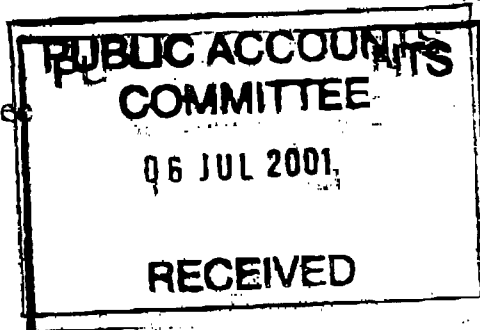




FROM: NIGEL HAMILTON
PERMANENT SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
MÄNNYSTRIE O LEAR

Mr Michael Rickard
Clerk, Public Accounts Committee
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3XX



5 July 2001

Dear Mr Rickard,

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Thank you for your letter of 22 June about the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on Energy Efficiency in the Education Sector.

First of all I should explain that, as outlined in a footnote to Page 20 of the Report, this examination covered DENI and the education sector as defined in footnote 2 prior to devolution. From December 1999, this Department's responsibilities have been restricted to the Education and Library Boards, schools and youth services. The Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment is now responsible for the universities and colleges of education and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is responsible for museums. These Departments would need to be consulted separately about their particular NDPBs.

We fully accept the recommendations in paragraphs 25 and 29 of the Report in as far as they relate to Education and Library Boards. Paragraph 40 refers specifically to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Energy Efficiency (IDCEE) which comes under the aegis of DFP and is charged with responsibility for promoting and disseminating good energy efficiency practice throughout the public sector in Northern Ireland.

Our response to the specific questions asked are set out below.

- (1) Education and Library Boards achieved weather corrected energy consumption savings of 10.37% by 31 March 2000 against the 1990/91 base year. -Reductions of 13.96% were also made in weather corrected carbon dioxide emissions - as against a Government benchmark of a 20% saving in these emissions by 2010.

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- (2) and (3) The Government set new targets for energy performance as from April 2000. All public sector bodies are required to improve greenhouse gas emissions (principally CO₂) by 1% per annum against 1999/2000 levels. Allied to this has been the objective of DFP to develop a more focused and relevant energy performance structure for all public sector bodies in Northern Ireland. This includes appropriate benchmarks for particular categories of buildings eg hospitals, libraries, museums, schools, youth centres. Annual energy data is being provided by Education and Library Boards for their various types of premises. This will enable annual reports to show how individual buildings compare against national and local benchmarks. This new structure will also pinpoint sites with high fossil fuel, electricity and carbon dioxide emissions and will allow corrective action to be taken at local level to improve energy performance.
- (4) An Estates Management Database is currently being established and this will hold up-to-date information on all education property. The database is currently being piloted in the Belfast Education and Library Board.
- (5) This question has been referred to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) since the Inter-Departmental Committee on Energy Efficiency (IDCEE) falls within its sphere of responsibility. DFP has advised that the former IDCEE has been reconstituted as the Public Sector Energy Committee to take forward work on energy management and share good practice across all public sector bodies. Information on good practice is disseminated through conferences and similar events addressing various groups such as Departmental Energy Managers, staff responsible for facilities management and utilities purchasing, and District Council Energy Managers.

The Central Energy Efficiency Fund provides financial support for cost effective capital projects which improve the energy efficiency of, or reduce emissions from, buildings occupied by public bodies. A substantial body of information has been developed by evaluating projects undertaken. This is being prepared for publication in the form of good practice booklets later this year. The development of a website is also under consideration.



As I shall be leaving the Department at the end of this week to take up the reins at DRD any further enquiries on this subject should be addressed to my colleague Stephen Peover who will be Acting Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer until Mr Gerry McGinn takes up post as Permanent Secretary on 1 September.

Yours sincerely

NIGEL HAMILTON