**1). What is the HBU funding pot for 2014/15? Why has it been cut from previous years?**

The Department’s Historic Environment Division provides a wide range of advice and support to record, conserve and promote the value of the historic environment. Alongside this ongoing support, we have in recent years been able to operate a number of grant schemes, including one available to owners of listed buildings to cover a portion of the cost of necessary works. For 2014/15, the budget for the listed building grant scheme was £4.17M. Given the very significant cuts made to the Department’s budget for 2015/16, we have not been able to allocate budget to the listed building grant scheme in the current financial year. The Minister has however allocated £500k of carrier bag levy funding to six community led conservation projects.

**2).** **The Department, in an FOI response had said that the 2014/15 budget was £4,410,895. Which figure is correct?**

The figure of £4.17m (at the date of the response) was the opening Listed Buildings grant-aid budget for financial year 14/15. The Listed Buildings Grant-Aid closing budget for financial year 14/15 was £4.403m; as at 21/04/2015.

**3). Why is BHARNI no longer available to view online?**

The BHARNI database has been reviewed and updated; it is expected to be back on line in four weeks.

**4). How many urgent works notices/other enforcement action have been issued in last five years? What is the success rate of this actions?**

The Department takes the approach of attempting to work with owners of listed buildings to encourage their proper maintenance. Where this proves ineffective, we move to tiered enforcement measures. In the last five years, 60 Urgent Works warning letters have issued to owners, with 12 Urgent works Notices issued. This has resulted in works being undertaken in approximately two thirds  of these 60 buildings, where owners were - and are - keen to work with the department, to ensure their buildings are safeguarded.

**5). Why has only one building (Sion Stables) been vested by the Department?**

When vesting is undertaken by the department, it is important that the building - after it has been acquired through compulsory acquisition - can be conserved through partnership with others. This means that a Building Preservation Trust, or a similar charity with a central focus on rescuing listed buildings, is willing to take on and complete the necessary repair and conservation of the vested building. In the case of Sion Mills Stable Block, the department entered into negotiations with Hearth, a building Preservation Trust; Hearth entered into a lease arrangement with the department, and has restored the building recently.

Given the significant governance arrangements that need to be put in place when a building is vested by the Department, we seek to work with owners to ensure the effective conservation of our historic environment.

**6). A heritage crime summit was called by former Minister Alex Attwood in 2011 following a fire at Herdman’s Mill. Another fire took place there last week. Post the summit a number of high profile fires were not recorded in the department’s official records despite considerable media coverage. What progress has been made on preventing heritage crime?**

Minister Attwood convened three summits on this issue between 2011 and 2012 and a plan of 12 actions were developed in partnership with key stakeholders at these events.  Key among these was the Department issuing Urgent Works Notices to send out a clear message that it was prepared to take direct  action.  This had an immediate effect of encouraging owners to secure sites. In the subsequent period, the issue  has become less of a problem as prices for metal have dropped considerably (one of the key problems at the time) and, as the economy has started to pick up, it has become more economically advantageous to secure sites earmarked for development. Responsibility for Urgent Works Notices passed from DOE to local councils in April 2015.  The Department continues to work with councils to enforce listed building and planning legislation.

**7). Does the Department acknowledge a link between reducing restoration funding and an increased risk in heritage crime/buildings being added to BHARNI?**

Whilst the  department has reduced budgets, we continue to engage with listed building owners. Our conservation architects have frequent engagement with owners, and provide advice on conservation, repairs, and  securing listed buildings. The frequency of ‘Heritage Crime’ has reduced significantly over the last three years, following on from the steps put in place (see point 5.  above)

**8). Why has the second survey been taken in-house? As a result, is the 2020 completion date for the second survey likely to be reassessed?**

Given the significantly reduced budget for the Department for 2015-16, funds were not available to continue the contract let for the project  and this was terminated in June.  Given the reduction in funding, and the reduction in civil service staffing through the voluntary exit scheme, all Departments are having to make difficult decisions on priorities and allocation of resources. As part of this, the Department is currently reviewing the resources available to progress the Second Survey, options to expedite particular elements of the work, and therefore a revised plan for the Second Survey.

**9). More than 650 buildings have been delisted in the past 20 years. We understand some buildings were delisted because of the installation of plastic windows yet others with plastic windows were also listed in the second survey. Why has this happened? Will this lead to reassessments.**

During this period the Department has been systematically reviewing historic buildings in defined parts of Northern Ireland. The Second Survey includes detailed historical research together with photographic and written recording of both the interior and exterior of the building. This information is then compared to detailed listing criteria published in Annex C of PPS6 ( revised and updated after public consultation in 2011).  No building is delisted solely because of the installation of plastic windows. However, such windows  will reduce the architectural and historical significance  of a building. In some cases buildings are considered to meet the legislative test for listing even though they have such windows.

**10). What are the department’s plans for the future protection of historic buildings and built heritage?**

The department seeks to support vibrant communities and a strong economy through championing the unique value of our historic environment for the benefit of current and future generations. The Department’s Historic Environment Division will continue to work in collaboration with a very wide range of individuals (including listed building owners) and organisations in the public, private and third sectors, to ensure that our heritage is recorded, protected, conserved and promoted in ways which support our economy and communities