response to the Mills Report, I emphasised that our focus must start with reducing the amount of waste created in the first place, supported by doing a better job of regulating residual waste.

This means that DOE has a range of programmes, ranging from supporting business innovation, supporting community waste reduction efforts, partnering with local councils and providing support and guidance to regulated waste operators.

The ECU's work sits at the compliance end of this spectrum, is focused on tackling the worst waste offending and is critical to the whole strategy. To achieve its aims, ECU has business plans in place that include the targets in respect of the number of:

- intelligence reports to be assessed in connection with environmental
- crime or other environmental offences;
- complex investigations underway throughout the year into serious environmental criminality.
- prosecution cases to be submitted to the Public Prosecution Service.
- confiscation investigations to be investigated under POCA.

PPS 21 Definition: Farm Business

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment when his Department will issue an update on the definition of a 'farm business' under Planning Policy PPS21.

(AQO 6452/11-15)

Mr Durkan: PPS 21 policy CTY10 'Dwellings on Farms' permits a dwelling on a farm subject to a number of criteria, including that the farm business is currently active and established.

Whilst the policy does not provide a definition of a 'farm business' it does contain a definition of agricultural activity which is 'the production, rearing or growing of agricultural products including harvesting, milking, breeding animals and keeping animals for farming purposes or maintaining the land in good agricultural condition'.

I have no plans to introduce a definition of a 'farm business', however members will be aware of ongoing work to bring forward a new single Strategic Planning Policy Statement. Whilst primarily a consolidation of existing planning policy, the SPPS provides an opportunity to bring improvements to the planning policy framework that will operate under the new two tier planning system that will take effect from next April.

The consultation on the SPPS has now closed and my officials are working to analyse the many responses received, including representations in relation to rural planning. When this work is concluded I will formalise my position with respect to this matter.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

(AQO 6455/11-15)

Mr Durkan: On 4th February 2014, I issued for public consultation the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS). The SPPS sets out the Department's regional planning policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land under a reformed two-tier local planning system. It is a proportionate and appropriate framework for delivery of the reformed planning system when the primary responsibility for planning functions transfers from the Department to councils on 1 April 2015.

The 12 week public consultation exercise on the draft SPPS was facilitated by means of online digital consultation with stakeholders invited to respond electronically. This is the first time the Department has incorporated digital engagement into the policy-making process. The consultation closed on 29 April 2014.

During the consultation period the Department held and contributed to a wide range of meetings and consultation events in order to both explain the content of the draft SPPS to interest groups and to inform stakeholders considering responding formally to the public consultation. One series of events, which ran from 31 March to 4 April, involved round table discussions which were facilitated by the RTPi who then prepared a report on the key themes that emerged. I am pleased to advise members that the RTPi report of those discussions is now available from the SPPS webpage www.planningni.gov.uk/spps.

Over 700 responses were received from individuals and a wide range of stakeholders, such as Business and Industry interests (including CBI, NIIRTA, IOD, NIFHA); Environmental interests (including NIEL, RSPB); Community / Academic / NGO interests (including Royal Town Planning Institute, Belfast Civic Trust, Historic Monuments Council, various residents groups); and Local Government interests (including NILGA and a number of local councils).

The scale of the response and the diverse composition of respondents is considered to be encouraging as it indicates a healthy public interest in planning matters generally but particularly the future of planning under the new two tier system that will be brought into effect in April 2015.

To date all responses have been acknowledged and transferred to a database which has been put in place to facilitate detailed analysis.

The process is well underway and I expect to be briefed shortly on the emerging findings. Work on the SPPS will continue into the summer and I expect a full report providing a synopsis of responses in the autumn.

Subject to Executive Committee agreement, the Department remains on target for finalising the SPPS by the end of the year.

Artefacts: Crannog

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on how much his Department has spent on work at the Crannog in Enniskillen, including the protection of artefacts.

(AQO 6456/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This is a significant project which commenced in June 2012 with the excavation of the Crannóg. Phase two of the works now involves a great volume of work to bring the evidence to publication. To date my Department has spent £261,237 on work at the Crannóg and on the protection of artefacts. This covers only the costs incurred by the Department of the Environment and not other government departments.

Environmental Crime Unit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment for an overview of the work programme of the Environmental Crime Unit. **(AQO 6460/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: As you may be aware, NIEA's Environmental Crime Unit (or ECU) was set up in December 2008 following recommendations made by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate. Its role is to investigate and prosecute serious and persistent, commercial-scale illegal environmental activities, crimes driven by the considerable financial gains that can be made from avoiding legitimate landfill taxes, VAT etc.

ECU's work is intelligence-led, maximising resources towards tackling the worst offenders who continue to flout our environmental regulations and cause considerable damage to our world-renowned landscape, while at the same time depriving our economy millions of pounds that could be put to the collective good through hospitals, infrastructure and schools.

It is critical to view the work programme of the ECU in the context of the direction I have set for waste management in the North. In my response to the Mills Report, I emphasised that our focus must start with reducing the amount of waste created in the first place, supported by doing a better job of regulating residual waste.

This means that DOE has a range of programmes, ranging from supporting business innovation, supporting community waste reduction efforts, partnering with local councils and providing support and guidance to regulated waste operators.

The ECU's work sits at the compliance end of this spectrum, is focused on tackling the worst waste offending and is critical to the whole strategy. To achieve its aims, ECU has business plans in place that include the targets in respect of the number of:

- intelligence reports to be assessed in connection with environmental
- crime or other environmental offences;
- complex investigations underway throughout the year into serious environmental criminality.
- prosecution cases to be submitted to the Public Prosecution Service.
- confiscation investigations to be investigated under POCA.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the provision of new employment opportunities at County Hall in Coleraine following the closure of the Driver and Vehicle Agency. **(AQO 6454/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: Following the unjustified and unwarranted decision by the Department for Transport to centralise all vehicle registration and licensing services in Swansea, I have been working hard to secure alternative employment for the staff affected.

In conjunction with the Minister for Finance and Personnel, I asked every department to introduce vacancy controls so that suitable vacant posts are offered in the first instance to surplus DVA staff. I also asked each department to identify any functions that could be relocated to Coleraine. Unfortunately, other than in my own department, no such permanent work has been identified as yet.

I have identified 70 jobs for relocation to Coleraine. 50 of these jobs will be available to surplus DVA staff and the other 20, while not suitable for the grade mix of surplus DVA staff, will help to mitigate the economic impact on Coleraine.

Officials are also continuing to discuss the possibility of a small number of jobs being retained in Coleraine to carry out minor, residual functions for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. I have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to trawl all departments in Britain for back-office work that could be carried out here which may go some way to eliminating well-publicised backlogs in the delivery of services such as the issue of passports.

My Department is continuing to work with other all other departments to identify individual, vacant posts which can be offered to surplus DVA staff in Coleraine and the Minister for Social Development has offered temporary work for up to 100 staff in Coleraine until the end of the year. This temporary work will provide additional time to find permanent posts for the affected staff.

I remain fully committed to securing appropriate alternative posts in the Civil Service for the displaced DVA staff who have served motorists and others so very well in delivering a high quality vehicle licensing service.

Councils: Planning Functions

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the range of planning functions and powers which will be transferred to the new councils.

(AQO 6457/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The range of planning functions and powers which will be transferred to the new councils is as follows:

- Local Development Planning;
- Development Management - determining the vast majority of planning applications except for Regionally Significant Applications;
- Enforcement – enforcing against breaches of planning control; and
- Other planning controls – responsibilities with regard to listed buildings, conservation areas, the preservation of trees, the control of advertisements and hazardous substances.

Councils: Performance Improvement

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of the Environment, given that councils will have a duty to report on their performance improvement under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to outline the proposed reporting mechanisms.

(AQO 6458/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 requires councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. The Act also provides that, before specifying performance indicators or standards, the Department must consult with councils, it also sets out the required reporting requirements. These include the requirement for councils to gather information to assess improvements in their services and to issue a report annually on their performance against indicators which they have either set themselves or that have been agreed with departments.

In recognising that the aim of local government reform is to deliver improved services to the community it is appropriate in the context of the governance of public funds, for a performance improvement structure to be in place to ensure effectiveness and consistency in approach by the councils in delivering services.

The Act sets out the broad parameters for reporting performance improvement and my Department will be working with councils, other Departments and the Local Government auditor to put in place an integrated performance improvement and reporting arrangement that is better co-ordinated and more responsive to local needs and circumstances. An effective regime will create opportunities for councils to serve citizens better, which is vital to secure sustainable improvements in public services. The delivery of community planning will be supported at council level by the performance improvement framework which focuses on the delivery of continuous improvement in service delivery against more strategic aspects.

Gaelectric

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the pre-application enquiry by Gaelectric to build a power station in the rural area of Inver, near Larne.

(AQO 6459/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials have held 5 pre-application discussion (PAD) meetings with Gaelectric to date on their “Project CAES (compressed air energy storage) Larne” proposals. A further meeting is scheduled for July. It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted to my Department before the end of the summer.

Planning Service: Craigavon

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the future of Planning Service, currently based in Marlborough House, Craigavon, in preparation for the transfer of planning powers to the new Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon council.

(AQO 6461/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In preparation for the smooth transfer of planning functions to the new Councils in April 2015, my officials have been working closely with the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon shadow Council. Work is ongoing on a number of key areas including capacity building for both Councillors and staff, and preparatory work on development plan. Decisions regarding future arrangements for the delivery of the planning function for the new Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council, including location, is a matter for the new Council.

Councils: Standing Orders

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment why the consultation on Standing Orders for the shadow councils has been delayed.

(AQO 6451/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) and the draft Model Standing Orders were finalised and issued for consultation as soon as was practicable following the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 being passed by this House. Prior to the formal issue of the documents my officials had engaged with the chief executives of the new councils on the content of the proposed mandatory standing orders.

In order to ensure that the new councils operated within the new governance framework from the beginning, including the procedures to protect the interests of minority communities, provision is made in the Local Government (Transitional, Supplementary, Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 requiring a new council to incorporate specified provisions in its standing orders.

These provisions include the specification of decisions that must be taken by a qualified majority. These are in addition to the decisions which are specified in the 2014 Act as being required to be taken by a qualified majority. Provision is also made in relation to the procedure that must be adopted by a council for the appointment of councillors to committees, if the council is appointing more than one committee at the same meeting. The other key aspects of the new governance arrangements, including in relation to filling positions of responsibility and the ability for 15 per cent of the members of a council to requisition the reconsideration of a decision are all provided for on the face of the 2014 Act.

The Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, which are subject to the draft affirmative procedure in this House, will be made at the earliest opportunity following the Assembly's summer recess.

Department of Finance and Personnel

NEETS: North Belfast

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many young people aged 16 to 25 years in North Belfast are not currently in education, employment or training,
(AQO 6232/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): A person is defined as NEET if they are aged 16 to 24 and not in employment, education or training (full-time or part-time). All available data refers to this age group therefore the question has been answered on this basis.

Estimates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) are sourced to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, these estimates are only available at Northern Ireland level, as the LFS sample size and design does not support the production of sufficiently reliable estimates for any lower level geography. Table 1 shows the most recent estimate of the overall number and rate of NEETs in Northern Ireland in January – March 2014.

Table 1 – NI NEETs January – March 2014

Northern Ireland NEETS (16-24)		
Quarter	Total	
	No. of 16-24 year olds	Rate (% of 16-24 year olds)
Jan-Mar 2014	32,000	14.6%

Source: Labour Force Survey, January – March 2014

The only other available data source which allows estimation of the number of NEETs at sub-regional level is the 2011 Census. This estimated that there were 2,656 young people aged 16-24 years old who were not in education, employment or training in North Belfast, accounting for 20.9% of the 16-24 population, on the 27th March 2011.

At this time, the Census also estimated that there were a total of 33,516 young people falling into the NEET categories in Northern Ireland, representing 14.7% of the 16-24 population.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 33543/11-15, why this information is not available, given that variable levels of taxation apply to flights in different bands.
(AQW 33863/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: HMRC has indicated that this is commercial-in-confidence taxpayer information that cannot be disclosed.

Institute for Professional Legal Studies

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the current arrangements whereby some students can gain admission to the Institute for Professional Legal Studies without having obtained a primary degree or sat the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) examination, due to their employment in a solicitor's office, whereas other applicants have to demonstrate academic achievement and pass the IPLS examination.
(AQW 34010/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not have a direct role in relation to admission to the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS).

Tourism: Jobs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for a breakdown of the current assessment of tourism jobs, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 34128/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The table overleaf details the number of jobs in tourism characteristic industries, broken down by parliamentary constituency. The figures refer to the number of employee jobs in September 2011. Figures for 2013 will be available by September 2014.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Employee Jobs in Tourism Characteristic Industries by Parliamentary Constituency Area

Parliamentary Constituency Area	Employee Jobs in Tourism Characteristic Industries
Belfast East	2,615
Belfast North	3,393
Belfast South	9,023
Belfast West	2,116
East Antrim	2,163
East Londonderry	3,236
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,787
Foyle	3,375
Lagan Valley	2,833
Mid Ulster	2,224
Newry and Armagh	2,798
North Antrim	2,650
North Down	2,834
South Antrim	3,707
South Down	2,955
Strangford	2,851
Upper Bann	2,788
West Tyrone	1,844
Total	56,192

Source: NI Census of Employment, September 2011

* The Tourism Characteristic Industries (TCI) used are based on international guidelines that include employees in business sectors with a significant reliance on tourist activity, but do not include the self-employed. The TCI industries are defined as "Accommodation for Visitors", "Food and Beverage Serving Activities", "Passenger Transport", "Sporting and Recreational Activities" and "Other" (including for example, travel agencies, museums, conference and exhibition centres etc.).

Hospitality: DFP

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 34139/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total cost of hospitality provided by the Department of Finance and Personnel in 2013/14 was £50k.

The total cost of hospitality provided by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) in 2013/14 was £0.5k.

Executive Spending Allocations

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what checks are in place to ensure that Ministers are spending only on matters agreed in their financial allocation, as agreed by the Executive.

(AQW 34177/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Each department must provide DFP with detailed monthly expenditure data, which is monitored to assess the risk of overspend, or underspend, against departmental budgets.

Whilst the majority of funding is at a Minister's discretion, should departments receive an Executive budget allocation for a specific ring-fenced service and are unable to incur full expenditure, then they must surrender that funding to the Executive for reallocation under the In-Year Monitoring rules.

Departments are also required to ensure that their expenditure represents Value for Money and has the appropriate legislative authority. This is monitored by DFP through expenditure approvals above delegated limits.

More widely, Executive Ministers have a collective responsibility to ensure that the Northern Ireland Budget is managed and controlled properly. This includes a clear imperative to adhere to the budget allocations agreed by the Executive.

Contingency Funds

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what rules apply to Ministers who withhold part of their departmental budget to use as a contingency fund.

(AQW 34178/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It is for each individual Minister to manage his or her budget within the context of the Executive's In-Year Monitoring Guidelines. This guidance clearly states that any Reduced Requirements must be surrendered at the earliest opportunity.

If the operation of a departmental contingency fund reflects surplus resources in that department, then this would be inconsistent with the requirements of the In-Year Monitoring Guidelines. In that scenario a contingency fund would be seen as an attempt to circumvent the Executive's authority in the redistribution of surplus funding.

Contingency Funds

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any Minister has established a contingency fund within their Department that has not been agreed by the Executive; and if so, to detail if he has corresponded with the relevant Minister on this matter and the content of the correspondence.

(AQW 34179/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The management of departmental budgets is generally a matter for each individual Minister within the context of the In-Year Monitoring Guidelines. The key issue in relation to any contingency fund is that Reduced Requirements are surrendered at an early stage for reallocation in line with the Executive's priorities.

It is not good practice for any department to withhold surplus funding and I would view this as an attempt to circumvent the Executive's role in redistributing Reduced Requirements.

I have not corresponded with any Minister on the issue of contingency funds.

Budget Controls: Treasury Rules

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any Treasury rules apply to the use of money allocated to a Department; and if so, to detail the rules and whether there has been a breach by a Minister.

(AQW 34180/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: HM Treasury Budget Controls apply to the entire Northern Ireland Block rather than individual departments.

Northern Ireland Executive departments are also expected to manage their budgets in line with relevant sections of HM Treasury's Consolidated Budgeting Guidance, which is the technical budgeting guidance that applies across the UK. DFP plays an important role in working with the departments to ensure compliance with this guidance. HM Treasury has not expressed any concern in relation to compliance in Northern Ireland with the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DFP Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34216/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is responsible for managing the Northern Ireland Civil Service Office Estate and pays the utility bills associated with DFP occupied buildings and buildings where DFP holds the budget.

The table below details the figures you requested.

Financial Year	Heat (million)	Electricity (million)	Water (million)
2009/10	£0.6	£2.3	£0.5
2010/11	£1.0	£2.9	£0.3
2011/12	£0.9	£2.6	£0.3

Financial Year	Heat (million)	Electricity (million)	Water (million)
2012/13	£1.0	£3.0	£0.3
2013/14	£1.1	£2.8	£0.3

Hardship Relief Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many applications, since 2011, were received from commercial properties for rates relief under the (i) Hardship Relief Scheme; (ii) how many were granted; and what was the total relief given in each year.

(AQW 34265/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Thirty six applications for Hardship Relief have been received since 1st April 2011. During that period, two applications were granted rate relief under the scheme; with the total value of relief awarded equalling £4,052.71. One award of £3,262.08 was granted during 2012/13 (backdated to 2009/10) and another for £790.63, for a period during 2011/12.

Commercial Properties: Ballymena

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of commercial properties in Ballymena with no rateable value; and to outline the reasons why this is the case.

(AQW 34266/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Land & Property Services has currently 37 new non domestic properties listed as yet to be valued in the Ballymena Borough Council area. These properties will be inspected in due course to ascertain if they are ready to be entered in the Valuation List. The number outstanding is considered to be well within a normal quota of work in progress.

Ballymena: Encouraging Investment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether a 'rates holiday' was offered in the last ten years to any incoming businesses as a means of encouraging investment within Ballymena; and if so, to detail the properties to which this applied.

(AQW 34268/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There is no legislative provision within the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 for granting a 'rates holiday'.

Rates: Domestic Rebates or Exemptions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any domestic properties will benefit from a rates rebate or exemption because of the presence of a place of worship within the property.

(AQW 34317/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Under rating legislation any church, chapel or similar building occupied by a religious body and used for purposes of public religious worship is exempt from rates.

Any occupation of this nature is considered on a case by case basis; in particular the question of the paramount occupation, the actual use of the premises, and the public nature of the worship will be considered.

The District Valuer in Land & Property Services in determining any entitlement to exemption will consider the facts of each case within the statutory framework and guided by case law.

European Business Network Congress

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) amount paid to each of the guest speakers at the European Business Network Congress from 29-31 May 2013; and (ii) funding provided by SEUPB's INTERREG IVA Programme for this event.

(AQW 34430/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The funding provided by the INTERREG IVA programme for this event was £17,652.59.

As the programme assistance did not relate to the fees paid to each of the guest speakers, it is not possible to provide you with such detail.

Cycling: Stormont Estate

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to improving cycling infrastructure in the Stormont Estate.

(AQW 34491/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Stormont Estate Workplace Travel Consortium, comprised of representatives from all the departments based on the Stormont Estate and the Northern Ireland Assembly, will shortly be issuing a questionnaire to all staff based on the Estate seeking information on their travel to work arrangements.

The results of this questionnaire will help formulate plans for developing a strategy more focused on sustainable transport (including cyclists) for all those who work on the Stormont Estate.

In the meantime we await the findings of this survey.

Rates: Liability

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) why tenants assume rates liability if the capital value of the property is greater than £150,000; and (ii) what evidence base is used to set the financial amounts which determine liability. **(AQW 34500/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: Although the domestic rating system has developed and is long established as a tax on the occupier, the owner or landlord is normally liable for rates in respect of rental properties with a capital value of £150,000 or less. A valuation limit is applied because the evidence shows that collection difficulties tend to occur in lower value rented properties because as a rule they are occupied by a more transient population. The general principle that the occupant is liable remains for higher value properties.

When the new capital value system came into effect in 2007, the threshold was reset at £150,000 assessed capital value. It replaced the old Net Annual Value (NAV) limit, which had been in place for many years. This was not a new policy initiative but something that had to be done because of the general revaluation in 2007.

The £150,000 threshold was decided following statistical analysis comparing frequency distributions between the old NAV and new capital valuation lists but set a little higher to allow for higher than average capital values in areas such as those around Queens University. The setting of the new threshold was also informed by a consultation undertaken by DFP in 2006, which was based on a study undertaken by the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation in 2005. Evidence for the continuing transient nature of private rented housing in Northern Ireland was obtained from Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency's Continuous Household Survey.

Rates: Arrears

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he is aware of the concern amongst some private rental tenants who are being pursued by Land and Property Services for rates arrears despite having paid their rates to the landlord of the property; and what steps he is taking to address these concerns. **(AQW 34501/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of a small number of cases where the landlord has taken payment from the tenant in respect of rates as part of the tenancy agreement, but not passed on to the Department. Such instances are unfortunate (and AQW 34500/11-15 refers); however for domestic properties with a Capital Value over £150,000, liability rests with the tenant or occupier. Land & Property Services is sympathetic to these cases and works closely with the tenant to agree a suitable repayment plan. In parallel, LPS and Housing Rights Service have met over recent months to discuss an approach for genuine cases of tenant hardship and where the tenant may be pursuing action against the landlord.

My Department has also taken steps through recent legislation to simplify the rules around landlord liability and from next April there will be no need for landlords or tenants to produce tenancy agreements. This change has the support of landlords, as represented by the Landlord Association and tenants, as represented by the Housing Rights Service.

Civil Service: Employment Advertisements

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of employment positions advertised externally by the NI Civil Service in 2013; and (ii) the total number of applicants for these positions. **(AQW 34543/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: The NI Civil Service reports figures annually on all external recruitment activity, including number of applicants. These figures are available in the NICS Annual Report on Recruitment for 2013. This report is in the public domain and is available on the NICS recruitment web-site at:

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/resources/documents/r/e/c/recruitment-to-the-nics-annual-report-2013.pdf>

Danske Bank: Branch Closure

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has had with Danske Bank following their decision to close their branch in Holywood, Co. Down. **(AQW 34558/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I have had no specific discussions with Danske Bank regarding this particular branch closure.

Roe Valley Country Park: Visitor Numbers

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the estimated number of visitors to the Roe Valley Country Park in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34611/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Visitor numbers to Roe Valley Country Park are collected by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Visitor Attraction Survey. This is a voluntary Survey and the results are based solely on the visitor numbers provided by respondents. The estimated number of visitors to Roe Valley Country Park for each of the last five years is shown in the table attached.

Visitor Numbers to Roe Valley Country Park (2009-2013)

Year	Estimated number of Visitors
2009	300,000
2010	300,000
2011	280,000
2012	250,000
2013	300,000

Welfare Reform: Financial Penalties

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the total sum of financial penalties due to Welfare Reform issues, deducted from the Block Grant, from the date of the first deduction until May 2015.

(AQW 34833/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has confirmed the Welfare Reform penalties of £13 million in 2013-14, £87 million in this year and £114 million next year. The 2015-16 deduction equates to £9.5 million per month.

As a consequence, if Welfare Reform has not been agreed by the end of May 2015, the Executive will have lost a total of £119 million. The financial penalties will continue to escalate significantly over time as reforms to the welfare system are rolled out in Great Britain.

Rates: Liability

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action can be taken to protect tenants from rates liability where the landlord has given a verbal assurance that they will assume responsibility for rates payment.

(AQW 34892/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am aware of a small number of cases where the landlord has given a verbal assurance that they will assume responsibility for rate payments but failed to do so. Such instances are unfortunate; however, in relation to domestic properties with a Capital Value over £150,000, liability rests with the tenant or occupier. Land & Property Services is sympathetic to such cases and works closely with the tenant to agree a suitable repayment plan. In parallel, LPS and Housing Rights Service have met over recent months to discuss an approach for genuine cases of tenant hardship and where the tenant may be pursuing action against the landlord.

My Department has also taken steps through recent legislation to simplify the rules around landlord liability and from next April there will be no need for landlords or tenants to produce tenancy agreements for rating matters. This change has the support of landlords, as represented by the Landlord Association and tenants, as represented by the Housing Rights Service.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Hospitality: DHSSPS

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) his Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013-14.

(AQW 34140/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The total cost of hospitality provided by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and each of the Department's Arms Length Bodies, in 2013-14, is set out in the table below.

	2013/14 £000
DHSSPS	62.8
Health and Social Care Board	53.7
Belfast HSC Trust	25.8
Northern HSC Trust	22.8
Southern HSC Trust	32.3
South Eastern HSC Trust	51.0
Western HSC Trust	13.1
NI Ambulance Service	2.8
Business Services Organisation	18.8
Public Health Agency	53.6
Patient Client Council	12.3
NI Fire & Rescue Service	16.7
NI Social Care Council	7.8
NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency	3.9
NI Medical & Dental Training Agency	5.9
NI Blood Transfusion Service	1.0
NI Practice & Education Council	-
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority	8.0
Total	392.2

All organisations across the HSC have comprehensive policies and procedures in respect of hospitality which outline the eligibility and entitlement to hospitality.

Due to the wide ranging operational nature of the Department's ALBs, hospitality may also include expenditure other than that associated with the provision of refreshments, for example room and/or equipment hire.

The annual total cost has decreased steadily in recent years to less than half of the 2008-2009 sum.

Skin Camouflage Services

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on skin camouflage services by the Health and Social Care Board in each of the last three years; and how much is projected to be spent in the next two years.

(AQW 34152/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has not issued funding directly to any organisation for skin camouflage services during the last three years.

In terms of projected spending, I understand that the Health and Social Care Board will be meeting with the Changing Faces charity in the near future to discuss this issue.

Staff Vehicles: DHSSPS

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the procurement procedures used for servicing and minor repairs of staff vehicles, in terms of the delays caused and keeping vehicles off the road.

(AQW 34298/11-15)

Mr Poots: I understand that this question relates to NIFRS vehicles. In that context, I would advise that procurement procedures are in place to ensure NIFRS follows national best practice and achieves value for money in terms of vehicle maintenance and repair.

Procurement is only one logistical aspect in turning around vehicles in a timely manner. The procurement for servicing and minor repairs of NIFRS vehicles includes a number of contracts, for example oil, filters, batteries and vehicle parts. These are collectively aimed at enabling repairs to be made in the most effective and efficient manner. In addition, NIFRS has analysed all aspects of the repair route and seeks to constantly improve start-to-finish times in a workshop, positioning of workshops and the way vehicles are serviced (One-Stop-Shop concept).

Strategic Service Reform

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will publish the reports made by Ernst & Young, on behalf of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, on phase 1 of the Strategic Service Reform; and to outline the cost of the work carried out to date by Ernst & Young.

(AQW 34299/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer these three questions together.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), following a procurement exercise, commissioned two consultancy firms, KPMG and Ernst & Young, to provide External Implementation Support to those taking forward the implementation of Transforming Your Care (TYC).

Each of the firms was allocated a group of Trusts, the associated Local Commissioning Group (LCG) and related Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) to work with. Ernst & Young were contracted to provide support for:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Western Trust (WHST) | ■ Northern LCG |
| ■ Southern Trust (SHST) | ■ 2 x ICPs in Western area |
| ■ Northern Trust (NHST) | ■ 3 x ICPs in Southern area |
| ■ Western LCG | ■ 4 x ICPs in Northern area |
| ■ Southern LCG | |

Phase 1 of the exercise set out to examine each organisation's readiness for change; the robustness of their service reform and financial plans to support that change; consideration of 'difficult choices' options, projects and reforms to deliver TYC and 'shift left' whilst maintaining quality and safety of service. This phase of work is due to be completed by the end of June 2014.

The cost of EY's work for Phase 1 is a fixed fee of £537,574 (excluding VAT). The fixed price fee was negotiated for provision of support to 3 Trusts, 3 Local Commissioning Groups (LCG) and Integrated Care Partnerships within the 3 LCG areas. The HSCB advise that it would not be possible extract costs specifically for work with the NHST.

The focus of this work has been on supporting the HSCB and Trusts to deliver significant and major whole system reform. Once I have had the opportunity to read reports from Phase 1 of this work I will consider placing a copy in the Assembly Library.

Any proposals for service changes arising from this work will be subject to the normal consultation and public engagement processes.

Transforming Your Care

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Health and Social Care Trust will publish the advice or reports produced by Ernst & Young to assist the Trust in the implementation of Transforming Your Care.

(AQW 34303/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer these three questions together.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), following a procurement exercise, commissioned two consultancy firms, KPMG and Ernst & Young, to provide External Implementation Support to those taking forward the implementation of Transforming Your Care (TYC).

Each of the firms was allocated a group of Trusts, the associated Local Commissioning Group (LCG) and related Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) to work with. Ernst & Young were contracted to provide support for:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Western Trust (WHST) | ■ Northern LCG |
| ■ Southern Trust (SHST) | ■ 2 x ICPs in Western area |
| ■ Northern Trust (NHST) | ■ 3 x ICPs in Southern area |
| ■ Western LCG | ■ 4 x ICPs in Northern area |
| ■ Southern LCG | |

Phase 1 of the exercise set out to examine each organisation's readiness for change; the robustness of their service reform and financial plans to support that change; consideration of 'difficult choices' options, projects and reforms to deliver TYC and 'shift left' whilst maintaining quality and safety of service. This phase of work is due to be completed by the end of June 2014.

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The focus of this work has been on supporting the HSCB and Trusts to deliver significant and major whole system reform. Once I have had the opportunity to read reports from Phase 1 of this work I will consider placing a copy in the Assembly Library.

Any proposals for service changes arising from this work will be subject to the normal consultation and public engagement processes.

Programme for Government: Implementation

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to what extent his Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34332/11-15)

Mr Poots: Social clauses for capital and construction related contracts are at a more advanced stage of development than those for goods and services contracts. Indeed, relevant clauses for capital contracts are well developed and understood by the construction industry, which means that they are routinely included within the tender documentation as a core specification. In that context, all construction works contracts awarded in the Health and Social Care and Public Safety sector since March 2010 have included social clauses.

In contrast however, the nature of goods and services contracts means that specific and tailored clauses must be developed. This issue is not specific to my Department and has been acknowledged as an issue across the wider public sector. All goods and services contracts awarded in the HSC sector are required to include standard social clauses in respect of Equality and Health and Safety. In addition, steps have been taken, where appropriate, to include clauses to support apprenticeships, employee development and employment opportunities. Further work is currently underway to expand the inclusion of these latter requirements and others across a wider number of contracts as renewals fall due. To support this, a HSC-wide group has been established to develop wider use of social clauses within goods and services HSC contracts.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the recommendations into the future of paediatric congenital cardiac services.

(AQW 34333/11-15)

Mr Poots: The International Expert Team, led by Dr John Mayer, commissioned by Dr James Reilly TD, Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland, and me to carry out an independent assessment of current and future needs for cardiology and cardiac surgery for congenital heart disease in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have been aiming to submit its report to Minister Reilly and me by 1 July 2014. I understand this timetable has slipped slightly. The team will describe the existing hospital services in both jurisdictions, outline options for service configuration and governance arrangements and report to both Ministers, jointly, recommending the most appropriate model that meets the population health needs and other requirements of both jurisdictions.

Health and Social Care Trusts: Invoices

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for each Health and Social Care Trust, the reduced (i) volume; and (ii) value of unprocessed and unpaid invoices making up the backlog reported to Business Services Organisation's Board meeting of 30 April 2014; and whether the agreed plan to address the backlog included the provision of an explanation to those suppliers whose invoices remain unpaid.

(AQW 34334/11-15)

Mr Poots: Because of the similarities in these questions, a combined response has been provided.

The number and value of unprocessed/unpaid invoices making up the backlog reported to Business Services Organisation's (BSO) Board meeting of 30 April 2014 are shown in the table below.

	Invoice Backlog as of 30 April 2014	
	Volume of Invoices	Value (£)
Belfast Trust	14,767	24,458,069
Northern Trust	4,490	4,476,807
Western Trust	5,649	11,190,020
Ambulance Service	864	3,158,917
Total for Trusts	25,770	43,283,813

As part of the plan to clear the backlog, the Backlog Team are in regular contact with suppliers to inform them of progress and considerable progress has been made in this regard – as at 30 June, the backlog had reduced to 8,404 invoices with a value of £10.7m.

Health and Social Care Trusts: Invoices

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail, for each Health and Social Care Trust, the (i) volume; and (ii) value of unprocessed suppliers invoices which made up the significant backlog of invoices reported to Business Services Organisation's Board meeting of 30 April 2014.

(AQW 34335/11-15)

Mr Poots: Because of the similarities in these questions, a combined response has been provided.

The number and value of unprocessed/unpaid invoices making up the backlog reported to Business Services Organisation's (BSO) Board meeting of 30 April 2014 are shown in the table below.

	Invoice Backlog as of 30 April 2014	
	Volume of Invoices	Value (£)
Belfast Trust	14,767	24,458,069
Northern Trust	4,490	4,476,807
Western Trust	5,649	11,190,020
Ambulance Service	864	3,158,917
Total for Trusts	25,770	43,283,813

As part of the plan to clear the backlog, the Backlog Team are in regular contact with suppliers to inform them of progress and considerable progress has been made in this regard – as at 30 June, the backlog had reduced to 8,404 invoices with a value of £10.7m.

Shared Services

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how Shared Services intend compensating suppliers who have been denied timely payment of their invoices; and why it appears that, when it comes to late payment, suppliers are apparently being treated less favourably than Health and Social Care staff.

(AQW 34336/11-15)

Mr Poots: The issue of prompt payment for suppliers remains a key priority for my Department. Guidance contained in Managing Public Money NI requires departments, agencies and NDPBs to pay invoices accurately and on time to avoid late payment. The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2013 ensures that businesses do not suffer financially from late payment by permitting businesses to charge statutory interest on overdue payments.

My Department's governance and accountability processes in this area requires all Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) to ensure that any issues relating to the timely payment of supplier invoices are addressed with the relevant supplier and resolved as a matter of urgency in line with the prevailing legislation and guidance.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how money apportioned through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in the last three years has been spent.

(AQW 34337/11-15)

Mr Poots: The annual proceeds from the UK wide Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme apportioned to NI have been used, together with other efficiency measures, to address the ever increasing financial challenges faced by the HSC over recent years.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Complaints

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a time limit or target for the resolution of complaints within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; and how many people registered a complaint with the Trust before 1 January 2014 and have yet to receive a final response.

(AQW 34339/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust operates a complaints policy in line with the HSC Complaints Policy – Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning. A copy can be found at http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc_complaints_revised_standards_and_guidelines_for_resolution_and_learning__amds_.pdf

The Trusts deals with over 2000 complaints per year. A complaint should be acknowledged in writing within 2 working days of receipt. However, a full response should be provided within 20 working days and service users should be notified of any delays. Some complaints will take longer than others to resolve because of differences in complexity, seriousness and the scale of the investigative work required.

The Trust is currently working to provide a full response to 58 complaints which were received before 1st January 2014.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DHSSPS Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34345/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department of Finance and Personnel Properties Division is responsible for paying utility bills associated with multiple occupancy buildings. My Department is housed in Castle Buildings, Stormont which is a multi-occupancy building.

I therefore refer you the Department of Finance and Personnel's response to your Assembly Question reference - AQW 34216/11-15 which details the costs of multi occupancy buildings.

Cross-border Nursing Home Places

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33922/11-15 and in instances where better value for money for the state and the client can be demonstrated and where clients can be closer to their families, whether he will approach the Minister for Health Dr James Reilly TD in order to come to a reciprocal arrangement whereby clients on both sides of the border could be placed in nursing homes that are registered with, and regulated, by either the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority or the Health Information and Quality Authority.

(AQW 34374/11-15)

Mr Poots: As detailed in my answer to AQW 33922/11-15, both jurisdictions are in a similar legislative position. The Republic of Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) permits the HSE to only place clients in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and registered with the ROI regulator and here in Northern Ireland, the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts can only place clients in care homes in Northern Ireland that are registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) under Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. Therefore, significant legislative changes would be required to allow for the placement of NI residents in care homes based in the ROI.

You should be aware that clients can move from one jurisdiction to another when the care package in the new care home is privately funded – as this requires no assistance from either HSC Trusts or the HSE.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: The Cottage, Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the Northern Health and Social Care Trust headquarters have been relocated, what use will be made of The Cottage in Ballymena.

(AQW 34432/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Cottage in Ballymena currently houses the following Northern Health and Social Care Trust (Trust) health and care teams, including 3 meeting rooms:

- Complaints
- ICT
- Corporate Communications
- Adoption

In addition, the Business Services Organisation (BSO) Procurement and Logistics Team are also located within the facility.

A proposal for the Autism and Brokerage services to move to The Cottage is currently being considered by the Trust as part of an overall accommodation review. This will take place over the next three months.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: The Cottage, Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the Northern Health and Social Care Trust headquarters have been relocated, whether there are any plans for the disposal of The Cottage site in Ballymena for development purposes.

(AQW 34433/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no plans for the disposal of The Cottage site in Ballymena. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust are continuing to utilise the site as per AQW 34432/11-15.

Organ Transplants: Children

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of operations for organ transplants to children that have taken place in each of the last three years, broken down by organ type.

(AQW 34436/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested has been supplied by NHS Blood and Transplant, which is the organ donation organisation for the UK and is responsible for matching and allocating donated organs.

The information is shown in the following table –

Transplants - by financial year as at June 2014

Organ	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Kidney (deceased)	<5*	<5	<5	-	<5
Kidney (live)	8	5	<5	<5	-
Lung(s)	-	-	<5	-	-
Liver (deceased)	<5	7	<5	<5	<5
Ocular tissue	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Cornea	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Sclera	6	<5	<5	<5	-
Total	20	16	10	8	<5

* Patient numbers of less than 5 in the attached document could become identifiable data and are therefore listed as <5

Gastric Band Operations

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many gastric band operations have been carried out by the Health Service, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years. (AQW 34460/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the last 3 years there have been fewer than five gastric band operations carried out by the Health Service in Northern Ireland. It is not possible to break this down per year due to the very small numbers involved and the right of those individuals to privacy and our obligations under Data Protection Act.

Cancer Drugs

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any drugs for the treatment of cancer are generally available in Great Britain but not in Northern Ireland; and if so, to detail the drugs and the measures he has in place to address any disparity. (AQW 34462/11-15)

Mr Poots: Access to effective treatments for the population of Northern Ireland, including access to cancer drugs and other specialist medicines, is an important priority for me and for my Department.

In Northern Ireland the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is responsible for commissioning drugs and treatments. Both the HSCB and the NHS in England are guided by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in determining which cancer drugs should be routinely available. All NICE approved cancer drugs that are available in England are either recurrently funded or available via a cost per case mechanism in Northern Ireland.

The HSCB has a clear process by which unapproved drugs (including drugs and therapies not limited to cancer) can be made available to patients in Northern Ireland. Around 98% of the applications for unapproved drugs for cancer are approved. I have recently instructed my Department to evaluate this process, and to take account of measures that other devolved administrations are considering in their approach towards access to specialist drugs.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the financial return from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme; and whether this funding is targeted towards the accessibility of cancer drugs. (AQW 34477/11-15)

Mr Poots: The attached table details how much money Northern Ireland was apportioned through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) (2009) in each of the last three years.

Financial Year	£m
2011/2012	3.426
2012/2013	3.003
2013/2014	2.853

The proceeds apportioned to Northern Ireland from the PPRS are used, together with other efficiency measures, to address the ever increasing financial challenges faced by the HSC. It is not specifically targeted towards the accessibility of cancer drugs.

Eye Tests: Children

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children had at least one eye test in 2012/13; and of these, to detail the number of children under 16, shown as a percentage of the total population of children. (AQW 34513/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is provided in the tables below, figures relate to Health Service sight tests only and excludes private sight tests.

Data relates to the date the sight test was processed and paid on the system rather than the date the test took place. Claims must be submitted for payment within six months of the date of the test.

Age is calculated using the date of birth on the sight test form and the date the test took place. Registered health population figures are taken from October 2012, the mid-point of the 2012/13 financial year.

Children who received Health Service sight tests in 2012/13

Age	Number of Health Service sight tests	Number of children registered for Health Service treatments at October 2012	% of children who received a sight test
0-15	104,986	384,097	27.33%
0-17	122,296	433,595	28.21%

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Health and Social Care Trusts: Adherence to Guidelines

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33960/11-15, what processes are in place within Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure adherence to the guidelines; and what mechanism can be instigated if the guidelines are not followed. (AQW 34545/11-15)

Mr Poots: Trust governance arrangements support processes of staff appraisal and, in the case of doctors, revalidation. Whilst medical revalidation is aimed at ensuring doctors adhere to the guidance of the GMC, the process does not rely on monitoring against every individual element of guidance. However, it does require that all doctors collect and reflect on complaints raised against them and the services they provide with a view to continually improving their practice. This will be documented at their annual appraisal.

If a person is dissatisfied with their care, including the handling of consultant to consultant referral, the Trust complaints process is the appropriate mechanism for them to raise their concerns.

Details on the process and support available can be found at [Make a complaint against the health service | nidirect](#)

Cancer Drugs

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will announce the terms of reference for the evaluation his Department will carry out on the Individual Funding Request process for access to cancer drug treatments. (AQW 34547/11-15)

Mr Poots: The terms of reference for the evaluation of whether the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process is meeting its objectives are currently being finalised by my Department and I expect to make an announcement in the near future.

European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will ensure that Article 2 of the European Cancer Patient's Bill of Rights is upheld. (AQW 34549/11-15)

Mr Poots: I attended the World Cancer Day event in February this year when the European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights was launched. Article 2 of the charter states every European citizen should have the right to "optimal and timely access to appropriate specialised care, underpinned by research and innovation".

The health service in Northern Ireland is working hard to ensure optimal timely access to appropriate, evidence based, specialised care. Specific action includes:

- the Cancer Service Framework which provides standards to improve how services prevent, diagnose and treat cancer, as well as standards to support both cancer survivors and those with end of life needs;
- the endorsement of National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) technical appraisals and clinical guidelines, and the provision of NICE approved drugs;

- continued ongoing collaboration between cancer research and clinicians, for example through the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre and Network, and the Queens University Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, for which my Department provides funding, helps promote innovation in cancer diagnostics and treatment; and,
- partnerships with organisations like Macmillan Cancer Support has led to innovation and improvement in follow up services for patients with cancer.

Dyslexia

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that dyslexia is recognised as a disability under equality legislation, why there is no Health Service provision for dyslexia, including at a diagnostic level.

(AQW 34554/11-15)

Mr Poots: Dyslexia is identified mainly within educational settings by educational psychologists, when teachers or parents have identified problems with reading and writing.

The additional and specialised teaching and adaptive strategies required to address the difficulty associated with dyslexia are delivered in schools and other educational settings.

While there are no specific health problems associated with dyslexia, any co-morbid or additional problems which require Health and Social Care input can be accessed by the normal referral routes.

If a referral is made to Health and Social Care, professionals including Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists support educational staff by assessing the child's or young person's phonological awareness and visual perceptual needs. They then provide appropriate intervention strategies and advice whilst liaising with educational colleagues and parents to meet the holistic needs of the child and enhance their literacy development.

Car Parking: Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration he has given to the provision of additional staff car parking space at the Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals.

(AQW 34557/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department's policy on car parking provision and management in the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector for Northern Ireland sets the direction for car park management including charging and makes clear that decisions relating to specific HSC site car parking rest with each Health and Social Care Trust.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that there are currently no plans to increase the provision of additional staff car parking space at the Causeway Hospital site. With regard to the Antrim Area hospital, car park provision for staff was increased in 2013 by 133 spaces. Further spaces may be considered subject to demand and availability of capital funding.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Appointment of Non-executive Directors

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the appointment of non-executive directors to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34564/11-15)

Mr Poots: The competition process to appoint two non-executive directors of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust is underway. Interviews were held in May 2014 and it is hoped that the appointment process will be completed within the coming weeks.

Out-of-hours Service: Kilkeel Health Centre

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any plans to reduce the out-of-hours service provided at Kilkeel Health Centre.

(AQW 34568/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board commissions the provision of GP Out of Hours service from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Board currently has no plans to reduce the Out of Hours service provided at Kilkeel Primary Care Centre.

Mental Health Unit: Omagh

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a decision has been made on the future location of the mental health unit currently situated in Omagh.

(AQW 34583/11-15)

Mr Poots: No decision has been taken. At my request, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) undertook an appraisal of the two suggested locations for the second Mental Health Inpatient Unit in the Western Trust area. The HSCB findings will inform the required business case for this project which will also need to take account of a financial and value for money analysis.

Only when a business case has been finalised and submitted to my Department for consideration can a final decision be taken. The business case will also need to be approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP).

Timing of the project will be subject to budgetary availability and this project will need to be considered alongside all other demands on the capital budget as we move to the next budgetary period commencing in 2015/16.

Omagh: Local Enhanced Hospital

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh will be built; and to list the facilities that will be available.

(AQW 34589/11-15)

Mr Poots: Work on the new Omagh Local Hospital is expected to commence this month and will be completed over a two year period. The Operational Commissioning is expected to take a further three to four months with the Hospital being operational late 2016.

The two storey building will provide accommodation for a range of services including GP practices, urgent care and treatment, cardiac assessment, renal dialysis, out-patients, dedicated children's department, X-ray and imaging, in-patient rehabilitation, recovery and palliative care services, day case theatres, community dental, allied health professional's therapy centre, the community mental health team and a dedicated centre for woman's health.

South West Acute Hospital: Maintenance Costs

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the maintenance costs for the South West Acute Hospital in the 2013/14 financial year.

(AQW 34590/11-15)

Mr Poots: The maintenance costs for the South West Acute Hospital are included in the Unitary Charge payable to PFI Partner, Northern Ireland Health Group. The Unitary Charge payment is made up of a number of components which include costs relating to the building construction, contractor supplied equipment, capital replacement and lifecycle and interest charges (et al), in addition to estates, energy and grounds maintenance services.

The annual Unitary Charge was the subject of detailed scrutiny during the three-year procurement as part of the competitive tendering process and set within the PFI contract at Financial Close (May 2009).

The detailed breakdown of Unitary Charge payments is considered as commercially sensitive information and the Trust is therefore not permitted to disclose this information in accordance with the PFI contract and the Freedom of Information Act.

Prescriptions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many prescriptions have been issued in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34608/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of prescription items for which a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2011, 2012 and 2013 is shown below.

Not all prescriptions issued are subsequently dispensed and presented for payment, so the number of prescriptions issued is not known centrally.

The figures shown are presented by the calendar year in which the prescription was paid to the pharmacist; it should be noted that there may be a time lag where prescriptions have been dispensed by the community pharmacist in a particular year but paid the following year. The data provided only covers drugs dispensed in primary care, as drugs prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems.

Number of prescription items dispensed in each of the last three years

Calendar Year	Number of prescription items
2011	36,322,851
2012	37,841,141
2013	38,661,481

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Tattoo Removal

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether tattoo removal can be carried out on the Health Service.

(AQW 34622/11-15)

Mr Poots: Plastic surgery procedures carried out through the Health and Social Care Service in Northern Ireland are consistent with the principles set out in the policy document "A Policy to Make Best Use of Resources in Plastic Surgery and Related Specialties". This states that clear clinical criteria will be used to determine whether a patient should have surgery. In the case of tattoo removal, the policy states that tattoo removal will only be available if the following criteria are met;

- the tattoo is visible in a person's normal daily life, and either
- the tattoo may put the patient's life, health, or livelihood at risk, or
- the tattoo was inflicted without the patient's valid consent.

A copy of the policy document is available on the DHSSPS website at http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_a_policy_to_make_best_use_of_resources_in_plastic_surgery_and_related_specialties__205_kb_.pdf

Wheelchair Accessible Scales

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when wheelchair accessible scales will be available at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

(AQW 34626/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can confirm that wheelchair accessible scales were installed in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children on Tues 24th June 2014.

Social Workers

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will consider the introduction of a new code of conduct as part of the development of a new social work strategy.

(AQW 34630/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is important that the standards of conduct, performance and ethics set by the NISCC in Codes take into account the different level of training, roles, responsibilities and job requirements of both social workers and social care workers to guide individuals and ensure they can be held to account for actions or omissions in their conduct or practice commensurate with expected levels of behaviour and performance.

I am fully supportive of the work being progressed by the NISCC to revise and update the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers (including social workers) which was developed over 12 years ago.

There will be two new Codes, one for social workers and one for social care workers, that will set out core standards of conduct that apply to both alongside specific standards that reflect specific differences in performance expectations.

This is in line with the Department's policy and the aims of the Social Work Strategy and officials are working with the NISCC to this end.

Legal Highs: Emergency Departments

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have reported to emergency units because of the effects of legal high psychoactive substances, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34640/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on attendances at emergency care departments because of the effect of legal high psychoactive substances is not available, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Legal Highs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Minister of Justice on the issue of legal highs.

(AQW 34641/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department leads on the cross-departmental strategy developed to tackle alcohol and drug misuse in Northern Ireland, the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs (NSD Phase 2). The NSD Phase 2 contains outcomes to reduce the availability and supply of all illegal/illicit drugs, including New Psychoactive Substances. With regard to illegal drugs, enforcement of the key UK-wide legislation (the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) is the responsibility of the PSNI, and therefore this Department has, and continues, to work closely with the Department of Justice and the Criminal Justice sector on this issue.

Examples of cross-departmental working include the Law and Criminal Justice Advisory Group, chaired by the Department of Justice, which is one of four advisory groups set up to provide advice and policy guidance on specific priorities contained within NSD Phase 2. In addition, key links have been made between NSD Phase 2, the DOJ Community Safety Strategy, the Organised Crime Task Force, and the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending. At a local level, my Department continues to promote joined up working between the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams, the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and local councils.

My Department is also represented on the Organised Crime Task Force Drugs Expert Group – chaired by the PSNI with representation from the UK Border Agency, the Department of Justice, and other key partners – which meets on an ongoing

basis to share information and intelligence, and to monitor and oversee joint action to help restrict supply and reduce the availability of all illicit drugs, including New Psychoactive Substances.

The issue of these substances was also discussed by all Ministers at the Executive meeting on 05 June 2014.

Legal Highs: Discussions with Other Jurisdictions

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other jurisdictions in the UK and in the Republic of Ireland on the issue of legal highs.

(AQW 34642/11-15)

Mr Poots: The British-Irish Council Ministerial Sectoral Group on Substance Misuse is chaired by the Republic of Ireland and includes representatives from the UK Government, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. This group meets on an ongoing basis to share information and intelligence, and to monitor and oversee joint action to help restrict supply and reduce the availability of all illicit drugs, including New Psychoactive Substances.

In addition, as the key UK-wide legislation (the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) is reserved to the Westminster Government, I have engaged with the Home Secretary Theresa May MP and other Home Office Ministers on the need for strengthening the relevant legislation on this issue. Following this, the Home Office is currently overseeing an "expert review" of the issue and is due to make recommendations in the near future.

Fire and Rescue Service: Vehicles

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of white cars operated by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; (ii) the mileage covered in the last twelve months; and (iii) the procedures in place to differentiate private use.

(AQW 34677/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The number of white cars operated by the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service is 115.
- (ii) The total mileage for the last 12 months is 1,326,738 giving an average of 11,537 per vehicle.
- (iii) In accordance with NIFRS policy private usage of these vehicles by flexi duty Officers is not permitted.

Adult Safeguarding Policy

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Adult Safeguarding Policy.

(AQW 34678/11-15)

Mr Poots: Work on the development of an Adult Safeguarding Policy is being taken forward by my department in partnership with the Department of Justice. The draft policy is currently being finalised. We intend undertake a final round of engagement with key stakeholders over the summer months and commence public consultation on the draft policy in Autumn 2014. It is our intention to publish the final policy in the early part of 2015.

Hospital Beds

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of medical beds within each local hospital.

(AQW 34681/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information in relation to the number of available beds in HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland is regularly collected by the Department.

The following table details the average number of available beds under medical specialties by HSC Hospital in 2012/13.

HSC Trust	Hospital	2012/13 Average Available Medical Beds
Belfast	Belfast City	368.1
	Musgrave Park	151.4
	Cancer Centre	69.1
	Royal Victoria	267.2
	Royal Maternity	76.8
	RBHSC	16.8
	Mater Infirmorum	160.5

HSC Trust	Hospital	2012/13 Average Available Medical Beds
South Eastern	Ards	20.0
	Ulster	378.6
	Bangor	20.0
	Lagan Valley	92.1
	Thompson House	35.0
	Downe	49.4
Northern	Robinson Memorial	25.0
	Dalriada	32.0
	Causeway	152.6
	Moyle	18.0
	Whiteabbey	44.2
	Mid Ulster	28.9
	Antrim	355.4
Southern	South Tyrone	45.0
	Lurgan	51.0
	Craigavon Area	280.7
	Daisy Hill	147.7
Western	Altnagelvin Area	283.2
	Waterside	47.6
	Tyrone County	44.3
	South West Acute	154.8
Northern Ireland		3,415.5

Source: KH03a return

MRI Scanner: Royal Hospital

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the purchase and the installation of the MRI scanner at the Royal Hospital, Belfast.

(AQW 34686/11-15)

Mr Poots: Work on the site is due to commence in August 2014, with completion of the MRI suite expected by the end of March 2015. The Trust plans to make the MRI scanner operational immediately after handover.

Bangor Hospital: Capital Works

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any future capital works planned for the Bangor Hospital.

(AQW 34701/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern HSC Trust has no current plans for future capital works at Bangor Hospital, however, a project to convert the old kitchen block has recently been completed and staff will be transferring from leased accommodation to Bangor Hospital after the summer .

Testicular Cancer

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many men were diagnosed with testicular cancer in (i) 2003; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 34713/11-15)

Mr Poots: The latest information provided by the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) indicates that 56 men were diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2003. Figures for 2013 are not currently available however 67 men were diagnosed in 2012.

Information on cancer incidence and survival rates in NI are available on the NICR website at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/CancerData/>. Cancer incidence figures for 2013 will be available in March 2015.

Eating Disorders

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the service provision for people below the age of 14 years diagnosed with eating disorders.

(AQW 34749/11-15)

Mr Poots: Eating Disorder Services for young people are provided by specialist community-based teams in each Health & Social Care Trust area. The Belfast Trust provides these services for the South Eastern Trust.

Inpatient care for children and adolescents with eating disorders is usually provided at Beechcroft, the Regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Inpatient Unit. The Unit provides inpatient care for children and young people up to the age of 18.

However, if a patient's condition is primarily physical, clinicians may decide that the best place for treatment is an acute hospital setting. If this is the case, acute paediatric medical and CAMHS eating disorders services work in partnership.

If a patient requires intense specialist treatment for an eating disorder, Trusts can access beds in England, Scotland and Ireland through the Extra Contractual Referral (ECR) process. Developments in local Eating Disorder Services in recent years have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of children and young people having to be referred outside Northern Ireland for treatment.

Eating Disorders

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many young people are diagnosed with an eating disorder.

(AQW 34750/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible to identify the number of young people diagnosed with an eating disorder.

The number of admissions of young people to acute hospitals as a result of eating disorders in each Health and Social Care Trust is given in the table below. The figures do not include admissions to any community or mental health facilities.

Financial year	Admissions
2010/11	15
2011/12	11
2012/13	16

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Notes:

- 1) Young people have been defined as those aged under sixteen years.
- 2) Eating disorders were searched for in the primary diagnostic position only.

Mental Capacity Legislation

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to ensure that new legislation on mental capacity complies with requirements outlined in Article 12 of United Nations Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

(AQW 34752/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department has taken account of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and will continue to assess the compatibility of the draft Mental Capacity Bill with the Convention, in light of recent developments such as the publication of the General Comment on Article 12. This assessment will also be informed by views expressed during the current consultation exercise on the draft Bill during which the Department intends to focus on raising awareness of the guiding principles of the draft Bill. These relate to maximising capacity and supporting people where possible to make decisions for themselves. The draft Bill's alignment with the themes of equal treatment, inclusion and accessibility enshrined in the Convention will also be highlighted.

Mental Capacity Legislation

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will consult with people with learning disabilities regarding the draft mental capacity legislation, to raise awareness and facilitate their involvement in monitoring its introduction and implementation.

(AQW 34753/11-15)

Mr Poots: The draft Mental Capacity Bill is a wide-ranging piece of legislation which has the potential to affect many people across various programmes of care. It was published for consultation on 27th May this year, following a detailed policy development phase during which key stakeholders were extensively engaged.

Five public consultation events are being held across Northern Ireland and, in addition, my Department, along with the Department of Justice, has offered to meet with any group during the consultation period to raise awareness of the draft Bill and gather feedback. To date, a number of events and workshops have already been arranged involving people with a learning disability. Officials from both Departments also recently presented to the All Party Group on Learning Disability. Easy read material is also available.

The Departments are also planning a collaborative approach with a wide range of stakeholders, including people with a learning disability and their representative organisations, to plan for the implementation of the legislation, for example, on the development of the associated Regulations, Code of Practice and training for those with a role under the legislation.

Learning Disabilities: Families

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will recognise the key role played by families and their involvement as a source of support to their loved one with a learning disability when making decisions about their own life.

(AQW 34754/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department, along with the Department of Justice, recently published the draft Mental Capacity Bill for consultation. The draft legislation sets out a new framework for decision making in relation to a person's care, treatment or personal welfare. It also covers decisions about property and affairs.

The Bill details the importance placed on the right of an individual to make their own decisions, but recognises that there will be many circumstances in which families and carers will play a role in helping and supporting a person to make their own decisions where they have capacity to do so.

For people who lack capacity, the Bill puts in place new and improved safeguards that go beyond what is required under the current law and which also ensure that families and carers are actively involved in any decisions made, through determining what would be in a person's best interests to acting as a Nominated Person under the Bill.

Tombstoning: Injuries

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been injured as a result of tombstoning, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 34762/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people injured as a result of tombstoning is not available.

Dental Hygiene

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans to sustain the future viability of dental hygiene training.

(AQW 34797/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware that no new students have been enrolled into the two year diploma course at the Belfast School of Dental Hygiene since September 2011. Officials from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Queen's University Belfast and the Department have been considering options on the way forward and I expect to receive their advice in due course.

Downe Hospital Emergency Unit

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant of AQW 33198/11-15 and given that the Downe Hospital Emergency Unit has had restricted opening times for six months, what progress has been made on the proposals to address the shortfall in the number of middle grade doctors by (i) converting middle grade doctor posts to consultant posts; (ii) developing middle grade staff by working intensely with locum staff; and (iii) employing and training GP trainees.

(AQW 34805/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- i) The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust converted 4 middle grade doctor posts to consultant posts in 2011 as it had been consistently difficult to fill the middle grade vacancies. Other Trusts are considering this as an option.
- ii) Trusts continue to seek to work with locums to help them develop to work at middle grade level but this has been met with limited success at present due to the small number of locums taking up this development opportunity, and there are currently no locums who fall into this category.
- iii) The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust had one GP in training for A&E but this GP has now moved to a different speciality outside A&E in a different Trust. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust currently employ a number of qualified GPs with special interests in A&E who provide sessional work.

Epilepsy

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have a diagnosis of epilepsy. (AQW 34837/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF), GPs maintain a register of the number of patients aged 18 and over who are currently on drug treatment for epilepsy.

As at 31 March 2014, there were 15,378 patients on the epilepsy registers of GPs located in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Inquiry: Emergency Healthcare

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will support and engage with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Emergency Health Care. (AQO 6478/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is committed to providing all necessary assistance and support to the Commission in carrying out its investigation.

I met with senior representatives of the Commission last month to discuss the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry. My Department and the Commission have agreed to work constructively together as the Inquiry moves forward.

Speak Up and Save a Life

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Public Health Agency's Speak up and save a life campaign. (AQO 6483/11-15)

Mr Poots: 'The Speak up and save a life campaign' is the first public information campaign of its kind in Northern Ireland. The campaign message focuses on lives saved by organ donation and takes a testimonial approach which shows the impact of organ donation from the recipient and the donor family perspectives, highlighting the importance of sharing our organ donation wishes with loved ones.

Unfortunately, the number of transplants needed is rising due to an aging population and increases in illnesses such as diabetes, kidney, heart and liver disease, so it is crucial that people speak up if lives are to be saved.

The Public Health Agency has already completed phase one of the campaign and has recently launched phase two which runs until 31 October 2014.

During the first phase, in February and March this year, the website received 11,260 visits and the registration page 3,629 visits. Social media also performed well, with Facebook ads and YouTube videos receiving significant levels of likes and clicks. A full evaluation of the campaign will be produced following the end of the campaign.

I take this opportunity to once again urge everyone to consider signing the organ donor register and having made such a decision, to discuss their wishes with their families and loved ones.

Care Homes

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give, following the Health and Social Care Board's review into residential care, that Health and Social Care Trusts will not unilaterally remove open admission policies or close care homes in the next twelve months. (AQO 6484/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Speaker, with your permission I will answer questions 9 and 15 together. As you will be aware, the board of the HSC Board considered and approved the post consultation report on Making Choices: Meeting the Current and Future Needs of Older People' on Thursday 12 June.

The report provides a thorough analysis of views shared during the consultation process and sets out final criteria against which statutory residential homes for older people will be evaluated. Where that evaluation indicates a clear case for a home to continue to provide residential care, the relevant Trust will be asked to review any non-admission policy in respect of that home. Any proposals for change will be subject to full consultation on a home by home basis.

Patients: '10,000 Voices: Improving the Patient Experience'

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the recent findings of the 10,000 Voices: Improving the patient experience report. (AQO 6485/11-15)

Mr Poots: A Regional Outcomes Report on the 10,000 Voices Project is in final draft and due to be presented to the Public Health Agency Board in August 2014 and the Health and Social Care Board September 2014 and will be published thereafter.

A briefing report on the progress of the 10,000 Voices Project was provided to my Department in May 2014 detailing the progress based on almost 4000 stories obtained from a range of different health care settings to date.

My assessment is that the interim report indicates that through this initiative, significant local improvements have already been achieved, and that there are also action plans in place for further improvements.

Trusts have implemented Quality Improvement measures across the areas where the stories were gathered. Most of these improvements have been practical and easily implemented solutions to issues raised by patients on their experience.

This initiative has also provided an opportunity for a partnership approach to shape the way in which we deliver and commission services based on patient experience.

By using information obtained from peoples stories of their experience of health care provision, to inform the commissioning of future services, we can be assured that quality improvements will be based on information which we know really matters to patients.

Suicide Prevention Projects

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the procurement process for suicide prevention projects.

(AQO 6486/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency will take forward the procurement of suicide prevention services, along with services linked to wider mental health promotion, in 3 phases over the next 12 months. Phase 1 will be initiated after the summer, with the aim that newly procured services will commence from April 2015. These services will include awareness programmes to support the mental and emotional health needs of specified groups - LGBT individuals and their families, travellers, and minority ethnic communities. They will also include community based psychological intervention services for people who self harm and family support services

It is anticipated that Phase 2 and 3 tenders will be awarded by June 2015 covering services such as counselling, complementary therapy, training, community support and bereavement support.

The Public Health Agency will keep the timescales under review and will provide periodic updates of any changes via their website.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money has been returned to his departmental budget as a result of the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme.

(AQO 6487/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme is a UK wide scheme negotiated between the Pharmaceutical Industry and the Department of Health (London) on behalf of all parts of the UK.

Through the scheme, for each of the last three financial years, Northern Ireland has been apportioned the following:

- For the 2011/2012 year £3.43 million
- For the 2012/2013 year £3 million
- For the 2013/2014 year £2.85 million

Children: Named Contact

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has he given to a designated named contact for every child, similar to the provision included in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

(AQO 6488/11-15)

Mr Poots: In drafting the Adoption and Children Bill, consideration has been given to new policy and legislative provisions in other jurisdictions. These have been highlighted in the consultation document on the draft Bill and include reference to the "named person service" recently introduced in Scotland. This service requires certain providers to make available an individual, to carry out specific functions in order to promote, support or safeguard the wellbeing of every child or young person from birth until they reach 18 years of age. Consultation responses on the Bill will inform a decision on whether a similar provision should be introduced in Northern Ireland.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the review of paediatric congenital cardiac services.

(AQO 6489/11-15)

Mr Poots: The International Expert Team, led by Dr John Mayer, commissioned by Dr James Reilly TD, Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland, and me to carry out an independent assessment of current and future needs for cardiology and cardiac surgery for congenital heart disease in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is aiming to submit its report to us shortly.

The team will describe the existing hospital services in both jurisdictions, outline options for service configuration and governance arrangements and recommend the most appropriate model that meets the population health needs and other requirements of both jurisdictions.

Minister Reilly and I will need to carefully consider the report and I will aim to make public the implications for the future delivery of this service for Northern Ireland as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Care Homes

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the recommendation in the Health and Social Care Board's Statutory Residential Care Homes post consultation report that Health and Social Care Trusts should review their individual positions regarding permanent admissions.

(AQO 6490/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Speaker, with your permission I will answer questions 9 and 15 together. As you will be aware, the board of the HSC Board considered and approved the post consultation report on Making Choices: Meeting the Current and Future Needs of Older People' on Thursday 12 June.

The report provides a thorough analysis of views shared during the consultation process and sets out final criteria against which statutory residential homes for older people will be evaluated. Where that evaluation indicates a clear case for a home to continue to provide residential care, the relevant Trust will be asked to review any non-admission policy in respect of that home. Any proposals for change will be subject to full consultation on a home by home basis.

Department of Justice

David Paige: Serious Case Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the Serious Case Review into David Paige, why his "stable" assessment of August 2012 was not revisited after being downgraded from "acute" status; and for his assessment of whether this would have assisted in alerting authorities to any potential reoffending.

(AQW 34321/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Stable Assessment is an accredited risk assessment tool completed at 12 month intervals in accordance with guidance in the PPANI Manual of Practice. The Local Area Public Protection Panel (LAPPP) met and agreed it was appropriate to recategorise David Page's risk status from Category 2 to Category 1 approximately four weeks before a further annual stable assessment would have been due to be undertaken.

In this case the LAPPP considered a series of favourable assessments, using Acute Assessment tools, which had been had been completed in the months preceding the reduction in Mr Page's risk category. In addition they considered a number of other positive contributory factors including current compliance with Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) and bail conditions and the absence of any emerging concerns about potential victim access opportunities. On the basis of these indicators it was not considered necessary at that time to revisit the Stable Assessment.

The Serious Case Review recommended that where the LAPPP meeting is considering recategorising the risk category and the current Stable assessment is more than 6 months old, that consideration should be given to the need for the Stable assessment to be revisited. This has now been incorporated into practice.

The Serious Case Review concluded that in view of the thoroughness of the supervision provided by both PBNI and PSNI in the period leading up to the offence, it is unlikely that any different assessment of the risk posed by Mr Page, including a revisited Stable assessment, would have assisted in alerting authorities to any potential reoffending.

David Paige: Serious Case Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the Serious Case Review into David Paige, why he was not considered to be high risk given his continued refusal to acknowledge his offending behaviour which would have automatically meant he rejected the suggestion that any further actions would be wrong.

(AQW 34322/11-15)

Mr Ford: A range of factors are taken into consideration when assessing the appropriate risk category including: current behaviour; absence of any emerging behavioural concerns (as evidenced in this case through visits carried out by PSNI's Public Protection Unit); the outcome of accredited assessments; the offender's attitudes towards his offence; and compliance with external controls put in place (including Sexual Offences Prevention Order and bail conditions). Mr Page's continued refusal to acknowledge his offending behaviour would not, in itself, have provided a sufficient basis alone to maintain Mr Page at a higher risk category.

David Paige: Custodial Sentence

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, to confirm that David Paige will not be released from prison, even when his custodial sentence has been served, until he no longer poses a threat or danger, acknowledges his offending behaviour and completes all required sexual offender behaviour programmes.

(AQW 34323/11-15)

Mr Ford: The court imposed a determinate custodial sentence on Mr Page and there is a statutory requirement that he must therefore be released on licence once he has served the custodial part of his sentence set by the sentencing judge.

It is only where the court has imposed an indeterminate custodial sentence that release is at the direction of the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland who must be satisfied before directing release that it is no longer necessary, for the protection of the public from serious harm, for the offender to continue to be confined in custody.

David Paige: Serious Case Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the Serious Case Review into David Paige, why he was downgraded from a Category 2 sex offender to a Category 1 in August 2012, whilst he was awaiting sentencing for breaches of Sexual Offences Prevention Orders proving he was not compliant with court orders.

(AQW 34324/11-15)

Mr Ford: At the time that Mr Page was recategorised from a Category 2 to a Category 1 risk, he was awaiting sentence in relation to a breach of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) which had occurred 22 months previously on 1 November 2010. The decision to recategorise was based on assessments which took account of more recent factors including: compliance with SOPO conditions over that 22 month period; adherence to bail conditions; no evidence of any emerging concerns, including potential victim access opportunities; and compliance with home visits by PSNI's Public Protection Unit.

David Paige: Serious Case Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the Serious Case Review into David Paige which states "The independent reviewer found that the agencies discharged their responsibilities fully and conscientiously in the management of the offender in the community", and "Accommodation was carefully assessed prior to approval being granted", to detail (i) how his Lurgan residence could have been deemed appropriate and as carefully assessed, given the number of children residing in the area, particularly on the same street and the close proximity to several schools; and (ii) whether the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland intend to review this section of their report.

(AQW 34383/11-15)

Mr Ford: Two potential addresses provided by Mr Page were assessed by police officers. One was rejected on the grounds of location and the second address was approved following assessment. The approved premises were located within approximately five minutes walk of two local educational establishments; a situation that is likely to apply to many urban residential properties across Northern Ireland. However the premises were not on the same street or road as those establishments nor did it overlook the entrance to either.

The independent reviewer, who conducted the Serious Case Review, concluded that the agencies had acted conscientiously regarding the management of Mr Page and the recommendation contained in the report has been implemented by the agencies. There is no mechanism for further review.

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, whether this funding is open to all local authorities that are prepared to facilitate a service for the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34384/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Community Grants Scheme operated by Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) invites application from organisations and groups in an annual advertisement. The scheme is open to local authorities who wish to apply and further details can be found on the PBNI website; www.pbni.org.uk.

Probation Board for Northern Ireland: Grants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33561/11-15, in relation to the £50,000 received in grants from the Probation Board for Northern Ireland over a number of years, what specific services Banbridge District Council provide to facilitate community service.

(AQW 34386/11-15)

Mr Ford: Banbridge District Council established an employability project known as the Restore project in 2009. The Restore project applied to Probation Board for Northern Ireland's Community Grants Scheme to help facilitate the delivery of Community Service placements in the council area. The project provides PBNI with 20 placements per annum for those on Community Service Orders.

Prison Service: Lisnevin Site

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the future of the Lisnevin Prison Service site in Millisle.
(AQW 34392/11-15)

Mr Ford: The site will continue in its present role as the Prison Service College until the Northern Ireland Community Safety College is completed at Desertcreat.

Consideration is being given to extending the training facility for use by other Justice Organisations.

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of times he has met with Members and representatives of the SDLP, in the last six months, to discuss the full extension and implementation of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34424/11-15)

Mr Ford: Over the past six months I, or my officials, have met with the SDLP twice and Sinn Fein once.

I, or officials, have met the Secretary of State or her officials or discussed the issue with them on numerous occasions. We have also had contact with other interested bodies.

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of times he has met with Members and representatives of Sinn Féin, in the last six months, to discuss the full extension and implementation of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34425/11-15)

Mr Ford: Over the past six months I, or my officials, have met with the SDLP twice and Sinn Fein once.

I, or officials, have met the Secretary of State or her officials or discussed the issue with them on numerous occasions. We have also had contact with other interested bodies.

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of times he has met the Secretary of State or Northern Ireland Office officials, in the last six months, to discuss the full extension and implementation of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34426/11-15)

Mr Ford: Over the past six months I, or my officials, have met with the SDLP twice and Sinn Fein once.

I, or officials, have met the Secretary of State or her officials or discussed the issue with them on numerous occasions. We have also had contact with other interested bodies.

Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Proceedings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the prisoner was subject to Supporting Prisoner at Risk (SPAR) proceedings on the most recent occasions prior to and after the episodes of self-harm; and if so, how many times SPAR proceedings closed and reopened during his time in custody.

(AQW 34439/11-15)

Mr Ford: This information has been withheld as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

NIPS has asked the Prisoner Ombudsman to conduct an independent investigation into this case. I hope the Member will be reassured that it is being treated both seriously and with transparency.

Committal Proceedings

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many committal proceedings in the last twelve months proceeded by way of (i) preliminary investigations; and (ii) preliminary inquiries.

(AQW 34446/11-15)

Mr Ford: During the last 12 months, provisional data indicates there were 35 committal proceedings by way of a preliminary investigation, 1,579 by way of a preliminary inquiry and 22 by way of a mixed committal.

Of this number, a total of three preliminary investigations, 40 preliminary inquiries and three mixed committals were not returned to the Crown Court. The outcome of each of these committal proceedings is outlined below.

Number of Committal Proceedings that were not returned to the Crown Court, by outcome: June 2013 to May 2014P

Outcome of committal proceedings	Type of proceeding		
	Preliminary Investigation	Preliminary Inquiry	Mixed Committal
Withdrawn by the Public Prosecution Service	3	24	1
Adjourned generally	0	13	0
Discharged	0	2	0
No jurisdiction	0	1	0
Key witness did not attend investigation	0	0	1
Proceedings stayed	0	0	1
Total number not returned to the Crown Court	3	40	3

Source: Integrated Court Operations System.

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

To identify the number of individual charges dismissed during committal proceedings in the last 12 months would require a manual review of court records and would incur a disproportionate cost.

Committal Proceedings

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of dismissed charges during committal proceedings in the last twelve months, indicating the number of dismissals in (i) preliminary investigations; and (ii) preliminary inquiries.

(AQW 34447/11-15)

Mr Ford: During the last 12 months, provisional data indicates there were 35 committal proceedings by way of a preliminary investigation, 1,579 by way of a preliminary inquiry and 22 by way of a mixed committal.

Of this number, a total of three preliminary investigations, 40 preliminary inquiries and three mixed committals were not returned to the Crown Court. The outcome of each of these committal proceedings is outlined below.

Number of Committal Proceedings that were not returned to the Crown Court, by outcome: June 2013 to May 2014P

Outcome of committal proceedings	Type of proceeding		
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Withdrawn by the Public Prosecution Service	3	24	1
Adjourned generally	0	13	0
Discharged	0	2	0
No jurisdiction	0	1	0
Key witness did not attend investigation	0	0	1
Proceedings stayed	0	0	1
Total number not returned to the Crown Court	3	40	3

Source: Integrated Court Operations System.

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

To identify the number of individual charges dismissed during committal proceedings in the last 12 months would require a manual review of court records and would incur a disproportionate cost.

Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33915/11-15, why this investigation and subsequent report was not made public at the time or on conclusion.

(AQW 34456/11-15)

Mr Ford: Details of the investigation and subsequent report were not made public as internal reports are not routinely published by the Department of Justice. Any requests for access to information are considered on a case by case basis under the Freedom of Information Act.

No material breach of contract was identified by the investigation. Disciplinary actions are a matter for the contractor. The Police Service of Northern Ireland was consulted and advised that no criminal investigation was required.

Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33915/11-15, whether any breach of contract was identified, or recommendations made for disciplinary actions or criminal proceedings.

(AQW 34457/11-15)

Mr Ford: Details of the investigation and subsequent report were not made public as internal reports are not routinely published by the Department of Justice. Any requests for access to information are considered on a case by case basis under the Freedom of Information Act.

No material breach of contract was identified by the investigation. Disciplinary actions are a matter for the contractor. The Police Service of Northern Ireland was consulted and advised that no criminal investigation was required.

Preliminary Enquiries

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the total percentage of preliminary enquiries assigned to counsel for hearing; and (ii) the percentage of enquiries broken down per court division, in each of the last three calendar years.

(AQW 34469/11-15)

Mr Ford: There were 1,467 preliminary enquiries during 2011 with counsel instructed for 14% of defendants, 1,616 preliminary enquiries during 2012 with counsel instructed for 17% of defendants and 1,669 preliminary enquiries in 2013, with counsel instructed for 17% of defendants.

The percentage of preliminary enquiries in each court division is outlined below.

Preliminary Enquiries at the Magistrates' Court, by court division: 2011 to 2013

Court Division	Year					
	2011		2012		2013	
	No. of Preliminary Enquiries	% in each court division	No. of Preliminary Enquiries	% in each court division	No. of Preliminary Enquiries	% in each court division
Belfast	523	36	586	36	573	34
Londonderry	131	9	185	11	179	11
Antrim	120	8	188	12	212	13
Fermanagh and Tyrone	200	14	186	12	211	13
Armagh and South Down	142	9	147	9	176	10
Ards	188	13	147	9	150	9
Craigavon	163	11	177	11	168	10
Total	1,467	100	1,616	100	1,669	100

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Legal Aid: Legal Services Commission

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the process of making Legal Aid payments by the Legal Services Commission; and for a breakdown of the timescale in which payments were made in each month of the last three years.

(AQW 34502/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Commission processes claims in chronological order. I am satisfied that this is an equitable basis on which to process payments.

There are two parts to the payment process. The first is a system to validate and authorise the claim on the Commission's case management system. The second is a procedure for paying authorised claims.

The Commission has performance targets in place for each of part of the process, which are measured on a quarterly basis. To extract the information on a monthly basis would involve disproportionate cost.

Table 1 below provides details of the Commission's performance in respect of the time taken from receipt of a claim until it is authorised for payment. From 2012/13 the Commission has measured performance separately in respect of standard and non-standard fees, as standard fees are more straightforward and take less time to assess and process for payment.

Table 1 – Time taken from receipt of claim to authorisation of claims

Year	Payments	Target Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2011/12	Authorisation of Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 6 weeks					86%*
	Authorisation of Non-Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 6 weeks					77%*
2012/13	Authorisation of Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 4 weeks	74%	73%	62%	53%	64%
	Authorisation of Non-Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 12 weeks	92%	83%	85%	60%	79%
2013/14	Authorisation of Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 4 weeks	51%	65%	50%	9%	47%
	Authorisation of Non-Standard fees for payment from date of receipt	75% within 12 weeks	78%	46%	22%	9%	41%

* The split between standard and non-standard was not reported on a quarterly basis during 2011/12. Therefore only year-end figures are available.

Table 2: Time taken from authorisation of claim to payment

Year	Payments	Target Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2011/12	Payments (Legal Fund) from date of authorisation.	85% in one week	86%	91%	87%	92%	89%
2012/13	Payments (Legal Fund) from date of authorisation.	95% in 7 working days	98%	97%	99%	9%	79%
2013/14	Payments (Legal Fund) from date of authorisation.	95% in 7 working days	81%	99%	73%	94%	91%

Please note that the statistics provided in these tables are also published within the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts and Business Plan. These documents are available on the DOJ website at <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/legalservices.htm>

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice whether he has held any discussions with the National Crime Agency (NCA) since January 2014 in connection with the consequences of organised crime in Northern Ireland not being effectively countered as a result of the NCA currently not being fully operational.

(AQW 34511/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is in constant contact with the National Crime Agency in relation to this issue and the ongoing attempts to ensure that it is resolved.

We are currently engaging with the Northern Ireland Office, the Home Office and law enforcement agencies on a further proposed model which we would intend to put to all parties and relevant bodies as soon as practicable.

Zero-hours Contracts

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34185/11-15, whether this applied to contracted companies providing services to his Department following a tender process; and if not (i) how many service providers use zero

hour contracts; (ii) the name of the providers using zero-hour contracts; and (iii) why a disparity is permitted when using Departmental funding.

(AQW 34514/11-15)

Mr Ford: My answer to AQW/34185/11-15 did not apply to contracted companies providing services to my Department following a tender process.

- (i) My Department currently has two contracts which use zero hours.
- (ii) G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd is the service provider for both of these.
- (iii) As per my previous reply, within the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook there is no provision for a Department to provide zero hours working for permanent civil servants. In one of the two contracts, it was the employees of G4S Secure Solutions (UK) who specifically requested zero hours and declined offers of full-time, or part-time, employment.

Legal Highs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current legislation that can be used by PSNI officers to cease or arrest people selling legal highs.

(AQW 34522/11-15)

Mr Ford: Current Home Office guidance outlines the relevant legislative provisions and the main types of offence that can be used against those selling what are known as "legal highs". The sale of "legal highs" is not in itself a specific offence though alternative powers can be available.

The offences available include selling controlled drugs, selling drugs paraphernalia, and breaching the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985. General Product Safety Regulations has also been utilised in terms of breaching consumer protection regulations.

Twelve month Temporary Class Drug Orders can also be made by the Home Secretary under the Misuse of Drugs Act - a reserved matter - to ban emerging substances that have not yet been assessed by the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs.

Across jurisdictions it is acknowledged that more needs to be done in terms of the law around "legal highs". The Home Secretary has therefore commissioned a Review of the effectiveness of the current legislation.

Whilst the Review is ongoing, I continue to support the efforts of all related agencies and local Councils as they work to remove these dangerous substances from our communities.

Legal Highs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice whether he has met with his counterparts in other jurisdictions to learn about other efforts combating the sale and distribution of legal highs.

(AQW 34523/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have met with counterparts in other jurisdictions to discuss a wide range of Criminal Justice matters and whilst not the specific focus of discussions, it is evident that responding to the emergence of New Psychoactive Substances across the world has been a challenge given the range and diversity of these illicit substances. This has resulted in a range of innovative responses including the utilisation of existing legislative provisions aimed at controlling the open sale of these harmful substances.

However, it is also clear that more needs to be done and as this remains a reserved matter, I welcome the Home Office led Review that will consider the effectiveness of the current legislation and operational response to date.

I understand that the review will consider the opportunities and risks of any new ideas identified, informed by international and other evidence and make a clear recommendation for an effective and sustainable UK-wide legislative response.

Legal Highs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail all programmes his Department has funded to educate young people about the dangers of legal highs, broken down by constituency, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34524/11-15)

Mr Ford: While the provision of education programmes is not the primary locus of the Department of Justice, my Department's Community Safety Strategy does refer to the need to increase awareness about substance misuse amongst young people. Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) are addressing this where it has been identified as an issue of local concern.

Whilst I am not able to provide the information in the format you have requested I have attached information on the wide range of programmes and events that have been delivered across Northern Ireland that have either been designed specifically, or contained elements within them, to educate young people about the dangers associated with taking New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). You may wish to seek further detail from local PCSPs.

Substance misuse issues, including NPS, are also addressed through the delivery of appropriately tailored programmes to young people under supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland or the Youth Justice Agency. I am also aware

that the PSNI have undertaken a number of awareness raising events in local schools to highlight the dangers of these substances. You may wish to approach these organisations for specific details on their programmes.

It is evident that a wide range of stakeholders are engaged in responding to this issue and my Department remains committed to working and supporting all efforts to highlight the risks and consequences involved in taking illicit substances, including new psychoactive substances.

PCSP PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

Antrim PCSP

- Drug and alcohol counselling service operated over the last three years.
- Drug and alcohol awareness session at Bee Safe operated over the last three years.
- Solvent abuse awareness campaign .
- Drug and alcohol parents awareness sessions - 2-4 a year.
- Drugs and alcohol awareness sessions with pupils or young persons' groups (around 4-6 per year).
- Drug and alcohol awareness for young people in BEAT programme operated over the last three years.
- Y-app smart phone app includes info on solvent abuse, legal highs etc and support services.

Ards PCSP

- PCSP has circulated legal highs leaflets to all community centres in the Borough through the Street By Street pilot project.
- Public forum around drugs and alcohol (April 2013) .
- Joint stands with PSNI at community events on two occasions in the last 6 months.
- Legal high awareness training in North Down community assistance with residents and youths in October / November 2013.
- Supported the Streetsafe bus, a youth diversion programme.
- PCSP took part in the regional campaign run by Belfast PCSP in relation to drugs awareness .

Banbridge

- Delivery of the "Be Smart Don't Start" training programme which provided training to increase awareness of the impact of drug use (including new psychoactive substances) amongst those who are working with young people.
- Delivery of "Be Smart Don't Start" education and awareness raising workshops to year 9 pupils in six local secondary schools.
- Delivery of "Be Smart Don't Start" drugs awareness roadshow, attended by approx. 650 pupils and teachers, which comprised of a drama "Popping Candy" as well PSNI, talk by NIAS.
- Hosted public and Inter-agency Community meetings with the public to respond and provide support in areas where substance misuse is causing concern.
- Work with the Assisting People and Communities Programme (APAC) which supports mentoring approaches to both individuals and communities where offending behaviour and related issues, such as drugs are creating a concern.

Belfast

- Provision of educational resources to identified families and the general distribution of educational material across the city to raise awareness of the dangers of these substances.
- Northern Ireland Wide Drugs Campaign in partnership with other district PCSPs and our partners within Crimestoppers, the PSNI and the Public Health Agency.
- Localised district public meetings were held across Belfast as part of the campaign in order to raise awareness at a local level and to educate all our communities on the dangers of these products.

Coleraine

- Supported the production of a "Legal Highs: Know the Risks" DVD launched in June 2014 which is available for roll-out to schools and groups within the Borough.

Craigavon

- Awareness sessions held in post-primary schools over last three years.
- Youth Engagement Partnership operating over last three years includes awareness raising of substance misuse.
- Supported 2013/14 regional drugs campaign.
- Production of drugs awareness leaflets in 2013/14.
- 'If you're not in control' promotional campaign in 2012/13.
- Where is your Child Tonight' promotional campaign in 2011/12.

Dungannon & South Tyrone

- MY Club – Youth diversionary Project reaching out to young people on a range of issues including substance misuse.
- Resource funding for use in Breakthru Drugs and Alcohol Outreach Centre to encourage youth participation in drugs/alcohol awareness and interventions programmes.

Fermanagh

- Working in partnership with Omagh, Strabane, Limavady and Londonderry/Derry PCSPs on a joint project to raise awareness of Legal Highs (planned launch in September 2014).

Limavady

- Funded delivery of “Legal Highs Training -New Drugs in our Community” (March 2014) to local community groups from across the Limavady Borough Council area.

Newtownabbey

- Funded delivery of an alcohol and drugs education/awareness programme which includes sessions on new psychoactive substances in, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Omagh

- Part funded the delivery of “Popping Candy” a drama which highlights pressures on young people, consequences of drug taking, legal highs etc . This project has been delivered each year for the past 3 years and the drama is provided to all secondary schools in the area with particular emphasis on year 12- 14 students. Advice leaflets have also been provided for parents and young people.

Strabane

- Strabane PCSP hosted a themed public meeting on drugs, specifically legal highs in March 2014.
- Delivery of education/training programme entitled “Addictions” in primary and post-primary schools and to community leaders throughout the district in 2013/14 and to continue in 2014/15.
- Support the delivery of Strabane Civic Drugs and Alcohol Forum.

Legal Highs

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been prosecuted for selling legal high products to children, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34525/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the sale of New Psychoactive Substances to any member of the public is not a specific offence there cannot have been any subsequent prosecutions.

Whilst this is the case I commend the specific action that has been taken by Local Councils under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005, against those who sell these products, in order to remove these harmful substances from sale to the general public.

Legal Highs: Dangers

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had discussions with the Minister of Education on how young people in school can be warned about the dangers of legal highs.

(AQW 34526/11-15)

Mr Ford: Whilst I have not met with the Minister for Education on this specific issue, we are both contributors to the Executive’s New Strategic Direction on Alcohol and Drugs (NSD) which recognises the importance of raising awareness around the risks and the potentially fatal consequences, of all substance misuse, particularly with young people.

Whilst the Criminal Justice system has a role to play in reaching out to young people either through Statutory Agencies or through a range of programmes delivered by Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, you may also wish to approach the Minister for Education regarding details of the drug education programmes included in the Curriculum.

Birds: Poisoning, Shooting or Trapping

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prosecutions for the (i) poisoning; (ii) shooting; and (iii) trapping of (a) red kite; (b) golden eagle; (c) white-tailed eagle; (d) peregrine; (e) hen harrier; and (f) buzzard, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 34532/11-15)

Mr Ford: No prosecutions have been made in the courts on charges relating to either the poisoning, shooting or trapping of a red kite, golden eagle, white-tailed eagle, peregrine, hen harrier or buzzard during the period 2007 to 2013. To provide information for years prior to 2007 would require a manual review of court records at a disproportionate cost.

Police: Pension Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the regulations under which the closed police pension scheme operates. (AQW 34579/11-15)

Mr Ford: The regulations under which the closed police pension schemes operate are as follows:

- The Royal Ulster Constabulary Pensions Order 1949
- The Royal Ulster Constabulary Regulations 1973
- The Royal Ulster Constabulary Regulations 1988
- The Royal Ulster Constabulary Pensions (Supplementary Provisions) Regulations 1988

Magilligan Prison

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total spent on the preparation and planning of the new prison project at Magilligan, from 2007 to date. (AQW 34584/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total spend to date on the preparation and development of the new Prison at Magilligan is £3,799,905.

Prison Service: Voluntary Early Retirement

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether all Prison Service staff who left the Service under Voluntary Early Retirement will receive the same excess leave pay as those who remained in the Service. (AQW 34595/11-15)

Mr Ford: Staff who have left the Northern Ireland Prison Service, have been paid in line with the terms of the Annual Leave Chapter of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) HR Handbook relating to cash compensation and have received payment in hours or calendar days, in line with their contract, in the month of leaving.

Staff who have remained in post received payment in May 2014 in hours or working days.

Trafficking: Associated Sexual Charges

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34042 11-15, in relation to the recently concluded case of R-v-Weir following public remarks made by Robert Weir in the Sunday Life on 22 June 2014 in which he claims he only pleaded guilty to controlling prostitution because of "the threat" of being charged with human trafficking, and as this charge was notably dropped, whether he will conduct a review into the handling of this matter, specifically, but not exclusively, focusing on how this charge was permitted to be withdrawn under the circumstances; and to detail whether a plea deal was arranged; and if so, if this was at the suggestion of the prosecution or defence. (AQW 34605/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prosecution decisions are a matter for the independent Public Prosecution Service (PPS), having regard to the public interest and in accordance with the Test for Prosecution. It is therefore not appropriate for me as Justice Minister to become involved in such matters or to review the decisions made in individual cases.

Domestic Violence Advisers

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the tendering process for Independent Domestic Violence Advisers for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences. (AQW 34633/11-15)

Mr Ford: The appointment of an Independent Advice and Support Service for high risk victims of domestic violence remains a key priority for my Department. My Officials have been working, on an ongoing basis, with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to define and develop the role of the Service and this specification is in the final stage of being drafted.

One final issue regarding management of the sensitive information which this Service will encounter remains to be resolved by all funding partners to enable the completion of the specification. We anticipate that we will be in a position to commence the procurement process in Autumn this year.

Adult Safeguarding Policy

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the Adult Safeguarding Policy. (AQW 34634/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has been working in partnership with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on a new adult safeguarding policy. It is intended to consult on the policy in the autumn, including the legislative change that is needed to underpin it. The final policy will be published following consideration of the consultation responses.

The development of an adult safeguarding policy will complement the measures already in place to protect older people from abuse and my Department's plans to enhance further the support available to all victims of crime.

Criminal Justice Workers: Regional Funding

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to provide regional funding for Criminal Justice Workers currently funded through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Health and Social Care Trusts and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships.

(AQW 34636/11-15)

Mr Ford: Criminal Justice Workers are based within particular PSNI Public Protection Units to work alongside Domestic Abuse Officers. My Department currently part funds these workers through the local Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. I have currently no plans to provide further funding at this stage.

Car Parking: Dungannon Court House

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to parking issues in the area of Dungannon Court House on sitting days, what discussions he, or departmental officials, held with (i) the PSNI in Dungannon; (ii) the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service; and (iii) Dungannon Court House staff on this matter.

(AQW 34652/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have had no discussions with the Police Service of Northern Ireland on this issue. My officials in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service have liaised with the PSNI following the issues raised about parking near Dungannon Courthouse. PSNI advised that they have not had any safety issues raised with them and they do not have any particular safety concerns regarding excessive street parking in the Killyman Road area.

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the talks that have taken place, or will take place, between his Department and Her Majesty's Government with regard to securing the full operation of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34705/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials and I have had regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and her officials. I have also discussed the issue with the Home Secretary, and her officials and mine continue to have exchanges.

We are currently engaging with the Northern Ireland Office, the Home Office and law enforcement bodies on a further proposed model which we would intend to put to all parties and relevant bodies as soon as practicable.

Prison Service: Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Policy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what amendments have been made to the Northern Ireland Prison Service suicide and self-harm prevention policy since 2011.

(AQW 34717/11-15)

Mr Ford: In 2013 the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy was updated to reflect changes to prison grades.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to completing a formal review of its Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy, which will be taken forward in consultation with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and informed by the recommendations from the Prison Review Team report and external scrutiny bodies.

Mental Capacity Legislation

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice what steps his Department is taking to ensure that new legislation on mental capacity complies with requirements outlined in Article 12 of United Nations Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

(AQW 34743/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am aware that a similar question has been asked of the Health Minister (AQW/34752/11-15).

In developing the new mental capacity legislation both my Department and the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety have taken account of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The current consultation exercise on the draft Bill provides an important opportunity for both Departments to continue to assess the compatibility of the draft Mental Capacity Bill with the Convention.

Mental Capacity Legislation

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice how his Department will consult with people with learning disabilities regarding the draft mental capacity legislation, to raise awareness and facilitate their involvement in monitoring its introduction and implementation.

(AQW 34744/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am aware that a similar question has been asked of the Health Minister (AQW/34753/11-15).

Over the past few years, Learning Disability groups have been closely involved in the development of the draft Mental Capacity legislation currently out for public consultation. The Member will also be aware that Justice and Health officials have already had a very productive session with the Assembly All-Party Group on Learning Disability.

Moving forward, the consultation on the mental capacity proposals over the coming months includes five public events across Northern Ireland along with a number of sessions for particular interest groups. A number of events and workshops are already in place including some for people with learning disability and/or their representative organisations. It is my intention that my Department will be represented at those events.

Along with Health colleagues we have also produced easy read versions of the consultation material for those who might find it helpful.

Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Process

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what amendments have been made to the Supporting Prisoner at Risk process since its commencement; and to outline the analysis that has been carried out to monitor their effectiveness in the detection and prevention of incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide, per amendment introduction.

(AQW 34791/11-15)

Mr Ford: No substantive amendments have been made to the Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) process since its commencement.

Since the introduction of the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy in February 2011, each prison regularly monitors and reviews samples of SPAR documentation and enhanced auditing was introduced in March 2013.

Consistent with my previous responses the Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to completing a formal review of its Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy in due course.

Joe Campbell

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice to outline what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the grave findings of the Police Ombudsman's Report into the murder of Sergeant Joe Campbell and the necessity for full cooperation with the Office of the Police Ombudsman.

(AQW 34929/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not had any such discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Magilligan Prison: Stakeholder Group

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Justice how many times the stakeholder group on Magilligan Prison have met with the local community.

(AQW 35034/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Ministerial Statement of 19 March 2013 on the development of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) Estate Strategy noted how the positive engagement between NIPS officials and a range of stakeholders helped shape my thinking that there was a case for the retention of Magilligan prison. In addition to the strategy's public consultation responses, that engagement centred on:

- NIPS officials presenting and discussing 'partnership working' at meetings of Limavady Borough Council and Coleraine Borough Council, and of Derry City Council's Staff Committee;
- establishment of a Magilligan Prison Elected Members' Liaison Group, which has met twice, supported by:
 - a working group of council Chief Executives, officers and NIPS officials (Ballymoney Borough Council represented in addition to those mentioned above);
- discussion with local businesses and employer groups; and
- operational planning between council officials and Magilligan staff.

This has delivered improved rehabilitation opportunities for those in custody at Magilligan and NIPS officials are committed to continuing with and building on this engagement as the redevelopment of the prison progresses.

Maghaberry Prison: Self-harm Incident

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice to outline the circumstances surrounding a recent incident that led to a prisoner from the Foyle constituency being able to seriously self-harm in Maghaberry prison.

(AQO 6500/11-15)

Mr Ford: I fully understand the concern of the Member and the family of this prisoner. I have utmost sympathy for everyone affected by this incident of serious self-harm.

In the interests of independence NIPS has asked the Prisoner Ombudsman, Tom McGonigle, to conduct an investigation.

I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of that investigation, but I hope Members and the individual's family will be reassured that this incident is being treated both seriously and with transparency.

Forensic Science: All-Ireland Service

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Justice to outline any recent discussions with the Minister for Justice and Equality on a collaborative approach to forensic science services on an all-Ireland basis.

(AQO 6501/11-15)

Mr Ford: I meet regularly with the Minister for Justice and Equality under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation on Criminal Justice Matters to discuss North/South cooperation on a range of justice issues. My most recent meeting was last week when I met with Frances Fitzgerald and we discussed ongoing cooperation between the forensic science laboratories in the two jurisdictions, amongst other issues.

I fully support collaborative working between the two forensic laboratories to underpin the delivery of high quality and efficient forensic services. Recent cooperation between the two laboratories, for example, has included joint training courses and exploring the scope for dealing with excess demand. A Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2011, also ensures that both laboratories can rely on each other's facilities in the event of sudden loss or damage to either laboratory.

Interface Barriers

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the recent comments by the Chair of the Community Relations Council on the prospects of removing all interface barriers by 2023.

(AQO 6502/11-15)

Mr Ford: I agree with Peter Osborne's recent comments and indeed those of Dr Adrian Johnston, IFI Chairman, that working towards the removal of 'peace walls' is complex, difficult and challenging work, and they are correct in highlighting that a lack of resources is a risk to progress.

It is clear to me that there are three main issues that need to be addressed to make progress. The lack of a dedicated programme budget is one. The need for a cross Executive commitment to address economic and social renewal is another. The need for continued and intensive good relations work is the third. These issues remain key to achieving the target of removal of barriers and must be addressed.

I know for local engagement there is a real need to tackle physical, economic, social and community renewal within interface areas. The Department of Justice cannot deliver this magnitude of change alone. It requires a properly funded programme which brings together the community, statutory bodies and voluntary groups. I believe that the Executive needs to address the issue comprehensively so that we see meaningful change in interface communities. I hope we can move forward soon.

Firearms: Age Restrictions

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Justice what lessons he has taken from other regions in the United Kingdom with differing age restrictions on the use of controlled firearms in relation to his own proposal to reduce the age limit in specified circumstances.

(AQO 6503/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have proposed a reduction in the age of shooters in Northern Ireland to 12 years old from 16 for shotgun for sporting clay use and air rifles for sporting purposes with appropriate supervision. My proposals follow public consultation, engagement with the shooting lobby and taking account of the situation in GB and the Republic of Ireland.

In England and Wales the age position has evolved over time and they have different ages for different types of firearms for supervised and unsupervised use. I note that in the Republic of Ireland the age is 14.

A strong argument has been made for young people to be able to participate competitively in shooting sports. My proposed way forward on this matter, put to the Justice Committee for a meeting on 18 June, suggests 12 with a proposal for review in 2-3 years' time in light of experience. In addition, it was proposed that a regulation making power to be put in primary legislation to make any further reduction subject to secondary legislation.

Prisoners: Absconding

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to prevent prisoners failing to return from leave.

(AQO 6504/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service takes appropriate and robust action to prevent prisoners failing to return from home leave. Prisoners who apply for home leave undergo a thorough risk assessment to ascertain whether they are suitable for temporary unaccompanied release. Part of this assessment looks at factors which help governors come to a view on whether applicants are likely to adhere to the terms of their temporary release.

These factors include the likelihood of re-offending; the nature of the offence or offences; an assessment of behaviour in custody; the length of time a prisoner has still to serve; the record of behaviour during any previous periods of home leave;

and whether they are likely to return to prison by the appointed time. Only those who are determined as presenting a low risk across these various factors will be granted home leave.

Prisoners who breach home leave conditions are subject to adjudication under Prison Rules and, if found guilty, that will impact upon any future application.

If a prisoner fails to return from a period of home leave the police are notified and take action to return individuals to prison custody.

Department for Regional Development

Hospitality: DRD

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to civil servants in his Department receiving gifts or hospitality in 2013/14, whether there have been any requests for approval or declarations of matters that fall outside the boundaries of what is normally allowable; and if so, to detail such requests or declarations.

(AQW 34311/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department operates declaration, approval and monitoring procedures in strict accordance with the NICS policy governing the acceptance by civil servants of gifts and hospitality from third parties. These include the maintenance of registers which detail all offers received and which indicate, in each case, whether the offer was accepted (with management approval) or declined.

The entries in the registers show that, during the 2013/14 financial year, there were no requests for approval or declarations of matters which fall outside the boundaries of what is normally allowable in this area. Similarly, no such requests or declarations were made within DRD's arm's length bodies, Northern Ireland Water and Translink.

Resurfacing: Causeway Road

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the continuation of the resurfacing of the Causeway Road.

(AQW 34314/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department carried out an extensive carriageway resurfacing scheme in November 2013 which has significantly improved the road surface from Whitepark Road to just beyond the entrance to the Giant's Causeway Visitor's Centre.

Whilst it is also my Department's intention to carry out further resurfacing work up to and including The Aird, the scheme is not currently included in this year's resurfacing programme. I would, however, hope to be able to include it in next year's programme for the Moyle area, subject to the availability of funding. A scheme such as this, adjacent to the Giant's Causeway, will need to be carefully planned and programmed in order to minimise disruption for both local residents and tourists visiting one of Northern Ireland's premier attractions.

Bushmills: Walkway and Cycle Path

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the walkway and cycle path from Bushmills to the Aird.

(AQW 34316/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will be aware this is a very extensive scheme proposal that will provide a footpath/cycle path extending for approximately 3.5km from Bushmills to The Aird. However, given the potentially high costs involved, any scheme delivery will need to be carried out in stages.

My officials are currently developing the stage proposal from The Aird to The Causeway, which is significant stretching for approximately 1.5km. The scheme will require the acquisition of a large tract of land. My officials have already met with one of the principal landowners, The National Trust, and will be arranging to meet with other landowners over the coming months.

Subject to the availability of funding and successful acquisition of the necessary land, I am hopeful this scheme will be able to be considered for inclusion in a works programme in the near future.

Disabled Parking: Limavady

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will consider the provision of additional parking spaces for people with disabilities in Central Car Park, Limavady.

(AQW 34329/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are 155 parking spaces in Central car park, Limavady, eight of which are currently marked out for disabled parking.

I have asked my officials to contact you with a view to identifying the need for, and potential location of, additional disabled parking spaces in Central Car Park.

Reservoir: Church Road, Holywood

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reasons for the draining of the Church Road Upper Reservoir in Holywood.

(AQW 34354/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water manages the reservoirs under its control in line with standards set out in the Reservoirs Act 1975 (England and Wales).

The lowering of the water level in Church Road Upper Reservoir is required to facilitate essential health and safety work to refurbish valves and other maintenance work required to protect the structural integrity of the reservoir. Due to the nature of the construction of the valve tower and the need to access the scour valve for refurbishment, NI Water is unable to complete this work without draining the reservoir. The scour valve is an essential element for releasing water from the impounding reservoir to ensure the protection of properties from flooding downstream in the event of a large rainfall event.

Reservoir: Church Road, Holywood

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reason for the lack of consultation following the draining of the Church Road Upper Reservoir in Holywood.

(AQW 34355/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water consulted with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) regarding lowering the level of the reservoir and continues to take advice from it on the environmental approach to this work. Consultation was also carried out with the private club who currently lease the reservoir for angling.

Church Road Upper Reservoir was also confirmed in the programme of planned works at a recent NI Water presentation on Portavoe Reservoir to North Down and Ards Borough Councils on 25 April 2014.

Town Centre Car Parks: Christmas Shopping

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he is considering implementing any additional reduced charging incentives for town centre car parks for the 2014 Christmas shopping season.

(AQW 34362/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A range of measures in respect of town centre car parking charges for the Christmas 2014 shopping season will be considered and announced in due course.

Transport Infrastructure: County Fermanagh

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the metres of (i) dual carriageway; (ii) motorway; and (iii) railway in County Fermanagh; and how he intends to improve transport infrastructure in these areas.

(AQW 34382/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are no lengths of dual carriageway, motorway or railway within County Fermanagh.

No stretches of the Fermanagh road network carry sufficiently high traffic volumes to justify motorway provision, while only a few rural stretches have dual traffic volumes approaching that which would justify provision of dual carriageway (for example, the A4 near Killyhevlin – carries approximately 15,700 vehicles per day).

However, there are sections of four lane carriageway, such as those within the limits of Enniskillen town, which improve traffic flow capacity (for example, Wellington Road across Enniskillen Island – approximately 17,700 vehicles per day).

In recent years there have been a number of improvements to the roads serving the Fermanagh region including improvements to the A32 at Cherrymount, Shannaragh and Drumskinny, which had a combined cost of approximately £26million. In addition, a number of 2+1 overtaking sections were also provided on the A4 between Enniskillen and Ballygawley.

The Strategic Road Improvement Programme includes the key schemes for improvements to the trunk road network across Northern Ireland. Schemes within Fermanagh included within this Programme are: the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass; A4 Fivemiletown Bypass; and further upgrades to the A32 between Enniskillen and Omagh.

It is anticipated an announcement on the Preferred Route for the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass will be made later this year and, in relation to the A32 improvements, design work is progressing on a scheme at Cornamuck with publication of the draft statutory orders likely to take place later this year, and also on a scheme at Kilgortnaleague, where the preferred route corridor is to be identified.

I am keen that we should be ready to develop our rail network where there is the greatest potential for further passenger growth. Progress will, however, be dependent upon the amount that can be made available from the Executive's budget and, where possible, from European grant programmes.

Resurfacing: Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of resurfacing Abbey Road, Millisle.
(AQW 34391/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has in recent years carried out two carriageway resurfacing schemes on Abbey Road, Millisle at a total cost of £317,000.

Resurfacing: Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to resurface Warren Road in Donaghadee.
(AQW 34393/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

Resurfacing: Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to resurface the footpaths on the Warren Road in Donaghadee.
(AQW 34394/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

A75

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how often the A75 has been discussed within the British-Irish Council transport sector format and with what effect, given its strategic and economic importance to Northern Ireland.
(AQW 34397/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Transport NI Division has no knowledge of any formal discussions having taken place at the British-Irish Council Transport Sector regarding the A75.

My Department's European Programmes and Gateways Unit has not had any input to discussions within the British-Irish Council Transport Sector in relation to the A75. There has been ongoing contact between the Unit's officials and their counterparts in London and Scotland which helped to ensure the inclusion of the A75 on the comprehensive Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The Unit continues to remain in regular contact with Transport Scotland regarding European funding opportunities to improve cross-border and inter-regional routes, including the A75.

Railway Station and Bus Depot: Ballymena

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on when Ballymena Railway Station and Bus Depot will be upgraded to a standard similar to that of Antrim or Coleraine stations.
(AQW 34407/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that a scoping and feasibility review of the project to refurbish Ballymena Bus and Rail Integrated Station has commenced. The project is included in Translink's Corporate Plan and work is expected to be completed during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years, subject to the successful conclusion of the approval process and the securing of the necessary funding.

Cycling Strategy

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timescale for the development of a cycling strategy.
(AQW 34408/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: An Issues Paper setting out the direction and key themes for a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland was drawn up by the Cycling Unit in May 2014. The Paper was distributed to key stakeholders and the Committee for Regional Development for comment and five regional workshops were held in May. Feedback received is being used to inform finalisation of the draft Bicycle Strategy which will be issued for public consultation late summer.

Cycle Parking: North Antrim

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to provide cycle parking facilities in North Antrim, particularly in close proximity to the route of the Giro d'Italia 2014.
(AQW 34410/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You are aware of my commitment to improve cycling provision and my Cycling Unit is currently developing a draft Bicycle Strategy for NI which will be published for consultation in the autumn.

This strategy will outline all aspects required to create a better environment for cyclists and communities overall. An integral part of this will be the development of cycling infrastructure including cycle parking.

Good end to end cycling needs to include good cycle parking, where cyclists want to leave their bikes and are confident to do so. My officials will continue to consider providing cycle parking at specific locations and, as part of our 25 year strategy, consideration will be given to the best locations for additional cycle parking – including locations along the route of the Giro d'Italia.

Bicycles: Train Passengers

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how he plans to increase the availability of space on the train network for passengers with bicycles.

(AQW 34411/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that NI Railways have now had their full fleet of 20 new Class 4000 trains in service for almost one year. The commissioning of this fleet represented a circa 30% increase in passenger capacity; however, passenger numbers continue to grow at a very high rate which limits available space on trains in peak times.

NI Railways have embarked on a comprehensive review of network utilisation to ensure they are making best use of existing rolling stock and infrastructure and this issue will be considered as part of an overall assessment of passenger needs. Translink expect to see the first outputs from this process incorporated into their 2015-2018 Corporate Plan document.

Currently the Class 3000 trains have capacity for 4 cycles, and the newer Class 4000 trains have double this capacity and can accommodate 8 Cycles. Modification of existing trains would reduce passenger capacity.

Translink provides specific cycle parking amenities at numerous bus, rail and integrated public transport facilities across Northern Ireland including 146 cycle parking spaces at rail stations, 88 at integrated bus and rail stations and a further 198 at bus stations. Translink's intention is to expand cycle storage capacity over the next year. Translink is also progressing with a wider bicycle facility programme and hope to bring forward an economic appraisal in 2014/15.

Cyclists

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there has been an increase in the number of cyclists over the last twelve months.

(AQW 34419/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) is the only source of data that records how and why people travel in Northern Ireland. A range of cycling specific information is recorded, including the average distance travelled per person per year by bicycle, the average number of cycling journeys taken per person per year and the average journey length for bicycle journeys.

Information on those who have cycled in the last 12 months by age and sex can be found in Table 5.4 of the In-depth report published in December every year. Between 2009-2011 and 2010-2012, there was no change in the proportion of respondents who had cycled in the last 12 months according to the TSNI.

The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland Headline Report 2011-2013 will be published on the 10th July 2014. All TSNI reports and details of methodology can be found at:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/northern_ireland_travel_survey.htm

For the future, my Cycling Unit is considering further research on cycling participation information that will compliment the TSNI.

Cycle Boxes at Traffic Lights: Parking

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has considered introducing penalty point fines for people who park in cycle boxes at traffic lights.

(AQW 34421/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that existing legislation provides for enforcement against vehicles found parked or waiting in areas reserved for cyclists.

Where a waiting restriction is indicated by a traffic sign, Traffic Attendants may issue a penalty charge notice to any vehicle parked or waiting in areas reserved for cyclists. Most of these reserved areas will be within 15 metres of a junction where a waiting restriction will automatically apply. In urban areas these restrictions will be marked with double yellow lines.

The PSNI may issue a fixed penalty notice if a parked or waiting vehicle is deemed to be causing an obstruction. Where a vehicle is waiting in an area reserved for cyclists, with the intention of moving on at the next traffic signal change, the police may issue a fixed penalty notice for breach of a stop line.

Cycling Infrastructure: Dublin

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has assessed the impact of recent changes to cycling infrastructure in Dublin; and if any initiatives could be applied locally.

(AQW 34423/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As part of the process to develop a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland the Cycling Unit has undertaken a review of best practice in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Europe and further afield. One element of this research has been to develop relations, and encourage dialogue with our counterparts in Dublin. This has included meeting with officials from the National Transport Authority.

Given that 'recent changes to cycling infrastructure in Dublin' are outside my jurisdiction, my Department will not have a role in assessing the impact of changes. The Cycling Unit will, however, continue to monitor best practice emerging from Dublin (including any assessment the authorities there make of the impacts of recent changes to cycling infrastructure) and elsewhere, and where appropriate consider changes to infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DRD Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34443/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The amount spent on heat, electricity, and water by my Department in each of the last five years is detailed below.

Year	(i) Heat £'000	(ii) Electricity £'000			(iii) Water £'000
		Electricity - General	Electricity – Street lighting, traffic signals & traffic signs	Total	
2009/10	121	718	9,179	9,897	104
2010/11	154	748	10,584	11,332	92
2011/12	160	666	11,318	11,984	85
2012/13	169	610	11,454	12,064	91
2013/14	166	571	11,772	12,343	93

Flags: Removal

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he plans to take action, even in the absence of further political agreement, to remove flags from his Department's property where the flags may cause a breach of the peace.

(AQW 34455/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In April 2005 my Department signed up to the Joint Protocol on the Display of Flags in Public Areas. Under the protocol, the agency in the most effective position to consult, negotiate, or resolve the situation will take the lead. My Department is generally not perceived to be the lead agency under the current Protocol. The PSNI, where best placed, will take the lead and also does so where the display of flags is causing community tension, or is affecting the quality of life for a community.

Under the protocol Transport NI, when called upon by the lead Agency, will provide the access equipment and resources to remove unwanted flags, once there is community agreement and practical assistance is required to facilitate such action.

Experience has shown that removing flags in the absence of widespread support can simply worsen the situation, with even more flags being displayed. My Department must also take account of the risks to workers in removing flags where agreement has not been reached.

My Department has contributed to the review of "The Joint Protocol in Relation to the Display of Flags in Public Areas", which OFMDFM initiated in April 2008 and continues to take the lead on.

Portavoe Reservoir: Drainage Operation

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development, with regards to the recent experience at Portavoe Reservoir in relation to the environmental impact of the drainage operation, whether any new measures will be implemented to minimise the environmental impact of any similar draining operations on the other reservoirs.

(AQW 34478/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water is currently carrying out maintenance work on a number of reservoirs across Northern Ireland with Portavoe being the sixth to be drawn down during this maintenance programme. NI Water has advised me that there have been lessons learnt at each of the sites, both in terms of the technical approach to the refurbishment and controlling the environmental impact. As with all other reservoir sites, the environmental mitigation works at Portavoe were designed and agreed following a period of extensive consultation with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and other stakeholders. While there are some unavoidable consequences of drawing down a reservoir, the environmental mitigation works have been

a success, with approximately 16,000 fish relocated, a swan mussel population collected and temporally relocated, and well over 100 water birds continuing to remain at the site.

The most significant lesson learnt from the Portavoe works has been the approach to public consultation. NI Water has learnt to recognise the wider public stakeholder groups with an active interest in Portavoe and ensuring early and regular communication with these groups and members of the local council to achieve greater buy in to the scheme. NI Water has already written to other local councils to advise them of future works at other reservoir sites and has offered to meet with councillors to discuss each of these proposed schemes.

Buses

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how he is ensuring that bus drivers are aware of how to drive when in close proximity to cyclists.

(AQW 34485/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised me that as part of their Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) annual training syllabus all of its drivers undertake a training course on safety awareness when sharing road space with cyclists. To date, 2120 drivers have completed this training.

My Department and Translink have also recently developed a programme of training along with an advice leaflet for both bus drivers and cyclists entitled 'Travelling in Harmony'. This provides cycle skills and safety training as well as guidance for bus drivers and cyclists to ensure that each understands the needs of the other, particularly in shared space.

Millennium Way: Lurgan

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the completion of Millennium Way in Lurgan.

(AQW 34487/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is continuing to develop the extension to Millennium Way scheme and work is ongoing to finalise the detailed design for the proposal.

The acquisition of land for the scheme requires a Vesting Order and it is hoped to publish the Notice of Intention to Make the Vesting Order in the near future. The scheme development team is continuing to meet with affected landowners and tenants with a view to minimising the risk of objections to the Vesting Order. It is possible, however, that a Public Inquiry may be required to determine if the level of land take identified is appropriate.

As previously indicated, it is estimated the scheme should take 4-6 months to construct, however, progression of the proposal onto my Department's Construction Programme and a date for the start of construction remain subject to the proposal continuing to have a satisfactory economic appraisal, clearing the statutory procedures and funding being made available in future budget settlements.

County Hall: Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the annual cost of providing services, for which his Department has responsibility, from County Hall in Ballymena; and what contingent liabilities are planned in the financial year 2015/16 for the use of these facilities.

(AQW 34507/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: County Hall in Ballymena is a Crown Estate building and therefore the responsibility of the Department for Finance and Personnel (DFP).

My Department is the principal occupant of the Northern Ireland Civil Service within County Hall in Ballymena, and as such bears responsibility for costs associated with Security, Cleaning and Waste Disposal. The cost for these services in 2013-2014 was £296,496.

There are currently six other occupants of County Hall in Ballymena; the North Eastern Education & Library Board; the Northern Health & Social Care Trust; Planning, Road Safety and Motor Tax officials from the Department of the Environment (DOE); and Urban Regeneration officials from the Department for Social Development (DSD).

My Department recharges the other occupants on the basis of square footage occupied. In 2013-2014, £222,347 was recharged leaving resultant costs to my Department of £74,149.

Park-and-ride Scheme: Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development whether consideration has been given to the provision of a park-and-ride scheme at Drumgormal in Dungannon on land owned by the Roads Service.

(AQW 34542/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is accepted that the land owned by my Department at Drumgormal has the potential to provide park-and-ride/share facilities. However, a site at this location would be less desirable than the currently proposed site in the vicinity of the Stangmore roundabout, which is located at a major interchange (A29/A4/M1), and is close to an existing bus stop. A

Stangmore location would also cater for an existing demand, as evidenced by the current numbers of parked vehicles along the A29.

However, the land in question will be retained by my Department, should a future need be identified after construction of the Tamnamore and Stangmore Park and Ride/Share sites.

Craigtlet Roundabout

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the Craigtlet Roundabout Improvement Scheme. (AQW 34550/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department commissioned a detailed study of a number of alternative layouts in relation to this scheme, many of which had been put forward by local residents. The report concluded that, of the options considered, three were worthy of further consideration.

These options were subsequently put forward for public consultation, which took place between 21 January and 7 February 2014. In total, 265 responses were received through the public consultation events. Officials are currently analysing the feedback and preparing a report on the consultation, for my consideration.

I hope to be in a position to announce details of the preferred scheme later in the summer.

A2

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the progress of the cleaning and maintenance of the open drain on the edge of A2 Belfast to Bangor Dual Carriageway adjacent to the boundary of Holywood Rugby Club and the North Down Borough Council 3G pitch development. (AQW 34551/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My officials have investigated this issue and acknowledged that further maintenance work on the drain would be beneficial prior to the winter period. It is anticipated the work will be carried out within the next 2 – 3 months.

Roads Service: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of (i) road sweepers; and (ii) vacuum tankers available to Roads Service in the Ballymena area. (AQW 34553/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has one road sweeper and one vacuum tanker (gully emptier) available for use in the Ballymena area.

Road Gullies

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the frequency of which road gullies are cleaned and emptied. (AQW 34555/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of over 550,000 gullies across Northern Ireland. Transport NI aims to inspect and clean, where necessary, all gullies in urban areas twice each year and gullies in rural areas once each year. This is in line with the Road Maintenance Standards for Safety which apply equally across Northern Ireland.

This policy ensures that a reasonable level of maintenance is carried out to drainage systems, taking account of the Department's finite funding and staff resource levels.

In addition, Transport NI undertakes additional inspection and cleaning of gullies at locations where fallen leaves create ongoing problems at certain times of the year, or where there has been a history of gullies becoming blocked for other reasons.

Sewer Overflow: Muckamore Bridge

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on Northern Ireland Water's response to the ongoing pollution incidents at the combined sewer overflow at Muckamore Bridge on the Six Mile Water River. (AQW 34561/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the past two months NI Water has undertaken extensive dye investigations in the sewerage network and properties in the vicinity of Muckamore Bridge area to ascertain the root cause of pollution incidents in the area. Some 253 properties have been tested to date with the initial focus on targeting areas identified as likely locations for misconnections.

Whilst more time will be required to explore the issues identified to date in full, the high level findings include:

- Misconnections were found at five properties
- NIW was unable to gain access to eight properties which had neighbouring properties possessing misconnections

- A foul sewer was found to be blocked and overflowing into the storm sewer. The blockages were cleared and the manholes and storm lines cleaned

Once the full extent of the issue is established, NI Water will liaise with NIEA to establish a prioritisation rank for this area, in relation to other identified areas of misconnections across Northern Ireland. NIEA has developed a scoring matrix for prioritisation of misconnections, which includes consideration of visual impact, aesthetics at outfall, accessibility/downstream users, water body designation/classification and Directive impact.

Following the completion of the investigation NI Water will work with NIEA to determine the prioritisation ranking for this using NIEA scoring matrix for misconnections. Subject to this location being given an adequate ranking in the prioritisation matrix and allocation of funding within PC15 to address misconnections, a programme of work may then be developed and taken forward to address this issue.

Waste Treatment Works: Ballyclare

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development what design changes are being considered by Northern Ireland Water for the Ballyclare Waste Treatment works to provide capacity so that it does not pollute the Six Mile Water when severe flooding conditions occur.

(AQW 34563/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Ballyclare Wastewater Treatment Works was constructed in 2005 to improve the quality of final effluent being discharged to the Six Mile Water. It operates under a Water Order Consent (WOC) issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and has been compliant since construction. The Works continues to treat effluent to well within its consented limits and NIW has no plans to increase its treatment capacity. Base maintenance programmes will be delivered in accordance with maintenance schedules to sustain the required level of treatment at the Works.

Recent discharges into the Six Mile Water River have been investigated by NI Water and identified as being caused by sewer blockages and misconnections. Further details of NI Water's response to these incidents are included in AQW34561/11-15.

Reservoirs: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reservoirs in North Down that are surplus to requirements.

(AQW 34572/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water currently has seven reservoirs in the North Down area which are considered surplus to requirements. The reservoirs are Ballysallagh Upper and Lower, Conlig Upper and Lower, Creightons Green, Church Road and Portavoe.

Resurfacing: Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the footpath resurfacing schemes that are under consideration for the Holywood area.

(AQW 34574/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

Resurfacing: Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the road resurfacing schemes that are under consideration for the Holywood area.

(AQW 34575/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

Traffic-calming Measures: Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the traffic calming measures that are under consideration for the Holywood area.

(AQW 34576/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

Dropped Kerbs: Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail where new dropped kerbs are under consideration for the Holywood area.

(AQW 34578/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 34288/11-15.

Cycling

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how he promotes cycling to his departmental staff.
(AQW 34588/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I promote cycling to all my staff as a realistic and sustainable travel option through my Department's Travelwise initiative and provide a particular focus on everyday cycling such as commuting and short journeys. When I am in my office in the city centre I promote cycling by example through cycling to meetings within Belfast.

My Department provides cycle parking along with showers and changing facilities at its Clarence Court Headquarters building and other Departmental offices. An extension to the cycle parking facilities was recently completed. The Department also provides pool bikes for staff use and has recently bought two folding bikes to encourage multi modal journeys.

In addition, I spearheaded the introduction of the Cycle to Work scheme in June 2012 to staff across the NICS including staff in my Department.

I also lead my Departmental annual cycling events programme during Bike Week and participate with DRD staff in activities such as Bike To Work Day as well as supporting the 10 Minute Cycle Challenge, both of which are designed to support staff participation in cycling.

Rural Transport Fund

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the benefits of the transport solutions provided as a result of the Rural Transport Fund, particularly the flexibility and value offered through volunteer drivers, whether his Department will protect such opportunities for volunteering and continue effective partnership working with the community transport sector in future considerations.
(AQW 34644/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department continues to provide support to Rural Community Transport Partnerships from the Rural Transport Fund. One of the main objectives of the Fund is to encourage volunteering activity and I have no plans to change this.

Bus Routes: Ards Peninsula

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to extend the number of bus routes in the Ards Peninsula to improve the service to Carrowdore.
(AQW 34660/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department, Translink and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development have been working together to introduce a small number of additional rural bus services. It is hoped to commence these services as soon as possible, subject to securing funding. However, it has not yet been possible to confirm financial support which would mean the additional bus services could be introduced. Officials are continuing to work together to find a solution and hope to have clarified the position by September.

One of these proposals would include Carrowdore as part of a service operating from Ballywalter up the Ards Peninsula to Bangor.

South Antrim Community Transport

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the funding his Department provided to South Antrim Community Transport in each of the last four financial years.
(AQW 34663/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below indicates the level of support provided by the Department from the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) and the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to South Antrim Community Transport in each of the last four years. All figures are taken from the Company's annual audited accounts.

Financial Year	Level of RTF Grant	Assisted Rural Travel Scheme	Total Support
2010-11	£138,389.00	£18,853.00	£157,242.00
2011-12*	£150,150.00	£28,037.00	£178,187.00
2012-13*	£158,938.00	£27,369.00	£186,307.00
2013-14	£212,666.00	£31,858.00	£244,524.00

* Please note that in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 financial years, South Antrim Community Transport was working in a collaborative partnership with Lagan Valley Rural Transport (Lisburn), while the two organisations considered the possibility of merging. After a two-year period, the two organisations took the decision not to take the merger forward.

Flooding: Newcastle

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the findings of his Department's recent report into perennial flooding in the Mourneview Estate in Newcastle, Co. Down; and (ii) the actions that will be implemented to tackle the ongoing issue.

(AQW 34741/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has now received the feasibility study from its consultants on the drainage situation within the Mourneview Estate and the investigation has outlined a complex drainage arrangement which has interdependencies between infrastructure owned by NI Water, Transport NI and some soakaway systems where ownership is unclear.

The report identifies two elements of work, one on the NI Water combined system and one associated with a soakaway which receives road drainage. Flood alleviation proposals include the upsizing of the combined sewer and provision of a new surface water sewer and discharge. The outline cost estimate for the flood alleviation proposals is £440k.

NI Water intends to progress and implement the recommendations in the report and commence detailed design work with a view to delivering a construction project to provide the solution to the flooding problem. Transport NI will also participate in this scheme and will work with NI Water to develop and agree the detail of this joint project.

The project will be progressed as quickly as possible, and it is estimated that construction could be completed mid-2015 subject to the availability of funding, lands and statutory approvals.

Illegal Waste

Mr Agnew asked Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 33866/11-15, given a valid enforcement notice exists that requires the offender to remove the illegal waste which lies directly in the line of the proposed A6 road, to detail (i) the implications of vesting land subject to such a legal charge; and (ii) whether his Department will be liable for the cost of removal, decontamination and repatriation of the waste.

(AQW 34880/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In responding to your previous questions about the discovery of the illegal landfill at Mobuoy Road, I advised that should I decide to proceed with this scheme:

- (i) I would confirm the Direction Order immediately to protect the footprint of the scheme from future development;
- (ii) the Vesting Orders would remain in draft awaiting Executive approval of funding to construct the scheme; and
- (iii) if the illegal landfill is still present when the road is being constructed, I am content that the installation of appropriately engineered measures to contain the illegal waste would ensure that the necessary compensatory floodplain could be constructed as planned.

Big Capital Project

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the start date of the infrastructural drainage changes that have been promised as part of the Big Capital Project.

(AQW 34961/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland's drainage infrastructure will require significant capital investment to support future economic growth. It is also important to ensure that our drainage infrastructure protects the environment to the standards set out in the relevant EU Directives and properly addresses flood risks.

My Department, with the support of the Department of the Environment and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, has identified the potential benefits of a strategic approach to drainage infrastructure planning across Northern Ireland. This cross-cutting, strategic approach would require additional investment above and beyond the sewerage infrastructure improvements that Northern Ireland Water will continue to deliver through the water industry's Price Control 13 and Price Control 15 Business Plans.

I have circulated a draft paper to Executive colleagues which sets out a proposed way forward. I believe that an interdepartmental working group should be established to develop a strategic drainage infrastructure plan for Northern Ireland. This could develop Northern Ireland's drainage infrastructure in a joined up way to support future economic growth, protect the environment and address flood risk in a strategic manner.

Department for Social Development

Migrants: Housing Patterns

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what information exists about the housing patterns for migrants living in public and social housing, including their prevalence in areas classified or regarded as unionist and nationalist.

(AQW 34025/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has developed a number of monitoring systems to analyse the performance of their housing services across a number of equality areas including race and migration. Information about the ethnic origin of applicants for housing services has been collected for 10 years and more recently the Housing Executive has collected information about the nationality of customers.

However, as these systems do not give a complete picture, the Housing Executive conducts an annual Black and Minority Ethnic and Migrant Worker mapping survey to supplement its knowledge of the range and prevalence of foreign nationals using their services. This study in conjunction with the monitoring data and the Housing Executive's community based work allows them to make broad estimates of the patterns of race and migration and the uptake of housing services.

However, at this stage the Housing Executive's statistical information is only effective at District (housing area) level due to the small numbers and the Housing Executive does not define areas as unionist or nationalist. There are also data coverage and data quality issues.

I would also refer the Member to my answer to AQW 34024/11-15.

Cavity Wall Insulation: Housing Executive Report

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the reasons for the delay in the publication of the Housing Executive's report on cavity wall insulation.
(AQW 34147/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they had been waiting on further survey data results which were received on 13 June 2014. A paper is currently being prepared to inform the Housing Executive's Business Committee of the research findings along with any recommendations. It is anticipated that this will be presented to the Business Committee on 7 July 2014.

Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development how much is still outstanding in redecoration grants as a result of the installation of double glazed windows in Housing Association properties.
(AQW 34230/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Of the current 24 registered Housing Associations, none have any monies outstanding in redecoration grants as a result of the installation of double glazed windows in Housing Association properties.

Social Housing: Provision

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development how he plans to increase social housing provision in (i) Banbridge; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Lurgan; and for his assessment of the current capacity and its suitability in relation to demand.
(AQW 34236/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive's Social Housing Need Assessment 2013-2018 identified a need for 72 additional social housing units in Banbridge and 191 additional units in Craigavon Borough, which includes both Lurgan/Brownlow and Portadown Districts. The majority of social housing need is for Banbridge Town and North Lurgan local housing areas as detailed below:

Social Housing Need Assessment 2013-2018

Settlement	5 Year Projected Social Housing Need
Banbridge District	
Banbridge Town	65
Dromore	6
Gilford	1
Banbridge District total	72
Craigavon District	
North Lurgan	150
South Lurgan	10
Portadown 1	10
Portadown 2	2
Aghagallon	4
Derrymacash / Derrytrasna / Kinnego	15

Settlement	5 Year Projected Social Housing Need
Craigavon District total	191

The table below shows the schemes planned for delivery in the upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency in the 2014/15 to 2016/17 Social Housing Development Programme

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Work Cat	Need Group
2014/15	Clanmil	Grattan Park, Lurgan	28	New Build	General Needs
	Habinteg	Woodlands, Gilford (T)	1	New Build	General Needs
	NIHE	118 Clonmeen (T)	1	New Build	General Needs
	NIHE	Corcrain Walk Portadown (T)	3	New Build	General Needs
2015/16	Habinteg	Headington Drive Ph 1, Lurgan	20	New Build	General Needs
2016/17	Habinteg	Headington Drive Ph 2, Lurgan	38	New Build	General Needs
	TBC	Brownlow Terrace, Lurgan (T)	4	New Build	General Needs
		Total	95		

The Unmet Need Prospectus, available on the Housing Executive's website, (http://www.nihe.gov.uk/unmet_social_housing_need_propectus.pdf) highlights areas where housing need remains unmet and directs housing associations to the number and type of housing required in particular housing areas. The Housing Executive continues to work with housing associations as they endeavour to secure sites for social housing in the above districts. With regard to Banbridge the Housing Executive has been encouraging Housing Associations to study the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 which lists the sites zoned with a Key Site Requirement for Social Housing within the district.

North Lurgan has the highest projection of housing need of all of the above settlements. To assist Housing Associations in sourcing suitable sites a North Lurgan Site Identification Study has been initiated by the Housing Executive. The study has identified a North Lurgan Boundary and determined all unconstrained sites within it.

This has resulted in the identification of 28 sites which have all been ranked on the basis of location and whether they have planning approval. Land and Property will be contacting all sites owners in a systematic manner to determine if any would be willing to sell their land for social housing development.

Social Housing Need Assessment 2013-2018

Settlement	5 Year Projected Social Housing Need
Banbridge District	
Banbridge Town	65
Dromore	6
Gilford	1
Banbridge District total	72
Craigavon District	
North Lurgan	150
South Lurgan	10
Portadown 1	10
Portadown 2	2
Aghagallon	4
Derrymacash / Derrytrasna / Kinnego	15
Craigavon District total	191

The table below shows the schemes planned for delivery in the upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency in the 2014/15 to 2016/17 Social Housing Development Programme

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Work Cat	Need Group
2014/15	Clanmil	Grattan Park, Lurgan	28	New Build	General Needs
	Habinteg	Woodlands, Gilford (T)	1	New Build	General Needs
	NIHE	118 Clonmeen (T)	1	New Build	General Needs
	NIHE	Corcrair Walk Portadown (T)	3	New Build	General Needs
2015/16	Habinteg	Headington Drive Ph 1, Lurgan	20	New Build	General Needs
2016/17	Habinteg	Headington Drive Ph 2, Lurgan	38	New Build	General Needs
	TBC	Brownlow Terrace, Lurgan (T)	4	New Build	General Needs
		Total	95		

The Unmet Need Prospectus, available on the Housing Executive's website, (http://www.nihe.gov.uk/unmet_social_housing_need_propectus.pdf) highlights areas where housing need remains unmet and directs housing associations to the number and type of housing required in particular housing areas. The Housing Executive continues to work with housing associations as they endeavour to secure sites for social housing in the above districts. With regard to Banbridge the Housing Executive has been encouraging Housing Associations to study the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 which lists the sites zoned with a Key Site Requirement for Social Housing within the district.

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This has resulted in the identification of 28 sites which have all been ranked on the basis of location and whether they have planning approval. Land and Property will be contacting all sites owners in a systematic manner to determine if any would be willing to sell their land for social housing development.

Heat, Electricity and Water: DSD Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development how much his Department has spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34248/11-15)

Mr McCausland: This Department has spent the following amounts on the in each of the last 5 years:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Heat	£386,092	£487,471	£511,028	£607,522	£604,627
Electricity	£1,202,646	£1,218,952	£1,665,200	£1,658,662	£1,600,460
Water	£109,394	£134,157	£123,507	£138,014	£144,957

Social Housing: West Belfast

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development how many units of social housing have been completed in West Belfast in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34259/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Details of the number of social housing units that have been completed in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years are as follows:-

- 2011/12 118 units
- 2012/13 176 units
- 2013/14 343 units

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.

Kilcooley: 3G Football Pitch

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding has been allocated for the 3G football pitch proposals for Kilcooley, Bangor.

(AQW 34282/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Kilcooley 3G pitch project is part of a capital cluster project entitled "Community Operated Sports Facilities" which has been submitted to the Office of the First and deputy First Minister for funding through the Social

Investment Fund within the South Eastern Zone's area plan. The cluster project is currently within the funding allocation of the Zone but has not yet been approved by the economic appraisal process. It should be noted that this project is not guaranteed funding.

The Kilcooley Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board has included in its Action Plan a commitment of £250,000 as a part contribution towards the overall costs of the proposal. My Department has indicated that it would be minded to support the commitment, through the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment fund, subject to the completion of a positive economic appraisal and the availability of finance. However it is likely that given the timeframe involved, responsibility for deciding whether to support this project will fall to the new North Down and Ards Council as part of the Reform of Local Government.

Alcohol Licensing

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33197/11-15, to outline the timescale for reporting on the reform of alcohol licensing.

(AQW 34295/11-15)

Mr McCausland: On 26 June, my officials provided a briefing to the Social Development Committee on the changes I propose to make to alcohol licensing law. I now intend seeking Executive agreement to the final policy content of a Liquor Licensing (Amendment) Bill. Following this I will make an announcement on the way forward.

Queen's Parade, Bangor

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Queen's Parade redevelopment project in Bangor.

(AQW 34358/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is taking the lead to progress proposals for the comprehensive development of the Queen's Parade. Over recent months good progress has been made and the Department has agreed the purchase a number of properties required to complete the proposed site boundary and negotiations to acquire the remaining property are ongoing with owners. In March DSD appointed Turley Associates to work with officials to develop a planning application and attain planning permission for the Queen's Parade scheme by March 2015.

A series of engagement events to seek the views of the public, local businesses and Council on what they would like to see developed on this prominent site have been undertaken. It is these views that have informed a number of proposed options for the site which are being presented to the public for their consideration from 16 June 2014 to 30 June 2014.

Urban Development Grant Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the criteria used to judge applications to the Urban Development Grant scheme.

(AQW 34378/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The criteria used to assess applications for Urban Development Grants are specified in the 'Application Pack', these are; location, strategic context, scale, value for money, practicability, additionality, environmental benefits and design. All applications are subject to an economic appraisal.

Employment Support Allowance

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in North Down have had their Employment Support Allowance withdrawn after a work capability assessment, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34435/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The following table details the number of people in North Down who failed to meet the threshold at a Work Capability Assessment in each financial year from June 2011 to February 2014. The figures provided are those Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have undergone a Work Capability Assessment as part of the re-referral process which is provided for under the legislation.

Year	Fail WCA
June 2011 - March 2012	90
April 2012 - March 2013	120
April 2013 - February 2014	90

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.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Social Development to what extent his Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34449/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In accordance with the Programme for Government commitment and Central Procurement Directorate's guidance, my department considers the inclusion of social clauses in all public procurement for supplies, services and construction.

The Procurement Board, in June 2013, revised the definition of social clauses to include wider community benefits. This is considered on a project by project basis, to determine which social considerations are relevant to the needs and the obligations to be met by the procurement. Any relevant social considerations are/will be clearly stated in tender documentation. Social Clauses linked to training and employment opportunities have been included in Government construction works contracts since 31 December 2008, developed by Central Procurement Directorate in conjunction with the construction industry.

My department promotes that public procurement should be undertaken and managed via a Centre of Procurement Expertise namely Central Procurement Directorate within the Department of Finance and Personnel. Subsequently this helps to ensure that social clauses are implemented where appropriate.

Bangor Public Realm Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding will be going into the Bangor public realms scheme. **(AQW 34454/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: My Department is investing £3 million and Council is investing £5 million in the Bangor public realm scheme. On-site construction works recently commenced and the works will address all aspects of street design including paving, kerbstones, street furniture, lighting and planting.

Work Capability Assessment Form

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many amendments have been made to the Work Capability Assessment form or the relevant criteria since its introduction; and to list the dates of each change.

(AQW 34458/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Five amendments have been made to the ESA50 Limited Capability for Work questionnaire. The amendments were made in March 2011, June 2011, January 2013, April 2013 and April 2014.

Common Landlord Areas: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to list the common landlord areas in each housing need assessment area in North Down.

(AQW 34471/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below details the Common Landlord areas in each Housing Need Assessment area in North Down.

Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
Bangor Central	Bangor Central
	Clandeboyne Road
	Clanmorris
	Greenmount Ave.
	Skipperstone/Tughan Court
	Whitehill
Bangor East	Churchill
	Donaghadee Road
Bloomfield/Bangor	Bloomfield Road/Balloo
Conlig	Conlig/Breezemount
Kilcooley	Bangor/Kilcooley

Housing Need Assessment Area	Common Landlord Area
Holywood Central	Spencer Street
	Strand
	Woodlands
Holywood Outer	Holywood/Redburn
	Loughview/White City
Groomspoint	Groomspoint
Crawfordsburn	Crawfordsburn
Helen's Bay	Helen's Bay

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Social Housing: Taughmonagh

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what steps have been taken to secure occupation of the new social housing dwellings in Taughmonagh.

(AQW 34530/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The allocation of new properties at Taughmonagh is the responsibility of Fold Housing Association.

Fold Housing Association has confirmed that they met with the tenants of the new properties on 27 June and are pleased to report that the issues that had previously delayed the tenants from taking up occupancy are now resolved. The tenants have now received their keys and their new tenancies commenced on 30 June 2014.

Poker: Legislation

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department will introduce legislation to allow the playing of organised poker with limited stakes.

(AQW 34594/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the member to the answer previously supplied to AQW 24512/11-15.

Land Banks: East Antrim

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development to list the (i) domestic; and (ii) non-domestic land banks in East Antrim that will be transferred to the Mid and East Antrim council.

(AQW 34614/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below details the land that is currently proposed will transfer to the control of Mid and East Antrim council under the Reform of Local Government. All areas of land are classed as non-domestic.

Mid and East Antrim
Rodgers Quay, Carrickfergus
Upper North St, Carrickfergus

Please note that by the transfer date the above list may be subject to change.

Housing Executive: East Antrim Properties

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties in East Antrim will have double glazing installed by the end of the 2014/15 financial year.

(AQW 34615/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that a total of 1,568 properties in the East Antrim parliamentary constituency will have double glazing installed by the end of the 2014/15 financial year. This includes those schemes that have been started in earlier years and those schemes that are due on site in the current financial year in order to achieve the Programme for Government commitment

Maintenance Repairs: Strabane District

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Social Development what action he is taking to address the backlog of maintenance repairs on Housing Executive properties in the Strabane district; and whether he will consider making additional resources and finance available to resolve this issue.

(AQW 34746/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that due to a number of performance related issues associated with this contract they have had no option but to serve a three month termination notice on the contractor, which is due to end on 15th September 2014. The Housing Executive has further advised that back up arrangements are being put in place during the termination period to address the backlog and uncompleted work situation. The Housing Executive is also actively seeking a replacement contractor using the mini-competition under the Framework Contract.

House Repossessions: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many house repossessions took place in North Down in (i) 2007; (ii) 2010; (iii) 2013; and (iv) the first quarter of 2014.

(AQW 34763/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department does not hold information on the number of houses possessed each year in Northern Ireland. However, the Department of Justice provides statistics on the number of writs and originating summonses issued, cases disposed and orders made in respect of mortgages in the Chancery Division of the Northern Ireland High Court. This information is publically available on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service websites. While these statistics are not a complete representation of possessions in Northern Ireland, they are informative as a proxy of people at risk of possession.

The figures for North Down show that:

- (i) In 2007 there were 91 mortgage cases received and 54 cases were disposed. A total of 54 final orders were made, of which 24 were Possession Orders.
- (ii) In 2010 there were 135 cases received and 121 cases disposed. A total of 121 final orders were made, of which 70 were Possession Orders.

A sub-regional breakdown of the statistics is not yet available for 2013 or the first quarter of 2014. The provisional overall figures for Northern Ireland show that:

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

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

If constituents in North Down are struggling to pay their mortgage or are worried about the future, I strongly encourage them to access advice and speak to their lender as soon as possible. The Mortgage Debt Advice Service, which is operated by Housing Rights Service and funded by my Department, can be contacted on 0300 323 0310. The earlier borrowers receive advice and engage with their lender, the more likely they are to arrive at an affordable and sustainable solution; however, it is never too late to begin this process.

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

Housing Executive: Glengormley Properties

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development to list the no-fines single-skin Housing Executive properties in the Glengormley area.

(AQW 34766/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they do not have any "No Fines" properties in Glengormley.

Housing Executive: North Down Properties

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive properties in North Down will have received double glazing between 2011 and the end of the scheme in 2015.

(AQW 34865/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that from April 2011 until March 2014 they had installed double glazing in 649 dwellings in the North Down constituency. A further 501 dwellings are due to have double glazing installed during 2014/15 financial year in line with the Programme for Government commitment.

Charity Commission

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34197/11-15, when he will review the costs incurred by charities in responding to Charity Commission for Northern Ireland investigations.
(AQW 34917/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The costs incurred by charities in responding to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland remain a matter for the organisations concerned and my Department does not have access to such information. In these circumstances I am not in a position to review costs.

Charity Commission investigations are not entered into lightly and can be necessary to protect the charity and / or its assets, for example where there is evidence of misconduct and mismanagement by trustees.

Housing Executive: West Tyrone Properties

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive homes in West Tyrone are set to benefit from the new double glazing contract.
(AQW 34936/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that there is only one double glazing scheme remaining in the West Tyrone constituency for 59 properties, which is due on site in February 2015.

Housing Executive: Superannuation Scheme

Mr Allister asked Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33845/11-15, whether there is an imperative on Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff to attend these courses.
(AQW 34987/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that attendance at such NILGOSC run courses is not mandatory.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Educational Visits

Mr Campbell asked the Assembly Commission how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools from (a) controlled; (b) maintained; and (c) integrated sectors have paid educational visits to Parliament Buildings in each of the last three years.
(AQW 34363/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Education Service provides an education programme for schools visiting Parliament Buildings. All schools are contacted at the start of each academic year to invite them to participate in the programme.

The tables below outline how many primary and post-primary schools from the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors took part in the Northern Ireland Assembly education programme in the last three years from September to June.

01/07/11 – 30/06/12		
Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	86	2414
Primary maintained	104	2966
Primary integrated	4	85
Post-primary controlled	71	2007
Post-primary maintained	69	2171
Post-primary integrated	19	578

01/07/12 – 30/06/13		
Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	68	2143
Primary maintained	40	1233
Primary integrated	1	46
Post-primary controlled	79	2693
Post-primary maintained	70	2572
Post-primary integrated	13	363

01/07/13 – 30/06/14		
Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	62	1809
Primary maintained	49	1583
Primary integrated	5	172
Post-primary controlled	66	2019
Post-primary maintained	57	2053
Post-primary integrated	12	332

Heat, Electricity and Water: Assembly Commission Spend

Mr Agnew asked the Assembly Commission how much has been spent on (i) heat; (ii) electricity; and (iii) water in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34445/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Gas fired boilers provide the majority of heating in Parliament Buildings with a small number of rooms supplied by electric heaters. There is also a range of mechanical extract ventilation or air conditioning systems which are also powered by electricity. At present it is not possible to break down the electricity costs by heat, light, power etc.

The total costs incurred by the Assembly for heat (gas) and electricity in each of the last five years can be found in the table below:

Year	Total Gas Costs (£)	Total Electricity Costs (£)
2013-2014	156,145.09	272,878.73
2012-2013	153,159.24	268,285.86
2011-2012	128,372.14	251,205.37
2010-2011	98,518.00	200,206.00
2009-2010	82,838.00	195,639.00

The Sustainable Development Office publishes these figures on the Northern Ireland Assembly website ensuring that they are available in the public domain.

The water distribution network in the Stormont Estate is owned and maintained by the Department of Finance and Personnel (Properties Division). The Assembly has incurred no costs relating to water charges over the last five years.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission to detail the uptake of the cycle to work scheme since its introduction.

(AQW 34493/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): A Cycle to Work Scheme for the Northern Ireland Assembly was first introduced in February 2013. The scheme runs annually with new applications accepted during February and March to coincide with the financial year.

Initially the scheme was only available to Assembly Secretariat Staff with 15 individuals availing of the scheme in the first year. This year the scheme was opened to MLAs as well as staff and a total of 19 people applied. It is hoped that there will be an increase in the number of people availing of the scheme in subsequent years.

If you require any additional information please feel free to contact the Sustainable Development Office on 02890521265.

Cycling

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission how they plan to promote cycling to staff over the next twelve months.
(AQW 34495/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): A Cycle to Work Scheme for Assembly Secretariat staff was introduced in February 2013 and continued again this year. The scheme will continue to be promoted annually with new applications accepted during February and March to coincide with the financial year.

The annual '10 Minute Cycle Challenge' and 'Active Belfast Workplace Cycle Challenge' which promote cycling are advertised to all building users each year.

In addition to this Sustainable Development Branch promote 'Bike Week' with a food voucher of £3.50 available to all staff who cycle to work on the day. This year 3 members of staff availed of the offer.

Information on cycling is available to all staff via the Sustainable Development Office Cycle to Work Scheme page on the Assembly intranet, AssISt.

If you require any further information please feel free to contact the Sustainable Development Office on 02890521265.

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 Education

In Bound Volume 91, page WA 148 please replace AQW 30039/11-15 with:

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education how many children are treated in outreach by the Middletown Centre for Autism. (AQW 30039/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Chief Executive of the Middletown Centre for Autism has advised that 20 children were provided with outreach support from 1 April 2013 to 30 November 2013.

A further 123 children also benefitted from support offered to the referred children within the same school.

Department for Employment and Learning

In this Bound Volume, page WA 15 please replace AQW 33925/11-15 with:

Disability Employment Strategy

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 32165/11-15, to detail (i) how the Disability Employment Strategy is being developed; (ii) when public consultation on the Strategy will take place; and (iii) what events have taken place, or are planned, in East Antrim with consultees to develop the Strategy. (AQW 33925/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The Disability Employment Strategy is being developed in close partnership with the local disability sector.

My Department fully recognises the role that the sector has to play in helping to achieve the key objective to assist as many disabled people as possible to find, sustain and retain paid employment.

A strategic working group, including a number of representatives from disability organisations, was established at the outset. The working group is in the process of finalising the draft consultation document, which is scheduled for issue in September 2014. This will initiate the period of formal public consultation, during which time, people from throughout Northern Ireland will be invited and encouraged to provide an input.

In order to inform the discussions thus far, a number of engagement events have been facilitated by the Department. Five large regional events were part of this exercise, and the strategic working group deliberately targeted a mix of those people with a disability who have or do use existing services, and those who, up until now, have not done so. One of the events took place at the Action Mental Health premises in Antrim and another took place at NICVA in North Belfast. Travel arrangements were organised through the local disability organisations and both of these locations would have been accessible for people from the East Antrim area.

The feedback from all involved, especially those participants who are disabled, has been overwhelmingly positive and all of the events were well attended. The discussion and contributions at the events have been very useful and constructive, and these will be reflected within the consultation document.

Following on from the consultation process, it is intended that the Disability Employment Strategy will be launched in April 2015.

Department of Justice

In this Bound Volume, page WA 44 please replace AQW 33694/11-15 with:

Suicides in Custody

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to provide a breakdown of the nature of convictions and allegations against prisoners who died in custody and were either confirmed or suspected death by suicides, in the last ten years.

(AQW 33694/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The breakdown of convictions or alleged offences in respect of each suicide or suspected suicide in prison custody is attached at annex A. There are two deaths where the information about convictions or alleged offences is not available due to information loss at the introduction of the PRISM information management system.

ANNEX A

Establishment	Date of Death	Conviction (multiple occasions of the same offence are recorded once)	Alleged Offence/s (multiple occasions of the same alleged offence are recorded once)
Maghaberry	03/03/2004	Information not available	Information not available
Maghaberry	12/12/2004	Information not available	Information not available
Magilligan	13/12/2006	Robbery	
Maghaberry	08/06/2007	Life licence revoked	Threats to kill; driving when unfit through drink or drug; disorderly behaviour
Maghaberry	31/01/2008	Inciting assault occasioning actual bodily harm	Intimidation - witness
Maghaberry	01/08/2008	Murder	
Maghaberry	08/03/2009		Producing Class C controlled drug; possessing Class C controlled drug with intent to supply; possession of a Class C controlled drug
Maghaberry	29/08/2009		Breach of custody probation order
Hydebank	03/08/2010		Disorderly behaviour; assault on police; resisting police; breach of community based order
Hydebank	04/05/2011	Burglary	Aggravated burglary and stealing; assault occasioning actual bodily harm; sexual activity by an adult with a child between 13 & 16 years; sexual activity involving penetration by adult with a child between 13 & 16 years; adult causing or inciting child between 13 & 16 to engage in sexual activity
Hydebank	04/05/2011		Hi jacking; possessing offensive weapon in a public place; dangerous driving; criminal damage
Maghaberry	22/05/2011	Resisting police	Attempted murder; assault occasioning actual bodily harm; criminal damage; attempted grievous bodily harm with intent; arson; assault

Establishment	Date of Death	Conviction (multiple occasions of the same offence are recorded once)	Alleged Offence/s (multiple occasions of the same alleged offence are recorded once)
Maghaberry	23/06/2011	Estreat bail - principal party	Criminal damage; assault on police; criminal damage
Maghaberry	25/06/2012	Murder; possession of a Class C controlled drug; theft	
Maghaberry	08/07/2012	Driving while disqualified (offences on or after 16 July 2008); Using a motor vehicle without insurance; Driving with excess alcohol in breath	Grievous bodily harm with intent; threats to kill; driving while disqualified (offences on or after 16 July 2008); using a motor vehicle without insurance; possession of offensive weapon with intent to commit an indictable offence; criminal damage
Maghaberry	15/10/2012	Burglary	Burglary
Maghaberry	06/11/2012	Indecent assault on female child; sexual activity with a child by a person in position of trust; indecent assault on female	
Hydebank	19/04/2013		Burglary
Maghaberry	06/05/2013		Breach of sexual offences prevention order

Department of the Environment

In this Bound Volume, page WA 103 please replace AQW 33893/11-15 with:

Dumping Sites: Illegal

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the action taken to tackle illegal dumping sites.
(AQW 33893/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Tackling illegal dumping, and the organised criminality associated with it, is one of my Department's key priorities. Working alongside local government we must be vigilant in challenging those who deliberately set out to make money by putting the health and well being of individuals and communities at risk.

Following publication of the Mills Report into the discovery of a major illegal landfill site at Mobuoy last year, my Department has drawn up an operational strategy and action plan to tackle the problems of illegal waste at their source. This means working closely with councils to monitor their contractual arrangements for the management and disposal of their waste so that we can then follow up on any areas that give rise for concern as to the ultimate destination of the waste involved. This will mean closer scrutiny of council contractors and requirements for them to provide information as to any further sub contracts they may enter into for the further processing and transport of the waste they have received.

In addition to this, the Department is continuing its actions against illegal dumping where it is discovered. There are currently 31 ongoing investigations, involving 37 locations and most of most of these focus on illegal waste management and dumping. Such dumping includes illegal landfill sites, products associated with fuel laundering, end of life vehicles and waste tyres.

I do not underestimate the nature and scale of the challenge we face here. There are substantial financial gains to be had by those prepared to put the health and well being of our communities at risk and damage the environment through their illegal activities. They also put at risk the jobs and futures of those waste operators who seek to secure the gains for our local economy that can be had through a legitimate waste sector.

My officials will therefore continue to work closely with colleagues in other enforcement agencies especially developing a new partnership approach with local councils on the overall management of waste. On the enforcement side, there is a Strategic Partnership with the PSNI for joint work on the prevention of illegal dumping and action to apprehend and convict those responsible for such activities.

Department of Justice

In Bound Volume 86, page WA 92 please replace AQW 23690/11-15 with:

Injunctive Relief: Publicity Prohibited

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the number of orders that have been made by the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief since 30 April 2012; (ii) when each order was made; (iii) the number that are extant; (iv) whether any such orders have been discharged since 30 April 2012; and (v) the total of orders, whenever made, extant on 29 May 2013.

(AQW 23690/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): No orders have been made by the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief since 30 April 2012. Information on all extant orders, whenever made, is not readily available and could only be compiled at a disproportionate cost.

Official Report
(Hansard)
Indexes

Members' Index

Agnew, Mr Steven

Adjournment

Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 215

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 128

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 156

Ministerial Statements

Schools: Capital Projects, 275

Zero-hours Contracts, 225

Oral Answers

Education

Integrated Education: Demand, 243

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Business Red Tape Review, 151

Business Tenancies, 151

Finance and Personnel

Photovoltaic Payback: Public Buildings, 355

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390

Regional Development

Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 410

Integrated Education: Article 64, 208, 209, 210

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Heat, Electricity and Water: DARD Spend, WA157

Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors, WA73

Single Farm Payment: Flat Rate, WA74

Assembly Commission

Heat, Electricity and Water: Assembly Commission Spend, WA397

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Heat, Electricity and Water: DCAL Spend, WA165

Education

Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, WA196

Buddy Up Programme, WA311

Heat, Electricity and Water: DE Spend, WA188

Home Tuition, WA12

Occupational Therapist Advice: Schools, WA80

Schools: Capital Funding in North Down, WA310

Special Educational Needs: Statements, WA80

Employment and Learning

Blast 106: Radio Station, WA320

Heat, Electricity and Water: DEL Spend, WA201

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Blast 106: Radio Station, WA328

CHx Industrial LLC, WA93

CHx Industrial LLC: Petroleum Licence, WA21

Communities and Renewable Energy, WA94

Gas: Licence Area PL1/10, WA329

Heat, Electricity and Water: DETI Spend, WA326

Hydraulic Fracturing, WA16

Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors, WA95

Invest NI, WA205

Renewables Obligation Certificates, WA324, WA325

Tamboran Resources, WA94

Environment

Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates, WA105, WA238

Ballinlea 1 Test Well, WA340

Ballinlea: Drilling, WA100

Bituminous Coal, WA236

Climate Bill, WA208

Gas Flares, WA105

Heat, Electricity and Water: DoE Spend, WA333

Illegal Waste: Arney, WA240

Illegal Waste: Total Volume, WA241

Infrastrata Drilling: East Antrim, WA337

Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Lignite, WA239

Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Unregulated Minerals Extraction, WA21

Lough Neagh: Habitats Regulation Assessment, WA340

Lough Neagh: Mineral Extraction, WA339

Lough Neagh: Sand Extractors, WA338

Lough Neagh: Unauthorised Sand Extraction, WA99

Minerals Permissions Legislation, WA239

Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards)

Regulations (NI) 2000, WA339

Retrofitting, WA103

Waste: Exports to Spain, WA208

Woodburn Forest: Oil and Gas, WA241

Finance and Personnel

Equal Pay Settlement: PSNI, WA110

Green Investment Bank Workshop, WA111

Heat, Electricity and Water: DFP Spend, WA346

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Children: Named Contact, WA365

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, WA119, WA245

Heat, Electricity and Water: DHSSPS Spend, WA353

Skin Camouflage Services, WA247, WA350

Justice

Heat, Electricity and Water: DoJ Spend, WA254

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Heat, Electricity and Water: OFMDFM Spend, WA283

Regional Development

Construction: Lower Carbon Materials, WA260

Environmental Contamination Issues, WA143

Heat, Electricity and Water: DRD Spend, WA383

Illegal Landfilling, WA130

Illegal Waste, WA388

Portavoe Reservoir, WA59

Portavoe Reservoir: Drainage Operation, WA383

Social Development

Heat, Electricity and Water: DSD Spend, WA391

Visually Impaired People, WA60

Allister, Mr Jim

Assembly Business, 261, 359

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 123, 125, 134, 135

Executive Committee Business

Justice Bill: Second Stage, 304, 314, 317

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 41, 43, 48

Matters of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 1

Ministerial Statements

- Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 268
- British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 171
- North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 374
- Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 367
- Zero-hours Contracts, 224

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 184, 185
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Electricity: Local Generation, 146
- Environment
 - Tyres: Illegal Dumping, 349
- Finance and Personnel
 - Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 23
 - Public Procurement: SMEs, 352
- Justice
 - Parading, 395
 - RUC GC Widows' Association, 397
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237
 - Victims: Apologies, 22

Private Members' Business

- Key Stage Assessments, 254, 255, 257
- North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 164
- Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 377, 384

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

- Education
 - Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 294

Revised Written Answer

- Justice
 - Injunctive Relief: Publicity Prohibited, RWA4

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - DARD Direct Office: Claudy, WA157
 - Headquarters Relocation, WA157
 - Hospitality: DARD, WA65
 - Hospitality: Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, WA287
 - Single Farm Payment: Distribution, WA74
 - Single Farm Payment: Impact Assessment, WA2
 - Single Farm Payment: Submission, WA1
 - Single Farm Payment: Unpaid, WA2
 - Ulster Farmers' Union, WA286
 - Veterinary Offices: Londonderry and Limavady, WA157
- Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Official Invitations, WA279
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Elver Kill: Ballyshannon, WA7
 - Hospitality: DCAL, WA160
- Education
 - Education and Skills Authority, WA8
 - Elective Home Education, WA11, WA81, WA288
 - Elective Home Education: Further Regulation, WA81
 - Hospitality: DE, WA79
 - Pupil Expenditure, WA9, WA188
 - Teachers: Redundancies, WA312
 - Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy, WA12
- Employment and Learning
 - Hospitality: DEL, WA89

- Queen's University, WA321
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Hospitality: DETI, WA206
- Open Championship: Royal Portrush, WA326
- Renewable Energy Projects, WA19

Environment

- Hospitality: DoE, WA237
- Planning Application E/2013/0093/F, WA338
- Renewable Energy Projects, WA22

Finance and Personnel

- Ballymena: Encouraging Investment, WA347
- Budget 2015-16, WA107
- Commercial Properties: Ballymena, WA347
- European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020, WA108
- Hardship Relief Scheme, WA347
- Hospitality: DFP, WA345
- Institute for Professional Legal Studies, WA344
- Rates: Domestic Rebates or Exemptions, WA347

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- Hospitality: DHSSPS, WA349
- Prescriptions, WA358
- Statutory Care Homes: New Admissions, WA250

Justice

- Committal Proceedings, WA368, WA369
- Hospitality: DoJ, WA120
- Police: Pension Scheme, WA375
- Policing Board: Adult Survivor Award Applications, WA254
- PSNI: Disclosure Obligations, WA42
- Superinjunctions, WA45

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

- Markethill: Main Street, WA155

Regional Development

- A75, WA381
- Drainage: Ballymena, WA258
- Gifts or Hospitality: Civil Servants, WA262
- Hospitality: DRD, WA261, WA379
- Wakehurst: Severe Flooding, WA60

Social Development

- Hospitality: DSD, WA272
- Housing Executive: Superannuation Scheme, WA149, WA396
- Migrant Residents, WA153
- Migrants: Housing, WA266
- Migrants: Housing Patterns, WA388
- Reform of Local Government: Transfer of Land, WA264
- Social Housing: Taughmonagh, WA394

Anderson, Mr Sydney

Executive Committee Business

- Justice Bill: Second Stage, 309

Ministerial Statements

- Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 7

Oral Answers

- Employment and Learning
 - Redundancies: DEL Assistance, 286
- Finance and Personnel
 - Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 26
- Justice
 - Fuel Laundering, 75
- Social Development
 - Energy Efficiency, 291

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 376, 380, 381, 382

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
Rural Development Programme, WA72

Education
Nursery Places: Upper Bann, WA82
Post-primary Schools: Upper Bann, WA82
School Maintenance and Repairs, WA302
Seagoe Primary School, WA195

Employment and Learning
Academic Underachievement, WA198

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Organ Donations/Transplants, WA41

Social Development
Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installations: Upper Bann, WA267

Attwood, Mr Alex

Adjournment

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 416

Assembly Business, 359

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 152

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102

Oral Answers

Finance and Personnel
Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 28

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 72

Justice
Parading, 394

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Delivering Social Change, 17

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 379, 380

Written Answers

Environment
Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA342
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Care Homes, WA364

Beggs, Mr Roy

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 129, 132

Ministerial Statements

Improving Unscheduled Care, 369
Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 279
Schools: Capital Projects, 274

Oral Answers

Education
Schools: East Antrim, 244
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 388

Justice

PSNI: Districts, 396

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Gender Equality Strategy, 236

Regional Development

Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 142

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 406, 407, 409, 410

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
Walking, WA79

Education

C2k: Attendance Records, WA88

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Care Packages, WA114, WA242
DHSSPS: Post-project Evaluations, WA27
Paracetamol: Prescriptions, WA115

Prescriptions, WA116

Prescriptions: Single and Multiple Items, WA116

Supported Housing Programme: Greenisland House, WA37

Wheelchair Accessible Scales, WA359

Beggs, Mr Roy (as Deputy Speaker)

Adjournment

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 415, 416, 417

Committee Business

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 183

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 85, 87, 88
Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion, 358
Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 9
Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16

Ministerial Statements

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 5, 7

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
Beef Crisis, 189
DARD Direct: Strabane, 188
Rural Development Programme, 190
Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 185

Assembly Commission, 80

Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 83
Parliament Buildings: School Visits, 81, 82

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Broadcasting: Funding, 194
Culture: Tourism Role, 193
Milk Cup: DCAL Contribution, 196
Orangefest, 193

Sporting Facilities: Regent House School, Newtownards, 195

Sports Facilities: Girdwood, 196
Training Programmes, 190

Employment and Learning

B/E Aerospace, 283, 284
Night Classes, 285

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 72

Health Service: Innovation, 69
 Health Service: Payroll Issues, 71
 Justice
 Community Safety College: Desertcreat, 79
 Crown Court Remuneration, 74
 Prison Service: Sickness Absence, 78
 Social Development
 Housing: Equality Scheme, 291
 Housing: Racial Intimidation, 292
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 290
 Private Members' Business
 Key Stage Assessments, 247, 248, 249, 250, 252, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 158, 160, 162, 164, 166
 Question for Urgent Oral Answer
 Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 294, 295, 296

Bell, Mr Jonathan

Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Bright Start, 237
 Gender Equality Strategy, 235, 236
 Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237

Boylan, Mr Cathal

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 125, 126
 Oral Answers
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 GP Out-of-hours Framework, 387
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Haass Proposals: DUP Intentions, 238
 Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Young Farmers, WA75
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA99
 Environment
 Explosives: Storage, WA103
 Explosives: Store Relocation, WA103
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA332
 Strategic Planning Policy Statement, WA341

Boyle, Ms Michaela

Executive Committee Business
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 29
 Ministerial Statements
 Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 280
 North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 373
 Schools: Capital Projects, 272
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 DARD Direct: Strabane, 188
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 City of Culture: North-west Legacy Plan, 195
 Education
 Anti-bullying Forum, 241

Justice
 Legal Criticism: DOJ, 399
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 A5: Executive Commitment, 239
 Regional Development
 Traffic Chaos: Strabane, 143
 Social Development
 Building Successful Communities, 287, 288
 Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Employment and Regeneration: Strabane, WA91
 Strabane Area: Commercial Investment, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism Jobs, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism-generated Revenue, WA21
 Strabane/Lifford Border Region: Investment, WA20
 Strabane: Visitors, WA19
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, WA365
 Justice
 Forensic Science: All-Ireland Service, WA378
 Regional Development
 Rural Borewells Scheme, WA59
 Water Bill, WA144
 Social Development
 Maintenance Repairs: Strabane District, WA395

Bradley, Mr Dominic

Assembly Business
 Public Petition: ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria, 329
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 333
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 59
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 14, 15
 Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 170
 North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 373
 Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Irish Language: Assembly Criticism, 81
 Finance and Personnel
 Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 22
 Public Procurement: SMEs, 351
 Justice
 Fuel Laundering, 75
 Joe Campbell, 398
 PSNI: Districts, 397
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, 238
 Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 228
 Key Stage Assessments, 253
 Written Answers
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Glengormley Properties, WA395
Bradley, Ms Paula
 Oral Answers
 Education
 Preschool Places: Criteria, 242

Justice
 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, 398
 Social Development
 Social Housing: Glengormley, 290

Written Answers

Employment and Learning
 Literacy and Numeracy, WA203
 Finance and Personnel
 Budget 2015-16, WA26
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 'Behind the Screen' Demos Report, WA118
 Cervical Screening Awareness Week, WA117

Brady, Mr Mickey

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 92, 93, 114
 Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous)
 Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 343
 Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic
 Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
 2014, 122
 Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern
 Ireland) 2014, 9

Ministerial Statements

Improving Unscheduled Care, 370

Oral Answers

Education
 Schools: Capital Build Projects, 244
 Environment
 Councils: DRD Functions, 346
 Newry: Carbane Development, 350
 Finance and Personnel
 Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 25
 Public Procurement: SMEs, 350, 351

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 408

Written Answers

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Dental Hygiene, WA363
 Social Development
 Affordable Homes, WA270
 Atos Healthcare, WA275
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA275

Buchanan, Mr Thomas

Committee Stages

Reservoirs Bill, CS7

Executive Committee Business

Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999
 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 54

Ministerial Statements

Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 265
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in
 Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 363
 Schools: Capital Projects, 273
 Zero-hours Contracts, 222

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform, WA73
 Education
 Capital Funding: Western Education and Library Board
 Area, WA175

Maintenance and Repairs Spending: Western
 Education and Library Board Area, WA168

Environment

Planning Application J/2011/0081, WA339

Finance and Personnel

Public Sector Reform, WA25

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Pancreatic Cancer Patients: Treatments, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Clinical Nurse Specialists, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Dieticians, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Early Diagnosis, WA28
 Pancreatic Cancer: Improvement of Treatment, WA112
 Pancreatic Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA28

Social Development

Benefit Claims, WA264
 Housing Executive: West Tyrone Properties, WA396

Byrne, Mr Joe

Adjournment

Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 324

Matters of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 2

Ministerial Statements

Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 267
 Schools: Capital Projects, 274

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 185
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: School Visits, 81
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Artefacts: Local Storage, 192
 Regional Development
 Car Parks: Council Control, 140, 141

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Broadband Services: West Tyrone, WA3
 Livestock Carcasses: Illegally Dumped, WA4
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Cross-border Initiatives, WA92
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Cancer Patients: Available Services, WA26
 Healthcare Staff: Incorrect Pay, WA241

Cameron, Mrs Pam

Executive Committee Business

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates
 2014-15, 37

Ministerial Statements

Improving Unscheduled Care, 369
 Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for
 Public Health, 279
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 173

Oral Answers

Environment
 Tyres: Illegal Dumping, 349
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Disability Strategy, 19

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 407

Written Answers

- Education
 - Domestic Violence: Education in Post-primary Schools, WA196
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Tourism: Commonwealth Games, WA98
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Adult Safeguarding Policy, WA360
- Justice
 - Adult Safeguarding Policy, WA375
 - Criminal Justice Workers: Regional Funding, WA376
 - Domestic Violence Advisers, WA375
- Regional Development
 - South Antrim Community Transport, WA387

Campbell, Mr Gregory

Ministerial Statements

- Schools: Capital Projects, 275

Oral Answers

- Education
 - Home Education: NEELB, 240
- Employment and Learning
 - Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281
- Environment
 - Wind Energy, 348
- Finance and Personnel
 - Social Clauses, 354
- Justice
 - Capital Works: Business Cases, 399
 - Magilligan: Newbuild Prison, 393
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Gender Equality Strategy, 235
- Regional Development
 - Schools: 20 mph Limit, 142
- Private Members' Business
 - North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 161, 166
 - Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 377, 382

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Livestock Grazing, WA160
- Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Educational Visits, WA396
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Walled City Tattoo: Londonderry, WA288
- Education
 - Schools: Capital Building East Londonderry, WA312
 - Woodlands Speech and Language Unit, WA80
 - World War I: Schools Commemoration, WA88
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Northern Ireland Tourist Board, WA325
 - Wind Farms, WA326
- Environment
 - Air Quality Research Study, WA336
 - Driver and Vehicle Agency: Staff, WA334
- Finance and Personnel
 - Roe Valley Country Park: Visitor Numbers, WA349
 - Solicitors: Complaints, WA107
 - Welfare Reform: Financial Penalties, WA349
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Food Safety Promotion Board: Salary of CEO, WA35
 - Payroll Systems: Health and Social Care Trusts, WA112

- Safefood Corporate Plan and Business Plan, WA35
- Testicular Cancer, WA361

Justice

- Magilligan Prison, WA375
- National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland, WA371
- Trial Process: Total Cost, WA54

Regional Development

- Town Centre Car Parks: Christmas Shopping, WA380

Social Development

- Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Contracts, WA149

Clarke, Mr Trevor

Committee Business

- Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 125, 126, 131, 134, 135
- Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage, 177

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Orangefest, 192, 193
- Finance and Personnel
 - Public Procurement: SMEs, 351
- Social Development
 - Building Successful Communities, 288
 - Crumlin Road Courthouse, 293

Written Answers

- Education
 - School Reports: Access by Absent Fathers, WA316
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Events, WA99
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Prescriptions: Repeat, WA120
 - Tattoo Removal, WA358
- Justice
 - Prisoners: Absconding, WA378
- Social Development
 - Meter Installation: Responsibility, WA62

Cochrane, Mrs Judith

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 61

Matters of the Day

- Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 2

Ministerial Statements

- Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 266

Oral Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Gender Action Plan, 83, 84
 - Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Creative Industries: Tourism, 148, 149
- Regional Development
 - Belfast Rapid Transit System, 142, 143
 - Traffic-calming Measures, 139

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Flooding, WA75
- Assembly Commission
 - Disability: Members Declaration, WA154
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Complaints, WA353

Cancer Drugs, WA356
 European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights, WA356

Copeland, Mr Michael

Executive Committee Business

Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 9

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 DARD Headquarters, 187

Education
 Anti-bullying Forum, 241

Environment
 Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345

Finance and Personnel
 Social Clauses, 354

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237

Regional Development
 Water Treatment: Electricity Costs, 144

Social Development
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 290

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 385, 386

Written Answers

Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, WA63

Finance and Personnel
 Civil Service Estate: Unoccupied Buildings, WA23

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Nurses: Recruitment, WA34

Justice
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA378

Social Development
 Homelessness, WA148
 Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland, WA147
 Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants, WA274, WA389

Craig, Mr Jonathan

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 127, 131
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 182, 183

Ministerial Statements

Schools: Capital Projects, 272

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, 282

Private Members' Business

Key Stage Assessments, 258, 259

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 296

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Rural Development Programme, WA76

Education
 Drumragh Integrated College, WA192
 Education: Contingency Fund, WA197

Environment

Councillors: Code of Conduct, WA333
 Councillors: Right of Appeal, WA334
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA334
 Planning Fees, WA237

Cree, Mr Leslie

Adjournment

Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 213

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 155

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 334
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 60
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 15

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 174
 North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 373

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Carbon Footprint, 84
 Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 82, 83

Education
 Integrated Education: Demand, 243

Employment and Learning
 Welfare Reform, 282

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 145

Environment
 Exploris: Business Plan, 347

Finance and Personnel
 Budget 2015-16, 26, 27
 Infrastructure Projects, 25

Justice
 Crown Court Remuneration, 74
 RUC GC Widows' Association, 397

Regional Development
 Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140

Protocols, 143
 Social Development
 Energy Efficiency, 291

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Sandy Row Boxing Club, WA78

Dallat, Mr John

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 337, 341, 342

Ministerial Statements

Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 268
 Improving Unscheduled Care, 370
 North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 375
 Schools: Capital Projects, 274

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 DARD Headquarters, 188

Assembly Commission
 Centenary Commemorations, 82

Employment and Learning
 Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281

Environment
 Councils: DRD Functions, 346

Finance and Personnel
 Invest-to-save Measures, 24
 Public Sector Reform, 352

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390

Justice
 Magilligan Prison, 75
 Magilligan: Newbuild Prison, 394

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Delivering Social Change, 236
 Disability Strategy, 19

Regional Development
 Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 142

Social Development
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 290

Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 228
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 160

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 295

Written Answers

Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Local Goods, WA62

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA77

Education
 Examinations: Irregularities, WA310

Employment and Learning
 Capital Projects, WA204

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Inward Investors: Limavady and Coleraine, WA330

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Fire and Rescue Service: Vehicles, WA360

Dallat, Mr John (as Deputy Speaker)

Adjournment
 Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 213, 215

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 178, 180, 181, 182, 183
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 152, 153, 155, 158
 Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage, 176

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Further Consideration Stage, 175
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 58, 63, 67
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 31, 32, 36, 37, 40

Ministerial Statements
 Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 278, 279, 280

Private Members' Business
 Cancer Research and Treatment, 403, 405, 407, 410, 412, 413, 415
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 210

Dickson, Mr Stewart

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 204

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 334
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 306
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 44

Oral Answers
 Social Development
 Welfare Reform, 289
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 290

Written Answers

Education
 Abbey Community College, WA312

Environment
 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, WA340

Finance and Personnel
 Energy Efficiency, WA24

Justice
 Interface Barriers, WA378

Dobson, Mrs Jo-Anne

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 181

Committee Stages
 Reservoirs Bill, CS12

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 103
 Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion, 358

Ministerial Statements
 Schools: Capital Projects, 273

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 185

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Training Programmes, 191

Education
 Home Education: NEELB, 240

Employment and Learning
 Students: Retention Rates, 287

Justice
 Fuel Laundering, 75

Social Development
 Universal Credit: GB Claimants, 293

Private Members' Business
 Key Stage Assessments, 254

Revised Written Answers

Education
 Middletown Centre for Autism, RWA1

Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Cattle Movement: Local Marts, WA286
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform Decisions, WA6

DARD: Staffing, WA65
 Live Export Sales: Current Restrictions, WA285
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Hockey: Portadown and Lurgan, WA163
 Education
 Educational Centre for Speech and Language, WA194
 Elective Home Education, WA79
 Language and Communication Service, WA194
 Middletown Centre for Autism, WA190
 School Starting Age, WA189
 Employment and Learning
 Developmental Disabilities, WA318
 Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina, WA88
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Invest NI: Financial Assistance, WA92
 Invest NI: Return Investment, WA92
 Invest NI: Sandwich Sector, WA329
 Tourism: Expenditure, WA322
 Tourism: Upper Bann, WA324
 Environment
 Planning Applications: Information Process, WA23
 Planning: Response Rates, WA101
 Poultry Sheds: Planning Approval Delays, WA22
 Finance and Personnel
 Rates: Arrears, WA348
 Rates: Liability, WA348
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Adherence to Guidelines, WA356
 Intensive Care Provision, WA111
 Organ Donation, WA30
 Out-of-hours Service: Southern Health and Social Care Trust, WA249
 Patients: Transfer, WA113
 Renal Unit, WA38
 Justice
 Legal Aid: Legal Services Commission, WA370
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Maze/Long Kesh Site, WA281
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Double-glazed Windows, WA274
 Housing Executive: Rent and Rates Charges, WA152
 Social Housing: Provision, WA389

Douglas, Mr Sammy

Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 267
 Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 7
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 366
 Tourism: Public Consultation, 402
 Zero-hours Contracts, 224
 Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Infrastructure Projects: Delivery, 356
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Public Health Framework, 392
 Justice
 Juvenile Justice: Education, 395
 Written Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund: East Belfast, WA156

Dunne, Mr Gordon

Adjournment
 Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 213
 Ministerial Statements
 Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 5
 Improving Unscheduled Care, 370
 Tourism: Public Consultation, 401
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 183
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Football Stadia Funding, 195
 Training Programmes, 190
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 145
 Environment
 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, 348, 349
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Cancer Drugs, 390, 391
 Cancer Drugs: Trials, 392, 393
 Justice
 RUC GC Widows' Association, 397
 Regional Development
 Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140
 Private Members' Business
 Cancer Research and Treatment, 405
 Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 North Down Training Ltd, WA320
 Environment
 Dereliction Funding Applications, WA333
 Finance and Personnel
 Danske Bank: Branch Closure, WA348
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Children with Eating Disorders: Professional Services, WA249
 Crossroads Care: North Down and Ards, WA248
 Diabetes: Training and Resources for Children in Schools, WA247
 D-Nav Insulin Self-management System, WA247
 GP Surgeries: Telephone Numbers, WA36
 Supported Living Schemes: North Down, WA247
 Regional Development
 A2, WA385
 Church Road Upper Reservoir: Holywood, WA380
 Craigantlet Roundabout, WA385
 Environmental Pollution: Kinnegar Sewage Works, WA262
 Social Development
 Queen's Parade, Bangor, WA392

Durkan, Mr Mark H

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 172, 173, 174
 Oral Answers
 Environment
 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, 348, 349
 Councils: DRD Functions, 346, 347
 Crawfordsburn Country Park, 350
 Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345, 346

Exploris: Business Plan, 347
 Newry: Carbane Development, 350
 Planning Service: Staff Relocation, 349
 Tyres: Illegal Dumping, 349
 Wind Energy, 347, 348
 Revised Written Answers
 Environment
 Dumping Sites: Illegal, RWA3
 Written Answers
 Environment
 Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates, WA105, WA238
 Air Quality Research Study, WA336
 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, WA240
 Artefacts: Crannog, WA342
 Ballinlea 1 Test Well, WA340
 Ballinlea: Drilling, WA100
 Bituminous Coal, WA236
 Climate Bill, WA208
 Committee for the Environment, WA105
 Community Benefit Summit, WA22
 Councillors: Code of Conduct, WA333
 Councillors: Right of Appeal, WA334
 Councils: Performance Improvement, WA343
 Councils: Planning Functions, WA343
 Councils: Standing Orders, WA343
 Councils: Status, WA335
 County Hall: Ballymena, WA336
 Crawfordsburn Country Park: Access Arrangements, WA335
 Crawfordsburn Country Park: Opening and Closing Times, WA335
 Cultural Interest Items: Preservation, WA236
 Dereliction Funding Applications, WA333
 Driver and Vehicle Agency, WA104
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA342
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Staff, WA334
 Dumping Sites: Illegal, WA103
 Eagles: Illegal Poisoning, WA337
 Eagles: White Tailed, WA337
 Environmental Crime Unit, WA340, WA342
 Explosives: Storage, WA103
 Explosives: Store Relocation, WA103
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA104
 Freedom of Information Response, WA23
 GAA HQ: Owenbeg, WA241
 Gaelectric, WA343
 Gas Flares, WA105
 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, WA239, WA340
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DoE Spend, WA333
 Hospitality: DoE, WA237
 Illegal Waste: Arney, WA240
 Illegal Waste: Total Volume, WA241
 Infrastrata Drilling: East Antrim, WA337
 Listed Buildings: Glens of Antrim, WA209
 Listed Buildings: North Down, WA336
 Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Lignite, WA239
 Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Unregulated Minerals Extraction, WA22
 Lough Neagh: Habitats Regulation Assessment, WA340
 Lough Neagh: Mineral Extraction, WA339
 Lough Neagh: Sand Extractors, WA338
 Lough Neagh: Unauthorised Sand Extraction, WA99
 Marine Bill, WA338
 Minerals Permissions Legislation, WA239

Moorland: Definition, WA101
 North Western River Basin Management Plan, WA101
 Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (NI) 2000, WA339
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA334
 Planning Application E/2013/0093/F, WA338, WA339, WA340
 Planning Application J/2011/0081, WA339
 Planning Application L/2011/0079/O, WA336
 Planning Applications: Information Process, WA23
 Planning Applications: Target Times, WA240
 Planning Applications: Timeliness, WA331
 Planning Enforcement Cases, WA332
 Planning Fees, WA237
 Planning Service: Craigavon, WA343
 Planning: CTY 10, WA105
 Planning: Response Rates, WA101
 Pollution Incidents: Muckamore Bridge, WA337
 Poultry Sheds: Planning Approval Delays, WA22
 PPS 21 Definition: Farm Business, WA341
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA332
 Public Service Vehicles (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1985, WA22
 Ravenhill Rugby Ground, WA238
 Red Kites: Katesbridge Area, WA338
 Renewable Energy Projects, WA22
 Retrofitting, WA103
 River Faughan: Hydroelectric Scheme, WA104
 River Faughan: Special Area of Conservation, WA104
 Springfarm Rath, Antrim, WA238
 Statutory Off-road Notification (SORN), WA336
 Strategic Planning Policy Statement, WA341
 Taxi Drivers: Fare History, WA237
 Taxi Drivers: Fixed Penalty Notices, WA238
 Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Functions, WA332
 Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Jobs, WA332
 Taxi Licensing: Staff Locations, WA331
 Waste: Exports to Spain, WA208
 Wildlife Poisoning: Investigation, WA337
 Woodburn Forest: Oil and Gas, WA241
 Written Ministerial Statements
 Environment
 Northern Area Plan 2016: Planning Appeals Commission Report, WMS3
 Taxis Act (NI) 2008: Implementation, WMS2

Easton, Mr Alex

Adjournment
 Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 214
 Oral Answers
 Environment
 Councils: DRD Functions, 346
 Finance and Personnel
 June Monitoring Round: HSSPS Bid, 27
 Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Common Agricultural Policy, WA5
 Education
 Bangor: School Development Proposals, WA192
 Controlled Sector Schools, WA8
 Holywood: New Schools, WA192
 Maintained Sector Schools, WA8
 Pupils: Year One, North Down, WA10
 Employment and Learning
 Unemployment: North Down, WA202

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Small Businesses: North Down, WA91

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Bangor Hospital: Capital Works, WA361
 Bangor: New Health and Care Centre, WA112
 Bangor: Proposed Health and Care Centre, WA39

Justice
 Prison Service: Lisnevin Site, WA368

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund: Capital Projects, WA284

Regional Development
 Councils: Services Developed to New Councils, WA259
 Dropped Kerbs, WA57
 Dropped Kerbs: Holywood, WA386
 Footpath Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Portavoe Reservoir, WA143
 Portavoe Reservoir: Cost of Repairing, WA58
 Portavoe Reservoir: Fauna and Wildlife, WA129
 Reservoirs: North Down, WA386
 Resurfacing: Bangor, WA262
 Resurfacing: Donaghadee, WA381
 Resurfacing: Holywood, WA386
 Resurfacing: Millisle, WA381
 Road Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Road Safety Measures, WA258
 Street Lighting, WA57, WA58
 Traffic-calming Measures: Expenditure, WA57
 Traffic-calming Measures: Holywood, WA386

Social Development
 Bangor Public Realm Scheme, WA393
 Bloomfield and Jubilee Estates: Bangor, WA61
 Bloomfield Estate: Clanmil Housing Association, WA61
 Cavity Wall Insulation: Housing Executive Report, WA389
 Employment Support Allowance: Appeals, WA269
 Graffiti: North Down, WA62
 Holywood: Public Realm Scheme, WA277
 Housing Executive: North Down Properties, WA148
 Kilcooley: 3G Football Pitch, WA391
 Queen's Parade, Bangor, WA277
 Social Housing: Holywood, WA276

Eastwood, Mr Colum

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 132, 133

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 336, 337, 338

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 173

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 83

Education
 Anti-bullying Forum, 241

Employment and Learning
 Magee Campus: Funding, 284

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health Service: Innovation, 69

Justice
 Hydebank: Secure College, 76
 Juvenile Justice: Education, 396
 Parades: Criminal Justice Issues, 399

Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 231, 232
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 383

Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Derry: City of Culture 2013, WA163

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Unanswered Questions, WA330

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeons, WA32
 Maghaberry Prison: Psychiatric Care, WA251

Regional Development
 A6 Derry to Dungiven: Dualling Scheme, WA260
 Sewerage and Drainage Systems: Derry, WA261

Elliott, Mr Tom

Adjournment
 Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 320, 327

Committee Stages
 Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, CS14

Executive Committee Business
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 305

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 173
 Schools: Capital Projects, 275

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Forest Service: Decentralisation, 189

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Derry: Investment Imbalance, 148

Environment
 Wind Energy, 348

Finance and Personnel
 Public Procurement: SMEs, 351

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 ITH Pharma: Contaminated Products, 391

Justice
 Parading, 394
 PSNI: Complaints, 396

Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 229
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 375, 376, 380

Written Answers
 Education
 Enniskillen Collegiate and Protora Royal School, WA11

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Destination Fermanagh, WA327, WA328
 Energy Prices, WA206
 Renewable Energy, WA96
 Tourism: Signature Projects, WA328

Environment
 Artefacts: Crannog, WA342
 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, WA239

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Cancer Drugs, WA355

Justice
 European Arrest Warrants, WA252
 National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland, WA256, WA376

Farry, Dr Stephen

- Adjournment
 - Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 213
- Executive Committee Business
 - Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 53, 55
- Ministerial Statements
 - Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 261, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268
 - Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 360, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367
 - Zero-hours Contracts, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225
- Oral Answers
 - Employment and Learning
 - Apprenticeships, 282, 283
 - Apprenticeships: People with Disabilities, 285
 - B/E Aerospace, 283, 284
 - Belfast Metropolitan College: Property Sale, 285
 - Economic Inactivity, 287
 - Magee Campus: Funding, 284
 - Night Classes, 285
 - Redundancies: DEL Assistance, 286
 - Students: Retention Rates, 287
 - Unemployment: Claimant Count, 286
 - Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281
 - Welfare Reform, 281, 282
- Revised Written Answers
 - Employment and Learning
 - Disability Employment Strategy, RWA1
- Written Answers
 - Employment and Learning
 - Academic Underachievement, WA198
 - Belfast Metropolitan College, WA90
 - Blast 106: Radio Station, WA320
 - Capital Projects, WA204
 - Careers: Guide to Service Provision for Ethnic Minority Groups, WA199
 - Civics: Teaching, WA14
 - Condition Management Programme: Benefits, WA13
 - Condition Management Programme: Funding, WA14
 - Cross-border Mobility: Students, WA202
 - Developmental Disabilities, WA318
 - Disability Arts Strategy, WA198
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995, WA15
 - Disability Employment Strategy, WA15
 - Disabled Students' Allowance, WA198, WA321, WA322
 - Disabled Students' Allowance: Review, WA89
 - Education: Rural Areas, WA204
 - Employment Law Reform, WA205
 - Employment Refusals, WA15
 - European Business Network Congress, WA202
 - Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina, WA88
 - Freedom of Information Requests, WA90
 - Further Education: Senior Managers, WA321
 - Heat, Electricity and Water: DEL Spend, WA201
 - Hospitality: DEL, WA89
 - Literacy and Numeracy, WA203
 - Marine Environment: Welders, WA90
 - Migrant Community, WA203
 - National Minimum Wage, WA90
 - North Down Training Ltd, WA320
 - Politics Modules, WA14
 - Qualifications Equivalence Service, WA199
 - Queen's University, WA321

- Queen's University: Centre for Doctoral Training, WA203
- South West Regional College, WA200
- Training for Success, WA205
- Unemployment Statistics: Fermanagh District Council Area, WA199
- Unemployment: North Down, WA202
- Universities: Public Bodies, WA15
- Voting, WA89
- Workers' Educational Association, WA198
- Youth Employment Scheme, WA13
- Zero-hours Contracts, WA201

Fearon, Ms Megan

- Committee Business
 - Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 153
- Ministerial Statements
 - British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 170
- Oral Answers
 - Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Broadcasting: Funding, 194
 - Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Prescription Charges, 392
- Written Answers
 - Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Cross-border Trade, WA98
 - Environment
 - Councils: Performance Improvement, WA343
 - Justice
 - Teenage Dating Violence, WA121

Flanagan, Mr Phil

- Adjournment
 - Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 323, 324
- Ministerial Statements
 - British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 171
 - Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 6
 - North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 174
 - Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 365
 - Tourism: Public Consultation, 401
- Oral Answers
 - Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Hydraulic Fracturing: DARD Involvement, 189
 - Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84
 - Parliament Buildings: School Visits, 81
 - Employment and Learning
 - B/E Aerospace, 284
 - Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Electricity: Local Generation, 147
 - Finance and Personnel
 - Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 23
 - Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 388
 - Regional Development
 - Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 141
 - Social Development
 - Housing: Racial Intimidation, 292
 - Welfare Reform, 289

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Single Farm Payment: Claims, WA4
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Eel Management Plans: European Council Regulation, WA6
 - Elver Kill: Cathaleen's Fall Dam, WA6
 - Enniskillen Library: Relocation, WA78
 - European Business Network Congress, WA166
- Education
 - Illuminate: Protocol, WA81
- Employment and Learning
 - European Business Network Congress, WA202
 - Unemployment Statistics: Fermanagh District Council Area, WA199
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Broadband Services, WA96
 - European Business Network Congress, WA327
 - Invest NI, WA206
 - Invest NI: Foreign Direct Investment, WA207
 - Procurement Contracts: DETI, WA324
 - Regional Development: Working Paper 2013/20, WA95
- Environment
 - Community Benefit Summit, WA22
 - Councils: Standing Orders, WA343
 - North Western River Basin Management Plan, WA101
 - Planning Application E/2013/0093/F, WA339, WA340
 - Planning Application L/2011/0079/O, WA336
- Finance and Personnel
 - Air Passenger Duty, WA344
 - Civil Servants: Stormont Estate, WA107
 - Civil Service: Employment Advertisements, WA348
 - European Business Network Congress, WA347
 - Net Fiscal Balance Report, WA106
 - Public Expenditure, WA106
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Cross-border Nursing Home Places, WA354
 - Patients: '10,000 Voices: Improving the Patient Experience', WA364
 - Patients: Placement in Border Areas, WA112
- Justice
 - Roe House: Forced Strip Searches, WA54
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Energy Efficiency, WA282
- Regional Development
 - NI Water, WA131
 - Sewage Odours: Enniskillen, WA146
 - Translink: Employees Community Background, WA144
 - Transport Infrastructure: County Fermanagh, WA380
- Social Development
 - Poker: Legislation, WA394
 - Social Housing: Grosvenor Barracks Site, WA152

Ford, Mr David

- Justice
 - Injunctive Relief: Publicity Prohibited, RWA4
- Executive Committee Business
 - Justice Bill: First Stage, 121
 - Justice Bill: Second Stage, 297, 308, 316, 317, 319
 - Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 344
 - Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 225, 227

Oral Answers

- Justice
 - Capital Works: Business Cases, 399
 - Community Safety College: Desertcreat, 79
 - Criminal Justice System: Public Confidence, 78
 - Crown Court Remuneration, 74
 - Firearms: Certificate Renewal, 397, 398
 - Fuel Laundering, 75
 - Hate Crime, 75, 76
 - Hydebank: Secure College, 76, 77
 - Joe Campbell, 398
 - Juvenile Justice: Education, 395, 396
 - Legacy Inquest Cases, 80
 - Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, 400
 - Legal Criticism: DOJ, 399
 - Legal Highs: Speckled Reds, 78, 79
 - Magilligan Prison, 74, 75
 - Magilligan: Newbuild Prison, 393, 394
 - On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme, 77, 78
 - On-the-runs: Ministerial Briefings, 79
 - Parades: Criminal Justice Issues, 399
 - Parading, 394, 395
 - Parading Season, 77
 - Police Ombudsman: Funding Request, 399
 - Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, 398
 - Prison Service: Chaplaincy, 397
 - Prison Service: Sickness Absence, 78
 - Prison Service: Staff Entitlements, 398
 - PSNI: Complaints, 396
 - PSNI: Districts, 396, 397
 - Racist Attacks: DOJ Action, 79
 - RUC GC Widows' Association, 397
 - Rural Crime, 80
 - Victims of Crime, 395
- Revised Written Answers
 - Justice
 - Suicides in Custody, RWA2
- Written Answers
 - Justice
 - Adult Safeguarding Policy, WA375
 - Anne Owers Report, WA127
 - Appeal Tribunals: Human Rights Act 1998, WA46
 - Appeals Service, WA251
 - Ballymena: Farmwatch, WA55
 - Birds: Poisoning, Shooting or Trapping, WA374
 - Bullying, WA127
 - Car Parking: Dungannon Court House, WA376
 - CCTV: Court Grounds, WA44
 - CCTV: Courts and Tribunal Service, WA50
 - Charitable and Voluntary Organisations: Community Services, WA52
 - Colin Bell Case: Appeals, WA42
 - Committal Proceedings, WA122, WA368, WA369
 - Community Services Funding, WA46, WA47, WA50
 - Compliance: Testing, WA129
 - Consultants: Hotel Expenses, WA54
 - Contract Services, WA51
 - Counterfeit Cosmetic Products, WA253
 - Counterfeit Tobacco Products, WA253
 - Court Hearings, WA46
 - Court Hearings: Parking Spaces, WA122
 - Courts and Tribunal Service: Contract Services, WA52
 - Courts and Tribunal Service: Disability Audits, WA52
 - Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers, WA121, WA369, WA370
 - Criminal Justice Workers: Regional Funding, WA376

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, WA121
 David Paige: Custodial Sentence, WA367
 David Paige: Serious Case Review, WA366, WA367
 Domestic Violence Advisers, WA375
 Dungannon Courthouse: Car Park, WA253
 European Arrest Warrants, WA252
 European Convention on Human Rights, WA50, WA129
 Fines and Enforcement Bill, WA123
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA378
 Forensic Science: All-Ireland Service, WA378
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA127
 G4S Proposed Contract Undercharging, WA253
 G4S Staff Keyholders, WA55, WA253
 General Product Safety Regulations, WA122
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DoJ Spend, WA254
 Hospitality: DoJ, WA120
 Interface Barriers, WA378
 Investigation into Case 13/056715, WA43
 Joe Campbell, WA377
 Legal Aid, WA56
 Legal Aid Costs, WA45, WA50, WA252
 Legal Aid: Fees, WA255
 Legal Aid: Legal Services Commission, WA370
 Legal Aid: Preliminary Enquiry Fees, WA255
 Legal Aid: Solicitor Advocate Fees, WA255
 Legal Highs, WA372, WA374
 Legal Highs: Dangers, WA256, WA374
 Legal Representation, WA52
 Maghaberry Prison: Self-harm Incident, WA377
 Magilligan Prison, WA375
 Magilligan Prison: Stakeholder Group, WA377
 Magistrates Court, WA43
 Mental Capacity Legislation, WA376
 National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland, WA256, WA368, WA371, WA376
 Police Pensions, WA123
 Police Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA253
 Police: Pension Scheme, WA375
 Policing Board: Adult Survivor Award Applications, WA254
 Preliminary Enquiries, WA370
 Preliminary Investigations/Mixed Committals, WA51
 Prison Officers: Compulsory Redundancy and Retraining, WA55
 Prison Officers: Retirement, WA255
 Prison Officers: Retraining, WA254
 Prison Service: Chief Finance Officer, WA54
 Prison Service: Code of Conduct and Discipline, WA42
 Prison Service: Lisnevin Site, WA368
 Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences, WA128
 Prison Service: Staff Duties, WA54
 Prison Service: Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Policy, WA376
 Prison Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA375
 Prisoners: Absconding, WA378
 Prisoners: Bullying, WA45
 Prisons: Discipline, WA124
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland, WA367
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland: Grants, WA367
 Prostitution: Project Steering Group, WA51, WA123
 PSNI: Disclosure Obligations, WA42
 Public Protection Arrangements, WA52
 Roe House: Forced Strip Searches, WA54
 RUC GC Widows' Association, WA126
 Serotonin, WA122

Sexual Offences Act 2003: Victims, WA127
 Stephen McCook, WA55
 Suicides in Custody, WA44
 Superinjunctions, WA45
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Booklet, WA43, WA252
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Proceedings, WA368
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Process, WA377
 Teenage Dating Violence, WA121
 Trafficking: Associated Sexual Charges, WA123, WA375
 Trial Process: Total Cost, WA54
 Zero-hours Contracts, WA129, WA372

Foster, Mrs Arlene

Assembly Business

Public Petition: Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen: Closure, 168

Matters of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 3

Ministerial Statements

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 4, 5, 6, 7

Tourism: Public Consultation, 400, 401, 402, 403

Written Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

3G Mobile Network: East Londonderry, WA97

Blast 106: Radio Station, WA328

Border Region: Economic Development, WA96

Broadband Services, WA96

Broadband: Business Premises, WA97

Business Start-up Programme, WA94

CHx Industrial LLC, WA93

CHx Industrial LLC: Petroleum Licence, WA21

Communities and Renewable Energy, WA94

Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation, WA331

Cross-border Initiatives, WA92

Cross-border Trade, WA98

Cyclists: North Antrim Area, WA328

Danske Bank: Branch Closure, WA329

Destination Fermanagh, WA327, WA328

Disposable Income, WA99

Electricity Prices, WA93

Electricity: Costs, WA327

Electricity: ROC Support, WA98

Employment and Regeneration: Strabane, WA91

Energy Prices, WA206

Ethnic Minority Communities: Economic Mobility, WA94

European Business Network Congress, WA327

Events, WA99

Exports, WA330

Freedom of Information Requests, WA93

Gas: Licence Area PL1/10, WA329

Giro d'Italia: Website Hits, WA21

Gran Fondo Stage Event, WA21

Heat, Electricity and Water: DETI Spend, WA326

Hospitality: DETI, WA206

Hydraulic Fracturing, WA16

Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors, WA95

Invest NI, WA205, WA206

Invest NI: Financial Assistance, WA92

Invest NI: Foreign Direct Investment, WA207

Invest NI: Funding, WA325

Invest NI: Outreach Programmes, WA93

Invest NI: Religious Demographics, WA93

Invest NI: Return Investment, WA92
 Invest NI: Sandwich Sector, WA329
 Inward Investors: Limavady and Coleraine, WA330
 Jobs Fund: North Down, WA206
 Mackies: Site Development, WA97
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA99
 Northern Ireland Tourist Board, WA325
 Open Championship: Royal Portrush, WA326
 Procurement Contracts: DETI, WA324
 R&D: Economic Benefits, WA97
 Regional Development: Working Paper 2013/20, WA95
 Renewable Energy, WA96
 Renewable Energy Projects, WA19
 Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, WA329
 Renewables Obligation Certificates, WA324, WA325
 Research and Development, WA326
 Small Businesses: North Down, WA91
 Strabane Area: Commercial Investment, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism Jobs, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism-generated Revenue, WA21
 Strabane/Lifford Border Region: Investment, WA20
 Strabane: Visitors, WA19
 Tamboran Resources, WA94
 Tourism: Commonwealth Games, WA98
 Tourism: Expenditure, WA322
 Tourism: Giro d'Italia, WA98
 Tourism: Signature Projects, WA328
 Tourism: Upper Bann, WA324
 Unanswered Questions, WA330
 Wind Farms, WA326

Frew, Mr Paul

Committee Stages

Reservoirs Bill, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7, CS8, CS9, CS10, CS11, CS12

Executive Committee Business

Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion, 358

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 13, 14

Matters of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 3

Ministerial Statements

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 6

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 185

Education
 Ballee Community High School, 245

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Electricity: Local Generation, 146

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Flooding: North Antrim, 21, 22

Regional Development
 Transport Infrastructure: Portrush, 144

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Poultry Beak Trimming, WA3
 Slurry Mixing Operations: Safe Practice, WA159
 Slurry Tanks: Safety, WA160

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Braid River, WA162

Education

Ballee Community High School, WA190
 Ballee Community High School: Closure Impacts, WA86
 Ballee Community High School: NEELB Advice, WA81
 Schools: Solar Panels, WA312

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 St Patrick's Barracks, WA156

Regional Development

Drainage Systems: Ballymena, WA59
 Drainage: Ballymena, WA256, WA257
 Road Gullies, WA385
 Roads Service: Ballymena, WA385

Gardiner, Mr Samuel

Oral Answers

Education
 Education Budget, 246
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health Service: Innovation, 69

Written Answers

Employment and Learning
 Further Education: Senior Managers, WA321
 Finance and Personnel
 Rates: Business Rates, WA108, WA109
 Regional Development
 Millennium Way Project, WA57

Gildernew, Ms Michelle

Oral Answers

Education
 Schools: Diversity Programmes, 246
 Employment and Learning
 Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281

Girvan, Mr Paul

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 332, 333
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 58

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 372

Oral Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Derry: Investment Imbalance, 148
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Nursing: Investment, 70

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Cattle Movement: Penalties, WA75

Education
 Ballyclare Primary School, WA197

Environment
 Springfarm Rath, Antrim, WA238

Finance and Personnel
 Rate Relief: Shop Windows, WA24

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Speak Up and Save a Life, WA364

Regional Development
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA261

Givan, Mr Paul

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 126, 127, 129, 133

Committee Stages

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, CS13, CS14

Executive Committee Business

Justice Bill: Second Stage, 300, 319

Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 226

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 33

Ministerial Statements

Schools: Capital Projects, 275

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning

Welfare Reform, 281, 282

Justice

Crown Court Remuneration, 74

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Secret Deals: Victims' Commissioner's Comments, 21

Private Members' Business

Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 382

Written Answers

Justice

Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences, WA127, WA128

Hale, Mrs Brenda

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 154

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 171

Oral Answers

Finance and Personnel

Bank of England: Meeting, 355, 356

Justice

Parading Season, 77

Prison Service: Staff Entitlements, 398

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, 20

Delivering Social Change, 236

Written Answers

Education

Special Educational Needs, WA186

Regional Development

Car Parks: Control, WA144

Traffic Weight Restrictions, WA132

Social Development

Grove Park: Roof Replacement Scheme, WA154

Hamilton, Mr Simon

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 330, 338, 339, 341, 342

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: First Stage, 52

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 93, 101, 102, 105, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115

Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 55

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 10, 41, 45, 48, 49, 50

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 372, 373, 374, 375

Oral Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 144, 145

Business Red Tape Review, 150

Business Tenancies, 151

Creative Industries: Tourism, 148, 149

Derry: Investment Imbalance, 147, 148

Electricity: Local Generation, 146, 147

Labour Mobility: Cross-border Possibilities, 149

Open Championship: Royal Portrush, 150

Finance and Personnel

Bank of England: Meeting, 356

Budget 2015-16, 26, 27

Desertcreat: Bill of Reductions, 27

DFP: Late Committee Papers, 353

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 28

Emigration, 354, 355

Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 22, 23

Family Law Review, 356

Health Service: Payroll Problems, 28

Infrastructure Projects, 24, 25

Infrastructure Projects: Delivery, 356

Invest-to-save Measures, 23, 24

June Monitoring Round: HSSPS Bid, 27

Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 25, 26

Photovoltaic Payback: Public Buildings, 355

Public Procurement: SMEs, 350, 351, 352

Public Sector Reform, 352

Social Clauses, 353, 354

Written Answers

Finance and Personnel

Air Passenger Duty, WA344

Ballymena: Encouraging Investment, WA347

Budget 2015-16, WA26, WA107

Budget Controls: Treasury Rules, WA346

Civil Servants: Stormont Estate, WA107

Civil Service Estate: Unoccupied Buildings, WA23

Civil Service: Employment Advertisements, WA348

Commercial Properties: Ballymena, WA347

Contingency Funds, WA346

Corporation Tax, WA25, WA107

Cycling: Stormont Estate, WA348

Danske Bank: Branch Closure, WA348

Energy Efficiency, WA24

Equal Pay Settlement: PSNI, WA110

Equal Pay: Outstanding Claims, WA26

European Business Network Congress, WA347

European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020, WA108

Executive Spending Allocations, WA345

Finance: Ministerial Spending, WA111

Financial Transaction Capital, WA110

Floodline, WA110

Freedom of Information Requests, WA110

Green Investment Bank Workshop, WA111

Hardship Relief Scheme, WA347

Heat, Electricity and Water: DFP Spend, WA346

Hospitality: DFP, WA345

Institute for Professional Legal Studies, WA344

Interest Rates, WA105

June Monitoring Round, WA26

NEETS: North Belfast, WA344

Net Fiscal Balance Report, WA106
 Public Expenditure, WA106
 Public Sector Reform, WA25
 Rate Relief: Amateur Sports Clubs, WA24
 Rate Relief: Shop Windows, WA24
 Rates: Arrears, WA348
 Rates: Business Rates, WA108, WA109
 Rates: Domestic Rebates or Exemptions, WA347
 Rates: Liability, WA348, WA349
 Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, WA25
 Roe Valley Country Park: Visitor Numbers, WA349
 Shared Education: Funding, WA23
 Solicitors: Complaints, WA107
 Tourism: Jobs, WA345
 Welfare Reform: Cost to Health Service, WA110
 Welfare Reform: Financial Penalties, WA349

Hazzard, Mr Christopher

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 180

Ministerial Statements
 Schools: Capital Projects, 271

Oral Answers
 Education
 Preschool Places: Criteria, 243
 Justice
 Rural Crime, 80

Private Members' Business
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 209
 Key Stage Assessments, 248, 249, 250, 255

Question for Urgent Oral Answer
 Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 295

Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Fisheries Task Force, WA158
 Tri-council Fisheries Group, WA287

Education
 Computer Infrastructure: Upgrade, WA86
 ICT Facilities, WA84
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA189

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Gran Fondo Stage Event, WA21

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Dyslexia, WA357

Regional Development
 Flooding: Newcastle, WA388

Hilditch, Mr David

Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 266
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 364
 Zero-hours Contracts, 224

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Tree Diseases: Update, 189, 190
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Artefacts: Local Storage, 192
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Legal Highs, 391, 392

Social Development
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 289, 290

Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Belfast, WA78

Humphrey, Mr William

Adjournment
 Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 417

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 125, 129, 130, 134

Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Broadcasting: Funding, 194
 Justice
 On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme, 78
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Parading Season, 239

Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 377, 378, 379, 381, 383

Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Budget, WA79
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Mackies: Site Development, WA97
 Finance and Personnel
 NEETS: North Belfast, WA344
 Justice
 National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland, WA368

Hussey, Mr Ross

Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 22

Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Disability: Members Declaration, WA154
 MLAs with a Disability, WA279
 MLAs: Office Accommodation, WA278

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Car Parking Charges, WA165
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Parking Spaces, WA165
 World War I: Commemoration, WA166

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Fire and Rescue Service: Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction, WA35
 Fire Officers: Wicking T-shirts, WA249
 Health Service Employees: Salaries and Expenses, WA246
 Mental Health Unit: Omagh, WA357
 Omagh Fire Station, WA250
 Omagh: Local Enhanced Hospital, WA358
 South West Acute Hospital and Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA26
 South West Acute Hospital: Maintenance Costs, WA358
 Staff Vehicles: DHSSPS, WA350

Justice

Courts and Tribunal Service: Disability Audits, WA52
 Police Pensions, WA123
 RUC GC Widows' Association, WA126

Social Development

Charity Commission, WA154, WA272, WA396
 Charity Commission: Investigations, WA272
 Charity Commission: Staffing, WA153
 Landlord Registration Scheme, WA61

Irwin, Mr William**Committee Stages**

Reservoirs Bill, CS8, CS9

Matters of the Day

Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 3

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Milk Cup: DCAL Contribution, 196
 Musical Instruments for Bands, 191

Written Answers

Environment
 Planning Service: Craigavon, WA343
 Regional Development
 Sewage Pumping Station at Derryhale: Upgrade, WA58

Kelly, Mrs Dolores**Executive Committee Business**

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 95, 102
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 39

Oral Answers

Education
 Preschool Places: Criteria, 243
 Environment
 Planning Service: Staff Relocation, 349
 Wind Energy, 348
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Blueprint for Change, 70

Justice

Legacy Inquest Cases, 80
 Parading Season, 77
 PSNI: Complaints, 396
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Gender Equality Strategy, 235

Social Development

Welfare Reform, 289

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 296

Written Answers

Education
 Mandarin Language, WA85
 Social Development
 Affordable Warmth Scheme, WA277
 Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Warm Homes Scheme, WA277
 Double Glazing: New Schemes, WA278

Kelly, Mr Gerry**Committee Business**

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 133, 134, 135

Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage, 176

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Sports Facilities: Girdwood, 196
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health Service: Payroll Issues, 71
 Justice
 Legal Highs: Speckled Reds, 78, 79
 Police Ombudsman: Funding Request, 398, 399
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Delivering Social Change, 236

Kennedy, Mr Danny**Oral Answers**

Regional Development
 Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140
 Belfast Rapid Transit System, 142, 143
 Car Parks: Council Control, 141
 Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 141, 142
 Protocols, 143
 Schools: 20 mph Limit, 142
 Traffic Chaos: Strabane, 143
 Traffic-calming Measures, 139, 140
 Transport Infrastructure: Portrush, 144
 Water Treatment: Electricity Costs, 144

Private Members' Business

Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 230
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 164, 166

Written Answers

Regional Development
 A2, WA385
 A6 Derry to Dungiven: Dualling Scheme, WA260
 A75, WA381
 Antrim Coast Road, WA132
 Belfast Rapid Transit System: South Belfast, WA142
 Bicycles: Train Passengers, WA382
 Big Capital Project, WA388
 Bus Routes: Ards Peninsula, WA387
 Buses, WA384
 Bushmills: Walkway and Cycle Path, WA379
 Car Parks: Control, WA144
 Car Parks: Off-street, WA256
 Car Parks: Revenue, WA138
 Church Road Upper Reservoir: Holywood, WA380
 Community Transport Services: Additional Funding, WA58
 Construction: Lower Carbon Materials, WA260
 Councils: Services Developed to New Councils, WA259
 County Hall: Ballymena, WA384
 Craigantlet Roundabout, WA385
 Crockanboy Road: Omagh, WA56
 Cycle Boxes at Traffic Lights: Parking, WA382
 Cycle Parking: North Antrim, WA381
 Cycling, WA387
 Cycling Infrastructure: Dublin, WA383
 Cycling Strategy, WA381
 Cycling Unit, WA145
 Cyclists, WA382
 Disabled Parking: Limavady, WA379
 DoE/DRD Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 Down Armagh Rural Transport, WA143, WA144
 Drainage Systems: Ballymena, WA59

Drainage: Ballymena, WA257, WA258
 DRD/DoE Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA146
 Dropped Kerbs, WA57
 Dropped Kerbs: Holywood, WA386
 Dungiven: Roads, WA145
 Environmental Contamination Issues, WA143
 Environmental Pollution: Kinnegar Sewage Works, WA262
 Fintona and Trillick: Flooding of Roads, WA56
 Flags: Removal, WA383
 Flooding: Ballymena, WA260
 Flooding: Newcastle, WA388
 Footpath Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Footpaths: North Belfast, WA59
 Footway Upgrading and Repair: Belfast North Section Office, WA259
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA257
 Gifts or Hospitality: Civil Servants, WA262
 Glencull: Booster Pumping Station, WA263
 Greystone Road/Broad Road: Works, WA58
 Grit: Stockpile, WA145
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DRD Spend, WA383
 Hospitality: DRD, WA261, WA379
 Illegal Landfilling, WA130
 Illegal Waste, WA388
 Jan Gehl, WA145
 Lough Cowey: Portaferry, WA263
 Manhole Covers: Non-slip, WA131
 Millennium Way Project, WA57
 Millennium Way: Lurgan, WA384
 NI Railways: Dog/Animal Policy, WA130
 NI Water, WA131
 Park-and-ride Scheme: Dungannon, WA131, WA384
 Park-and-ride Schemes: Greater Belfast, WA143
 Portavoe Reservoir, WA59, WA143
 Portavoe Reservoir: Cost of Repairing, WA58
 Portavoe Reservoir: Drainage Operation, WA383
 Portavoe Reservoir: Fauna and Wildlife, WA129
 Railway Station and Bus Depot: Ballymena, WA381
 Reservoirs: North Down, WA386
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA261
 Residents Parking Schemes: Outside Belfast, WA256
 Resurfacing: Bangor, WA262
 Resurfacing: Causeway Road, WA379
 Resurfacing: Donaghadee, WA381
 Resurfacing: Holywood, WA386
 Resurfacing: Millisle, WA381
 Road and Traffic Schemes: West Belfast, WA262
 Road Gullies, WA385
 Road Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Road Safety Measures, WA258
 Roads Service: Ballymena, WA385
 Rural Borewells Scheme, WA59
 Rural Transport Agencies: Non-core Funding, WA263
 Rural Transport Fund, WA387
 Sewage Odours: Enniskillen, WA146
 Sewage Pumping Station at Derryhale: Upgrade, WA58
 Sewer Overflow: Muckamore Bridge, WA385
 Sewerage and Drainage Systems: Derry, WA261
 Sewerage Works: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA260
 South Antrim Community Transport, WA387
 Street Lighting, WA57, WA58
 Taxis: Public Hire at Belfast City Hall, WA56

Tidal Urban Clearway Scheme: Antrim Road, Belfast, WA130
 Town Centre Car Parks: Christmas Shopping, WA380
 Traffic Light System: Dungannon, WA263
 Traffic Weight Restrictions, WA132
 Traffic-calming Measures: Expenditure, WA57
 Traffic-calming Measures: Holywood, WA386
 Translink: Employees Community Background, WA144
 Transport Infrastructure: County Fermanagh, WA380
 Transport: Mid-Ulster, WA144
 Transport: Public Attacks, WA146
 Wakehurst: Severe Flooding, WA60
 Waste Treatment Works: Ballyclare, WA386
 Water Bill, WA145

Kinahan, Mr Danny

Committee Business

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 200, 201, 202, 203

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 85
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 66, 67

Ministerial Statements

Schools: Capital Projects, 271
 Tourism: Public Consultation, 402

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Lough Neagh, 188
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 184

Assembly Commission

Centenary Commemorations, 82

Education

Crumlin Integrated College, 242

Environment

Councils: DRD Functions, 347

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Health Service: Financial Pressures, 68

Justice

On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme, 77
 On-the-runs: Ministerial Briefings, 79

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Racial Equality Strategy, 235

Regional Development

Traffic-calming Measures, 139

Private Members' Business

Integrated Education: Article 64, 208, 209, 212
 Key Stage Assessments, 250, 251

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Less-favoured Area Land, WA76
 Pesticide and Planting Restrictions, WA287

Education

C2k System, WA86
 Education and Library Boards: Spending, WA195
 Education Reform: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81

Ligoniel Primary School: Pupil Enrolment Numbers, WA167

Long-term Planning: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81

Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy Requests, WA301

Uniforms and Sports Gear: Stock, WA7

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Electricity: ROC Support, WA98

Environment
 Pollution Incidents: Muckamore Bridge, WA337

Finance and Personnel
 Shared Education: Funding, WA23

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Care Homes, WA366
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Appointment of
 Non-executive Directors, WA357
 Primary Schools: Health Checks for Children, WA41

Regional Development
 Sewer Overflow: Muckamore Bridge, WA385
 Waste Treatment Works: Ballyclare, WA386

Lo, Ms Anna

Adjournment
 Cancer Services: South Belfast, 118

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 128, 129
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and
 the School Improvement Process, 204
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week
 2014, 152, 153
 Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Extension of Committee
 Stage, 123

Executive Committee Business
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates
 2014-15, 15

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 172

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Rural Development Programme: Match Funding, 189
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Artefacts: Local Storage, 192
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Muslim Community, 18
 Racial Equality Strategy, 235

Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Careers: Guide to Service Provision for Ethnic Minority
 Groups, WA199
 Qualifications Equivalence Service, WA199
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Business Start-up Programme, WA94
 Ethnic Minority Communities: Economic Mobility, WA94
 Tourism: Giro d'Italia, WA98

Environment
 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, WA240

Finance and Personnel
 Rates: Liability, WA349

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Pregnancies: Guidance on Terminations, WA248

Lunn, Mr Trevor

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and
 the School Improvement Process, 182

Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 170
 Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public
 Consultation, 6
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in
 Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 366

Schools: Capital Projects, 272
 Tourism: Public Consultation, 402

Oral Answers
 Justice
 Hate Crime, 75

Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 230
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 204, 205, 206, 207, 211,
 212
 Key Stage Assessments, 251, 252

Written Answers
 Education
 Drumragh Integrated College: Education Reform
 (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, WA7
 Schools: Development Proposals, WA317
 Schools: Lisanelly Campus, WA317
 Schools: Transformation or Closure, WA317
 Teachers: Exemption at Secondary-level Education,
 WA318

Employment and Learning
 Queen's University: Centre for Doctoral Training,
 WA203

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Prescription Charges, WA32

Lynch, Mr Seán

Adjournment
 Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 322

Executive Committee Business
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 310
 Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements)
 Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 226

Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Health Service: Payroll Problems, 28

Justice
 Hate Crime, 76
 PSNI: Complaints, 396

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Disability Strategy, 18

Social Development
 Housing: Social Need, 292

Lyttle, Mr Chris

Committee Business
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week
 2014, 152, 157

Executive Committee Business
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates
 2014-15, 37, 39

Ministerial Statements
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in
 Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 364
 Zero-hours Contracts, 223

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84

Education
 Integrated Education: Demand, 244

Justice
 Hydebank: Secure College, 76

Social Development
 Housing: Racial Intimidation, 292

Private Members' Business
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 205
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 376, 377, 384, 385, 386

Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Broadband: Business Premises, WA97
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Delivering Social Change, WA283
 Good Relations Grants, WA284
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Allocation, WA283
 Social Development
 Victims and Survivors: Housing, WA276

McAleer, Mr Declan

Ministerial Statements
 Schools: Capital Projects, 274

Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Racial Equality Strategy, 234

Regional Development
 Car Parks: Council Control, 141

Social Development
 Housing: Social and Affordable, 292

Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Education: Rural Areas, WA204
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Border Region: Economic Development, WA96
 Regional Development
 Crockanboy Road: Omagh, WA56

McCallister, Mr John

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 86, 87, 88, 90, 110
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 57
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 34, 35, 36, 48

Matters of the Day
 Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 2

Private Members' Business
 Cancer Research and Treatment, 409, 410

Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Single Farm Payment: Appeals, WA287
 Environment
 Planning: CTY 10, WA105

McCann, Mr Fra

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 88, 91, 93, 113
 Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 9

Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 266
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 364
 Zero-hours Contracts, 224

Oral Answers
 Education
 Schools: Disadvantaged Communities, 245
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, 283
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Gender Equality Strategy, 235
 Social Development
 Housing: Equality Scheme, 291

Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Disposable Income, WA99
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Insulin Pumps, WA40
 Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Inquiry: Emergency Healthcare, WA364
 Social Development
 Affordable Housing: Definition, WA271
 Employment Support Allowance: Withdrawals, WA270
 Glen 10 Development Group, WA271
 Jobseeker's Allowance: Breaching Regulations, WA271
 Social Housing: West Belfast, WA391

McCann, Ms Jennifer

Adjournment
 Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 417

Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Delivering Social Change, 16, 17
 Disability Strategy, 18, 19
 Internet Safety Strategy, 21
 Racial Equality Strategy, 20

Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 232, 233

McCarthy, Mr Kieran

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 136

Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 94

Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 268
 Improving Unscheduled Care, 369
 Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 279

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Fisheries Task Force, 186
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Sporting Facilities: Regent House School, Newtownards, 194, 195
 Employment and Learning
 Unemployment: Claimant Count, 286
 Environment
 Exploris: Business Plan, 347
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health Service: Financial Pressures, 68
 Justice
 Victims of Crime, 395
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Racial Equality Strategy, 20

- Private Members' Business
 Cancer Research and Treatment, 407
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 161
- Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Electricity Prices, WA93
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Eating Disorders, WA362
 Regional Development
 Rural Transport Fund, WA387
- McCartney, Mr Raymond**
- Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 132
- Executive Committee Business
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 302
- Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Magee Campus: Funding, 284
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Legal Highs: Speckled Reds, 72
 Justice
 Prison Service: Sickness Absence, 78
 Victims of Crime, 395
- Written Answers
 Environment
 Councils: Planning Functions, WA343
 River Faughan: Hydroelectric Scheme, WA104
 River Faughan: Special Area of Conservation, WA104
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Suicide Prevention Projects, WA365
- McCausland, Mr Nelson**
- Executive Committee Business
 Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous)
 Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 343, 344
 Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic
 Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
 2014, 122
 Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern
 Ireland) 2014, 8, 10
- Oral Answers
 Social Development
 Building Successful Communities, 287, 288
 Crumlin Road Courthouse, 293
 Energy Efficiency, 291
 Housing: Equality Scheme, 291
 Housing: Newbuild Bungalows, 292, 293
 Housing: Racial Intimidation, 292
 Housing: Social and Affordable, 292
 Housing: Social Need, 292
 Social Housing: Glengormley, 290, 291
 Universal Credit: GB Claimants, 293
 Welfare Reform, 288, 289
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 289, 290
- Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and
 Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated
 Protests, 379, 380, 381
- Written Answers
 Social Development
 Affordable Homes, WA270
 Affordable Housing: Definition, WA271
- Affordable Warmth Scheme, WA277
 Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Warm Homes
 Scheme, WA277
 Alcohol Licensing, WA392
 Alcohol: Minimum Pricing, WA278
 Appeals Service: Staffing, WA268, WA269
 Atos Healthcare, WA270, WA275
 Bangor Public Realm Scheme, WA393
 Benefit Claims, WA264
 Bloomfield and Jubilee Estates: Bangor, WA61
 Bloomfield Estate: Clanmil Housing Association, WA61
 Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installations: Upper Bann,
 WA267
 Cavity Wall Insulation: Housing Executive Report,
 WA389
 Charity Commission, WA154, WA272, WA396
 Charity Commission: Investigations, WA272
 Charity Commission: Staffing, WA153
 Common Landlord Areas, WA267
 Common Landlord Areas: North Down, WA393
 Double Glazing: New Schemes, WA278
 Employment Support Allowance, WA392
 Employment Support Allowance: Appeals, WA269
 Employment Support Allowance: Withdrawals, WA270
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA149, WA152
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA153
 Glen 10 Development Group, WA271
 Graffiti: North Down, WA62
 Grove Park: Roof Replacement Scheme, WA154
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DSD Spend, WA391
 Hollywood: Public Realm Scheme, WA277
 Homelessness, WA148
 Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland, WA147
 Hospitality: DSD, WA272
 House Repossessions: North Down, WA395
 Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants, WA274,
 WA389
 Housing Executive: Criteria for Defining a Public Sector
 Body, WA264
 Housing Executive: Double-glazed Windows, WA274
 Housing Executive: East Antrim Properties, WA394
 Housing Executive: Glengormley Properties, WA395
 Housing Executive: North Down Properties, WA148,
 WA396
 Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Contracts,
 WA149
 Housing Executive: Rent and Rates Charges, WA152
 Housing Executive: Superannuation Scheme, WA149,
 WA396
 Housing Executive: West Tyrone Properties, WA396
 Housing Stress: Ballymena Area, WA273
 Housing Stress: Ballymoney Area, WA273
 Housing: Monkstown, WA278
 Jobseeker's Allowance: Breaching Regulations,
 WA272
 Kilcooley: 3G Football Pitch, WA391
 Land Banks: East Antrim, WA394
 Landlord Registration Scheme, WA61
 Maintenance Repairs: Strabane District, WA395
 Medical Assessments, WA274
 Meter Installation: Responsibility, WA62
 Migrant Residents, WA153
 Migrants: Housing, WA267
 Migrants: Housing Patterns, WA389
 Poker: Legislation, WA394
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA275, WA393

Queen's Parade, Bangor, WA277, WA392
 Reform of Local Government: Transfer of Land, WA264
 Reid and Wright Printers: Former Site, WA275
 Social Housing: Allocation, WA269
 Social Housing: Grosvenor Barracks Site, WA152
 Social Housing: Holywood, WA276
 Social Housing: Provision, WA389
 Social Housing: Taughmonagh, WA394
 Social Housing: West Belfast, WA391
 Urban Development Grant Scheme, WA392
 Urban Development Grants, WA276
 Victims and Survivors: Gateway Process, WA275
 Victims and Survivors: Housing, WA276
 Visually Impaired People, WA60
 Work Capability Assessment Form, WA393
 Work Capability Assessments, WA269

Written Ministerial Statements

Social Development
 Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community
 Sector and the Northern Ireland Government: 2014
 Annual Report, WMS6

McCorley, Ms Rosaleen

Adjournment

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 415

Executive Committee Business

Justice Bill: Second Stage, 308

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 184
 Assembly Commission
 Irish Language: Assembly Criticism, 80
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Orangefest, 193
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships: People with Disabilities, 285
 Finance and Personnel
 Social Clauses, 354
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Pay Issues: Belfast Trust, 73
 Justice
 Magilligan Prison, 74
 Parading, 394

Written Answers

Education
 GCSE and A-level Irish Language: West Belfast
 Schools, WA84

McCrea, Mr Ian

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 128, 130, 131

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 105

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes,
 374

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission
 Irish Language: Assembly Criticism, 81
 Education
 Education and Library Boards: Budgets, 245, 246
 Integrated Education: Demand, 243

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Transforming Your Care: Sinn Féin U-turn, 73
 Regional Development
 Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 141
 Written Answers
 Environment
 Statutory Off-road Notification (SORN), WA336
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Shared Future Strategy, WA281

McDonnell, Dr Alasdair

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Rural Development Programme, 190
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 145
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 RQIA: Unscheduled Care Review, 393
 Written Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Interest Rates, WA105
 Regional Development
 Belfast Rapid Transit System: South Belfast, WA142
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA146

McElduff, Mr Barry

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 173

Oral Answers

Environment
 Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345
 Finance and Personnel
 Desertcreat: Bill of Reductions, 27
 Emigration, 354, 355
 Justice
 Criminal Justice System: Public Confidence, 78
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237

Private Members' Business

Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 227, 228,
 232
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 210

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Tree Diseases, WA76
 Employment and Learning
 Cross-border Mobility: Students, WA202
 Regional Development
 Fintona and Trillick: Flooding of Roads, WA56

McGahan, Ms Bronwyn

Assembly Business

Public Petition: Loane House, Dungannon, 359

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week
 2014, 151

Ministerial Statements

Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 265
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in
 Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 365
 Zero-hours Contracts, 222

Oral Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Gender Action Plan, 83, 84
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Racial Equality Strategy, 20, 234

Private Members' Business

- Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 231

Written Answers

- Employment and Learning
 - Migrant Community, WA203
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - GP Services: Out of Hours, WA120
 - Learning Disabilities Complex: Oakridge, Dungannon, WA251
- Regional Development
 - Traffic Light System: Dungannon, WA262
 - Transport: Mid-Ulster, WA144

McGimpsey, Mr Michael

Oral Answers

- Education
 - SEELB: Membership, 245
- Justice
 - Hydebank: Secure College, 77

Written Answers

- Education
 - Primary School: Belfast City Hospital Site, WA197
- Regional Development
 - Big Capital Project, WA388

McGlone, Mr Patsy

Committee Business

- Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 125

Executive Committee Business

- Justice Bill: Second Stage, 310
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 30, 31

Ministerial Statements

- Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 5
- Schools: Capital Projects, 273
- Tourism: Public Consultation, 401

Oral Answers

- Employment and Learning
 - Night Classes, 285
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Electricity: Local Generation, 146
- Finance and Personnel
 - Infrastructure Projects, 25
- Justice
 - On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme, 77

Written Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Irish Language Information, WA166
- Education
 - Education and Library Boards, WA84
 - Schools: Local Produce, WA315
 - Schools: Small Works Contracts, WA316
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Invest NI: Funding, WA325
 - Invest NI: Religious Demographics, WA93
 - Research and Development, WA326

Environment

- Planning Enforcement Cases, WA332
- PPS 21 Definition: Farm Business, WA341

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- Family Support Interventions, WA38
- National Insurance and Tax Deductions, WA117

Regional Development

- Community Transport Services: Additional Funding, WA58

McGuinness, Mr Martin

Oral Answers

- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, 20
 - Delivering Social Change, 16
 - Disability Strategy, 18
 - Flooding: North Antrim, 21, 22
 - Internet Safety Strategy, 20
 - Muslim Community, 17, 18
 - NICVA Economic Data Report, 19
 - Racial Equality Strategy, 20
 - Secret Deals: Victims' Commissioner's Comments, 21
 - Victims: Apologies, 22

Written Answers

- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Active Ageing Strategy, WA155
 - Bright Start, WA156
 - Colliers International, WA1
 - Delivering Social Change, WA283
 - Energy Efficiency, WA282
 - Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA155, WA281
 - Flooding: Defence Measures, WA282
 - Good Relations Grants, WA284
 - Heat, Electricity and Water: DSD Spend, WA284
 - Markethill: Main Street, WA155
 - Maze/Long Kesh Site, WA281
 - Shared Future Strategy, WA281
 - Social Investment Fund, WA155, WA282, WA285
 - Social Investment Fund: Capital Projects, WA284
 - Social Investment Fund: East Belfast, WA156
 - St Patrick's Barracks, WA156
 - Strategic Investment Board, WA1
 - Victims and Survivors Service, WA282
 - Victims and Survivors: Benefit Entitlement and Taxation, WA283
 - Victims and Survivors: Funding Allocation, WA283
 - Victims and Survivors: Funding Cycle, WA283
 - Victims and Survivors: Offer Letters, WA282
 - Victims and Survivors: Support and Financial Assistance, WA156

Written Ministerial Statements

- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On, WMS4

McIlveen, Mr David

Assembly Business, 219

Matters of the Day

- Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 3

Ministerial Statements

- Improving Unscheduled Care, 371
- Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 280

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Culture: Tourism Role, 193
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Accident Prevention Initiatives, 389
 - Blueprint for Change, 70
- Justice
 - Parading, 394
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Muslim Community, 17

Private Members' Business

- Cancer Research and Treatment, 409

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Common Agricultural Policy, WA76
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Electricity: Costs, WA327
- Justice
 - Ballymena: Farmwatch, WA55

McIlveen, Miss Michelle

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Fisheries Task Force, 185, 186
- Finance and Personnel
 - Invest-to-save Measures, 23

Written Answers

- Education
 - Glastry College, Ballyhalbert, WA315
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Bright Start, WA156
- Regional Development
 - Bus Routes: Ards Peninsula, WA387
 - Lough Cowey: Portaferry, WA263

McKay, Mr Daithí

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 331, 332
- Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 56, 57, 58
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 11, 13

Matters of the Day

- Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 2

Ministerial Statements

- North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 372

Oral Answers

- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Muslim Community, 17

Private Members' Business

- North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 159, 160
- Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 379

Written Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Cycle to Work Scheme, WA397
 - Cycling, WA398
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Public Services: Provision, WA78
- Education
 - Academic Selection, WA192

- Cycle Parking Facilities, WA194
- Down's Syndrome, WA188
- Down's Syndrome: Expenditure, WA316
- Down's Syndrome: Statement of Special Educational Needs, WA316
- Irish Language: Examinations, WA314
- Irish-medium Education, WA314
- St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena, WA191
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Cyclists: North Antrim Area, WA328
- Finance and Personnel
 - Cycling: Stormont Estate, WA347
 - Welfare Reform: Cost to Health Service, WA110
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Unscheduled Care, WA40
- Regional Development
 - Bicycles: Train Passengers, WA382
 - Buses, WA384
 - Cycle Boxes at Traffic Lights: Parking, WA382
 - Cycle Parking: North Antrim, WA381
 - Cycling, WA387
 - Cycling Infrastructure: Dublin, WA382
 - Cycling Strategy, WA381
 - Cyclists, WA382
 - Jan Gehl, WA145
 - Railway Station and Bus Depot: Ballymena, WA381

McKevitt, Mrs Karen

Ministerial Statements

- North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 374

Oral Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Carbon Footprint, 84
- Finance and Personnel
 - Social Clauses, 353
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Accident Prevention Initiatives, 389
 - Nursing: Investment, 71
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Bright Start, 237

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA74
 - Livestock Carcasses, WA158, WA159
 - Telephone Enquires: System Failures, WA285
- Education
 - Head Teachers: Coaching, WA194
 - Muscular Dystrophy, WA318
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults, WA37
 - Neuromuscular Nurses: Employment, WA38
 - UK Rare Disease Strategy, WA113

McKinney, Mr Fearghal

Adjournment

- Cancer Services: South Belfast, 116

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 335, 341
- Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 91, 92, 110
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 40, 41, 49, 50

Ministerial Statements

- Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 7
- Improving Unscheduled Care, 369
- Tourism: Public Consultation, 402

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Going for Growth, 187
- Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84

Environment

- Exploris: Business Plan, 347

Finance and Personnel

- Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 26

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- Health Service: Financial Pressures, 68
- Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 388

Justice

- Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, 400

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

- Muslim Community, 17

Regional Development

- Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140

Private Members' Business

- Cancer Research and Treatment, 403, 405, 406, 409, 412, 413

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Flooding: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA157
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Health and Social Care Board Meeting, WA117
 - Health and Social Care Trusts: Invoices, WA352
 - Mental Health Service Provision, WA111
 - Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, WA38, WA353
 - Shared Services, WA353
 - Transforming Your Care, WA41
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Flooding: Defence Measures, WA282
- Regional Development
 - Sewerage Works: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA260
- Social Development
 - Appeals Service: Staffing, WA268

McLaughlin, Ms Maeve

Committee Business

- Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 197

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 95
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 32, 33

Ministerial Statements

- Improving Unscheduled Care, 368
- Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 278

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Broadcasting: Investment, 195
 - Training Programmes, 190
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Business Red Tape Review, 150

Derry: Investment Imbalance, 147

Finance and Personnel

- DFP: Late Committee Papers, 353
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Cancer Drugs, 391

Private Members' Business

- Cancer Research and Treatment, 405
- Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 381

Written Answers

Education

- BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, WA195

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Senior Managers, WA31
- Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services, WA352
- Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, WA355
- Programme for Government: Implementation, WA352
- Serotonin: Classification, WA37
- Social Workers, WA359

Justice

- General Product Safety Regulations, WA122
- Serotonin, WA122

Regional Development

- Grit: Stockpile, WA145

McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel

Ministerial Statements

- Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 7

McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel (as Principal Deputy Speaker)

Assembly Business, 345

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: First Stage, 52
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 41, 44, 50, 51

Ministerial Statements

- North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 372
- Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 364, 365, 366

Oral Answers

Education

- Academic Selection, 244
- Education Budget, 246
- Home Education: NEELB, 240
- Schools: Disadvantaged Communities, 245
- Schools: Diversity Programmes, 246
- Schools: East Antrim, 244

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

- Business Red Tape Review, 151
- Business Tenancies, 151
- Derry: Investment Imbalance, 148

Environment

- Crawfordsburn Country Park, 350
- Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345
- Exploris: Business Plan, 347
- Newry: Carbane Development, 350
- Wind Energy, 348

Finance and Personnel, 22

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 28
 Infrastructure Projects, 25
 Infrastructure Projects: Delivery, 357
 Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 26
 Public Procurement: SMEs, 351, 352
 Social Clauses, 354
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Bright Start, 238
 Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, 20
 Muslim Community, 18
 Racial Equality Strategy, 20
 Secret Deals: Victims' Commissioner's Comments, 21
 Victims: Apologies, 22
 Regional Development
 Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140
 Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 142
 Schools: 20 mph Limit, 142
 Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 375, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382

McMullan, Mr Oliver

Committee Stages
 Reservoirs Bill, CS2, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7, CS11
 Matters of the Day
 Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 3
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Beef Crisis, 189
 Fisheries Task Force, 186
 Assembly Commission
 Centenary Commemorations, 82
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Musical Instruments for Bands, 191
 Private Members' Business
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 163, 164
 Revised Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Disability Employment Strategy, RWA1
 Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA158
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Cliff Project: Seacourt Estate, Larne, WA161
 Employment and Learning
 Disability Arts Strategy, WA198
 Disability Employment Strategy, WA15
 Disabled Students' Allowance, WA198
 Environment
 Listed Buildings: Glens of Antrim, WA209
 Marine Bill, WA338
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Central Register: Children and Adults, WA250
 Down's Syndrome: Children, WA35
 Down's Syndrome: Organ Transplants, WA39
 Down's Syndrome: People Aged 40+, WA35
 Mental Health Capacity Bill, WA41
 Prostate Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA36
 Urology Nurse: Funding, WA39
 Regional Development
 Antrim Coast Road, WA131

Social Development
 Common Landlord Areas, WA267
 Housing Executive: East Antrim Properties, WA394
 Land Banks: East Antrim, WA394

McNarry, Mr David

Assembly Business, 219
 Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 130, 135
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 86, 104
 Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Orangefest, 193
 Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Museum Visits, WA77
 Finance and Personnel
 Budget Controls: Treasury Rules, WA346
 Contingency Funds, WA346
 Executive Spending Allocations, WA345
 Finance: Ministerial Spending, WA111
 Regional Development
 Car Parks: Off-street, WA256
 Car Parks: Revenue, WA138
 Social Development
 Reid and Wright Printers: Former Site, WA275

McQuillan, Mr Adrian

Private Members' Business
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 162
 Written Answers
 Education
 Garvagh High School, WA193
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 3G Mobile Network: East Londonderry, WA97
 Finance and Personnel
 Corporation Tax, WA107
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Gastric Band Operations, WA355

Maginness, Mr Alban

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 126, 127, 131, 136
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 336, 337
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 303, 304, 317
 Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 344
 Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 226
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 174
 Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Economic Inactivity, 287
 Justice
 Crown Court Remuneration, 74
 Prison Service: Chaplaincy, 397

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Racial Equality Strategy, 234
 Social Development
 Social Housing: Glengormley, 291
 Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and
 Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated
 Protests, 385
 Written Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Equal Pay: Outstanding Claims, WA26
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting List, WA119
 Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting Time, WA119
 Regional Development
 Footpaths: North Belfast, WA58
 Footway Upgrading and Repair: Belfast North Section
 Office, WA259
 Tidal Urban Clearway Scheme: Antrim Road, Belfast,
 WA130
 Transport: Public Attacks, WA146

Maskey, Mr Alex

Adjournment
 Cancer Services: South Belfast, 118
 Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 129, 130
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week
 2014, 155
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 86, 87, 88
 Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern
 Ireland) 2014, 9
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates
 2014-15, 39, 40
 Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 82, 83
 Justice
 Racist Attacks: DOJ Action, 79
 Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and
 Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated
 Protests, 382, 383
 Written Answers
 Education
 Racism: Young People, WA197
 Regional Development
 Flags: Removal, WA383
 Social Development
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA393

Milne, Mr Ian

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Going for Growth, 187
 Education
 Academic Selection, 244
 Written Answers
 Justice
 Legal Aid, WA56
 Regional Development
 Cycling Unit, WA145

Morrow, The Lord

Adjournment
 Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 321, 326
 Assembly Business, 121
 Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 130
 Executive Committee Business
 Justice Bill: Second Stage, 307, 311
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 174
 Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 83
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Health Service: Innovation, 68, 69
 Social Work: 24/7 Access, 73
 Revised Written Answers
 Justice
 Suicides in Custody, RWA2
 Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Disability Discrimination Act 1995, WA15
 Employment Refusals, WA15
 South West Regional College, WA200
 Zero-hours Contracts, WA201
 Environment
 Committee for the Environment, WA105
 Driver and Vehicle Agency, WA104
 Freedom of Information Response, WA23
 Public Service Vehicles (Northern Ireland) Regulations
 1985, WA22
 Ravenhill Rugby Ground, WA237, WA238
 Taxi Drivers: Fare History, WA237
 Taxi Drivers: Fixed Penalty Notices, WA238
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Craigavon Area Hospital: Bluestone Unit, WA29
 Justice
 Appeal Tribunals: Human Rights Act 1998, WA45
 Appeals Service, WA251
 Bullying, WA127
 Car Parking: Dungannon Court House, WA376
 CCTV: Court Grounds, WA44
 CCTV: Courts and Tribunal Service, WA50
 Charitable and Voluntary Organisations: Community
 Services, WA52
 Colin Bell Case: Appeals, WA42
 Committal Proceedings, WA122
 Community Services Funding, WA46, WA47, WA50
 Compliance: Testing, WA129
 Contract Services, WA51
 Court Hearings, WA46
 Court Hearings: Parking Spaces, WA122
 Courts and Tribunal Service: Contract Services, WA52
 Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers,
 WA121, WA369, WA370
 David Paige: Custodial Sentence, WA367
 David Paige: Serious Case Review, WA366, WA367
 Dungannon Courthouse: Car Park, WA253
 European Convention on Human Rights, WA50,
 WA129
 Fines and Enforcement Bill, WA123
 G4S Proposed Contract Undercharging, WA253
 G4S Staff Keyholders, WA55, WA253
 Investigation into Case 13/056715, WA43

Legal Aid Costs, WA45, WA50, WA252
 Legal Aid: Fees, WA255
 Legal Aid: Preliminary Enquiry Fees, WA254
 Legal Aid: Solicitor Advocate Fees, WA255
 Legal Representation, WA52
 Magistrates Court, WA43
 Police Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA253
 Preliminary Enquiries, WA370
 Preliminary Investigations/Mixed Committals, WA51
 Prison Officers: Compulsory Redundancy and Retraining, WA55
 Prison Officers: Retraining, WA254
 Prison Service: Code of Conduct and Discipline, WA42
 Prison Service: Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Policy, WA376
 Prisoners: Bullying, WA45
 Prisons: Discipline, WA124
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland, WA367
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland: Grants, WA367
 Public Protection Arrangements, WA52
 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Victims, WA127
 Stephen McCook, WA55
 Suicides in Custody, WA44
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Booklet, WA43, WA252
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Proceedings, WA368
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Process, WA377
 Trafficking: Associated Sexual Charges, WA123, WA375
 Zero-hours Contracts, WA129, WA371
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund, WA281
 Regional Development
 DoE/DRD Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 DRD/DoE Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 Glencull: Booster Pumping Station, WA263
 Park-and-ride Scheme: Dungannon, WA131, WA384
 Taxis: Public Hire at Belfast City Hall, WA56
 Social Development
 Atos Healthcare, WA270
 Medical Assessments, WA274
 Work Capability Assessment Form, WA393
 Work Capability Assessments, WA269

Moutray, Mr Stephen

Committee Business
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 139
 Oral Answers
 Environment
 Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345
 Finance and Personnel
 Infrastructure Projects, 24
 Public Sector Reform, 352
 Justice
 Prison Service: Sickness Absence, 78
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Delivering Social Change, 16
 Private Members' Business
 Key Stage Assessments, 253
 Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Young Farmer Scheme, WA159
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 World War I: Commemoration Funding, WA77

Education
 Elective Home Education, WA301
 Illuminate, WA310
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation, WA330
 Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, WA329
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Epilepsy, WA364
 Regional Development
 Down Armagh Rural Transport, WA143, WA144
 Millennium Way: Lurgan, WA384
 Rural Transport Agencies: Non-core Funding, WA263

Nesbitt, Mr Mike

Committee Business
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 137
 Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 169
 Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, 283
 Belfast Metropolitan College: Property Sale, 285
 Private Members' Business
 Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 229
 Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA160, WA161
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Colliers International, WA1
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA155, WA281
 Strategic Investment Board, WA1
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA282
 Victims and Survivors: Benefit Entitlement and Taxation, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Cycle, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Offer Letters, WA282
 Victims and Survivors: Support and Financial Assistance, WA156
 Social Development
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA149, WA152
 Victims and Survivors: Gateway Process, WA275

Newton, Mr Robin

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 197, 198
 Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 23
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Armed Forces: Healthcare Providers, 389
 Social Development
 Welfare Reform, 288, 289
 Private Members' Business
 Key Stage Assessments, 252, 253
 Question for Urgent Oral Answer
 Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 295
 Written Answers
 Education
 Elective Home Education, WA88, WA188

Employment and Learning
 Belfast Metropolitan College, WA90
 Marine Environment: Welders, WA90
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 R&D: Economic Benefits, WA97
 Justice
 Prison Officers: Retirement, WA255

Ní Chuilín, Ms Carál

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Artefacts: Local Storage, 192
 Broadcasting: Funding, 194
 Broadcasting: Investment, 195
 City of Culture: North-west Legacy Plan, 195
 Culture: Tourism Role, 193, 194
 Edward the Bruce, 196
 Football Stadia Funding, 195
 Milk Cup: DCAL Contribution, 196
 Musical Instruments for Bands, 191, 192
 Orangefest, 192, 193
 Sporting Facilities: Regent House School,
 Newtownards, 195
 Sports Facilities: Girdwood, 196
 Training Programmes, 190, 191

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ballyshannon: ESB Dam, WA288
 Braid River, WA162
 Cliff Project: Seacourt Estate, Larne, WA161
 Derry: City of Culture 2013, WA163
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA77
 Edward the Bruce: Anniversary of Landing, WA163
 Eel Management Plans: European Council Regulation,
 WA6
 Elver Kill: Ballyshannon, WA7
 Elver Kill: Cathaleen's Fall Dam, WA6
 Enniskillen Library: Relocation, WA78
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA160, WA161
 European Business Network Congress, WA166
 Fencing: Financial Support, WA162
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA162
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DCAL Spend, WA165
 Hockey: Portadown and Lurgan, WA163
 Hospitality: DCAL, WA160
 Irish Language Information, WA166
 Museum Visits, WA77
 North/South Language Body, WA163
 Procurement Contracts: DCAL, WA164
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Car Parking
 Charges, WA165
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Parking
 Spaces, WA165
 Public Services: Provision, WA78
 Sandy Row Boxing Club, WA78
 Sport: Adult Involvement, WA164
 Sport: Children Involvement, WA164
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Belfast, WA78
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Budget, WA79
 Walking, WA79
 Walled City Tattoo: Londonderry, WA288
 World War I: Commemoration, WA166
 World War I: Commemoration Funding, WA77

Ó hOisín, Mr Cathal

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Culture: Tourism Role, 193
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Labour Mobility: Cross-border Possibilities, 149
 Environment
 Wind Energy, 347, 348
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Blueprint for Change, 69, 70
 Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390
 Mental Health Capacity Bill: Under-16s, 72
 Justice
 Crown Court Remuneration, 73, 74
 Magilligan: Newbuild Prison, 393
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 NICVA Economic Data Report, 19

Private Members' Business

North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 162

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ballyshannon: ESB Dam, WA288
 Procurement Contracts: DCAL, WA164
 Environment
 GAA HQ: Owenbeg, WA241
 Justice
 Magilligan Prison: Stakeholder Group, WA377
 Regional Development
 Dungiven: Roads, WA145

O'Dowd, Mr John

Adjournment

Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 321, 325,
 326, 327

Committee Business

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and
 the School Improvement Process, 198, 199, 200, 201,
 203

Ministerial Statements

Schools: Capital Projects, 269, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275

Oral Answers

Education

Academic Selection, 244
 Anti-bullying Forum, 241, 242
 Ballee Community High School, 245
 Crumlin Integrated College, 242
 Education and Library Boards: Budgets, 245, 246
 Education Budget, 246
 Home Education: NEELB, 240, 241
 Integrated Education: Demand, 243, 244
 Preschool Places: Criteria, 242, 243
 Schools: Capital Build Projects, 244
 Schools: Disadvantaged Communities, 245
 Schools: Diversity Programmes, 246
 Schools: East Antrim, 244
 SEELB: Membership, 245

Private Members' Business

Integrated Education: Article 64, 210, 212
 Key Stage Assessments, 249, 251, 252, 255, 256, 258

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education

Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 294,
 295, 296

Revised Written Answers

Education

Middletown Centre for Autism, RWA1

Written Answers

Education

'British Values': Promotion in Schools, WA87
 Abbey Community College, WA312
 Academic Selection, WA192
 Ballee Community High School, WA190, WA316
 Ballee Community High School: Closure Impacts, WA86
 Ballee Community High School: NEELB Advice, WA82
 Ballee Community High School: Pupil Placements, WA85
 Ballee Community High School: Pupils' Alternatives, WA12
 Ballee Community High School: Suitable Alternative for Pupils, WA11
 Ballyclare Primary School, WA197
 Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, WA196
 Bangor: School Development Proposals, WA192
 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, WA195
 Buddy Up Programme, WA311
 C2k System, WA86
 C2k: Attendance Records, WA88
 Capital Funding: South Eastern Education and Library Board, WA289
 Capital Funding: Western Education and Library Board Area, WA175
 CCEA: Industrial Action, WA313
 Civics: Teaching, WA9
 Computer Infrastructure: Upgrade, WA86
 Controlled Sector Schools, WA8
 County Hall: Ballymena, WA193
 Cycle Parking Facilities, WA194
 Domestic Violence: Education in Post-primary Schools, WA196
 Down's Syndrome, WA188
 Down's Syndrome: Expenditure, WA316
 Down's Syndrome: Statement of Special Educational Needs, WA317
 Drumadonnell Primary School: Pupil Transport, WA80
 Drumragh Integrated College, WA192
 Drumragh Integrated College: Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, WA7
 Dunclug High School, WA10, WA166, WA186, WA196
 Education and Library Boards, WA84
 Education and Library Boards: Spending, WA195
 Education and Skills Authority, WA8
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Collaborative Working Arrangements, WA84
 Education Reform: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81
 Education: Contingency Fund, WA197
 Educational Centre for Speech and Language, WA194
 Educational Welfare Service, WA189
 Elective Home Education, WA11, WA79, WA81, WA88, WA168, WA188, WA288, WA301
 Elective Home Education: Further Regulation, WA81
 Elective Home Education: Policy, WA10
 Elective Home Education: Regional Strategy Group, WA313
 Elluminate, WA310
 Elluminate: Protocol, WA81
 Enniskillen Collegiate and Protora Royal School, WA11
 Entitlement Framework, WA317

Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils, WA83, WA87
 Examinations: Irregularities, WA310
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA13
 Garvagh High School, WA193
 GCSE and A-level Irish Language: West Belfast Schools, WA84
 Glastry College, Ballyhalbert, WA315
 Head Teachers: Coaching, WA194
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DE Spend, WA188
 Hollywood: New Schools, WA192
 Home Tuition, WA12
 Hospitality: DE, WA79
 ICT Facilities, WA84
 Irish Language: Examinations, WA314
 Irish-medium Education, WA314
 IT Strategy, WA167
 IT Systems, WA167
 Language and Communication Service, WA194
 Ligoniel Primary School: Pupil Enrolment Numbers, WA167
 Long-term Planning: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81
 Maintained Sector Schools, WA8
 Maintenance and Repairs Spending: Western Education and Library Board Area, WA168
 Mandarin Language, WA85
 Mandarin: Qualified Teachers, WA88
 Middletown Centre for Autism, WA87, WA190
 Minimum School Starting Age, WA194
 Muscular Dystrophy, WA318
 Nursery Places: Upper Bann, WA82
 Occupational Therapist Advice: Schools, WA80
 Post-primary Places, WA314
 Post-primary Schools: Upper Bann, WA82
 Preschool Places: September 2014, WA82
 Primary School: Belfast City Hospital Site, WA197
 Primary Schools: Admission Criteria, WA10
 Primary Schools: Admissions, WA196
 Primary Schools: Places, WA83
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA189
 Pupil Expenditure, WA10, WA188
 Pupils: Year One, North Down, WA10
 Racism: Young People, WA197
 School Closures: New School Uniforms, WA11
 School Maintenance and Repairs, WA302
 School Reports: Access by Absent Fathers, WA316
 School Starting Age, WA189
 Schools, WA192
 Schools: Capital Building East Londonderry, WA312
 Schools: Capital Funding in North Down, WA310
 Schools: Development Proposals, WA317
 Schools: Formal Intervention, WA83
 Schools: Intervention Stage, WA85
 Schools: Lisanelly Campus, WA317
 Schools: Local Produce, WA315
 Schools: Maintenance and Repairs, WA296
 Schools: New Capital School Builds in North Down, WA316
 Schools: Small Works Contracts, WA316
 Schools: Solar Panels, WA312
 Schools: Transformation or Closure, WA317
 Seagoe Primary School, WA195
 Special Educational Needs, WA186
 Special Educational Needs: Statements, WA80
 St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena, WA191
 Teacher:Pupil Ratios, WA82

Teachers: Exemption at Secondary-level Education, WA318
 Teachers: Redundancies, WA87, WA312
 Teachers: Redundancy Offers, WA314
 Teachers: Redundancy Payments, WA315
 Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy, WA12
 Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy Requests, WA301
 Temporary Classrooms: North Down, WA86
 Uniforms and Sports Gear: Stock, WA7
 Voting, WA80
 Woodlands Speech and Language Unit, WA80
 World War I: Schools Commemoration, WA88

Written Ministerial Statements

Education

Capital Investment Advancing New Schools in Planning, WMS1

O'Neill, Mrs Michelle

Executive Committee Business

Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion, 357, 358

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Beef Crisis, 189
 DARD Direct: Strabane, 188
 DARD Headquarters, 187, 188
 Fisheries Task Force, 185, 186
 Forest Service: Decentralisation, 189
 Going for Growth, 186, 187
 Hydraulic Fracturing: DARD Involvement, 189
 Lough Neagh, 188
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 183, 184
 Rural Development Programme, 190
 Rural Development Programme: Match Funding, 189
 Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 184, 185
 Tree Diseases: Update, 189, 190

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Broadband Services: West Tyrone, WA3
 Cattle Movement: Local Marts, WA286
 Cattle Movement: Penalties, WA75
 Common Agricultural Policy, WA5, WA76
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform, WA73
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform Decisions, WA6
 Conference Attendance, WA286
 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, WA71
 DARD Direct Office: Claudy, WA157
 DARD: Full Cost Recovery, WA73
 DARD: Staffing, WA65
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, WA74
 Farm Safe Awareness Courses, WA73, WA74, WA159
 Fisheries Task Force, WA158
 Flooding, WA75
 Flooding: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA157
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA72
 Going for Growth Strategy, WA286
 Headquarters Relocation, WA157
 Heat, Electricity and Water: DARD Spend, WA157
 Hospitality: DARD, WA65
 Hospitality: Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, WA287
 Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors, WA73
 Illegal Dog Breeds: Cross-border Smuggling, WA71
 Illegal Dog Breeds: Sale, WA70
 Less-favoured Area Land, WA76

Live Export Sales: Current Restrictions, WA285
 Livestock Carcasses, WA158, WA159
 Livestock Carcasses: Illegally Dumped, WA4
 Livestock Grazing, WA160
 Lough Neagh: Ownership and Control, WA6
 Pesticide and Planting Restrictions, WA287
 Poultry Beak Trimming, WA3
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA158
 Reservoirs Bill: Full Cost Recovery, WA286
 Rural Development Programme, WA72, WA76
 Single Farm Payment: Appeals, WA287
 Single Farm Payment: Claims, WA4
 Single Farm Payment: Distribution, WA74
 Single Farm Payment: Flat Rate, WA74
 Single Farm Payment: Impact Assessment, WA2
 Single Farm Payment: Submission, WA1
 Single Farm Payment: Unpaid, WA2
 Slurry Mixing Operations: Safe Practice, WA159
 Slurry Tanks: Safety, WA160
 Telephone Enquires: System Failures, WA285
 Tree Diseases, WA76
 Tri-council Fisheries Group, WA287
 Ulster Farmers' Union, WA286
 Veterinary Offices: Londonderry and Limavady, WA157
 Wind Farm Development Project, WA5
 Young Farmer Scheme, WA159
 Young Farmers, WA75

Overend, Mrs Sandra

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 127, 128

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 96

Ministerial Statements

Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public Consultation, 6

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Going for Growth, 186

Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 83

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Nursing: Investment, 71

Justice

Community Safety College: Desertcreat, 79

Hate Crime, 76

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Internet Safety Strategy, 20, 21

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Going for Growth Strategy, WA286

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Car Parking: Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals, WA357

Strategic Service Reform, WA351

Transforming Your Care, WA351

Poots, Mr Edwin

Adjournment

Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 215, 216

Cancer Services: South Belfast, 119

Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 416, 418

Ministerial Statements

- Improving Unscheduled Care, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371
- Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 276, 278, 279, 280

Oral Answers

- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Accident Prevention Initiatives, 389
 - Armed Forces: Healthcare Providers, 389
 - Blueprint for Change, 69, 70
 - Cancer Drugs, 390, 391
 - Cancer Drugs: Trials, 392, 393
 - Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 72
 - Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390
 - GP Out-of-hours Framework, 387
 - Health Service: Financial Pressures, 68
 - Health Service: Innovation, 69
 - Health Service: Payroll Issues, 71
 - ITH Pharma: Contaminated Products, 391
 - Legal Highs, 391, 392
 - Legal Highs: Speckled Reds, 72
 - Mental Health Capacity Bill: Under-16s, 72
 - Nursing: Investment, 70, 71
 - Pay Issues: Belfast Trust, 73
 - Prescription Charges, 392
 - Public Health Framework, 392
 - RQIA: Unscheduled Care Review, 393
 - Social Work: 24/7 Access, 73
 - Transforming Your Care: Sinn Féin U-turn, 73
 - Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 387, 388

Private Members' Business

- Cancer Research and Treatment, 410, 412

Written Answers

- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - 'Behind the Screen' Demos Report, WA118
 - Adult Safeguarding Policy, WA360
 - Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA40
 - Bangor Hospital: Capital Works, WA361
 - Bangor: New Health and Care Centre, WA112
 - Bangor: Proposed Health and Care Centre, WA39
 - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Complaints, WA353
 - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Senior Managers, WA31
 - Cancer Drugs, WA355, WA356
 - Cancer Patients: Available Services, WA26
 - Car Parking: Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals, WA357
 - Care Homes, WA364, WA366
 - Care Packages, WA114, WA242
 - Central Register: Children and Adults, WA250
 - Cervical Screening Awareness Week, WA117
 - Children with Eating Disorders: Professional Services, WA249
 - Children: Named Contact, WA365
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, WA119, WA245
 - Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeons, WA32
 - Craigavon Area Hospital: Bluestone Unit, WA29
 - Cross-border Nursing Home Places, WA354
 - Crossroads Care: North Down and Ards, WA248
 - Dental Hygiene, WA363
 - DHSSPS: Post-project Evaluations, WA27
 - Diabetes: Training and Resources for Children in Schools, WA247
 - Diabetic Retinopathy Screening, WA32, WA33, WA34
 - D-Nav Insulin Self-management System, WA247

- Dog Attacks: Injuries and Deaths, WA113
- Down's Syndrome: Children, WA35
- Down's Syndrome: Organ Transplants, WA39
- Down's Syndrome: People Aged 40+, WA35
- Downe Hospital Emergency Unit, WA363
- Dyslexia, WA357
- Eating Disorders, WA362
- Epilepsy, WA364
- European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights, WA356
- Eye Clinic, WA36
- Eye Tests: Children, WA356
- Eyes: Enucleation, WA36
- Family Support Interventions, WA38
- Fire and Rescue Service: Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction, WA35
- Fire and Rescue Service: Vehicles, WA360
- Fire Officers: Wicking T-shirts, WA249
- Flooding: Northern Health and Social Care Trust Hospitals, WA250
- Food Safety Promotion Board: Salary of CEO, WA35
- Freedom of Information Requests, WA119
- Gastric Band Operations, WA355
- GP Services: Out of Hours, WA120
- GP Surgeries: Telephone Numbers, WA36
- Health and Social Care Board Meeting, WA117
- Health and Social Care Trusts: Adherence to Guidelines, WA356
- Health and Social Care Trusts: Invoices, WA352, WA353
- Health Service Employees: Salaries and Expenses, WA246
- Health Service: Staffing, WA39
- Healthcare Staff: Incorrect Pay, WA241
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DHSSPS Spend, WA354
- Hospital Beds, WA360
- Hospitality: DHSSPS, WA349
- Insulin Pumps, WA40
- Intensive Care Provision, WA111
- ITH Pharma Supplies, WA39, WA120
- Learning Disabilities Complex: Oakridge, Dungannon, WA251
- Learning Disabilities: Families, WA363
- Legal Highs, WA359
- Legal Highs: Discussions with Other Jurisdictions, WA360
- Legal Highs: Emergency Departments, WA359
- Maghaberry Prison: Psychiatric Care, WA251
- Mental Capacity Legislation, WA362, WA363
- Mental Health Capacity Bill, WA41
- Mental Health Service Provision, WA111
- Mental Health Unit: Omagh, WA357
- MRI Scanner: Royal Hospital, WA361
- National Insurance and Tax Deductions, WA117
- Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults, WA37, WA250
- Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults: Funding, WA251
- Neuromuscular Nurses: Employment, WA38
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Appointment of Non-executive Directors, WA357
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust: The Cottage, Ballymena, WA354
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Inquiry: Emergency Healthcare, WA364
- Nurses: Recruitment, WA34
- Omagh Fire Station, WA250
- Omagh: Local Enhanced Hospital, WA358
- Organ Donation, WA30

Organ Donations/Transplants, WA41
 Organ Transplants: Children, WA354
 Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting List, WA119
 Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting Time, WA119
 Out-of-hours Service: Kilkeel Health Centre, WA357
 Out-of-hours Service: Southern Health and Social Care Trust, WA249
 Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services, WA352, WA365
 Paediatric Orthopaedics, WA40
 Pancreatic Cancer Patients: Treatments, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Clinical Nurse Specialists, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Dieticians, WA29
 Pancreatic Cancer: Early Diagnosis, WA28
 Pancreatic Cancer: Improvement of Treatment, WA112
 Pancreatic Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA29
 Paracetamol: Prescriptions, WA115
 Parkinson's Disease: Specialist Nurses, WA246
 Patients: '10,000 Voices: Improving the Patient Experience', WA364
 Patients: Placement in Border Areas, WA112
 Patients: Transfer, WA113
 Payroll Systems: Health and Social Care Trusts, WA112
 Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, WA38, WA353, WA355, WA365
 Pregnancies: Guidance on Terminations, WA248
 Prescription Charges, WA32
 Prescriptions, WA116, WA358
 Prescriptions: Number Issued, WA248
 Prescriptions: Repeat, WA120
 Prescriptions: Single and Multiple Items, WA116
 Primary Schools: Health Checks for Children, WA42
 Programme for Government: Implementation, WA352
 Prostate Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA37
 Renal Unit, WA38
 Safefood Corporate Plan and Business Plan, WA35
 Serotonin: Classification, WA37
 Shared Services, WA353
 Skin Camouflage Services, WA247, WA350
 Social Workers, WA359
 South West Acute Hospital and Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA26
 South West Acute Hospital: Maintenance Costs, WA358
 Speak Up and Save a Life, WA364
 Staff Vehicles: DHSSPS, WA350
 Statutory Care Homes: New Admissions, WA250
 Strategic Service Reform, WA351
 Suicide Prevention Projects, WA365
 Supported Housing Programme: Greenisland House, WA37
 Supported Living Schemes: North Down, WA247
 Tattoo Removal, WA359
 Testicular Cancer, WA361
 Tombstoning: Injuries, WA363
 Transforming Your Care, WA41, WA351
 UK Rare Disease Strategy, WA113
 Unscheduled Care, WA40
 Urology Nurse: Funding, WA39
 Wheelchair Accessible Scales, WA359

Ramsey, Mr Pat

Assembly Business, 359
 Public Petition: Detoxification Provisions: Foyle, 329

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 204
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 64
 Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 54
 Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 265
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 364
 Zero-hours Contracts, 223
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 184
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Training Programmes, 191
 Employment and Learning
 Welfare Reform, 282
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Derry: Investment Imbalance, 148
 Finance and Personnel
 Family Law Review, 356
 Social Development
 Building Successful Communities, 288
 Housing: Newbuild Bungalows, 292, 293
 Private Members' Business
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 207
 Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Cycle to Work Scheme, WA397
 Cycling, WA398
 Heat, Electricity and Water: Assembly Commission Spend, WA397
 MLAs with a Disability, WA279
 MLAs: Office Accommodation, WA278
 Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, WA63
 Parliament Buildings: Local Goods, WA62
 Employment and Learning
 Disabled Students' Allowance: Review, WA89
 Environment
 Cultural Interest Items: Preservation, WA236
 Environmental Crime Unit, WA340, WA342
 Finance and Personnel
 Financial Transaction Capital, WA110
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Learning Disabilities: Families, WA363
 Mental Capacity Legislation, WA362
 Paediatric Orthopaedics, WA40
 Justice
 Anne Owers Report, WA127
 Joe Campbell, WA377
 Maghaberry Prison: Self-harm Incident, WA377
 Mental Capacity Legislation, WA376
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund, WA155

Ramsey, Ms Sue

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 DARD Headquarters, 188
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Nursing: Investment, 70

Written Answers

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Hospital Beds, WA360
 Parkinson's Disease: Specialist Nurses, WA246
 Regional Development
 Road and Traffic Schemes: West Belfast, WA262

Robinson, Mr George

Committee Business

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week
 2014, 153

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 339

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 170

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 DARD Headquarters, 187
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84
 Employment and Learning
 Night Classes, 284, 285
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Open Championship: Royal Portrush, 149, 150
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 GP Out-of-hours Framework, 387
 Justice
 Magilligan Prison, 74
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 NICVA Economic Data Report, 19
 Racial Equality Strategy, 234

Private Members' Business

North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 158, 159

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 296

Written Answers

Justice
 Prostitution: Project Steering Group, WA51
 Regional Development
 Disabled Parking: Limavady, WA379
 Greystone Road/Broad Road: Works, WA58

Robinson, Mr Peter

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 169, 170, 171

Oral Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 A5: Executive Commitment, 239
 Bright Start, 237
 Delivering Social Change, 236
 Gender Equality Strategy, 235
 Haass Proposals: DUP Intentions, 238
 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, 238
 Parading Season, 239
 Racial Equality Strategy, 234, 235
 Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237
 Welfare Reform, 239

Written Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Active Ageing Strategy, WA155
 Bright Start, WA156
 Colliers International, WA1

Delivering Social Change, WA283
 Energy Efficiency, WA282
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA155, WA281
 Flooding: Defence Measures, WA282
 Good Relations Grants, WA284
 Heat, Electricity and Water: OFMDFM Spend, WA284
 Markethill: Main Street, WA155
 Maze/Long Kesh Site, WA281
 Shared Future Strategy, WA281
 Social Investment Fund, WA155, WA282, WA285
 Social Investment Fund: Capital Projects, WA284
 Social Investment Fund: East Belfast, WA156
 St Patrick's Barracks, WA156
 Strategic Investment Board, WA1
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA282
 Victims and Survivors: Benefit Entitlement and
 Taxation, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Allocation, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Cycle, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Offer Letters, WA282
 Victims and Survivors: Support and Financial
 Assistance, WA156

Written Ministerial Statements

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Building a Prosperous and United Community: One
 Year On, WMS4

Rogers, Mr Seán

Committee Business

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and
 the School Improvement Process, 180, 181

Executive Committee Business

Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates
 2014-15, 42

Ministerial Statements

Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for
 Public Health, 278
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in
 Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 366
 Schools: Capital Projects, 271

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Fisheries Task Force, 186
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Culture: Tourism Role, 194
 Education
 Home Education: NEELB, 241
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 GP Out-of-hours Framework, 387

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 413
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 207
 Key Stage Assessments, 249, 250

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA72
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA162
 Education
 Educational Welfare Service, WA189
 Elective Home Education: Policy, WA10
 Entitlement Framework, WA317
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA12
 Minimum School Starting Age, WA194

Employment and Learning
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA90
 Training for Success, WA205
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA93
 Environment
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA104
 Finance and Personnel
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA110
 June Monitoring Round, WA26
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Downe Hospital Emergency Unit, WA363
 Eye Tests: Children, WA356
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA119
 Justice
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA127
 Regional Development
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA257
 Social Development
 Alcohol Licensing, WA392
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA153

Ross, Mr Alastair

Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 123, 125, 126, 127, 132, 135, 136
 Ministerial Statements
 Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 267
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 365
 Zero-hours Contracts, 223
 Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Employment Law Reform, WA205
 Finance and Personnel
 Rate Relief: Amateur Sports Clubs, WA24
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Legal Highs, WA359
 Legal Highs: Discussions with Other Jurisdictions, WA360
 Legal Highs: Emergency Departments, WA359
 Justice
 Counterfeit Cosmetic Products, WA253
 Counterfeit Tobacco Products, WA253
 Legal Highs, WA372, WA374
 Legal Highs: Dangers, WA255, WA374
 Social Development
 Housing: Monkstown, WA278

Ruane, Ms Caitriona

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: School Visits, 81, 82
 Private Members' Business
 Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 379

Sheehan, Mr Pat

Committee Business
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 198

Ministerial Statements
 Schools: Capital Projects, 273
 Oral Answers
 Education
 Home Education: NEELB, 240
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 144, 145
 Justice
 Parading Season, 77
 Private Members' Business
 Integrated Education: Article 64, 206, 207, 209
 Key Stage Assessments, 247, 257, 258
 Written Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Corporation Tax, WA25

Speaker, The (Mr William Hay)

Adjournment
 Cancer Services: South Belfast, 116
 Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 320, 324, 325, 326, 327
 Assembly Business, 121, 219, 261, 359
 Assembly Commission Membership, 360
 Committee Membership, 359
 Public Petition: Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen: Closure, 168
 Public Petition: Detoxification Provisions: Foyle, 329, 330
 Public Petition: Loane House, Dungannon, 359
 Public Petition: ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria, 329
 Committee Business
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 167
 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 198, 201, 203, 204
 Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014: Prayer of Annulment, 227
 Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 137, 139
 Executive Committee Business
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Consideration Stage, 121
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 332, 342
 Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 93, 98, 101, 102, 116
 Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 344
 Matters of the Day
 Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 1
 Ministerial Statements
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 363
 Schools: Capital Projects, 272, 274, 275
 Zero-hours Contracts, 220, 223
 Oral Answers
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Cancer Drugs, 391
 Public Health Framework, 392
 RQIA: Unscheduled Care Review, 393
 Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 388

Justice

- Firearms: Certificate Renewal, 398
- Legal Criticism: DOJ, 400
- Parades: Criminal Justice Issues, 399
- Parading, 394

Private Members' Business

- Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 227, 228, 229, 232, 233
- Integrated Education: Article 64, 204, 206, 207
- Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386

Spratt, Mr Jimmy

Adjournment

- Cancer Services: South Belfast, 117

Executive Committee Business

- Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 61, 63

Ministerial Statements

- British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 169

Oral Answers

- Regional Development
- Car Parks: Council Control, 141

Private Members' Business

- North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 158

Storey, Mr Mervyn

Adjournment

- Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 325, 326

Committee Business

- Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 167
- Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 178, 180, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202

Executive Committee Business

- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 30, 31, 32

Matters of the Day

- Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 1

Ministerial Statements

- Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 366
- Schools: Capital Projects, 270, 275
- Tourism: Public Consultation, 402

Oral Answers

- Education
- Home Education: NEELB, 240

Private Members' Business

- Integrated Education: Article 64, 206, 208, 209, 210, 212
- Key Stage Assessments, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

- Education
- Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 294

Written Answers

- Education
- CCEA: Industrial Action, WA313
- Education and Training Inspectorate: Collaborative Working Arrangements, WA84
- Elective Home Education: Regional Strategy Group, WA313
- Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils, WA83

IT Strategy, WA167

- IT Systems, WA167
- Middletown Centre for Autism, WA87
- Post-primary Places, WA314
- Teachers: Redundancies, WA87
- Teachers: Redundancy Offers, WA314

Finance and Personnel

- Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, WA25

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

- Health Service: Staffing, WA39

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

- Active Ageing Strategy, WA155

Swann, Mr Robin

Committee Business

- Work and Families Bill: Extension of Committee Stage, 175

Committee Stages

- Reservoirs Bill, CS8, CS9

Executive Committee Business

- Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 53
- Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 42

Matters of the Day

- Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 2

Ministerial Statements

- Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 264
- Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 363
- Zero-hours Contracts, 221

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Edward the Bruce, 196
- Musical Instruments for Bands, 191
- Employment and Learning
- Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281
- Finance and Personnel
- Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 26
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
- Muslim Community, 18

Social Development

- Building Successful Communities, 288

Private Members' Business

- North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 160

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

- Education
- Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 295

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Conference Attendance, WA286
- DARD: Full Cost Recovery, WA73
- Farm Safe Awareness Courses, WA73, WA74, WA159
- Reservoirs Bill: Full Cost Recovery, WA286
- Wind Farm Development Project, WA5

Culture, Arts and Leisure

- Edward the Bruce: Anniversary of Landing, WA163
- North/South Language Body, WA163

Education

- Ballee Community High School, WA315
- Ballee Community High School: Pupil Placements, WA85

Ballee Community High School: Pupils' Alternatives, WA12	Revised Written Answers
Ballee Community High School: Suitable Alternative for Pupils, WA11	Environment
County Hall: Ballymena, WA193	Dumping Sites: Illegal, RWA3
Dunclug High School, WA10, WA166, WA186, WA196	Written Answers
School Closures: New School Uniforms, WA11	Agriculture and Rural Development
Schools, WA192	Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, WA71
Employment and Learning	Illegal Dog Breeds: Cross-border Smuggling, WA71
Condition Management Programme: Benefits, WA13	Illegal Dog Breeds: Sale, WA70
Condition Management Programme: Funding, WA14	Lough Neagh: Ownership and Control, WA6
National Minimum Wage, WA90	Assembly Commission
Workers' Educational Association, WA198	Parliament Buildings: Educational Visits, WA396
Youth Employment Scheme, WA13	Parliament Buildings: Official Invitations, WA279
Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Culture, Arts and Leisure
Exports, WA330	Fencing: Financial Support, WA162
Environment	Sport: Adult Involvement, WA164
County Hall: Ballymena, WA336	Sport: Children Involvement, WA164
Moorland: Definition, WA101	Education
Finance and Personnel	'British Values': Promotion in Schools, WA87
Floodline, WA110	Capital Funding: South Eastern Education and Library Board, WA289
Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Civics: Teaching, WA9
Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA40	Elective Home Education, WA167
Flooding: Northern Health and Social Care Trust Hospitals, WA250	Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils, WA87
ITH Pharma Supplies, WA39, WA120	Mandarin: Qualified Teachers, WA88
MRI Scanner: Royal Hospital, WA361	Preschool Places: September 2014, WA82
Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults, WA250	Primary Schools: Admission Criteria, WA10
Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults: Funding, WA251	Primary Schools: Admissions, WA196
Northern Health and Social Care Trust: The Cottage, Ballymena, WA354	Primary Schools: Places, WA83
Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services, WA365	Schools: Formal Intervention, WA83
Regional Development	Schools: Intervention Stage, WA85
Bushmills: Walkway and Cycle Path, WA379	Schools: Maintenance and Repairs, WA296
County Hall: Ballymena, WA384	Schools: New Capital School Builds in North Down, WA316
Flooding: Ballymena, WA260	Teacher:Pupil Ratios, WA82
Resurfacing: Causeway Road, WA379	Temporary Classrooms: North Down, WA86
Social Development	Voting, WA80
Housing Stress: Ballymena Area, WA272	Employment and Learning
Housing Stress: Ballymoney Area, WA273	Civics: Teaching, WA14
Weir, Mr Peter	Disabled Students' Allowance, WA321, WA322
Adjournment	Politics Modules, WA14
Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 215	Universities: Public Bodies, WA15
Executive Committee Business	Voting, WA89
Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 332, 341	Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 97, 98, 99	Danske Bank: Branch Closure, WA329
Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 63	Giro d'Italia: Website Hits, WA21
Ministerial Statements	Invest NI: Outreach Programmes, WA93
North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 172	Jobs Fund: North Down, WA206
North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 373	Environment
Oral Answers	Councils: Status, WA335
Assembly Commission	Crawfordsburn Country Park: Access Arrangements, WA335
Centenary Commemorations, 82	Crawfordsburn Country Park: Opening and Closing Times, WA335
Irish Language: Assembly Criticism, 80, 81	Dumping Sites: Illegal, WA103
Environment	Listed Buildings: North Down, WA335
Crawfordsburn Country Park, 350	Planning Applications: Target Times, WA240
Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Planning Applications: Timeliness, WA331
Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390	Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Functions, WA332
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Jobs, WA332
Welfare Reform, 238, 239	Taxi Licensing: Staff Locations, WA331
	Finance and Personnel
	Tourism: Jobs, WA345
	Health, Social Services and Public Safety
	Dog Attacks: Injuries and Deaths, WA113
	Organ Transplants: Children, WA354

Prescriptions: Number Issued, WA248
Tombstoning: Injuries, WA363

Justice

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, WA121
Prison Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA375
Prostitution: Project Steering Group, WA123

Regional Development

NI Railways: Dog/Animal Policy, WA130
Park-and-ride Schemes: Greater Belfast, WA143
Residents Parking Schemes: Outside Belfast, WA256

Social Development

Alcohol: Minimum Pricing, WA278
Common Landlord Areas: North Down, WA393
Employment Support Allowance, WA392
House Repossessions: North Down, WA395
Housing Executive: Criteria for Defining a Public Sector Body, WA264
Housing Executive: North Down Properties, WA395
Social Housing: Allocation, WA269
Urban Development Grant Scheme, WA392
Urban Development Grants, WA276

Wells, Mr Jim

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 113, 115
Justice Bill: Second Stage, 307, 308
Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 344

Ministerial Statements

Improving Unscheduled Care, 369
Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 278
Schools: Capital Projects, 272

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning
B/E Aerospace, 283
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 387, 388
Justice
Firearms: Certificate Renewal, 397

Private Members' Business

Cancer Research and Treatment, 407, 412, 413

Written Answers

Education
Drumadonnell Primary School: Pupil Transport, WA80
Teachers: Redundancy Payments, WA315
Environment
Eagles: Illegal Poisoning, WA337
Eagles: White Tailed, WA337
Red Kites: Katesbridge Area, WA338
Wildlife Poisoning: Investigation, WA337
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Diabetic Retinopathy Screening, WA32, WA33, WA34
Eye Clinic, WA36
Eyes: Enucleation, WA36
Out-of-hours Service: Kilkeel Health Centre, WA357
Justice
Birds: Poisoning, Shooting or Trapping, WA374
Consultants: Hotel Expenses, WA54
Prison Service: Chief Finance Officer, WA54
Prison Service: Staff Duties, WA54

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Social Investment Fund, WA285

Wilson, Mr Sammy

Committee Business

Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 128, 129

Executive Committee Business

Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 9
Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 12, 15, 33, 35, 36, 37

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 174
Zero-hours Contracts, 225

Oral Answers

Education
Anti-bullying Forum, 241
Regional Development
Traffic-calming Measures, 140

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Education
Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 295

Written Answers

Environment
Gaelectric, WA343
Regional Development
Manhole Covers: Non-slip, WA130

Business Index

3

3G Mobile Network: East Londonderry, WA97

A

A2, WA385

A5: Executive Commitment, 239

A6 Derry to Dungiven: Dualling Scheme, WA260

A75, WA381

Abbey Community College, WA312

Academic Selection, 244, WA192

Academic Underachievement, WA198

Accident Prevention Initiatives, 389

Active Ageing Strategy, WA155

Adult Safeguarding Policy, WA360, WA375

Affordable Homes, WA270

Affordable Housing: Definition, WA271

Affordable Warmth Scheme, WA277

Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Warm Homes Scheme, WA277

Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates, WA105, WA238

Air Passenger Duty, WA344

Air Passenger Duty: Thomas Cook, 144, 145

Air Quality Research Study, WA336

Alcohol Licensing, WA392

Alcohol: Minimum Pricing, WA278

Anne Owers Report, WA127

Anti-bullying Forum, 241, 242

Antrim Coast Road, WA131, WA132

Appeal Tribunals: Human Rights Act 1998, WA45, WA46

Appeals Service, WA251

Appeals Service: Staffing, WA268, WA269

Apprenticeships, 282, 283

Apprenticeships/Youth Training, 261, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268

Apprenticeships: People with Disabilities, 285

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, WA240

Armed Forces: Healthcare Providers, 389

Artefacts: Crannog, WA342

Artefacts: Local Storage, 192

Assembly Business, 121, 219, 261, 345, 359

Assembly Commission, 80

Assembly Commission Membership, 360

Atos Healthcare, WA270, WA275

B

B/E Aerospace, 283, 284

Ballee Community High School, 245, WA190, WA315, WA316

Ballee Community High School: Closure Impacts, WA86

Ballee Community High School: NEELB Advice, WA81, WA82

Ballee Community High School: Pupil Placements, WA85

Ballee Community High School: Pupils' Alternatives, WA12

Ballee Community High School: Suitable Alternative for Pupils, WA11

Ballinlea 1 Test Well, WA340

Ballinlea: Drilling, WA100

Ballyclare Primary School, WA197

Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA40

Ballymena: Encouraging Investment, WA347

Ballymena: Farmwatch, WA55

Ballyshannon: ESB Dam, WA288

Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, WA196

Bangor Health and Well-being Centre, 213, 214, 215, 216

Bangor Hospital: Capital Works, WA361

Bangor Public Realm Scheme, WA393

Bangor Sewerage Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, 140

Bangor: New Health and Care Centre, WA112

Bangor: Proposed Health and Care Centre, WA39

Bangor: School Development Proposals, WA192

Bank of England: Meeting, 355, 356

Beef Crisis, 189

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Complaints, WA353

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Senior Managers, WA31

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, 348, 349

Belfast Metropolitan College, WA90

Belfast Metropolitan College: Property Sale, 285

Belfast Rapid Transit System, 142, 143

Belfast Rapid Transit System: South Belfast, WA142

'Behind the Screen' Demos Report, WA118

Benefit Claims, WA264

Bicycles: Train Passengers, WA382

Big Capital Project, WA388

Birds: Poisoning, Shooting or Trapping, WA374

Bituminous Coal, WA236

Blast 106: Radio Station, WA320, WA328

Bloomfield and Jubilee Estates: Bangor, WA61

Bloomfield Estate: Clanmil Housing Association, WA61

Blueprint for Change, 69, 70

Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233

Border Region: Economic Development, WA96

Braid River, WA162

Bright Start, 237, 238, WA156

'British Values': Promotion in Schools, WA87

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 169, 170, 171

Broadband Services, WA96

Broadband Services: West Tyrone, WA3

Broadband: Business Premises, WA97

Broadcasting: Funding, 194

Broadcasting: Investment, 195

BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, WA195

Buddy Up Programme, WA311

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Consideration Stage, 121

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Final Stage, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 341, 342

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: First Stage, 52

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Further Consideration Stage, 175

Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116

Budget (No.2) Bill 2014: Second Stage, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67

Budget 2015-16, 26, 27, WA26, WA107

Budget Controls: Treasury Rules, WA346

Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On, WMS4

Building Successful Communities, 287, 288

Bullying, WA127

Bus Routes: Ards Peninsula, WA387

Buses, WA384

Bushmills: Walkway and Cycle Path, WA379
 Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations
 (Northern Ireland) 2014, 343, 344
 Business Red Tape Review, 150, 151
 Business Start-up Programme, WA94
 Business Tenancies, 151

C

C2k System, WA86
 C2k: Attendance Records, WA88
 Cancer Drugs, 390, 391, WA355, WA356
 Cancer Drugs: Trials, 392, 393
 Cancer Patients: Available Services, WA26
 Cancer Research and Treatment, 403, 405, 406, 407, 408,
 409, 410, 412, 413, 415
 Cancer Services: South Belfast, 116, 117, 118, 119
 Capital Funding: South Eastern Education and Library Board,
 WA289
 Capital Funding: Western Education and Library Board Area,
 WA175
 Capital Investment Advancing New Schools in Planning,
 WMS1
 Capital Projects, WA204
 Capital Works: Business Cases, 399
 Car Parking: Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals, WA357
 Car Parking: Dungannon Court House, WA376
 Car Parks: Control, WA144
 Car Parks: Council Control, 140, 141
 Car Parks: Off-street, WA256
 Car Parks: Revenue, WA138
 Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installations: Upper Bann, WA267
 Care Homes, WA364, WA366
 Care Packages, WA114, WA242
 Careers: Guide to Service Provision for Ethnic Minority
 Groups, WA199
 Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, 20
 Cattle Movement: Local Marts, WA286
 Cattle Movement: Penalties, WA75
 Cavity Wall Insulation: Housing Executive Report, WA389
 CCEA: Industrial Action, WA313
 CCTV: Court Grounds, WA44
 CCTV: Courts and Tribunal Service, WA50
 Centenary Commemorations, 82
 Central Register: Children and Adults, WA250
 Cervical Screening Awareness Week, WA117
 Charitable and Voluntary Organisations: Community
 Services, WA52
 Charity Commission, WA154, WA272, WA396
 Charity Commission: Investigations, WA272
 Charity Commission: Staffing, WA153
 Children with Eating Disorders: Professional Services,
 WA249
 Children: Named Contact, WA365
 Church Road Upper Reservoir: Holywood, WA380
 CHx Industrial LLC, WA93
 CHx Industrial LLC: Petroleum Licence, WA21
 City of Culture: North-west Legacy Plan, 195
 Civics: Teaching, WA9, WA14
 Civil Servants: Stormont Estate, WA107
 Civil Service Estate: Unoccupied Buildings, WA23
 Civil Service: Employment Advertisements, WA348
 Cliff Project: Seacourt Estate, Larne, WA161
 Climate Bill, WA208
 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, WA119, WA245
 Colin Bell Case: Appeals, WA42
 Colliers International, WA1
 Commercial Properties: Ballymena, WA347
 Committal Proceedings, WA122, WA368, WA369
 Committee for the Environment, WA105
 Committee Membership, 359
 Common Agricultural Policy, WA5, WA76
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform, WA73
 Common Agricultural Policy: Reform Decisions, WA6
 Common Landlord Areas, WA267
 Common Landlord Areas: North Down, WA393
 Communities and Renewable Energy, WA94
 Community Benefit Summit, WA22
 Community Safety College: Desertcreat, 79
 Community Services Funding, WA46, WA47, WA50
 Community Transport Services: Additional Funding, WA58
 Compliance: Testing, WA129
 Computer Infrastructure: Upgrade, WA86
 Concordat Between the Voluntary and Community Sector
 and the Northern Ireland Government: 2014 Annual Report,
 WMS6
 Condition Management Programme: Benefits, WA13
 Condition Management Programme: Funding, WA14
 Conference Attendance, WA286
 Construction: Lower Carbon Materials, WA260
 Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeons, WA32
 Consultants: Hotel Expenses, WA54
 Consumer Representation in Northern Ireland: Public
 Consultation, 4, 5, 6, 7
 Contingency Funds, WA346
 Contract Services, WA51
 Controlled Sector Schools, WA8
 Corporation Tax, WA25, WA107
 Councillors: Code of Conduct, WA333
 Councillors: Right of Appeal, WA334
 Councils: DRD Functions, 346, 347
 Councils: Performance Improvement, WA343
 Councils: Planning Functions, WA343
 Councils: Services Developed to New Councils, WA259
 Councils: Standing Orders, WA343
 Councils: Status, WA335
 Counterfeit Cosmetic Products, WA253
 Counterfeit Tobacco Products, WA253
 County Hall: Ballymena, WA193, WA336, WA384
 Court Hearings, WA46
 Court Hearings: Parking Spaces, WA122
 Courts and Tribunal Service: Contract Services, WA52
 Courts and Tribunal Service: Disability Audits, WA52
 Courts and Tribunal Service: Service Providers, WA121,
 WA369, WA370
 Craigantlet Roundabout, WA385
 Craigavon Area Hospital: Bluestone Unit, WA29
 Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation, WA330,
 WA331
 Crawfordsburn Country Park, 350
 Crawfordsburn Country Park: Access Arrangements, WA335
 Crawfordsburn Country Park: Opening and Closing Times,
 WA335
 Creative Industries: Tourism, 148, 149
 Criminal Justice System: Public Confidence, 78
 Criminal Justice Workers: Regional Funding, WA376
 Crockanboy Road: Omagh, WA56
 Cross-border Initiatives, WA92
 Cross-border Mobility: Students, WA202
 Cross-border Nursing Home Places, WA354
 Cross-border Trade, WA98
 Crossroads Care: North Down and Ards, WA248

Crown Court Remuneration, 73, 74
 Crumlin Integrated College, 242
 Crumlin Road Courthouse, 293
 Cultural Interest Items: Preservation, WA236
 Culture: Tourism Role, 193, 194
 Cycle Boxes at Traffic Lights: Parking, WA382
 Cycle Parking Facilities, WA194
 Cycle Parking: North Antrim, WA381
 Cycle to Work Scheme, WA397
 Cycling, WA387, WA398
 Cycling Infrastructure: Dublin, WA382, WA383
 Cycling Strategy, WA381
 Cycling Unit, WA145
 Cycling: Stormont Estate, WA347, WA348
 Cyclists, WA382
 Cyclists: North Antrim Area, WA328

D

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, WA71, WA121
 Danske Bank: Branch Closure, WA329, WA348
 DARD Direct Office: Claudy, WA157
 DARD Direct: Strabane, 188
 DARD Headquarters, 187, 188
 DARD: Full Cost Recovery, WA73
 DARD: Staffing, WA65
 David Paige: Custodial Sentence, WA367
 David Paige: Serious Case Review, WA366, WA367
 Delivering Social Change, 16, 17, 236, WA283
 Dental Hygiene, WA363
 Dereliction Funding Applications, WA333
 Dereliction Intervention Funding, 345, 346
 Derry: City of Culture 2013, WA163
 Derry: Investment Imbalance, 147, 148
 Desertcreat: Bill of Reductions, 27
 Destination Fermanagh, WA327, WA328
 Developmental Disabilities, WA318
 DFP: Late Committee Papers, 353
 DHSSPS: Post-project Evaluations, WA27
 Diabetes: Training and Resources for Children in Schools, WA247
 Diabetic Retinopathy Screening, WA32, WA33, WA34
 Disability Arts Strategy, WA198
 Disability Discrimination Act 1995, WA15
 Disability Employment Strategy, WA15, RWA1
 Disability Strategy, 18, 19
 Disability: Members Declaration, WA154
 Disabled Parking: Limavady, WA379
 Disabled Students' Allowance, WA198, WA321, WA322
 Disabled Students' Allowance: Review, WA89
 Disposable Income, WA99
 D-Nav Insulin Self-management System, WA247
 DoE/DRD Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 Dog Attacks: Injuries and Deaths, WA113
 Domestic Violence Advisers, WA375
 Domestic Violence: Education in Post-primary Schools, WA196
 Double Glazing: New Schemes, WA278
 Down Armagh Rural Transport, WA143, WA144
 Down's Syndrome, WA188
 Down's Syndrome: Children, WA35
 Down's Syndrome: Expenditure, WA316
 Down's Syndrome: Organ Transplants, WA39
 Down's Syndrome: People Aged 40+, WA35
 Down's Syndrome: Statement of Special Educational Needs, WA316, WA317

Downe Hospital Emergency Unit, WA363
 Drainage Systems: Ballymena, WA59
 Drainage: Ballymena, WA256, WA257, WA258
 DRD/DoE Meeting: December 2013, WA263
 Driver and Vehicle Agency, WA104
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Job Relocation, 28, 72, WA74, WA77, WA146, WA342
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Staff, WA334
 Dropped Kerbs, WA57
 Dropped Kerbs: Holywood, WA386
 Drumadonnell Primary School: Pupil Transport, WA80
 Drumragh Integrated College, WA192
 Drumragh Integrated College: Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, WA7
 Dumping Sites: Illegal, WA103, RWA3
 Dunclug High School, WA10, WA166, WA186, WA196
 Dungannon Courthouse: Car Park, WA253
 Dungiven: Roads, WA145
 Dunloy Farming Tragedy, 1, 2, 3
 Dyslexia, WA357

E

Eagles: Illegal Poisoning, WA337
 Eagles: White Tailed, WA337
 Early Intervention Transformation Programme, 390
 Eating Disorders, WA362
 Economic Inactivity, 287
 Education and Library Boards, WA84
 Education and Library Boards: Budgets, 245, 246
 Education and Library Boards: Spending, WA195
 Education and Skills Authority, WA8
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Collaborative Working Arrangements, WA84
 Education Budget, 246
 Education Reform: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81
 Education: Contingency Fund, WA197
 Education: Rural Areas, WA204
 Educational Centre for Speech and Language, WA194
 Educational Welfare Service, WA189
 Edward the Bruce, 196
 Edward the Bruce: Anniversary of Landing, WA163
 Eel Management Plans: European Council Regulation, WA6
 Elective Home Education, WA11, WA79, WA81, WA88, WA167, WA168, WA188, WA288, WA301
 Elective Home Education: Further Regulation, WA81
 Elective Home Education: Policy, WA10
 Elective Home Education: Regional Strategy Group, WA313
 Electricity Prices, WA93
 Electricity: Costs, WA327
 Electricity: Local Generation, 146, 147
 Electricity: ROC Support, WA98
 Elluminate, WA310
 Elluminate: Protocol, WA81
 Elver Kill: Ballyshannon, WA7
 Elver Kill: Cathaleen's Fall Dam, WA6
 Emigration, 354, 355
 Employment and Regeneration: Strabane, WA91
 Employment Law Reform, WA205
 Employment Refusals, WA15
 Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 53, 54, 55
 Employment Support Allowance, WA392
 Employment Support Allowance: Appeals, WA269
 Employment Support Allowance: Withdrawals, WA270
 Energy Efficiency, 291, WA24, WA282

Energy Prices, WA206
 Enniskillen Collegiate and Protora Royal School, WA11
 Enniskillen Library: Relocation, WA78
 Entitlement Framework, WA317
 Environmental Contamination Issues, WA143
 Environmental Crime Unit, WA340, WA342
 Environmental Pollution: Kinnegar Sewage Works, WA262
 Epilepsy, WA364
 Equal Pay Settlement: PSNI, WA110
 Equal Pay: NIO/PSNI, 22, 23
 Equal Pay: Outstanding Claims, WA26
 Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups, WA149, WA152, WA155, WA160, WA161, WA281
 Ethnic Minority Communities: Economic Mobility, WA94
 European Arrest Warrants, WA252
 European Business Network Congress, WA166, WA202, WA327, WA347
 European Cancer Patients Bill of Rights, WA356
 European Convention on Human Rights, WA50, WA129
 European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020, WA108
 Events, WA99
 Examination Statistics: Excluding Pupils, WA83, WA87
 Examinations: Irregularities, WA310
 Executive Spending Allocations, WA345
 Exploris: Business Plan, 347
 Explosives: Storage, WA103
 Explosives: Store Relocation, WA103
 Exports, WA330
 Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina, WA88
 Eye Clinic, WA36
 Eye Tests: Children, WA356
 Eyes: Enucleation, WA36

F

Family Law Review, 356
 Family Support Interventions, WA38
 Farm Safe Awareness Courses, WA73, WA74, WA159
 Fencing: Financial Support, WA162
 Finance and Personnel, 22
 Finance: Ministerial Spending, WA111
 Financial Transaction Capital, WA110
 Fines and Enforcement Bill, WA123
 Fintona and Trillick: Flooding of Roads, WA56
 Fire and Rescue Service: Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction, WA35
 Fire and Rescue Service: Vehicles, WA360
 Fire Officers: Wicking T-shirts, WA249
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA378
 Firearms: Certificate Renewal, 397, 398
 Fisheries Task Force, 185, 186, WA158
 Flags: Removal, WA383
 Flooding, WA75
 Flooding: Ballymena, WA260
 Flooding: Defence Measures, WA282
 Flooding: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA157
 Flooding: Newcastle, WA388
 Flooding: North Antrim, 21, 22
 Flooding: Northern Health and Social Care Trust Hospitals, WA250
 Floodline, WA110
 Food Safety Promotion Board: Salary of CEO, WA35
 Football Stadia Funding, 195
 Footpath Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Footpaths: North Belfast, WA58, WA59

Footway Upgrading and Repair: Belfast North Section Office, WA259
 Forensic Science: All-Ireland Service, WA378
 Forest Service: Decentralisation, 189
 Freedom of Information Requests, WA12, WA13, WA72, WA90, WA93, WA104, WA110, WA119, WA127, WA153, WA162, WA257
 Freedom of Information Response, WA23
 Fuel Laundering, 75
 Further Education: Senior Managers, WA321

G

G4S Proposed Contract Undercharging, WA253
 G4S Staff Keyholders, WA55, WA253
 GAA HQ: Owenbeg, WA241
 Gaelectric, WA343
 Garvagh High School, WA193
 Gas Flares, WA105
 Gas: Licence Area PL1/10, WA329
 Gastric Band Operations, WA355
 GCSE and A-level Irish Language: West Belfast Schools, WA84
 Gender Action Plan, 83, 84
 Gender Equality Strategy, 235, 236
 General Product Safety Regulations, WA122
 Gerry Kelly MLA: Sanction of Exclusion, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 167
 Gifts or Hospitality: Civil Servants, WA262
 Giro d'Italia: Website Hits, WA21
 Glashry College, Ballyhalbert, WA315
 Glen 10 Development Group, WA271
 Glencull: Booster Pumping Station, WA263
 Going for Growth, 186, 187
 Going for Growth Strategy, WA286
 Good Relations Grants, WA284
 GP Out-of-hours Framework, 387
 GP Services: Out of Hours, WA120
 GP Surgeries: Telephone Numbers, WA36
 Graffiti: North Down, WA62
 Gran Fondo Stage Event, WA21
 Grass: Cutting Responsibility, 141, 142
 Green Investment Bank Workshop, WA111
 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, WA239, WA340
 Greystone Road/Broad Road: Works, WA58
 Grit: Stockpile, WA145
 Grove Park: Roof Replacement Scheme, WA154

H

Haass Proposals: DUP Intentions, 238
 Hardship Relief Scheme, WA347
 Hate Crime, 75, 76
 Head Teachers: Coaching, WA194
 Headquarters Relocation, WA157
 Health and Social Care Board Meeting, WA117
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Adherence to Guidelines, WA356
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Invoices, WA352, WA353
 Health Service Employees: Salaries and Expenses, WA246
 Health Service: Financial Pressures, 68
 Health Service: Innovation, 68, 69
 Health Service: Payroll Issues, 71
 Health Service: Payroll Problems, 28
 Health Service: Staffing, WA39
 Healthcare Staff: Incorrect Pay, WA241

- Heat, Electricity and Water: Assembly Commission Spend, WA397
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DARD Spend, WA157
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DCAL Spend, WA165
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DE Spend, WA188
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DEL Spend, WA201
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DETI Spend, WA326
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DFP Spend, WA346
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DHSSPS Spend, WA353, WA354
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DoE Spend, WA333
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DoJ Spend, WA254
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DRD Spend, WA383
- Heat, Electricity and Water: DSD Spend, WA284, WA391
- Heat, Electricity and Water: OFMDFM Spend, WA283, WA284
- Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, 238
- Hockey: Portadown and Lurgan, WA163
- Hollywood: New Schools, WA192
- Hollywood: Public Realm Scheme, WA277
- Home Education: NEELB, 240, 241
- Home Tuition, WA12
- Homelessness, WA148
- Homelessness Monitor Northern Ireland, WA147
- Hospital Beds, WA360
- Hospitality: DARD, WA65
- Hospitality: DCAL, WA160
- Hospitality: DE, WA79
- Hospitality: DEL, WA89
- Hospitality: DETI, WA206
- Hospitality: DFP, WA345
- Hospitality: DHSSPS, WA349
- Hospitality: DoE, WA237
- Hospitality: DoJ, WA120
- Hospitality: DRD, WA261, WA379
- Hospitality: DSD, WA272
- Hospitality: Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, WA287
- House Repossessions: North Down, WA395
- Housing Associations: Redecoration Grants, WA274, WA389
- Housing Executive: Criteria for Defining a Public Sector Body, WA264
- Housing Executive: Double-glazed Windows, WA274
- Housing Executive: East Antrim Properties, WA394
- Housing Executive: Glengormley Properties, WA395
- Housing Executive: North Down Properties, WA148, WA395, WA396
- Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Contracts, WA149
- Housing Executive: Rent and Rates Charges, WA152
- Housing Executive: Superannuation Scheme, WA149, WA396
- Housing Executive: West Tyrone Properties, WA396
- Housing Stress: Ballymena Area, WA272, WA273
- Housing Stress: Ballymoney Area, WA273
- Housing: Equality Scheme, 291
- Housing: Monkstown, WA278
- Housing: Newbuild Bungalows, 292, 293
- Housing: Racial Intimidation, 292
- Housing: Social and Affordable, 292
- Housing: Social Need, 292
- Hydebank: Secure College, 76, 77
- Hydraulic Fracturing, WA16
- Hydraulic Fracturing: DARD Involvement, 189
- Hydrogen Sulphide Detectors, WA73, WA95
- ICT Facilities, WA84
- Illegal Dog Breeds: Cross-border Smuggling, WA71
- Illegal Dog Breeds: Sale, WA70
- Illegal Landfilling, WA130
- Illegal Waste, WA388
- Illegal Waste: Arney, WA240
- Illegal Waste: Total Volume, WA241
- Improving Unscheduled Care, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371
- Infrastrata Drilling: East Antrim, WA337
- Infrastructure Projects, 24, 25
- Infrastructure Projects: Delivery, 356, 357
- Injunctive Relief: Publicity Prohibited, RWA4
- Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, 178, 180, 181, 182, 183, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204
- Institute for Professional Legal Studies, WA344
- Insulin Pumps, WA40
- Integrated Education: Article 64, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212
- Integrated Education: Demand, 243, 244
- Intensive Care Provision, WA111
- Interest Rates, WA105
- Interface Barriers, WA378
- Internet Safety Strategy, 20, 21
- Invest NI, WA205, WA206
- Invest NI: Financial Assistance, WA92
- Invest NI: Foreign Direct Investment, WA207
- Invest NI: Funding, WA325
- Invest NI: Outreach Programmes, WA93
- Invest NI: Religious Demographics, WA93
- Invest NI: Return Investment, WA92
- Invest NI: Sandwich Sector, WA329
- Investigation into Case 13/056715, WA43
- Invest-to-save Measures, 23, 24
- Inward Investors: Limavady and Coleraine, WA330
- Irish Language Information, WA166
- Irish Language: Assembly Criticism, 80, 81
- Irish Language: Examinations, WA314
- Irish-medium Education, WA314
- IT Strategy, WA167
- IT Systems, WA167
- ITH Pharma Supplies, WA39, WA120
- ITH Pharma: Contaminated Products, 391
- ## J
- Jan Gehl, WA145
- Jobs Fund: North Down, WA206
- Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014: Prayer of Annulment, 227
- Jobseeker's Allowance: Breaching Regulations, WA271, WA272
- Joe Campbell, 398, WA377
- June Monitoring Round, WA26
- June Monitoring Round: HSSPS Bid, 27
- Justice Bill: First Stage, 121
- Justice Bill: Second Stage, 297, 300, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 314, 316, 317, 319
- Juvenile Justice: Education, 395, 396

K

Key Stage Assessments, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259
 Kilcooley: 3G Football Pitch, WA391

L

Labour Mobility: Cross-border Possibilities, 149
 Land Banks: East Antrim, WA394
 Landlord Registration Scheme, WA61
 Language and Communication Service, WA194
 Learning Disabilities Complex: Oakridge, Dungannon, WA251
 Learning Disabilities: Families, WA363
 Legacy Inquest Cases, 80
 Legal Aid, WA56
 Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill, 400, CS13, CS14
 Legal Aid Costs, WA45, WA50, WA252
 Legal Aid: Fees, WA255
 Legal Aid: Legal Services Commission, WA370
 Legal Aid: Preliminary Enquiry Fees, WA254, WA255
 Legal Aid: Solicitor Advocate Fees, WA255
 Legal Criticism: DOJ, 399, 400
 Legal Highs, 391, 392, WA359, WA372, WA374
 Legal Highs: Dangers, WA255, WA256, WA374
 Legal Highs: Discussions with Other Jurisdictions, WA360
 Legal Highs: Emergency Departments, WA359
 Legal Highs: Speckled Reds, 72, 78, 79
 Legal Representation, WA52
 Less-favoured Area Land, WA76
 Ligoniel Primary School: Pupil Enrolment Numbers, WA167
 Listed Buildings: Glens of Antrim, WA209
 Listed Buildings: North Down, WA335, WA336
 Literacy and Numeracy, WA203
 Live Export Sales: Current Restrictions, WA285
 Livestock Carcasses, WA158, WA159
 Livestock Carcasses: Illegally Dumped, WA4
 Livestock Grazing, WA160
 Long-term Planning: Judgement of Mr Justice Treacy, WA81
 Lough Cowey: Portaferry, WA263
 Lough Neagh, 188
 Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Lignite, WA239
 Lough Neagh Special Protection Area: Unregulated Minerals Extraction, WA21, WA22
 Lough Neagh: Habitats Regulation Assessment, WA340
 Lough Neagh: Mineral Extraction, WA339
 Lough Neagh: Ownership and Control, WA6
 Lough Neagh: Sand Extractors, WA338
 Lough Neagh: Unauthorised Sand Extraction, WA99

M

Mackies: Site Development, WA97
 Magee Campus: Funding, 284
 Maghaberry Prison: Psychiatric Care, WA251
 Maghaberry Prison: Self-harm Incident, WA377
 Magilligan Prison, 74, 75, WA375
 Magilligan Prison: Stakeholder Group, WA377
 Magilligan: Newbuild Prison, 393, 394
 Magistrates Court, WA43
 Maintained Sector Schools, WA8
 Maintenance and Repairs Spending: Western Education and Library Board Area, WA168
 Maintenance Repairs: Strabane District, WA395
 Making Life Better 2013-2023: Strategic Framework for Public Health, 276, 278, 279, 280

Mandarin Language, WA85
 Mandarin: Qualified Teachers, WA88
 Manhole Covers: Non-slip, WA130, WA131
 Marine Bill, WA338
 Marine Environment: Welders, WA90
 Markethill: Main Street, WA155
 Maze/Long Kesh Site, WA281
 Medical Assessments, WA274
 Mental Capacity Legislation, WA362, WA363, WA376
 Mental Health Capacity Bill, WA41
 Mental Health Capacity Bill: Under-16s, 72
 Mental Health Service Provision, WA111
 Mental Health Unit: Omagh, WA357
 Meter Installation: Responsibility, WA62
 Middletown Centre for Autism, WA87, WA190, RWA1
 Migrant Community, WA203
 Migrant Residents, WA153
 Migrants: Housing, WA266, WA267
 Migrants: Housing Patterns, WA388, WA389
 Milk Cup: DCAL Contribution, 196
 Milk: Prices and Quotas, 183, 184
 Millennium Way Project, WA57
 Millennium Way: Lurgan, WA384
 Minerals Permissions Legislation, WA239
 Minimum School Starting Age, WA194
 MLAs with a Disability, WA279
 MLAs: Office Accommodation, WA278
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA99
 Monitoring Rounds: Reallocation, 25, 26
 Moorland: Definition, WA101
 MRI Scanner: Royal Hospital, WA361
 Muscular Dystrophy, WA318
 Museum Visits, WA77
 Musical Instruments for Bands, 191, 192
 Muslim Community, 17, 18

N

National Crime Agency: Northern Ireland, WA256, WA368, WA371, WA376
 National Insurance and Tax Deductions, WA117
 National Minimum Wage, WA90
 NEETS: North Belfast, WA344
 Net Fiscal Balance Report, WA106
 Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults, WA37, WA250
 Neuromuscular Nurse for Adults: Funding, WA251
 Neuromuscular Nurses: Employment, WA38
 Newry: Carbane Development, 350
 NI Railways: Dog/Animal Policy, WA130
 NI Water, WA131
 NICVA Economic Data Report, 19
 Night Classes, 284, 285
 North Coast Transport Infrastructure, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 166
 North Down Training Ltd, WA320
 North Western River Basin Management Plan, WA101
 North/South Language Body, WA163
 North/South Ministerial Council: Environment, 172, 173, 174
 North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes, 372, 373, 374, 375
 Northern Area Plan 2016: Planning Appeals Commission Report, WMS3
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Appointment of Non-executive Directors, WA357
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: The Cottage, Ballymena, WA354

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Inquiry:
Emergency Healthcare, WA364
Northern Ireland Tourist Board, WA325
Nursery Places: Upper Bann, WA82
Nurses: Recruitment, WA34
Nursing: Investment, 70, 71

O

Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 122
Occupational Therapist Advice: Schools, WA80
Omagh Fire Station, WA250
Omagh: Local Enhanced Hospital, WA358
On-the-runs: Administrative Scheme, 77, 78
On-the-runs: Ministerial Briefings, 79
Open Championship: Royal Portrush, 149, 150, WA326
Orangefest, 192, 193
Organ Donation, WA30
Organ Donations/Transplants, WA41
Organ Transplants: Children, WA354
Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting List, WA119
Otto Bock C-leg Trial: Waiting Time, WA119
Out-of-hours Service: Kilkeel Health Centre, WA357
Out-of-hours Service: Southern Health and Social Care Trust, WA249

P

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services, WA352, WA365
Paediatric Orthopaedics, WA40
Pancreatic Cancer Patients: Treatments, WA29
Pancreatic Cancer: Clinical Nurse Specialists, WA29
Pancreatic Cancer: Dieticians, WA29
Pancreatic Cancer: Early Diagnosis, WA28
Pancreatic Cancer: Improvement of Treatment, WA112
Pancreatic Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA28, WA29
Paracetamol: Prescriptions, WA115
Parades: Criminal Justice Issues, 399
Parading, 394, 395
Parading Season, 77, 239
Parading: Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386
Park-and-ride Scheme: Dungannon, WA131, WA384
Park-and-ride Schemes: Greater Belfast, WA143
Parkinson's Disease: Specialist Nurses, WA246
Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, WA63
Parliament Buildings: Carbon Footprint, 84
Parliament Buildings: Community Inclusion, 82, 83
Parliament Buildings: Disabled Access, 84
Parliament Buildings: Educational Visits, WA396
Parliament Buildings: Local Goods, WA62
Parliament Buildings: Official Invitations, WA279
Parliament Buildings: School Visits, 81, 82
Patients: '10,000 Voices: Improving the Patient Experience', WA364
Patients: Placement in Border Areas, WA112
Patients: Transfer, WA113
Pay Issues: Belfast Trust, 73
Payroll Systems: Health and Social Care Trusts, WA112
Pesticide and Planting Restrictions, WA287
Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme, WA38, WA353, WA355, WA365
Photovoltaic Payback: Public Buildings, 355

Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (NI) 2000, WA339
Planning Appeals Commission, WA334
Planning Application E/2013/0093/F, WA338, WA339, WA340
Planning Application J/2011/0081, WA339
Planning Application L/2011/0079/O, WA336
Planning Applications: Information Process, WA23
Planning Applications: Target Times, WA240
Planning Applications: Timeliness, WA331
Planning Enforcement Cases, WA332
Planning Fees, WA237
Planning Service: Craigavon, WA343
Planning Service: Staff Relocation, 349
Planning: CTY 10, WA105
Planning: Response Rates, WA101
Poker: Legislation, WA394
Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 344
Police Ombudsman: Funding Request, 398, 399
Police Pensions, WA123
Police Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA253
Police: Pension Scheme, WA375
Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, 398
Policing Board: Adult Survivor Award Applications, WA254
Politics Modules, WA14
Pollution Incidents: Muckamore Bridge, WA337
Portavoe Reservoir, WA59, WA143
Portavoe Reservoir: Cost of Repairing, WA58
Portavoe Reservoir: Drainage Operation, WA383
Portavoe Reservoir: Fauna and Wildlife, WA129
Post-primary Education in County Fermanagh, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327
Post-primary Places, WA314
Post-primary Schools: Upper Bann, WA82
Poultry Beak Trimming, WA3
Poultry Sheds: Planning Approval Delays, WA22
PPS 21 Definition: Farm Business, WA341
Pregnancies: Guidance on Terminations, WA248
Preliminary Enquiries, WA370
Preliminary Investigations/Mixed Committals, WA51
Preschool Places: Criteria, 242, 243
Preschool Places: September 2014, WA82
Prescription Charges, 392, WA32
Prescriptions, WA116, WA358
Prescriptions: Number Issued, WA248
Prescriptions: Repeat, WA120
Prescriptions: Single and Multiple Items, WA116
Primary School: Belfast City Hospital Site, WA197
Primary Schools: Admission Criteria, WA10
Primary Schools: Admissions, WA196
Primary Schools: Places, WA83
Primary Schools: Health Checks for Children, WA41, WA42
Prison Officers: Compulsory Redundancy and Retraining, WA55
Prison Officers: Retirement, WA255
Prison Officers: Retraining, WA254
Prison Service: Chaplaincy, 397
Prison Service: Chief Finance Officer, WA54
Prison Service: Code of Conduct and Discipline, WA42
Prison Service: Lisnevin Site, WA368
Prison Service: Sickness Absence, 78
Prison Service: Staff Criminal Offences, WA127, WA128
Prison Service: Staff Duties, WA54
Prison Service: Staff Entitlements, 398

Prison Service: Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Policy, WA376
 Prison Service: Voluntary Early Retirement, WA375
 Prisoners: Absconding, WA378
 Prisoners: Bullying, WA45
 Prisons: Discipline, WA124
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland, WA367
 Probation Board for Northern Ireland: Grants, WA367
 Procurement Contracts: DCAL, WA164
 Procurement Contracts: DETI, WA324
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA158, WA189, WA275, WA332, WA393
 Programme for Government: Implementation, WA352
 Prostate Cancer: Raising Awareness, WA36, WA37
 Prostitution: Project Steering Group, WA51, WA123
 Protocols, 143
 PSNI: Complaints, 396
 PSNI: Disclosure Obligations, WA42
 PSNI: Districts, 396, 397
 Public Bodies (Abolition of Food from Britain) Order 2014: Assembly Consent Motion, 357, 358
 Public Expenditure, WA106
 Public Health Framework, 392
 Public Petition: Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen: Closure, 168
 Public Petition: Detoxification Provisions: Foyle, 329, 330
 Public Petition: Loane House, Dungannon, 359
 Public Petition: ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria, 329
 Public Procurement: SMEs, 350, 351, 352
 Public Protection Arrangements, WA52
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Car Parking Charges, WA165
 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: Parking Spaces, WA165
 Public Sector Reform, 352, WA25
 Public Service Vehicles (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1985, WA22
 Public Services: Provision, WA78
 Pupil Expenditure, WA9, WA10, WA188
 Pupils: Year One, North Down, WA10

Q

Qualifications Equivalence Service, WA199
 Queen's Parade, Bangor, WA277, WA392
 Queen's University, WA321
 Queen's University: Centre for Doctoral Training, WA203

R

R&D: Economic Benefits, WA97
 Racial Equality Strategy, 20, 234, 235
 Racism: Young People, WA197
 Racist Attacks: DOJ Action, 79
 Railway Station and Bus Depot: Ballymena, WA381
 Rate Relief: Amateur Sports Clubs, WA24
 Rate Relief: Shop Windows, WA24
 Rates: Arrears, WA348
 Rates: Business Rates, WA108, WA109
 Rates: Domestic Rebates or Exemptions, WA347
 Rates: Liability, WA348, WA349
 Ravenhill Rugby Ground, WA237, WA238
 Red Kites: Katesbridge Area, WA338
 Redundancies: DEL Assistance, 286
 Reform of Local Government: Transfer of Land, WA264

Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014, 137, 139, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158
 Regional Development: Working Paper 2013/20, WA95
 Reid and Wright Printers: Former Site, WA275
 Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, WA25
 Renal Unit, WA38
 Renewable Energy, WA96
 Renewable Energy Projects, WA19, WA22
 Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, WA329
 Renewables Obligation Certificates, WA324, WA325
 Research and Development, WA326
 Reservoirs Bill, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7, CS8, CS9, CS10, CS11, CS12
 Reservoirs Bill: Full Cost Recovery, WA286
 Reservoirs: North Down, WA386
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA261
 Residents Parking Schemes: Outside Belfast, WA256
 Resurfacing: Bangor, WA262
 Resurfacing: Causeway Road, WA379
 Resurfacing: Donaghadee, WA381
 Resurfacing: Holywood, WA386
 Resurfacing: Millisle, WA381
 Retrofitting, WA103
 Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland: Stage 2 Report, 360, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367
 River Faughan: Hydroelectric Scheme, WA104
 River Faughan: Special Area of Conservation, WA104
 Road and Traffic Schemes: West Belfast, WA262
 Road Gullies, WA385
 Road Resurfacing: Total Spend, WA57
 Road Safety Measures, WA258
 Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage, 123
 Roads Service: Ballymena, WA385
 Roe House: Forced Strip Searches, WA54
 Roe Valley Country Park: Visitor Numbers, WA349
 RQIA: Unscheduled Care Review, 393
 RUC GC Widows' Association, 397, WA126
 Rural Borewells Scheme, WA59
 Rural Crime, 80
 Rural Development Programme, 190, WA72, WA76
 Rural Development Programme: Match Funding, 189
 Rural Transport Agencies: Non-core Funding, WA263
 Rural Transport Fund, WA387

S

Safefood Corporate Plan and Business Plan, WA35
 Sandy Row Boxing Club, WA78
 School Closures: New School Uniforms, WA11
 School Maintenance and Repairs, WA302
 School Reports: Access by Absent Fathers, WA316
 School Starting Age, WA189
 Schools, WA192
 Schools: 20 mph Limit, 142
 Schools: Capital Build Projects, 244
 Schools: Capital Building East Londonderry, WA312
 Schools: Capital Funding in North Down, WA310
 Schools: Capital Projects, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275
 Schools: Development Proposals, WA317
 Schools: Disadvantaged Communities, 245
 Schools: Diversity Programmes, 246
 Schools: East Antrim, 244
 Schools: Formal Intervention, WA83
 Schools: Intervention Stage, WA85
 Schools: Lisanelly Campus, WA317

- Schools: Local Produce, WA315
 Schools: Maintenance and Repairs, WA296
 Schools: New Capital School Builds in North Down, WA316
 Schools: Small Works Contracts, WA316
 Schools: Solar Panels, WA312
 Schools: Transformation or Closure, WA317
 Seagoe Primary School, WA195
 Secret Deals: Victims' Commissioner's Comments, 21
 SEELB: Membership, 245
 Serotonin, WA122
 Serotonin: Classification, WA37
 Sewage Odours: Enniskillen, WA146
 Sewage Pumping Station at Derryhale: Upgrade, WA58
 Sewer Overflow: Muckamore Bridge, WA385
 Sewerage and Drainage Systems: Derry, WA261
 Sewerage Works: Greystown and Sicily Park, WA260
 Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, 225, 226, 227
 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Victims, WA127
 Sexual Orientation Strategy, 237
 Shared Education: Funding, WA23
 Shared Future Strategy, WA281
 Shared Services, WA353
 Single Farm Payment: Appeals, WA287
 Single Farm Payment: Claims, WA4
 Single Farm Payment: Distribution, WA74
 Single Farm Payment: Flat Rate, WA74
 Single Farm Payment: Future Allocations, 184, 185
 Single Farm Payment: Impact Assessment, WA2
 Single Farm Payment: Submission, WA1
 Single Farm Payment: Unpaid, WA2
 Skin Camouflage Services, WA247, WA350
 Slurry Mixing Operations: Safe Practice, WA159
 Slurry Tanks: Safety, WA160
 Small Businesses: North Down, WA91
 Social Clauses, 353, 354
 Social Housing: Allocation, WA269
 Social Housing: Glengormley, 290, 291
 Social Housing: Grosvenor Barracks Site, WA152
 Social Housing: Hollywood, WA276
 Social Housing: Provision, WA389
 Social Housing: Taughmonagh, WA394
 Social Housing: West Belfast, WA391
 Social Investment Fund, WA155, WA281, WA282, WA285
 Social Investment Fund: Capital Projects, WA284
 Social Investment Fund: East Belfast, WA156
 Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014, 8, 9, 10
 Social Work: 24/7 Access, 73
 Social Workers, WA359
 Solicitors: Complaints, WA107
 South Antrim Community Transport, WA387
 South West Acute Hospital and Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA26
 South West Acute Hospital: Maintenance Costs, WA358
 South West Regional College, WA200
 Speak Up and Save a Life, WA364
 Special Educational Needs, WA186
 Special Educational Needs: Statements, WA80
 Sport: Adult Involvement, WA164
 Sport: Children Involvement, WA164
 Sporting Facilities: Regent House School, Newtownards, 194, 195
 Sports Facilities: Girdwood, 196
 Springfarm Rath, Antrim, WA238
 St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena, WA191
 St Patrick's Barracks, WA156
 Staff Vehicles: DHSSPS, WA350
 Standing Orders 31, 35 and 37: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage, 176, 177
 Statutory Care Homes: New Admissions, WA250
 Statutory Off-road Notification (SORN), WA336
 Stephen McCook, WA55
 Strabane Area: Commercial Investment, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism Jobs, WA20
 Strabane Area: Tourism-generated Revenue, WA21
 Strabane/Lifford Border Region: Investment, WA20
 Strabane: Visitors, WA19
 Strategic Investment Board, WA1
 Strategic Planning Policy Statement, WA341
 Strategic Service Reform, WA351
 Street Lighting, WA57, WA58
 Students: Retention Rates, 287
 Suicide Prevention Projects, WA365
 Suicides in Custody, WA44, RWA2
 Superinjunctions, WA45
 Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2014-15, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51
 Supported Housing Programme: Greenisland House, WA37
 Supported Living Schemes: North Down, WA247
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Booklet, WA43, WA252
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Proceedings, WA368
 Supporting Prisoner-at-risk Process, WA377
- ## T
- Tamboran Resources, WA94
 Tattoo Removal, WA358, WA359
 Taxi Drivers: Fare History, WA237
 Taxi Drivers: Fixed Penalty Notices, WA238
 Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Functions, WA332
 Taxi Licensing: Relocation of Jobs, WA332
 Taxi Licensing: Staff Locations, WA331
 Taxis Act (NI) 2008: Implementation, WMS2
 Taxis: Public Hire at Belfast City Hall, WA56
 Teacher:Pupil Ratios, WA82
 Teachers: Cost-based Redundancy Exercise, 294, 295, 296
 Teachers: Exemption at Secondary-level Education, WA318
 Teachers: Redundancies, WA87, WA312
 Teachers: Redundancy Offers, WA314
 Teachers: Redundancy Payments, WA315
 Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy, WA12
 Teachers: Voluntary Redundancy Requests, WA301
 Teenage Dating Violence, WA121
 Telephone Enquires: System Failures, WA285
 Temporary Classrooms: North Down, WA86
 Testicular Cancer, WA361
 Tidal Urban Clearway Scheme: Antrim Road, Belfast, WA130
 Tombstoning: Injuries, WA363
 Tourism: Commonwealth Games, WA98
 Tourism: Expenditure, WA322
 Tourism: Giro d'Italia, WA98
 Tourism: Jobs, WA345
 Tourism: Public Consultation, 400, 401, 402, 403
 Tourism: Signature Projects, WA328
 Tourism: Upper Bann, WA324
 Town Centre Car Parks: Christmas Shopping, WA380
 Traffic Chaos: Strabane, 143
 Traffic Light System: Dungannon, WA262, WA263
 Traffic Weight Restrictions, WA132
 Traffic-calming Measures, 139, 140

Traffic-calming Measures: Expenditure, WA57
 Traffic-calming Measures: Holywood, WA386
 Trafficking: Associated Sexual Charges, WA123, WA375
 Training for Success, WA205
 Training Programmes, 190, 191
 Transforming Your Care, WA41, WA351
 Transforming Your Care: Sinn Féin U-turn, 73
 Transitional Family Support Services: West Belfast, 415, 416, 417, 418
 Translink: Employees Community Background, WA144
 Transport Infrastructure: County Fermanagh, WA380
 Transport Infrastructure: Portrush, 144
 Transport: Mid-Ulster, WA144
 Transport: Public Attacks, WA146
 Tree Diseases, WA76
 Tree Diseases: Update, 189, 190
 Trial Process: Total Cost, WA54
 Tri-council Fisheries Group, WA287
 Tyres: Illegal Dumping, 349

U

UK Rare Disease Strategy, WA113
 Ulster Farmers' Union, WA286
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Belfast, WA78
 Ulster-Scots Agency: Budget, WA79
 Unanswered Questions, WA330
 Unemployment Statistics: Fermanagh District Council Area, WA199
 Unemployment: Claimant Count, 286
 Unemployment: North Down, WA202
 Uniforms and Sports Gear: Stock, WA7
 Universal Credit: GB Claimants, 293
 Universities: Public Bodies, WA15
 Unscheduled Care, WA40
 Urban Development Grant Scheme, WA392
 Urban Development Grants, WA276
 Urology Nurse: Funding, WA39

V

Veterinary Offices: Londonderry and Limavady, WA157
 Veterinary School: Coleraine, 281
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA282
 Victims and Survivors: Benefit Entitlement and Taxation, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Allocation, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Funding Cycle, WA283
 Victims and Survivors: Gateway Process, WA275
 Victims and Survivors: Housing, WA276
 Victims and Survivors: Offer Letters, WA282

Victims and Survivors: Support and Financial Assistance, WA156
 Victims of Crime, 395
 Victims: Apologies, 22
 Visually Impaired People, WA60
 Voting, WA80, WA89

W

Wakehurst: Severe Flooding, WA60
 Walking, WA79
 Walled City Tattoo: Londonderry, WA288
 Waste Treatment Works: Ballyclare, WA386
 Waste: Exports to Spain, WA208
 Water Bill, WA144, WA145
 Water Treatment: Electricity Costs, 144
 Welfare Reform, 238, 239, 281, 282, 288, 289
 Welfare Reform: Block Grant Reductions, 387, 388
 Welfare Reform: Cost to Health Service, WA110
 Welfare Reform: Financial Penalties, WA349
 Wheelchair Accessible Scales, WA359
 Wildlife Poisoning: Investigation, WA337
 Wind Energy, 347, 348
 Wind Farm Development Project, WA5
 Wind Farms, WA326
 Window Replacement: East Antrim, 289, 290
 Woodburn Forest: Oil and Gas, WA241
 Woodlands Speech and Language Unit, WA80
 Work and Families Bill: Extension of Committee Stage, 175
 Work Capability Assessment Form, WA393
 Work Capability Assessments, WA269
 Workers' Educational Association, WA198
 World War I: Commemoration, WA166
 World War I: Commemoration Funding, WA77
 World War I: Schools Commemoration, WA88

Y

Young Farmer Scheme, WA159
 Young Farmers, WA75
 Youth Employment Scheme, WA13

Z

Zero-hours Contracts, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, WA129, WA201, WA371, WA372

Strangers' Index

Brazier, Mr Kieran

Committee Stages

Reservoirs Bill, CS1, CS2, CS8, CS9

Committee Clerk, The

Committee Stages

Reservoirs Bill, CS7

Porter, Mr David

Committee Stages

Reservoirs Bill, CS2, CS3, CS7, CS8, CS9, CS9

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 9 June 2014

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

2. Matter of the Day

2.1 Farming tragedy at Dunloy

Mr Jim Allister made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the farming tragedy at Dunloy. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Statement – Public consultation on consumer representation in Northern Ireland

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster, made a statement regarding the public consultation on consumer representation in Northern Ireland, following which she replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

3.2 Motion – Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.3 Motion – Supply Resolution Main Estimates 2014-15

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves that a sum, not exceeding £8,411,921,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund, for or towards defraying the charges for Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31st March 2015 and that resources, not exceeding £9,168,609,000, be authorised for use by Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for the year ending 31st March 2015 as summarised for each Department or other public body in Columns 3 (b) and 3 (a) of Table 1.3 in the volume of the Northern Ireland Estimates 2014-15 that was laid before the Assembly on 28th May 2014.

Minister of Finance and Personnel

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) 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 deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness. The junior Minister, Ms Jennifer McCann, also answered a number of questions.

4.2 Finance and Personnel

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton.

5. Executive Committee Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Supply Resolution Main Estimates 2014-15

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

*The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support nemine contradicente.*

5.2 First Stage - Budget (No.2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, introduced a Bill to authorise the issue out of the Consolidated Fund of certain sums for the service of the year ending 31st March 2015; to appropriate those sums for specified purposes; to authorise the Department of Finance and Personnel to borrow on the credit of the appropriated sums; to authorise the use for the public service of certain resources (including accruing resources) for the year ending 31st March 2015; and to repeal certain spent provisions.

The Budget (No.2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15) passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.24pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

9 June 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 4 – 9 June 2014

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

Food from Britain - Annual Report and Accounts 2010-11 (For the year ended 31 March 2011) (DARD).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2014/151 The Foot and Mouth Disease (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DARD).

S.R. 2014/152 The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (Northern Ireland Prison Service – Prison Order and Discipline) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ).

S.R. 2014/154 The Optical Charges and Payments (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2014/158 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment No.2) and Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2014/159 The Misuse of Drugs (Designation) (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2014/162 The Social Security (Recovery of Benefits) (Lump Sum Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S.R. 2014/167 The Child Support (Great Britain Reciprocal Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

For Information Only:

S.R. 2014/157 The Road Races (Dungannon Bush Motorcycle Race) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

Planning Reform & Transfer to Local Government: Proposals for Subordinate Legislation - The Planning Act (NI) 2011 - Phase 1 Public Consultation (DOE).

The Draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and Model Standing Orders (DOE).

Consultation on a Scheme of Continuous Enforcement of Motor Insurance (DOE).

Consultation on Planning Policy Statement 22 'Affordable Housing' (DOE).

Consultation on Draft Northern Ireland Legislation - The Marine Conservation (Fixed Monetary Penalties) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 10 June 2014

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

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.2 Motion – Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Minister for Employment and Learning

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

2.3 Second Stage – Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved the Second Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15).

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.34pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

3. Question Time

3.1 Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots.

3.2 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

3.3 Assembly Commission

Questions were put to, and answered by, members of the Assembly Commission.

4. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

4.1 Second Stage – Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15) (Cont'd)

Debate resumed on the Bill.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Budget (No. 2) Bill 2014 (NIA 36/11-15) passed Second Stage with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5. Adjournment

Mr Fearghal McKinney spoke to his topic regarding cancer services in South Belfast.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 8.41pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

10 June 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 10 June 2014

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
 - Southern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13 (DHSSPS).
 - Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust Funds 2012-13 Held by Southern Health and Social Care Trust (DHSSPS).
5. Assembly Reports
 - NIA 132/11-15 Report on the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process (Committee for Education).
 - NIA 183/11-15 Report on complaints about the conduct of Mr Gerry Kelly MLA on 21 June 2103 (Committee on Standards and Privileges).
6. Statutory Rules
 - S.R. 2014/168 The New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).
 - S.R. 2014/169 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).
 - For Information Only:**
 - S.R. 2014/160 The Waiting Restrictions (Randalstown) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
 - S.R. 2014/161 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Cathedral Quarter, Belfast) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
 - Fifth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment – A Call for Evidence (DSD).
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 11 June 2014

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	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		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					
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					
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	24.06.14					
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	02.09.14					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/				

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15								
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15		23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14				
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ 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 June 2014

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 First Stage – Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15)

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, introduced a Bill to provide for a single jurisdiction for county courts and magistrates' courts; to amend the law on committal for trial; to provide for prosecutorial fines; to make provision in relation to victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings and investigations; to amend the law on criminal records and live links; to provide for violent offences prevention orders; to make other amendments relating to the administration of civil and criminal justice; and for connected purposes.

The Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15) passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

2.2 Consideration Stage – Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved the Consideration Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill.

No amendments were tabled to the Bill.

Clauses

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 1 to 7 stand part of the Bill.

Schedules

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedules 1 to 3 stand part of the Bill.

Long Title

The question being put, the Long Title was **agreed** without division.

The Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15) stood referred to the Speaker.

2.3 Motion – The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 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 (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 35/11-15)

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 35/11-15).

Chairperson, Committee for the Environment

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.2 Motion – Report on complaints against Mr Gerry Kelly MLA

Following receipt of a valid Petition of Concern (Appendix 1) under Standing Order 28, Members were informed that the vote would be taken on Tuesday 17 June 2014.

Proposed:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges (NIA183/11-15), imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution.

Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

Debate ensued.

3.3 Motion – Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes that 16-22 June 2014 marks Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014; further notes the respective themes of Shared Future and Building a United Community; and expresses its support for both Refugee Week and Community Relations Week, particularly in relation to their shared aim of facilitating positive encounters between diverse cultures in order to encourage greater understanding, overcome hostility and build a shared society.

Chairperson, Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Principal Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy.

4.2 Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, on behalf of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

5. Committee Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Refugee Week 2014 and Community Relations Week 2014 (Cont'd)

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

6. Private Members' Business

6.1 Motion – North Coast Transport Infrastructure

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls upon the Minister for Regional Development to invest in the transport infrastructure at, and leading to, the North Coast to assist the commercial, commuter and tourist sectors of the economy.

Mr G Robinson

Mr J Spratt

Mr G Campbell

Mr A McQuillan

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.31pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

16 June 2014

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 16 June 2014 in relation to the following motion:

Report on complaints against Mr Gerry Kelly MLA

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges (NIA183/11-15), imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution.

- Ms Megan Fearon
- Mr Chris Hazzard
- Mr Cathal Boylan
- Mr Daithí Mckay
- Mr Cathal Ó Hóisin
- Ms Michaela Boyle
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín
- Mr Mickey Brady
- Ms Maeve McLaughlin
- Ms Sue Ramsey
- Mr Raymond McCartney
- Mr Pat Sheehan
- Mr Sean Lynch
- Ms Caitriona Ruane
- Ms Bronwyn McGahan
- Mr Alex Maskey
- Mr Mitchel McLaughlin
- Mr Barry McElduff
- Ms Rosaleen McCorley
- Mr Gerry Kelly
- Mr Declan McAleer
- Mr Oliver McMullan
- Mr John O'Dowd
- Ms Jennifer McCann
- Mr Fra McCann
- Mr Phil Flanagan
- Mrs Michelle O'Neill
- Mr Ian Milne
- Mr Martin McGuinness
- Mr Pat Ramsey
- Mr Colum Eastwood
- Mrs Dolores Kelly
- Mr John Dallat
- Mr Patsy McGlone
- Mr Seán Rogers
- Mr Joe Byrne
- Mr Fearghal McKinney
- Dr Alasdair McDonnell
- Mr Mark H Durkan
- Mr Alban Maginness
- Mr Dominic Bradley

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 11 - 16 June 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Chapter 8.

Licensing of Pavements Cafés Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Chapter 9.

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

The National Fraud Initiative: Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Audit Office).

Funds in Court in Northern Ireland – Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 (Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service).

Land Purchase Account for the year ended 31 March 2013 (Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service).

Annual Report about Special Advisers Employed the Financial Year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (DFP).

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S. R. 2014/163 The Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ).

S. R. 2014/166 The Smoke Control Areas (Exempted Fireplaces) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S. R. 2014/170 The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S. R. 2014/172 The Plant Health (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DARD).

For Information Only:

S. R. 2014/155 The Financial Provisions (2014 Act) (Commencement No. 1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DFP).

S. R. 2014/156 The Social Security (Reciprocal Agreements) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S. R. 2014/164 The Cycle Routes (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S. R. 2014/165 The Waiting Restrictions (Antrim) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S. R. 2014/171 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 17 June 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Committee Business

2.1 Motion – Report on complaints against Mr Gerry Kelly MLA

The motion was debated on 16 June 2014. A valid Petition of Concern was presented under Standing Order 28 on 16 June 2014 in relation to the motion. The vote on the motion was therefore taken on 17 June 2014.

Proposed:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges (NIA183/11-15), imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution.

Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote (Division 1).

3. Public Petition

3.1 Public Petition – Closure of Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen

Mrs Arlene Foster was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition regarding the closure of Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – British Irish Council Summit Meeting

The First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson, made a statement regarding the British Irish Council Summit meeting, following which he replied to questions.

4.2 Statement – North South Ministerial Council Meeting in Environment Sectoral format

The Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H Durkan, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Environment Sectoral format following which he replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

4.3 Further Consideration Stage – Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved the Further Consideration Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill.

No amendments were tabled to the Bill.

The Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15) stood referred to the Speaker for consideration in accordance with section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

5. Committee Business

5.1 Motion – Extension of Committee Stage: Work and Families Bill (NIA Bill 34/11-15)

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 30 November 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Work and Families Bill (NIA Bill 34/11-15).

Chairperson, Committee for Employment and Learning

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.2 Motion (a) – Amend Standing Order 37 – Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

Proposed:

After Standing Order 37, insert –

‘37A. Public Bills: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

(1) If, after the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, and prior to its Final Stage, the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill submits a statement to the Speaker, in writing, asserting—

(a) that, as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill, either a provision of the Bill is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly, or the Bill has a serious technical defect, and

(b) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect,

the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for Exceptional Further Consideration Stage is determined.

(2) A statement submitted to the Speaker under paragraph (1) shall be circulated to all members of the Assembly, as soon as is practicable, and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

(3) An amendment proposed to a Bill at Exceptional Further Consideration Stage shall only be selected if the Speaker is satisfied—

(a) that the amendment is intended either -

(i) to bring the Bill within the legislative competence of the Assembly, or

(ii) to correct any serious technical defect;

(b) that the proposed amendment deals with a matter specified in the statement under paragraph (1)(a) and which has arisen as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill; and

(c) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect.

(4) Subject to paragraphs (1) to (3) above, the provisions of Standing Order 37 and Standing Order 39 shall apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage of a Bill as if in those Standing Orders for ‘Further Consideration Stage’ there were substituted ‘Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5.3 Motion (b) – Amend Standing Order 31 – Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

Proposed:

In Standing Order 31 line 1, after ‘33(1)’ insert –

‘37A,’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5.4 Motion (c) – Amend Standing Order 35 – Exceptional Further Consideration Stage**Proposed:**

After Standing Order 35(19) insert –

‘(19A) Paragraphs (17) to (19) apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage as they do to Further Consideration Stage.’

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5.5 Motion – Report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15)**Proposed:**

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15); and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Chairperson, Committee for Education

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.30pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

6. Question Time**6.1 Agriculture and Rural Development**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.

6.2 Culture, Arts and Leisure

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

7. Committee Business (Cont'd)**7.1 Motion – Report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15) (Cont'd)**

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 2).

8. Private Members' Business

8.1 Motion – Integrated Education

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the High Court ruling on the judicial review taken by Drumragh Integrated College; welcomes the reaffirmation of the statutory duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 “to encourage and facilitate integrated education”; further welcomes the Court’s confirmation that integrated education, as referred to in Article 64, means a standalone concept envisaging the education of children together at the same school rather than in a school which has a predominately Catholic or Protestant ethos; and calls on the Minister of Education to place Article 64 at the heart of educational planning and to publish guidance within his own Department and beyond to ensure that this is the case in departmental decisions when planning for education.

Mr T Lunn

Mr C Lyttle

Mr S Dickson

Ms A Lo

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** (Division 3).

9. Adjournment

Mr Gordon Dunne spoke to his topic regarding the Bangor Health and Well-Being Centre.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.17pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

17 June 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

17 June 2014
Division 1

Motion – Report on complaints against Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (vote on the motion without further debate)

Proposed:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges (NIA183/11-15), imposes upon Mr Gerry Kelly MLA the sanction of exclusion from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days beginning on the Monday after the resolution.

Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 56

Noes: 37

AYES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Other

Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs Overend and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Nationalist

Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Ms S Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Lynch and Ms Ruane.

Total Votes	93	Total Ayes	56	[60.2%]
Nationalist Votes	37	Nationalist Ayes	0	[0.0%]
Unionist Votes	49	Unionist Ayes	49	[100.0%]
Other Votes	7	Other Ayes	7	[100.0%]

The Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote.

Northern Ireland Assembly

17 June 2014
Division 2

Motion – Report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15)

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15); and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Chairperson, Committee for Education

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 56

Noes: 27

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr I McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Newton and Mr Rogers

NOES

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, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Ms S Ramsey, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan

The Motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

17 June 2014
Division 3

Motion – Integrated Education

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the High Court ruling on the judicial review taken by Drumragh Integrated College; welcomes the reaffirmation of the statutory duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 “to encourage and facilitate integrated education”; further welcomes the Court’s confirmation that integrated education, as referred to in Article 64, means a standalone concept envisaging the education of children together at the same school rather than in a school which has a predominately Catholic or Protestant ethos; and calls on the Minister of Education to place Article 64 at the heart of educational planning and to publish guidance within his own Department and beyond to ensure that this is the case in departmental decisions when planning for education.

*Mr T Lunn
Mr C Lyttle
Mr S Dickson
Ms A Lo*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 29

Noes: 40

AYES

Mr Agnew, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Dr Farry, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr O’Dowd, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Dickson and Mr McCarthy

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Newton and Mr G Robinson

The Motion was **negatived**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

**Papers Presented to the Assembly on
17 June 2014**

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules

For Information Only:

7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
Consultation Paper on the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and Revisions to Associated Regulations (DARD)
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 18 June 2014

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	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					
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					
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	24.06.14					
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		

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 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				

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 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ 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 June 2014

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 – Consultation on Zero Hours Contracts

The Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, made a statement regarding the consultation on Zero Hours Contracts, following which he replied to questions.

2.2 Motion – The draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notification Requirements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3. Committee Business

3.1 Motion – Prayer of Annulment - The Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (SR 2014/150)

The following motion stood on the Order Paper in the name of the Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development.

Proposed:

That the Jobseeker's Allowance (Schemes for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (SR 2014/150) be annulled.

Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

The Motion was **not moved**.

4. Private Members' Business

4.1 Motion – Bon Secours Sisters' Institution in Tuam

Proposed:

That this Assembly acknowledges the scandal that occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' institution in Tuam, Co Galway, where almost 800 children died whilst in the care of a religious order and were placed in a mass unmarked grave over a period of five decades; notes the intention of the Dublin government to take steps to establish the best course of action to investigate the deaths of these children and the appalling manner of their interment; recognises that the abusive practices which occurred at the Bon Secours Sisters' mother and baby care home were not unique and were replicated in similar institutions across the island of Ireland; and calls for all government departments and their agencies, as well as religious orders, to proactively co-operate with any investigation that takes place to establish the truth behind this scandal.

Mr B McElduff

Ms M Fearon

Ms B McGahan

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The sitting suspended at 1.50pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm with the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the First Minister, Rt Hon Peter Robinson. The junior Minister, Mr Jonathan Bell, also answered a number of questions.

5.2 Education

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

6. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Motion – End of Key Stage Assessments

Proposed:

That this Assembly expresses concern that principals and teachers in schools no longer have any confidence in end of Key Stage Assessments; notes with concern that the Department of Education's and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's approach to end of Key Stage Assessments is not fit for purpose; and calls on the Minister of Education to halt the present process, review other Assessment For Learning tools that schools currently use and introduce a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning.

Mr M Storey

Mr J Craig

Mr R Newton

Mr S Moutray

6.2 Amendment – End of Key Stage Assessments

Proposed: Leave out all after ‘expresses’ and insert:

‘support for end of Key Stage Assessment; notes the endorsement of the principles of the current Assessment system as outlined in the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report; recognises the concern of principals and teachers about some elements of Key Stage Assessments; notes the progress made in recent discussions between the Department of Education and teachers’ representatives in dealing with those concerns; and calls on both parties to redouble their efforts and finalise a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils.’

Mr C Hazzard

Ms M McLaughlin

Mr P Sheehan

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Amendment **fell** (Division 1).

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.15pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

23 June 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

23 June 2014
Division 1

Motion – End of Key Stage Assessments – Amendment

Proposed: Leave out all after ‘expresses’ and insert:

‘support for end of Key Stage Assessment; notes the endorsement of the principles of the current Assessment system as outlined in the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report; recognises the concern of principals and teachers about some elements of Key Stage Assessments; notes the progress made in recent discussions between the Department of Education and teachers’ representatives in dealing with those concerns; and calls on both parties to redouble their efforts and finalise a system of assessment that helps inform teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils.’

Mr C Hazzard
Ms M McLaughlin
Mr P Sheehan

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 25
Noes: 60

AYES

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Ms S Ramsey, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Moutray and Mr G Robinson.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 18 – 23 June 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
 - Northern Ireland Audit Office Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (NIO)
 - Legislative Consent Memorandum – Childcare Payments Bill (OFMDFM)
5. Assembly Reports
 - NIA 174/11-15 – Report on the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (DOJ)
 - NIA 184/11-15 – Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly and the Appropriate Committees
6. Statutory Rules
 - S. R. 2014/173 The Industrial Training Levy (Construction Industry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DEL)
 - S. R. 2014/174 The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ)
 - S. R. 2014/178 The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ)

For Information Only:
7. Written Ministerial Statements
 - Implementation of the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (DOE)
8. Consultation Documents
 - Consultation on the Draft Home Accident Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland (DHSSPS)
 - A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2024 (OFMDFM)
 - Public Consultation on Zero Hours Contracts (DEL)
9. Departmental Publications
 - Annual Report and Accounts of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (DSD)
 - Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland Resource Accounts 2013/14 (DHSSPS)
10. Agency Publications
 - Youth Justice Agency Business Plan 2014-15 (Youth Justice Agency)

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 24 June 2014

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 – Review of Apprenticeships Policy and Update on the Review of Youth Training

The Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, made a statement regarding the review of Apprenticeships Policy and provided an update on the review of youth training, following which he replied to questions.

2.2 Statement – Major Capital Works

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, made a statement regarding major capital works, following which he replied to questions.

2.3 Statement – Publication of the Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023 'Making Life Better'

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding the publication of the Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023 'Making Life Better', following which he replied to questions.

The sitting suspended at 12.52pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

3. Question Time

3.1 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

3.2 Social Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, Mr Nelson McCausland.

4. Question for Urgent Oral Answer

4.1 Refusal of Applications under the Cost Based Teaching Redundancy Exercise

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, responded to a Question for Urgent Oral Answer tabled by Mr Mervyn Storey.

The Principal Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

5. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Second Stage – Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15)

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, moved the Second Stage of the Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15).

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15) passed Second Stage without division.

6. Adjournment

Mr Tom Elliott spoke to his topic regarding post primary education in County Fermanagh.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 7.59pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

24 June 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 24 June 2014

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
Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland Annual Report 2013-2014 (Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland)
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
S.R. 2014/XXX The Lands Tribunal (Salaries) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ)

For Information Only:
S.R. 2014/175 The Child Maintenance (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 13) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)
S.R. 2014/176 The Roads (Speed Limit) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014
S.R. 2014/177 The Motor Hackney Carriages (Newry) Bye-Laws (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD)
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 25 June 2014

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	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		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					
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				
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
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	
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14						

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 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				

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 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ 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 30 June 2014

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Public Petition

2.1 Public Petition – Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria for M.E. in Northern Ireland

Mr Dominic Bradley was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition regarding the full adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria for M.E. in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Public Petition – Detoxification Provisions in the Foyle Constituency

Mr Pat Ramsey was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition regarding detoxification provisions in the Foyle Constituency.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Final Stage – Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15)

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, moved that the Final Stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15) do now pass.

Debate ensued.

The Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 36/11-15) passed Final Stage with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

3.2 Motion – The draft Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the draft Business Improvement Districts (Miscellaneous) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.3 Motion – The draft Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

Proposed:

That the draft Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The sitting was suspended at 1.54pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm with the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Environment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H Durkan.

4.2 Finance and Personnel

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Assembly Consent Motion: The Public Bodies (Abolition of Food From Britain) Order 2014

Proposed:

That this Assembly consents to the Public Bodies (Abolition of Food From Britain) Order 2014 in the form of the draft laid before the UK Parliament on 6 May 2014.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

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 3.37pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

30 June 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 25 - 30 June 2014

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

Commissioner for Standards Annual Report 2013-2014 (Commissioner for Standards)

Annual Report and Accounts: Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (Professional Standards Authority)

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman – Annual Report 2013-14 (DOJ)

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust – Charitable Trust Fund Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS)

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust – Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS)

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust – Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS)

Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland – Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland)

Annual Report of the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints 2013-2014 (Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints)

Committee on Climate Change (CCC) – Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DOE)

Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR): Annual Report for 2013/14 (DETI)

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S. R. 2014/181 The Police and Criminal Evidence (1989 Order) (Codes of Practice) (Temporary Modification to Code A) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ)

S. R. 2014/182 The Child Support Fees Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)

S. R. 2014/186 The Bus and Coach Passengers Rights and Obligations (Designation of Terminals, Tour Operators and Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD)

S. R. 2014/188 Local Government Pension Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE)

S. R. 2014/189 The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE)

S. R. 2014/191 The Child Support (Ending Liability in Existing Cases and Transition to New Calculation Rules) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)

S.R. 2014/192 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Homeless Claimants) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)

S. R. 2014/193 The Child Support (Modification, Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)

For Information Only:

S. R. 2014/194 (C.13) The Child Maintenance (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 14 and Transitional Provisions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD)

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

9. Departmental Publications

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DARD)

Strategic Investment Board Limited 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts (OFMDFM)

Development of Services for People with a Learning Disability or Mental Illness in Northern Ireland (DHSSPS)

Publication of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's Annual Report 2013-14 (DSD)

Publication of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's Report on the Presumption that Illness is Due to Working Conditions (DSD)

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 1 July 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Public Petition

2.1 Public Petition – Loane House, Dungannon

Ms Bronwyn McGahan was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition regarding Loane House, Dungannon.

3. Committee Business

3.1 Motion – Committee Membership

Proposed:

That Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson replace Mr Samuel Gardiner as a member of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; that Mr Danny Kinahan replace Mrs Sandra Overend as a member of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; that Mrs Sandra Overend replace Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson as a member of the Committee for Education; that Mr Tom Elliott replace Mr Robin Swann as a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; and that Mrs Sandra Overend replace Mr Tom Elliott as a member of the Committee for the Environment, with effect from Friday 4 July 2014.

Mr R Swann

Mrs S Overend

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.2 Motion – Assembly Commission Membership

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 79(4), Mr Samuel Gardiner be appointed to fill a vacancy on the Assembly Commission with effect from Friday 4 July 2014.

Mr R Swann

Mrs S Overend

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – Report on Stage 2 of the Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland

The Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, made a statement regarding the report on Stage 2 of the review of initial teacher education infrastructure in Northern Ireland, following which he replied to questions.

The Principal Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

4.2 Statement – Improving Unscheduled Care

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding improving unscheduled care, following which he replied to questions.

4.3 Statement – North South Ministerial Council in Special EU Programmes Sectoral Format

The Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council in Special EU Programmes Sectoral format, following which he replied to questions.

5. Private Members' Business

5.1 Motion – Demonstrating Respect, Restraint and Tolerance in Contested Parades and Associated Protests

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes, in the absence of a formal agreement on a new way forward for contested parades and associated protests, that it is essential that everyone involved, whether participants, spectators or protesters, demonstrate respect, restraint and tolerance for those of differing opinions.

Mr M Nesbitt

Mr T Elliott

5.2 Amendment

Proposed: At end insert:

'; and calls on all organisations and parties involved, particularly elected representatives, to demonstrate unambiguous adherence to the rule of law.'

Mr C Lyttle

Mr S Dickson

Debate ensued.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

The sitting was suspended at 1.55pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Speaker in the Chair.

6. Question Time

6.1 Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots.

6.2 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

7. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

7.1 Statement – Public Consultation on the Future of Tourism

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster, made a statement regarding public consultation on the future of tourism, following which she replied to questions.

8. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

8.1 Motion – Cancer Research and Treatment

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the prevalence of cancer in Northern Ireland and the efforts made by frontline staff and professionals to counteract the disease; notes the advances in cancer treatment being made here and the achievements of the cancer centre in South Belfast which, in collaboration with the pharmaceutical sector, has made significant and unique strides in bio-medical diagnostic research; applauds the global and local economic and health benefits of such research; acknowledges that the predicted increased rates of cancer dictates that more needs to be done in terms of furthering research and treatment; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to support this work to develop Northern Ireland as a world class centre for cancer research and treatment.

Mr F McKinney

Mr S Rogers

8.2 Amendment

Proposed: After first 'research and treatment;' insert:

'supports efforts to broaden access for local patients to innovative treatments and clinical trials; encourages the establishment of a university-linked Biomedical Research Centre;'

Mr J Wells

Mr G Dunne

Mrs P Cameron

Mr D McIlveen

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

9. Adjournment

Ms Rosaleen McCorley spoke to her topic regarding transitional family support services in West Belfast.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.47pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

1 July 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 1 July 2014

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
 - Driver and Vehicle Agency Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOE)
 - Northern Ireland Environment Agency Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOE)
 - Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (DETI)
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
 - For Information Only:**
7. Written Ministerial Statements
 - 2014 Annual Report on the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government (DSD)
8. Consultation Documents
 - Consultation on the draft Environmental Liability (Prevention and Remediation) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE)
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
 - Managing and Protecting Funds Held in Court (NIAO)
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

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Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 2 July 2014

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	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					
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				
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
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	
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	30.09.14					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 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				

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 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

