

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF  
HOUSE OF KEYS**

**Douglas, Tuesday, 9th February 1999  
at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

The Speaker (the Hon N Q Cringle) (Rushen); Mr L I Singer and Hon A R Bell (Ramsey); Hon R E Quine OBE (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Hon H Hannan (Peel); Mr W A Gilbey (Glenfaba); Mr S C Rodan (Garff); Hon D North (Middle); Mr P Karran, Hon R K Corkill and Mr G T Cannell (Onchan); Messrs J R Houghton and R W Henderson (Douglas North); Hon D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South); Mr R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Messrs J P Shimmin and A F Downie (Douglas West); Hon J A Brown (Castletown); Hon D J Gelling (Malew and Santon); Sir Miles Walker CBE LLD (hc), and Mrs P M Crowe (Rushen); with Prof T StJ N Bates, Secretary of the House.

*The Chaplain took the prayers.*

**Income Tax – Rebate on UK Investments – Question by Mr Houghton**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we turn to our order paper, item 1. I call upon the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

*Can you confirm that Manx residents, who receive a rebate from the United Kingdom Inland Revenue on tax stopped at source on United Kingdom investments, will shortly no longer be able to claim such a rebate?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the Minister for the Treasury, the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Corkill, to reply.

**Mr Corkill:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have assumed that the hon. member is referring to the changes taking place in the United Kingdom in connection with the tax credit on the United Kingdom dividends. It has been possible up until now for persons resident in the Isle of Man who were in receipt of UK dividends to make a claim to the Inland Revenue for a refund of the tax credit attached to the dividend, the amount of the claim being dependent upon their total UK source income.

Under new proposals the tax credit is being reduced from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. At the same time the taxation treatment is to be changed so that in the United Kingdom individuals will no longer be able to claim a refund of the tax credit should they find they have no income tax liability.

This change is coming into effect from 6th April 1999 and will also apply to any claims made to the Inland Revenue by persons resident in the Isle of Man and, indeed, elsewhere in the world. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Houghton:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the Treasury for his reply, but does he agree that this is a severe set-back for Manx people who invest in United Kingdom funds and this is only the first stage of the Labour Government's plans to erode financial relationships with the Isle of Man and other countries throughout the world, and does he have

any proposals to meet with the UK Treasury's officials in an attempt to rectify this very serious situation, sir?

**Mr Corkill:** Mr Speaker, there are no plans to meet with United Kingdom representatives in regard to this issue. It is an issue which is a matter for the United Kingdom to deal with and they have sought to do what they have done. I understand a number of people may be disappointed, but certainly when an investor makes a choice as to where to place his investments, then if that is in a different country then the rules that apply in that country will have to be taken account of, and therefore that is a decision for the investor to make, Mr Speaker.

### **Douglas Corporation Housing – Vacant Houses – Question by Mr Henderson**

**The Speaker:** Item 2, hon. members, and I call upon the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment:

- (1) *How many vacant local authority houses are there currently within the town boundaries of Douglas;*
- (2) *how many of these houses were vacant in each month of 1998;*
- (3) *what is the average period that the vacant houses remained vacant in 1998;*
- (4) *what is the estimated loss in rental from the houses that were vacant in 1998; and*
- (5) *how many people are at present on the Douglas Corporation housing accommodation list?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the Minister for Local Government and the Environment, the hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine.

**Mr Quine:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have sought information from the Douglas Corporation which, as hon. members will appreciate, is a housing authority in its own right.

Now, turning to part (1) of the question, there are currently 48 empty properties out of the Douglas Corporation's total housing stock of 2,272. This equates to 2.1 per cent of the total stock. It does not include those properties which are included in major refurbishment programmes, of which there are 10 at the present time being refurbished.

With regard to the second part of the question, the number of properties empty over the 12-month period January 1998 to December 1998 is as follows: January, 16; February, 15; March, 16; April, 14; May, 14; June, 14; July, 13; August, 13; September, 24; October, 26; November, 29; and December, 32.

Over the 12 months in question the average is 17.6 properties empty per month or, to put it another way, this is 0.8 per cent of the total housing stock. Hon. members will note that the figure for January 1999 is three times higher than the January 1998 figure. No explanation has been supplied for it, nor is any information available as to how long these properties were actually empty.

Concerning the third part of the question, I am advised that the average period to turn round an empty property is currently eight to 12 weeks, but this obviously depends on the condition of the properties when vacated.

On part (4), the information I have is that the rental not passed over during the period 1st January 1998 to 31st December 1998 is £55,672, or 1.4 per cent of the rent collected.

As regards part (5), there are currently 325 applications on the corporation's housing waiting list. Assuming each application equates to one housing unit, this means that the waiting list is equivalent to 14.3 per cent of the corporation's total housing stock, sir.

**Mr Henderson:** Mr Speaker, a supplementary. I thank the hon. minister for his comprehensive reply to that question and, further to the moneys in lost rent, does the Department of Local Government have to meet this loss, which is ultimately spread on to the taxpayer?

**Mr Quine:** Yes, quite clearly the rent not collected represents moneys which are not available to be laid against the costs, so clearly lost rent will represent ultimately a placement of that burden elsewhere.

**Mr Duggan:** Mr Speaker, could I ask the minister, could he look and check into the Douglas Corporation regarding staffing levels to meet the housing needs and repairs, because it was the policy of the corporation at times to pay off painters, et cetera, and it is a concern that people are waiting for houses and maybe the fault is because they do not have workmen?

**Mr Quine:** Mr Speaker, as I pointed out at the outset, Douglas Corporation is a housing authority in its own right. I think it would be quite appropriate for members to make contact with the corporation direct to obtain that type of information. If there is information of a failing on the part of Douglas Corporation to carry out their statutory responsibilities, then that is a situation where this department could become involved.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, could the minister inform us as to what percentage of the rent collected by the Douglas Corporation is held by them for maintenance of their properties, and does he feel that that particular percentage is enough to meet the requirements, bearing in mind that in January 1999 we have 48 local authority houses empty?

**Mr Quine:** The position in regard to maintenance, sir, I think you have to view in two parts. First of all there is the ongoing, what I would call, first-line maintenance to local authority housing, and that is intended to be met through the withholding of 30 per cent of the rent. There is then the second line, or the major area of refurbishment which comes through major refurbishment schemes, and they are, of course, provided for separately and the department holds those funds, or controls those funds, and the local authorities work up projects and make application to draw on those funds. So there are two parts there: 30 per cent is the present element of the rent which is withheld, there is no indication across the board; each local authority has its own views as to how much of the rent it would wish to retain but, taken across the board and on the sampling I have got before me of the views of local authorities, that 30 per cent appears to be adequate, bearing in mind, as I say, there is the major refurbishment project which addressed the large-scale requirements for maintenance.

**Mr Henderson:** Mr Speaker, if the situation was deemed serious enough, would your department be prepared to make an application to the High Court for an enforcement order if a local authority was considered to be managing its housing stock poorly or negligently, sir?

**Mr Quine:** I would not wish to deal in hypothetical situations, sir. This hon. House has been advised as to the powers which our department has. Those powers can be invoked to require information. Those powers can be invoked where there is a failing on the part of the local authority to carry out its statutory duties, but we should always bear in mind that these are popularly elected local authorities, and I would expect the ratepayers, those that put the councillors in place, to react in the first place to correct any deficiencies within their local authorities, but certainly, if a case is made to us - that is, to the department - that there is a serious failing, we will look into that and we will consider, in the light of the information which is collected, what action is required.

### **Police Stations – Closure Plans – Question by Mr Houghton**

**The Speaker:** Item 3, hon. members. Again, I call upon the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

*Does the Isle of Man Constabulary plan to close any more police stations?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the Minister for Home Affairs, the hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Bell.

**Mr Bell:** Mr Speaker, there are no plans to close any of the Island's principal police stations. In relation to the smaller stations, the future of the Port St Mary police station, following the opening of the new police station in Port Erin later this year, is currently under consideration. There are no plans to close any of the other smaller stations.

**Mr Houghton:** Mr Speaker, can the hon. minister comment as to whether he believes that the primary requirement of the public is to see police officers working out of police stations in their own communities? And further, was this not indeed the main issue at the last general election and therefore does he not agree that he is failing in his duty to provide the public with the service and reassurance that they so richly deserve, sir?

**Mr Bell:** No, I do not, Mr Speaker. I believe strongly what the public want is an efficient and effective police force capable of combating any rise in crime which is perceived within the Island. That, I believe, is the goal which the Isle of Man Constabulary is working towards, and I believe we are making progress in achieving that. The fact that some of the previously operating smaller police stations no longer function I do not believe has a major impact on the operating efficiency of the police service itself.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, would the minister not agree with me that he could actually maximise the efficiency within the police force by engaging the services of an auxiliary police force to actually man a lot of these smaller police stations, thereby relieving the pressure on police officers to be doing police work where the people expect to see them, out on the streets?

**Mr Bell:** Mr Speaker, that is a policy which is already being applied by my department. We are working very closely with the Isle of Man Special Constabulary to try and find ways

under which, from time to time, members of the special constabulary will in fact man the desks of operating police stations. They do that almost on a full-time basis now in the Cop Shop in Douglas and we are looking at ways of extending that to other police stations. The alternative would be that either we take serving officers off the streets to man the reception desks in police stations or the service should be granted increased resources to enable us to employ more civilians to actually do the same work.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not agree that we need to revisit the way that policemen are employed and that they should be living in the areas that they police, and is that not the way forward as far as this issue is concerned?

**Mr Bell:** Mr Speaker, that certainly was the case in the past, but I think most people now recognise that patterns of policing are changing and the move away from police officers living in dedicated police houses in the community now is a thing of the past, not only in the Isle of Man but throughout the British Isles. It would obviously be more desirable to have them living in the area, but again, with changing patterns of policing I do not believe that necessarily is going to be the way for the future. We would encourage the Isle of Man Constabulary to look at ways of involving the local officers more in the community, and I think they are now starting to respond to that by way of establishing more community policemen, but I believe the fact of policemen necessarily living in the area really will not make a big difference to the quality of the policing in that particular jurisdiction.

**Mr Cannell:** Mr Speaker, a supplementary, if I may, of the hon. minister. Notwithstanding that he has assured us that there will be no further closures of the smaller police stations, would he not agree, although he accused me of attempting to restore policing by nostalgia, that in fact the public overwhelmingly backed the plan to have community policing? In fact, far from closing more police stations, which, agreed, he has not said he would do, in fact what is required is the opening of further ones on the larger estates of the Island.

**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Bell:** Mr Speaker, I take the point the hon. member makes, and there is no doubt at all that there is strong support in the Isle of Man for community policing. I can remind the hon. member it is one of the main planks of my department's policy to encourage community policing, to encourage greater communication between the Isle of Man police service and the public. That is under way at the moment and certainly, whilst I remain as minister, that policy will remain in place. Simply opening more smaller police stations which are going to be a demand on manpower and financial resources I do not believe will necessarily improve the quality of community policing or the quality of policing generally in those areas.

We, like every other department, have to make the best of the resources which have been made available to us, and I believe strongly that it is far and away more effective to have highly trained, highly paid police officers operating out on the street where the public want to see them rather than sitting behind a desk in a police office. If hon. members feel strongly enough though that that should not be the case, if they wish to see officers taken off the street to man receptions in new police offices, then I need to have the resources to be able to do it. At the moment I do not have the manpower resources nor the financial resources to build more police stations, and I am not convinced at all that simply opening one-man offices, which

is in effect what they would be, on housing estates would necessarily improve the quality of policing on this Island.

**The Speaker:** We are in danger, hon. members, of widening the question. I will take a final supplementary from the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the hon. minister not agree with me that, far be it from using up valuable resources, a community police officer working from a police station - working out of, not living in - would actually boost the profile of community policemen and would actually enhance the policing for an area such as Willaston?

**Mr Houghton:** Well said! (*Interjections*)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has answered but nevertheless the minister to reply.

**Mr Bell:** I cannot agree with the hon. member, Mr Speaker. We have to accept that society on the Isle of Man has changed dramatically over the last few years. The nature of crime has changed dramatically over the last few years and the pattern of policing has responded to those changes. We cannot turn the clock back. Now, if we find, as I have said before, that we have the resources to revisit the concept of one-man police stations scattered around the Island, then that may be something that we can look at, but at the moment we do not have the resources and therefore we cannot consider amending the patterns which are operating at the moment.

I would, though, just like to add one final point, that the impression is being given by the hon. member that we are willy-nilly closing small police stations. My understanding is that it is at least six or seven years since the last small police station was actually closed on the Isle of Man, and we have, as I said at the outset, no plans whatsoever to close any further ones. So it is not an ongoing policy of regular closure of small police stations and police houses. That has not been the case for a number of years and, as I have said, it is not our intention to continue with that policy in the future.

#### **Hyperbaric Chambers – DHSS Support and Funding – Question by Mrs Cannell**

**The Speaker:** Item 4, hon. members. I call upon the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the member for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *Does your department support the use of hyperbaric chambers as an aspect of medical treatment; and*
- (2) *if so, for each of the last 10 years, what financial support has the department provided towards the operation and running costs incurred by the Kevin Gray Memorial Charity in the operation of the hyperbaric chamber?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the hon. member for Health and Social Security, the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, taking the first part of the question, I can advise the hon. member that my department does support the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy for treatment of conditions recognised as benefiting from that.

Looking to the second part of the question, my department has for a number of years provided support funding to the Kevin Gray Memorial Charity, including certain small contributions from the Department of Transport, and the Department of Tourism and Leisure. Such funding amounting to about £235,000 has been provided overall, of which approximately £210,000 relates to the period referred to in the hon. member's question.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his reply but could he ascertain, please, as to what, for each of the last 10 years, was financial support given by his department towards the operating costs? Does he have a figure for that, for each year?

**Mr Karran:** The figures are £4,490 in 1989-90; £4,490, 1990-91; in 1991-92 it was £14,000; in 1992-93 it was £17,000; in 1993-94 it was £17,000; in 1995-96 it was £17,000; in 1996-97 it was £40,000; in 1997-98 it was £40,000; and in 1998-99 it was £40,000.

**Mr Houghton:** Mr Speaker, can my hon. colleague in the department confirm that we have visited the hyperbaric chamber together and have seen for ourselves the extremely high standard of service given by the charity responsible for its operation? Will he confirm that we will be only too happy to work together in the department, alongside our minister, to maintain adequate support to meet the rising financial costs for the enhancement of staffing and operation of this very valuable asset in future years? Would he not agree, sir?

**The Speaker:** I am sure he will say yes to the first part. He may answer the second part of the question.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, I would agree with the hon. member but I do have to say in this hon. House that the health department has many responsibilities and it is a matter of having to put in the list of priorities. I totally agree with the hon. member that I see value in this charity. This charity is very worthy of support, but I have to be honest, the issue is a matter of balancing up the books as far as all the other needs within the health service.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, I thank the minister . . . 'The minister' perhaps is a bit presumptuous - *(Laughter)*

**A Member:** Not yet!

**Mr Cannell:** Do you know something we don't?

**Mrs Cannell:** - but I thank the member for the department for his informative reply to my previous question. Given that the department has provided £17,000 for a period of three, followed by £40,000 for a period of three years, can he confirm whether or not the department intends to increase in the next financial year, as has been the pattern for the last six years?

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, the charity is having considerable difficulty in raising money itself and I do appreciate that that is a major problem that they have got at the present time, and obviously the department is very sympathetic to revisiting the amounts that are involved. We hope that we can raise some more money, but I would hate to give an assurance and then have to backtrack at the later date.

**Mr Cannell:** Mr Speaker, a supplementary, if I may. Would not the hon. member, though, agree with me that the department has more than honoured its obligations in this respect by having 75 per cent of the gross annual funding of this operation provided by it?

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, the hon. member is right. I think that it is an important facility, and if it means the difference between it staying open and closing, then obviously we have got to look at our financial priorities to make sure that this service does not close down for the benefit of the people of Mann.

**Douglas Harbour Link Overhead Walkway – Delay in Completion – Extra Costs –  
Question by Mr Downie**

**The Speaker:** Item 5, hon. members. I call upon the hon. member for Douglas West, Mr Downie.

**Mr Downie:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the Minister for Transport:

- (1) *What was the original completion date for the Douglas harbour link overhead walkway;*
- (2) *what are the reasons for the delay in its completion;*
- (3) *what extra costs have accrued as a result of the delay; and*
- (4) *who will be meeting them?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the Minister for Transport, the hon. member for Castletown, Mr Brown.

**Mr Brown:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The original date for completion of the walkway was 30th October 1998. There are a number of reasons why there has been a delay in completion of the contract.

Firstly, the contractor advised the department that, due to an industrial dispute within the Mersey Docks and Harbours Company, the large floating crane, known as the Mersey mammoth, which was required to secure the deck delivery and for the erection of the walkway deck, was not available to meet the contract programme as originally envisaged. Due to the industrial dispute, an eight-week extension of time was agreed which provided a new completion date of 25th December 1998.

Secondly, on 15th December 1998 the contractor further advised that a second extension of time was required due to variations and additional works, and this amounted to a further three-week extension. As this in turn moved the contract into the Christmas shut-down period which applies to the building industry, this resulted in a further two-week delay.

Furthermore, due to the exceptional weather conditions experienced, a further three-week extension period was required. This therefore meant that as a result of these legitimate delays, as allowed for under such contracts, an extension period to the contract for a further period of eight weeks - that is, for substantial completion by 19th February 1999 - was required.

I can advise the House that the main contractor on the elevated passenger walkway, Charles Brand Limited, have agreed that they will absorb the additional costs within their contract and I would like to take this opportunity to put on record the appreciation of myself and my department to them for agreeing to this course of action.

Finally, I can confirm that this project is expected to be completed within the budget approved by Tynwald Court. Thank you.

**Mr Downie:** Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if he could confirm that the current cost of providing a bus to and from the sea terminal to the *Ben my Chree* costs his department somewhere in the region of £4,000 per month and, given that in all probability the opening of the linkbridge scheme will be delayed by approximately six months, this figure for providing buses could rise to a figure approaching £24,000. Can I ask, is Charles Brand to pay that cost also or is that cost being met by the department?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I see no reference to buses in the question. Nevertheless, the minister may reply if he wishes.

**Mr Brown:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. There is a coach service provided and, as the hon. member will be well aware, it was made clear in Tynwald Court when I sought the approval of Tynwald for the funds that in fact we would pay in the region of £4,000 per month for this service. Whether or not there is a claim due to the contract going over the period is a matter that will have to be considered by the department at a future date.

**Mr Downie:** I would like to ask the minister with regard to the linkbridge itself and given that the most important items of equipment within this development are the two lifts, why has a lift system manufactured by Olympic Lifts been installed, what back-up facilities and maintenance staff currently are available in the Isle of Man, and, in the event of a breakdown, could the minister confirm that people will have to be brought from off-Island to address any such problem?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, again I see no reference to lifts, but the minister may reply if he wishes.

**Mr Brown:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I think when members make statements it is important the minister has the opportunity to correct them. First of all, if the hon. member is making a statement, I think accuracy is important, and Olympic Lifts do not make lifts. The lift is made by Stannah Lifts, and Olympic Lifts are the approved installers of those lifts and they were successful in being awarded that contract.

As far as the ongoing maintenance of the lift is concerned, it will follow a pattern, as I understand it, similar to that within the hon. member's own department, the Department of Local Government and the Environment, which is that there will be a Manx firm - and it is called Manx Lifts on this occasion - who will have a local service agency agreement to maintain the lifts, and when the lift needs a major refurbishment or total works done to it, as is, I understand, usual, the firm will be brought in from across from the main suppliers, who will then undertake that work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Douglas West, a final supplementary, sir.

**Mr Downie:** I would just like to ask the minister, given that there are a significant amount of extra moneys on this particular project and the minister indicated that the contractor had possibly agreed to absorb the cost, should this not be the case, I would like to ask the minister, by what date will the department be invoking any liquidated damages claim?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the hon. minister has already told us that the contractor is meeting the cost and that it would be met within the budget approved by Tynwald. Is that not a fact, minister?

**Mr Brown:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. I think it is, and I think it is very important that we do not have insinuations that give an impression to the public that these contracts are going out of control. The hon. member should be aware, as I am - because his department deals with many contracts as well - that there are safeguards there contractually between (1) the client, which happens to be my department in this case, and (2) the contractor. Anything that we are entitled to under the law or anything that the contractor is entitled to under the law agreement, i.e. the contract, will be dealt with appropriately. As I indicated, we expect this contract to be within the money voted by Tynwald.

### **Procedural**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Court clock now stands at 10.34 and I call upon the hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I move:

*That Standing Order 43(2) be suspended to enable the remaining questions tabled for oral answer at this sitting to be put.*

**Mr Downie:** I beg to second.

**The Speaker:** Are we agreed, hon. members?

**Members:** Agreed.

### **Construction Industry – Initiatives to Attract Employees – Training Course Vacancies – Question by Mr Downie**

**The Speaker:** In that case we turn to item 6 on our order paper and again I call upon the hon. member for Douglas West, Mr Downie.

**Mr Downie:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for Trade and Industry:

- (1) *What new initiatives has your department introduced to encourage or assist persons seeking employment in the construction industry; and*
- (2) *how many vacancies currently exist on apprentice training courses for the construction industry and allied trades?*

**The Speaker:** I call on the Minister for Trade and Industry, the hon. member for Middle, Mr North.

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, within the last year my department has introduced several initiatives to assist local people get employment in the construction industry and to alleviate skill shortages. Our training division gained accreditation by the Construction Industry Training Board and City and Guilds for its pre-vocational training course and, as a result, the division is able to offer National Vocational Qualification assessment to young people who are not ready to enter an apprenticeship. Trainees completing the course can either start in employment with relevant skills and knowledge or progress on to an apprenticeship. Also the training division's building operatives course has similarly received accreditation to enable it to offer National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels 1 and 2. This course provides training and assessment in general construction skills, including health and safety before employment on site.

In September the training centre, in collaboration with Ramsey Grammar School, introduced a pilot scheme to provide year 10 pupils of the school with a new training and assessment option in building craft occupations. The 14-year-olds choosing this option are highly motivated and attend the training centre one afternoon per week throughout their two year course. They are assessed to NVQ level 1. The course will provide an accelerated route to an apprenticeship qualification, and it is hoped that once the pilot has been evaluated the Island's other secondary schools will choose to become involved.

Finally, the training division has continued to expand its range of local skills tests, with the recent addition of slating and tiling to other tests already available. Applicants wishing to register as certificated craftsmen previously had to travel off the Island to undertake this test.

Turning to the second part of the question, Mr Speaker, at the beginning of the 1998-99 programme there was one vacancy in each of plumbing and brickwork, three vacancies in painting and decorating and five in electrical installation. I understand that these vacancies, together with any others which may occur during the year, generally remain unfilled due to the need for apprentices to attend a full year's programme.

**Mr Downie:** Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the minister, how many apprentices are currently involved on courses under the guise of his department and in which particular skills in the construction industry, and is he not concerned at the number of people who are seeking to take up employment as apprentices, and can he advise the department does he intend to review the current system of apprentices and perhaps broaden the net, as it were, and try and advertise for young people or people to retrain to come into the construction industry?

**Mr North:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I fully understand the hon. member's concerns and, as you can see from the initiatives that have been taken already within the training division, we are well aware of this and really would like to see more young people coming into apprenticeships and all the various schemes. Certainly the Ramsey Grammar School initiative has worked extremely well. The hon. member asks how many. The number of current apprenticeships in the first year are 56; in the second year there are 43, and in the third year there are 36. Now, I have a long list: in brickworking there are 11 at the moment in the first year; in carpentry there are 12; in electrical, five; in painting and decorating there are eight; in plumbing there are 11; there is one doing ceramic tiling, two doing glazing and plastering; in roof slating and tiling there is one; and in scaffolding there are three. That is 56. I will not go all through the second and third year.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not agree that our whole problem is about the bottom line, and that is about the money in the hip pocket of the employers, and are we doing sufficient as far as financial reward in order to encourage employers to take on apprentices? Would the minister not also agree that the long-term commitment to employing an apprentice for the apprenticeship scheme, is another concern that a lot of people have within the employers in the Island and he needs to get over that issue as well?

**Mr North:** Yes, Mr Speaker, there is no simple answer to this question. We have to keep working at it, trying to encourage young people with skills to come into these construction trades, and of course assistance to construction companies providing on-the-job training may be offered under the various schemes that we have and other relevant schemes such as the retraining of unemployed persons scheme. There are many, many schemes, and if any of the

members would like to visit the training centre, have an update of what is actually going on down there, some of the tremendous work that has been done. . . I certainly welcome this question this morning, because it does highlight the problem and hopefully will get out to some of the people in the Island that there are tremendous opportunities and we need to - something which is being done through Ramsey Grammar School - try and get them at 14 and encourage them as they are doing into these skilled trades. There is going to be a tremendous shortage of skilled people. The hon. member for Onchan has asked about the wages of that and, quite honestly, yes, there is a temptation for people to enter the finance sector, but not everybody wants to go into white collar jobs.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, would the minister not agree with me that it is an expressed view of the Department of Trade and Industry that the construction of the new hospital would provide a wonderful opportunity for apprentices to be able to train on site for a given period of approximately five to six years? And would he not further agree with me that the Department of Trade and Industry is in point of fact reviewing the whole of the apprenticeship scheme package in order to make it easier for employers to manage, more attractive for would-be-apprentices to enter?

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, I would entirely agree, and the work is ongoing.

**Mr Downie:** Would the minister not accept that for an Island with a construction industry like it has at the moment to be only training 56 apprentices across a whole broad spectrum of trades and many of those coming from government, we first of all have to do something to address this problem? And would the minister be prepared to consider examining a scheme whereby major companies who get involved in government contracts - a percentage of the money that is involved goes towards setting up a proper apprenticeship scheme which could be run in conjunction with the present scheme and perhaps provide a system to bolster the existing shortfall in the situation and provide us with some more skills and more initiative to get out of this problem?

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, my department and myself particularly are always ready to listen to new ideas for training skilled craftsmen. There is a need, we know there is a need, and I hope that all departments who are taking on major capital works will ensure that through their own contract arrangements as many apprentices as possible are taken on.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, could the minister inform this hon. House what grants are available as far as employers taking on apprentices, and would he not also agree, that is not the bottom line as far as solving this issue? We have to give more financial incentives to employers in the building trade to take on more apprentices.

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, I have a long list, if members will bear with me, of schemes that are available for this: there is the craft and technician training scheme; this scheme is designed to ensure the provision of systematic craft and technician training and to alleviate the financial burden on employers, and this replaced a former scheme in 1996. There is the youth training programme; all training allowances for persons under 18 undergoing full-time training are funded from this programme. The scheme for the further training of craftsmen and technicians - the scheme is designed to assist employers. There is an adult training programme. There is a scheme for retraining of unemployed persons, training opportunity schemes for 1985, and if any further money is available on these schemes, because of the

influx of additional apprentices, then we will apply for that money and increase our budget on training. The training budget is well over £1 million at the moment and we will apply for further money if the people are available and if the schemes come up that work.

**Mr Rodan:** Mr Speaker, following the welcome news of the success of the year 10 initiative at Ramsey Grammar School in basic construction courses, can I ask the minister if it is his department's intention to extend the educational programme to all schools, in the Isle of Man, all secondary schools and if he has the full co-operation of the Department of Education to do so?

**Mr North:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the Ramsey Grammar School NVQ initiative has come to the notice of the other secondary schools and two of these have approached the training division to discuss a similar provision. I must emphasise, there is no cost to the school for training or transportation of the pupils to and from the school and the 10 Ramsey Grammar School pupils are currently pursuing the NVQ option, and I would comment that the Department of Education are fully behind this scheme.

**The Speaker:** A final supplementary, the hon. member for Onchan.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not agree that when you are taking on a commitment of a long-term employee and have to guarantee his wages every week, he has to revisit the schemes that provide the employment in the first place as far as the grants are concerned, and will he look into increasing the financial support by employers to take on apprentices, otherwise the only way apprenticeships are going is they are going to go out of the window?

**The Speaker:** I think that is an opinion of the hon. member for Onchan. The minister to reply.

**Mr North:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I sincerely believe that apprenticeships will not go out of the window. We have a positive attitude in the department and we will try and continue to work with the industry, and there are grants available.

#### **Work Permits – Estimate of Applications – Extra Resources to Process – Question by Mr Downie**

**The Speaker:** Item 7, hon. members, again I turn to the hon. member for Douglas West, Mr Downie.

**Mr Downie:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for Trade and Industry:

- (1) *What is the estimated number of applications for work permits which your department expects to receive this year; and*
- (2) *what additional resources will be available to the work permit section to process any increase in the number of such applications?*

**The Speaker:** The Minister for Trade and Industry, the hon. member, Mr North, to reply.

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, during 1998 a total of 9,787 permits were issued. This consisted of some 6,000 new permits while the balance were renewals. The department estimates that

there will be approximately 10,000 applications during 1999 and it is expected that our existing resources will be able to handle this level of throughput.

**Mr Downie:** Mr Speaker, given the statement made by the chairman of the Work Permits Committee on Manx Radio today, where he indicated that it was not possible to check as far as criminal records were concerned and no access was allowed to them because of a situation in the United Kingdom, is the minister happy with the way that the present work permit scheme is conducted, does he not feel that the very object of bringing this scheme in was to protect Manx jobs, and is he satisfied that that original function that the work permit system was brought in for is actually working and being carried out at the moment?

**The Speaker:** The minister may or may not have heard any comments on the radio; nevertheless, I call on the minister to reply.

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, I am happy with the way it is working at the moment.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not agree that it is no revelation that the Work Permits Committee has not been able to get into the police computer in the adjacent isle for the last five or eight years or something like that, and would he not agree that that is the position and has been for many years, and could the minister not also agree that the only people that are at a disadvantage are the Manx people, because we do not have a Rehabilitation of Offenders Bill anyway to help them?

**The Speaker:** Again, hon. members, we are in danger of widening the question. The minister to reply.

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, the answer is 'yes' and 'yes.'

**Mr Downie:** Mr Speaker, would the minister give an undertaking to this House today that if a person on the Isle of Man who is working with a work permit in place commits a criminal offence on the Isle of Man, would his department invoke the removal of that permit and therefore put the person in the position where he had to leave the Isle of Man?

**Mr North:** Mr Speaker, it would purely depend on each individual case, and each individual case will be assessed individually at the time.

**Mr Brown:** Mr Speaker, could the minister confirm how many of the 6,000 permits that were issued were for more than one year?

**Mr North:** No, Mr Speaker, I have not got that figure.

**Mr Downie:** You should know!

### **Battery Hen Farming – Broadcast Statement – Question by Mr Singer**

**The Speaker:** Item 8, hon. members and I call upon the hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry:

*Will you elaborate on your statement broadcast on Radio 4 regarding battery hen farming?*

**The Speaker:** I call upon the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

**Mrs Hannan:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, I am not in a position to elaborate on any statement broadcast on Radio 4 as I have not made one. Thank you. *(Laughter)*

**Mr Singer:** Can I ask, is the hon. minister not aware that approximately two weeks ago a pre-recorded interview she gave in the Isle of Man rejecting the acceptance of EU recommendations to end battery hen farming was used in a national radio programme on cruelty to animals, and how does the minister think this reflects on her department and the Isle of Man in general?

**Mrs Hannan:** No-one has asked me about the European statement on battery farming and therefore I have not made a statement either here to anyone or in the UK to anyone.

**Mr Downie:** Given that the minister indicates that she has not previously made a statement, would she take the opportunity now and make a statement as to what the Isle of Man's position is in view of the fact that the European Community have technically outlawed battery cages?

**Mrs Hannan:** The last statement I made with regard to the battery system of egg production was to this hon. House on 26th January 1999. I was not asked about the position with regard to the European Union. The European Union have not banned production of eggs by battery method. They have suggested a phasing-out period. It is a suggestion by the parliament. The agricultural ministers have to address this fact. There is another added complication in that the World Trade Organisation would be able to overrule the European Union and allow and insist that they allowed the import of battery egg production from other areas other than the European Union and certainly the European Union would want to act on a level playing field.

**Mr Henderson:** Mr Speaker, it was alluded to before by the hon. member for Ramsey that there was a broadcast made in the UK nonetheless on a national channel over there. Could the minister give us some sort of explanation as to what that was, and was she stating government policy at that time?

**The Speaker:** The minister has replied that she did not make a statement. Nevertheless, minister?

**Mrs Hannan:** I have not been approached by anyone on the issue of battery hen egg production. I do not know where the statement came from. I do not know who made the statement using my name. If that was the case I have no idea as to where. . . or even what was said, so I cannot comment on it.

**Mr Rodan:** Mr Speaker, following from the minister's remarks about decisions on battery hen farming in Europe, could she confirm that if the statement of intent of the European Parliament actually becomes a European Commission directive, then this will impact on the Isle of Man, because the subject of the directive will be clearly embraced by Protocol 3 regarding agricultural products and we shall have to comply with the directive?

**Mrs Hannan:** It is a complicated issue, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Protocol 3 allows us to trade with the European Union and if we trade with the European Union we have to abide by their standards and their directives, but we do not trade in eggs with the European Union. The

European Union trade is with us, and if we ban an area of production we cannot ban the import of that production which takes place in the European Union, and so it is difficult from that point of view to when we are not trading. We trade in milk products; we trade in beef. That is why we have brought in the standards in the creamery and in the meat plant - not because we have to, but because we have decided that Protocol 3 allows us to trade and we will trade to their standards and therefore we have an open market within that area, but we do not trade in eggs. The majority of eggs that are imported are battery-produced eggs and the majority of eggs produced in the UK are battery-produced eggs, and I believe it is the same throughout the whole of the European Union.

My department has clearly said on 26th January 1999 that it is our stated wish to bring to Tynwald a farm improvement scheme which will not give support to battery hen producers using that system from the year 2000 and that is our position, but we are still waiting for the report of the select committee, and it would be felt, I think, at this stage to be rather presumptuous to bring that forward while we are still waiting for a report.

**Mrs Cannell:** Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that the minister has just spoken about standards and that she is concerned about standards under Protocol 3 with regard to the meat plant and other areas, are we to understand, then, that the minister does not condone the practice of battery hen production on the Isle of Man? Is that her view and the policy of the department?

**The Speaker:** The minister may reply if she wishes.

**Mrs Hannan:** The law actually states at the moment that as long as people comply to the standards that are in place at the moment, battery egg production can continue and that is the position of my department.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that brings to a conclusion the items for oral answer on your order paper for written answer are items 9 and 10.

### **Isle of Man Constabulary – Establishment of Officers – Question by Mr Houghton for Written Answer**

#### **Question 9**

The hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton, to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

- (1) *What was the establishment of police officers in the Isle of Man Constabulary in 1978;*
- (2) *on how many occasions has that establishment been subsequently increased;*
- (3) *on each of those occasions what was the increase in the establishment; and*
- (4) *do you have any plans to increase further the establishment?*

#### **Answer**

- (1) In 1978 the Isle of Man Constabulary had an establishment of 148 police officers.
- (2) Since 1978, the establishment has been increased on nine occasions.
- (3) On each occasion the increase in establishment has been as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Revised Establishment</u>
-------------	-----------------	------------------------------

1981	6	154
1982	15	169
1983	6	175
1986	4	179
1987	12	191
1988	12	203
1989	6	209
1992	4	213
1998	5	218

(4) The establishment of the Isle of Man Constabulary is under regular review. Any further increase in establishment will be dependent upon an increase in the department's revenue and personnel budgets.

**DoT Projects Approved 1997 to Date – Expenditure – Question by Mrs Cannell  
for Written Answer**

**Question 10**

The hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell, to ask the Minister for Transport:

- (1) *What projects in the constituencies of (a) Castletown, (b) Douglas East and (c) Peel have been approved by your department since 1st January 1997;*
- (2) *in respect of each of these projects -*
- (a) *what has been the total expenditure of public moneys to date, and*
- (b) *what is the estimated total expenditure of public moneys?*

**Answer**

The department has identified the following projects which have been approved by my department since 1st January 1997, as laid out in the accompanying appendix, within the constituencies of (a) Castletown, (b) Douglas East and (c) Peel, including total expenditure to date and estimated total expenditure.

In responding to the question, the department has taken the term 'project' to mean any individual expenditure of £10,000 or above which has involved construction, reconstruction, refurbishment, replacement, new equipment and new build.

Constituency	Project	Total expenditure to date £	% of total	Estimated total expenditure £	% of total
Castletown	Farrants Way – plain and overlay	34,274		34,274	
	Bank Street – reconstruction	43,258		50,000	
	Castle Street – reconstruction	18,380		225,000	
	Janet's Corner estate – new lay-bys	29,791		45,000	
	Douglas Road – new bus shelter	13,642		13,642	
	Mill Road boatpark – phase 2	90,434		90,434	
	Outer breakwater – structural repairs	153,962		153,962	
	The Quay – reconstruction of highway	103,302		103,302	
	Ballalough – footway resurface	12,149		12,149	
	Alexandra Road/bypass – footways	22,900		22,900	

	<b>Total Castletown</b>	<b>522,092</b>	<b>9.80</b>	<b>750,663</b>	<b>8.90</b>
<b>Douglas East</b>	Broadway phase 1	100,264		100,264	
	Broadway phase 2			112,000	
	Strand/Duke Street – new streetscape contribution	30,270		32,770	
	Promenade railings	191,970		250,000	
	Queen’s Promenade walkway phase 1	358,565		358,565	
	Queen’s Promenade walkway phase 2	271,292		350,000	
	North Quay repointing (part only in Douglas East)	15,000		15,000	
	Berth 5 gangway platforms	74,705		74,705	
	Victoria Pier berth 1 – remove ledges/repair	63,055		63,055	
	Refurbishment of harbour control	177,016		177,016	
	New harbour walkway	1,434,117		1,890,000	
	New harbour bridge	1,401,276		3,386,500	
	Demolition of ex-maritime office	10,000		10,000	
	Sea Terminal:				
	– Upgrading of building	370,000		430,000	
	– Passenger facilities – equipment/concourse	130,000		155,000	
	– Upgrading of lift	30,000		30,000	
	– Upgrading of Victoria Pier shelter			75,000	
	– Underpin work on foundations			30,000	
	<b>Total Douglas East</b>	<b>4,657,530</b>	<b>87.45</b>	<b>7,539,875</b>	<b>89.37</b>
<b>Peel</b>	Re-cabling and replacement of light columns	84,054		84,054	
	Construction of security office	14,000		14,000	
	Breakwater regrouting/rendering	48,313		48,313	
	<b>Total Peel</b>	<b>146,367</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>146,367</b>	<b>1.73</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,325,989</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8,436,905</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**The Speaker:** That concludes this morning the order paper in front of the hon. House. The House will now stand adjourned until Tuesday next at 10.30 in Tynwald Court. Thank you, hon. members.

*The House adjourned at 10.59 a.m.*