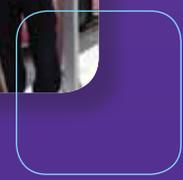
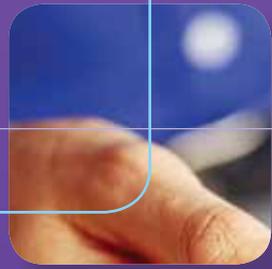


# Annual Report and Accounts 2011-2012



The Consumer Council





The Consumer Council

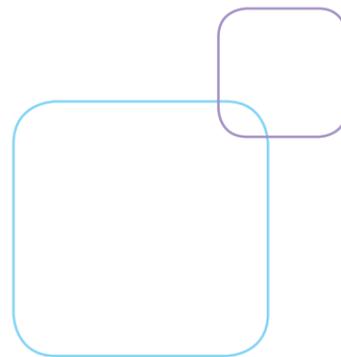
The General Consumer Council for  
Northern Ireland  
Accounts  
For the year ended 31 March 2012

*The Accounting Officer authorised these  
Financial statements for issue  
on  
21 June 2012*

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly  
Under paragraph 12(7) of schedule 1 to the  
General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) 1984  
By the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on  
1 July 2012

# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>Who we are and what we do</b>	5
<b>Current Consumer Context</b>	6
<b>Making A Difference for Consumers</b>	
• Ensuring public policy reflects the needs of today's and tomorrow's consumer	10
• Championing and protecting the interests of all consumers	13
• Informing and empowering consumers	16
• Ensuring Consumer Council is fit for purpose and delivering value for money	18
<b>Striving for Equality</b>	20
<b>Our Commitments to Consumers for the Year Ahead</b>	23
<b>Corporate Performance Indicators</b>	28
<b>Corporate Governance Structure</b>	32
<b>Glossary</b>	34
<b>Accounts</b>	40
• Management Commentary	40
• Remuneration Report	40
• Statement of Council's and Chief Executives Responsibilities	40
• Statement on Internal Control	40
• Certificate and Report of Comptroller and Auditor General	40
• Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	40
• Statement of Financial Position	40
• Statement of Cashflow	40
• Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity	40
• Notes forming part of the Financial Statements	40
• Accounts Direction	40



## Foreword

The seemingly relentless increases for consumers in the cost of everyday living essentials such as food, heating, lighting, home and car insurance, petrol and diesel are coming at a time of reducing incomes. Responding to these challenges and supporting consumers to get a fair deal has been the cornerstone of work priorities in the last year for the Consumer Council. We have had some real successes:-

The last minute commitment in Stormont Executive's Programme for Government to develop a financial capability strategy for NI in March 2012 was a real win for consumers. This region has the lowest levels of financial capability in the UK, and yet is the only region without a government supported financial capability strategy.

While the Consumer Council often criticises government and constantly challenges it to do more - because government has had sufficient confidence to give us that challenge function - it is not reticent in saying well done to the Executive Team in Stormont. Political leaders do take decisions and change policy in response to the need of citizens and now many struggling families, older people and vulnerable consumers will learn vital life skills.

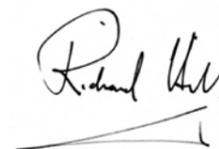
During the last year the Consumer Council took our campaigns for a better deal for NI consumers to Westminster. We called on the government there to abolish air passenger duty given the disproportionate detrimental impact on NI. Now it has been radically reduced on long haul flights we will continue to seek its abolition on all flights to and from NI. The Council also called on the Office of Fair Trading to investigate the high cost of car insurance here – and over five thousand consumers signed our petition and told us their stories, providing much needed evidence. Together, the Council and NI consumers secured an OFT investigation which found that we do pay considerably more here for car insurance – up to 70 per cent more in rural communities compared to rural communities in GB. The Council continues to work with the insurance industry and legal profession to address some of the causes

so that we can see an actual reduction in premiums. Meanwhile, we will continue to encourage you, the consumer, to shop around more which can also help to reduce premiums.

During the period under review, the Consumer Council focused on food given the increase in the cost of the weekly shop as indicated by consumers. Many consumers used our food diaries during the year helping to manage food bills and providing data for us.

Key to our work throughout 2011-12 was energy prices. Consumers continue to tell us that energy is the number 1 priority and we have made it ours, alongside building better money management skills through the financial capability strategy. The Council continued to lead and co-chair the NI Fuel Poverty Coalition. With over 160 members, the Coalition's focus for the year ahead will be to work with government to identify practical measures and interventions to address fuel poor homes, also an Executive commitment in the Programme for Government. During the year under review, we supported consumers in very practical ways by publishing prices on the best deals on home heating oil and a price comparison tool for electricity suppliers. We published an update on the 2008 McIlDoon report asking why electricity generators were allowed to make such a large profit here whilst households were struggling to pay energy bills. We also facilitated Lord Whitty in finalising his independent report into energy policy in NI, which will inform much debate.

Some of the above achievements have been hard won and are as a result of working in partnership with many organisations. The year ahead is already looking to be a busy one as we take our petrol and diesel price campaign to Westminster and we work to have airlines uphold consumer protection rights. We will be relentless in our remit to represent and safeguard the interests of NI. As ever we will strive to give consumers a voice and make it count.



Richard Hill  
Chairman



Antoinette McKeown  
Chief Executive

## Who we are and what we do

The Consumer Council of Northern Ireland (the Consumer Council) is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland (NI) consumers. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count.

We have a statutory remit to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in NI and we have specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport and food<sup>1</sup>. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research and educating and informing consumers.<sup>2</sup>

The Consumer Council is also a designated body for the purposes of supercomplaints<sup>3</sup>, which means that we can refer any consumer affairs goods and services issue to the Office of Fair Trading<sup>4</sup>, where we feel that the market may be harming consumers' best interests.

In taking forward our broad statutory remit we are informed by and representative of consumers in NI. We work to bring about change to benefit consumers by making their voice heard and making it count. To represent consumers in the best way we can, we listen to them and produce robust evidence to put their priorities at the heart of all we do.

<sup>1</sup> The Consumer Council undertakes its specific functions in relation to food recognising the role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA has responsibility for the development of food policy and for the provision of advice, information and assistance, in respect to food safety or other interests of consumers in relation to food. Therefore, to ensure good value and use of public money, the Consumer Council and FSA have a memorandum of understanding and the Council's strategic focus on food is primarily in relation to food prices and customer experience.

<sup>2</sup> The General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, No. 1822 (N.I. 12), <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1984/1822/contents>

<sup>3</sup> The Enterprise Act 2002 (Part 9 Restrictions on Disclosure of Information) (Amendment and Specification) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1400/schedules/made>

<sup>4</sup> The OFT is the UK's consumer and competition authority. Its mission is to make markets work well for consumers. It is a non-ministerial government department established by statute in 1973 <http://oft.gov.uk/about-the-oft/>

## Current consumer context

There has never been a more important time for consumers to exercise their rights, to seek fair play from the people who serve them and an increase in consumer proficiency to build much needed resilience. It is equally important to seek protection and redress when that fails, especially in the current consumer context:-

**Energy:** Rising energy prices were a major factor for households throughout the year. The rising cost for energy contributed to consumers' overall cost of living and as a result, many consumers were left with a difficult decision of whether to heat their homes or not. Although natural gas prices did subside slightly during the year the overall rising trend was worrying.

With 68 per cent of households in NI (82 per cent of rural households) relying on home heating oil, it is estimated that households using home heating oil spend on average over £1,000 a year more on heating than households using natural gas. That's why the Consumer Council wants regulation of home heating oil explored.



Know Your Consumer Rights workshop held at the Millennium Forum.

Sarah Havlin, Council Member of the Consumer Council, Damian Doherty, Trading Standards Service (DETI), Bob McCann, Council Member of the Consumer Council and Sylvia Patton, Northern Bank

**Water:** The Consumer Council accepts the Stormont Executive's decision to defer water charges again until 2015, providing much needed relief to hard pressed households facing significant increases in other areas. However, we want to see a public debate on how we finance our water and sewerage services so that we can continue to get the quality consumers want at the best deal for the public purse.

Consumers benefitted from improvements made to our water and sewerage services during the year; NI Water delivered the highest ever quality of tap water and sewage treatment. Investment in 2011/12 continued this trend. We also saw improvements across NI Water's customer services over 2011-2012.

Confidence needs to be rebuilt in those trusted to provide our water and sewerage services and decisions as to how NI water is managed and governed should be subject to public debate so that consumers understand cost and accountability for this vital service.



Caroline Mooney, Julie McCurley, Carol Edwards and Caoimhe Fullen of the Consumer Council at Money Week 2012.

**Transport:** At a time when consumers are finding it difficult to make ends meet the cost of travel continues to be a major challenge. In 2011, NI had the highest prices for petrol, diesel or both every month. At the start of 2012 the price for diesel in NI was the highest in Europe.

This is a significant issue for consumers as Northern Ireland is the most car dependant region across the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. Northern Ireland also has the highest rural population when compared to the other UK regions (35 per cent compared to the 12 per cent UK average) and in many areas, public transport is not a viable alternative.

Where public transport is accessible passengers were pleased to see fares frozen for 2011-2012. Our own research<sup>1</sup> showed that 'Value for Money' was the main priority for passengers. However, consumers need to know more about the discounted travel options available and this must be a priority for Translink going forward.

Air and sea travel is another essential area on which NI passengers are overly dependent. Approximately 75 per cent of all flights to and from NI airports are to other UK airports and we fly more than our GB counterparts<sup>2</sup>.

Figures from the Department for Transport<sup>3</sup> (DfT) show that the ferry routes from NI to Scotland are the busiest domestic routes in the UK. These links are essential to the economic recovery and development of Northern Ireland.

## Money Affairs

It has been a difficult year for consumers regarding finances. The economic downturn has continued to worry consumers who are struggling to pay bills and there is a fear that things could get tougher and more jobs will be lost. The rising costs of insurance products and day to day living expenses such as food and utilities

<sup>1</sup> Public Transport – On the Right Track (2009)

<sup>2</sup> NI passengers travel on average on 3.8 flights per year, 9 per cent higher than the UK average of 3.5 flights per year

<sup>3</sup> Department for Transport - Sea Passenger Statistics 2011

are impacting on household budgets. Consumers are still telling us that they are finding it difficult to make ends meet and are worried about the future. It has never been so important to ensure that the consumers are protected and that their voice is championed.

We continue to lead the Financial Capability Partnership NI which brings together government, banks, building societies, credit unions, education and community groups to ensure that we all help consumers to manage money and make it work best for them. After much lobbying and campaigning we are delighted to see the Programme for Government now includes the development of a Financial Capability strategy for Northern Ireland, vitally important as Northern Ireland has the lowest levels of financial capability in the UK.

## Consumer Education

As unemployment rises and prices increase, consumers find it increasingly difficult to cope with bigger bills and less money in their pockets. It is important that consumers are upskilled and that we are a society of informed and confident consumers who are treated fairly and who have the skills to exercise their rights. More than ever consumers need to be empowered with the information, advice, knowledge and skills to make ends meet and to protect themselves from unfair trading practices and scams.

This year payday loans – with their extremely high interest rates – have been increasingly used by hard-pressed consumers as a short-term way of borrowing money. And, as high interest short-term loans increased, we launched the first consumer education resource in the UK that will help consumers get to grips with how payday loans operate.

## Consumer Support

In a time of ever increasing household bills, there has been some relief with the expansion of the domestic electricity and gas market enabling consumers to switch supplier and save money. Many, many consumers have been enquiring throughout the year under review about switching and asking for help with issues arising from their attempts to switch supplier.

Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive of the Consumer Council and Rick Hill, Chairman of the Consumer Council launch the McIlldoon Report examining the energy market in Northern Ireland.



## Meeting our Aims and Objectives - Making a difference for consumers

The Consumer Council works to make the consumer voice heard and make it count. We continue to value and nurture the partnerships we have with Government, public bodies, private companies and community and voluntary organisations. We recognise that these links are vital to our delivery of change and making a positive impact for consumers.

Our Corporate Plan 2011 – 2015 sets out the focus of our work until 2015, the four core aims being:

- Ensuring public policy reflects the needs of today's and tomorrow's consumer;
- Championing and protecting the interests of all consumers;
- Informing and empowering consumers; and
- Ensuring the Consumer Council is fit for purpose and delivers value for money.

We have set out below a selection of key impacts that we have achieved under each theme in the past twelve months.



Mark H Durkan MLA, Antoinette McKeown, joint Chair of the NI Fuel Poverty Coalition, Paul Wallace, National Energy Action and Michael Copeland MLA help launch the Fuel Poverty Coalition Petition to eradicate fuel poverty in NI.

## Aim: Ensuring public policy reflects the needs of today's and tomorrow's consumer.

We work to be a catalyst for change by driving forward policies and frameworks for consumer protection with Government and businesses at a local, national, European and international level. We promote best practice and encourage innovation to ensure a fairer deal for all consumers.

The following include key impacts achieved in 2011-2012:

- The Consumer Council was active in the debate on Air Passenger Duty (APD) and called for it to be reduced or removed in line with the Republic of Ireland equivalent Air Travel Tax. This call was echoed by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and in September 2011 it was announced that APD for long haul flights departing Northern Ireland would be reduced from £60 to £12 from 1 November 2011. In addition to this, APD will be devolved to Northern Ireland and we will continue to pursue a reform of APD that will benefit Northern Ireland consumers;
- We maintained the focus on consumers when agreeing with stakeholders a revised PC10 investment programme for NI Water that directly affected the services consumers receive. We secured the central role of consumers' priorities when agreeing the approach to Price Control 2013-2015 (PC13);
- We published 'Tapping into Consumer Views on Water – Update Report' showing the progress we have made working with NI Water and how consumers' views have been listened to resulting in service improvements;
- The Consumer Council has continued to work with the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to represent air passengers with a disability or reduced mobility, ensuring that we continue to be the designated complaint handler for EC Regulation 1107. This allows us to take complaints from passengers with reduced mobility and to work with industry to improve services to passengers with reduced mobility;

- Throughout the year we monitored the cost of airline charges including the fee charged for paying by credit or debit card. We used this information to contribute to an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) into surcharges applied when paying by debit or credit card. In December 2011 the Government announced that by the end of 2012 only the actual cost of processing debit and credit card payments can be charged to consumers;
- The Consumer Council worked with key stakeholders to agree 2011-2012 tariffs for Power NI, Phoenix Supply Limited (PSL) and firmus energy – and the timescale for review of the tariffs;
- The Consumer Council worked with the Utility Regulator and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) on the fifth price control (RP5) and with Phoenix Natural Gas (PNG) on their price control. This ensured that the impact on consumers was inherent in the decision making process on the next price control period;
- The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) issued a consultation on the extension of the gas network during 2011-2012. The Consumer Council responded to ensure consumers were represented throughout the decision making process and that the decision was taken with consumers' interests in mind;
- Although not in the first draft, the final Programme for Government 2011-2015 includes an Executive commitment to develop and implement a Financial Capability Strategy for consumers after lobbying from the Consumer Council. The aim of the Financial Capability Strategy will be to equip consumers with the skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively.
- The Consumer Council responded to the consultation on the 3rd EU package on consumer protection for energy to ensure that Northern Ireland consumers would be given the necessary protection;
- To ensure energy policy in NI works in the best interests of consumers, the Consumer Council commissioned Lord Whitty to undertake an independent review of energy policy in NI. The report 'Energising Northern Ireland' outlined

key recommendations and challenges for NI government departments and energy suppliers alike;

- The Fuel Poverty Coalition continues to be co-chaired by the Consumer Council and we work with our Coalition partners to lobby for action to reduce the high fuel poverty levels in Northern Ireland;

Members of the Rural Development Agency help the Consumer Council and YouthAction NI launch the Consumer Council's Guide to Public Transport for Young People.



## Aim: Championing and protecting the interests of all consumers

We take an evidence-based approach to championing consumers' interests in a complex, changing world. Particular care and attention is paid to those consumers who have greatest needs in each area of work we do. This requires flexibility and responsiveness, recognising that we all have need for different levels of support at different times in our lives. The recent recession has had a dramatic impact on the range of issues which have needed a consumer champion and the Council has striven hard to be that champion and protect the interests of all consumers.

The following include key impacts achieved in 2011-2012:

- The Consumer Council and YouthAction NI engaged with young people on their issues with public transport. As a result of this, which built on work Translink had also done with young people, the company is now piloting a discount travel card for 16-23 year olds which will be implemented in 2012;
- In December 2011 we published a research report on ferry travel.<sup>4</sup> One of the key issues identified was the cost comparison passengers made between Northern Ireland ferry services and other UK ferry services. We have sought clarity from the ferry companies on this disparity and called on our Assembly to investigate options for reducing the cost to consumers of travelling to other UK regions;
- Feedback from consumers and advice agencies identified that improvements were needed for consumers using personal current accounts. In response, the Consumer Council worked with banks to drive changes for consumers using current accounts such as: improved communications, more cash machines, improved online banking security, convenient branch opening hours and better staff training.
- The consumer voice was heard by Government and regulators when over 5,000 consumers signed our petition to lower car insurance in a five week period. As a result of our submission to the OFT, they launched a call for evidence and found we pay approximately 11 percent more for our car insurance in NI than consumers in the GB. We are using this evidence to continue our work with the NI Assembly and industry to drive change for NI consumers;
- We produced the A-Z Consumer Advice Handbook, an easy reference guide providing consumer information, legal advice and contact references for consumers, their representatives and those involved in advocacy, advice and information work. Over two thousand copies were disseminated to individual consumers and front line advice and community workers across NI;
- More consumers now have free access to their money as seven new free-to-use cash machines have been installed into lower-income areas, both urban and rural, across the region in the last year as a result of our work with LINK (the operator of the UK cash machine network) and MLAs;
- The Consumer Council worked with NI Water to achieve a lasting solution for residents of Rosslea and surrounding townlands in Fermanagh for the water supply problems they had experienced dating back 15 years;
- Consumers affected by a NI Water billing error were provided with a full refund for overcharges and any backdated charges would be charged at 50 per cent in an approach agreed by the Consumer Council;
- The Consumer Council worked with the NI Executive and other key stakeholders to ensure that consumer issues within the unregulated oil industry have been kept high on the agenda. Consequently, the Northern Ireland Oil Federation (NIOF) recently developed codes of practice with
- The sum of £237,887 was put back into the pockets of 171 consumers, due to the work of the Consumer Council. This amount is an increase of 5.5 per cent on last year's figure of £225,522 and represents an average of £1,391 per complaint (as at 29 March);
- In total 4,451 contacts were received and responded to during the year, compared to 4,482 in 2010-2011. Within this figure, 61 per cent (2,711) were consumer complaints and enquiries and 39 per cent (1,740) were referrals to other organisations more suited to dealing with the issues raised;
- We produced the second edition of our Complaints Report, Complain, Campaign and Gain: Championing Consumers 2009-2011. This report was very well received by all of the service providers. It was also distributed to other key stakeholders to increase awareness of the important role the Consumer Council plays in representing consumers when they have complaints.

<sup>4</sup> Ferry Travel – A Consumer Council Report on the perceptions and experiences of ferry passengers in Northern Ireland. Dec 2011

## Aim: Informing and empowering consumers

We want to empower people and equip them with the confidence, information and skills they need to make appropriate choices. We seek to demonstrate how informed consumers can benefit the economy, business performance and public services.

The following include key impacts achieved in 2011-2012:

- The Consumer Council increased shoppers' awareness of their rights and responsibilities by working with the Department of Employment and Learning to embed consumer education in the delivery of essential skills, adult literacy and numeracy. Tutors in 60 training centres were equipped with lesson plans and teaching resources to pass vital information on to adult learners and help them to understand their credit report and shop confidently for home insurance;

Andrew Murray and Antoinette McKeown launch the Consumer Council's Weather the Winter campaign.



- Consumer needs were prioritised when developing an improved and co-ordinated response in water emergency situations. We supported NI Water's campaign to inform consumers about their responsibilities and the steps we can all take to be better prepared for winter;
- The Financial Capability Partnership NI, which is led by the Consumer Council, held its third Money Week – this time in Craigavon. The First Minister, Peter Robinson MLA attended to officially launch the week which saw over 20 events being held by members of the Partnership. A Money Market was held in Portadown High Street Mall which was extremely well attended by thousands of consumers on the day;
- The first UK interactive training event on payday loans was delivered by the Consumer Council to a group of 50 money and debt advisors, family workers and essential skills tutors. This event helped them to empower their clients to understand the real cost of payday loans;
- The Consumer Council also launched 'Understanding Payday Loans', the first consumer education resource in the UK which helped consumers get to grips with how payday loans operate;
- Working with NI Water, the Consumer Council agreed five new Codes of Practice and a Domestic Customer Charter that more clearly explains the service promises NI Water consumers can expect;
- We supported 35 Financial Capability teachers at a conference organised in partnership with CCEA. The event covered key aspects of the Level 1 Award in Personal Money Management in the NI Curriculum which aims to help young people make decisions about their money and plan for their future financial needs;
- The Consumer Council introduced a new categorisation in its complaints process to facilitate a more efficient service for consumers;

- During the period, the Consumer Council received 612 requests for publications. The information contained within these will be instrumental in ensuring that consumers make more informed choices;
- The UK wide debate over whether to abolish cheques continued throughout the year. To help the Payments Council understand the NI perspective, the Consumer Council hosted a forum representing consumers, older people, those with disabilities, charities and banks to discuss cheque use in NI. In July, the Payments Council decided not to scrap cheques, which will be a relief to many consumers in NI.
- Consumer Council staff worked with NI Water to improve the services received for consumers who signed up to its Customer Care Register. As a result, membership increased from 1,200 in April 2011 to over 1,800 in November 2011.
- 13,500 holiday caravan owners here benefitted from information we produced on the increased consumer protection that was provided in the new Caravans Act (NI) 2011. This Act includes the right for a written agreement before caravan owners commit to renting a pitch and also the right to have a greater say in how their caravan site is operated;

## Aim: Ensuring the Consumer Council is fit for purpose and delivering value for money

Being fit for purpose is the foundation of all our work. We must make sound decisions and ensure that we can deliver on the themes of our Corporate Plan 2011-2015.

The following include key impacts achieved in 2011-2012:

- During 2011-2012 a total of 115 customer satisfaction surveys were returned from consumers who had sought the assistance of the Consumer Council in the investigation of their complaint. This represents a return rate of 50 per cent. The customer satisfaction surveys returned showed a satisfaction rate of 97 per cent.



We continue to use the feedback provided from consumers to improve the service delivered to consumers by both the Consumer Council and the relevant service provider;

- The Consumer Council was awarded the Investors in People (IiP) Good Practice Award in Health and Wellbeing. We are one of only six organisations in Northern Ireland to have achieved this award;
- We developed a Knowledge Management Strategy in recognition that we need to continually transform as an organisation and be adaptable to a changing political, economic and social environment. This strategy sets out our plan to capture and use information from our employees and stakeholders and learn from it;
- A new complaint handling system was implemented on 1 April 2012. This has increased effectiveness in complaint handling and information management by reducing day to day administration;



Carol Edwards of the Consumer Council talks to Conal McDevitt at the SDLP Annual Conference.

- Our new Human Resources Strategy 2011-2015 focuses on four key areas – growing leadership, developing employees, supporting wellbeing and encouraging employee participation. This strategy underpins the delivery of the Consumer Council 2011-2015 Corporate Plan;
- The Consumer Council facilitated three Service Provider Roundtable Meetings with Energy, Transport and Water service providers. These meetings have been instrumental in continually improving the service delivered to consumers in the resolution of complaints both directly by the service providers and also by the Consumer Council;
- During the year the Consumer Council held 27 consumer panels across Northern Ireland, listening to the views and experiences of consumers on a variety of issues including, sustainability, energy, food concerns, transport and consumer proficiency. Their stories and opinions were used to shape all our work and ensure that the consumer voice is heard and taken account of by policy makers and at the highest levels in the NI Assembly and Westminster Government;
- During the year Consumer Council staff organised and attended 102 events, exhibitions and eight training seminars across Northern Ireland. We worked with front line workers in the community, voluntary and advice sectors, teachers in schools, essential skills tutors and MLA constituency advisors to help consumers manage their money to cope in this tough economic climate;

## Striving for Equality

### Equality Statement in Annual Report

The Consumer Council has prepared its second Equality Scheme, which was approved by the Equality Commission in November 2011. For the period 2011-2015 we have aligned our Equality Scheme commitments with those in our Corporate Plan to ensure consistency and to embed equality considerations into our priorities and activities. In compliance with the Scheme, the Consumer Council prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in our Equality Scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report). This annual report is also aligned with the Consumer Council's overall Annual Report and Accounts.

Our work for consumers is shaped not only by our statutory non discrimination equality duties, including employment related duties of Section 75 of the NI Act and the Disability Discrimination Act; our work is also shaped by a drive to deliver greater equality impacts and outcomes for all consumers in Northern Ireland and by reaching out to those who most need our support and representation. A fair deal and fair treatment for consumers underpins all of the services we deliver.

In the last 12 months we have delivered our work with an underpinning conviction that we deliver best when we deliver with equality in mind, taking account also of our statutory duty in relation to vulnerable consumers. This has included; training young people and single parents in relation to financial capability and affordable credit; working with prisoners to help prepare them for budgeting when released; giving older people experiencing fuel poverty a real voice through the Fuel Poverty Coalition, working with the Committee for Regional Development to give young people a voice in Stormont on public transport; representing disabled passengers on flights and at the airports – all part of the daily work we deliver on behalf of consumers here.

In addition, we delivered formal presentations to 102 organisations to raise awareness of our role and our information and resources for consumers; amongst others this included seven older people/retired groups, nine younger people’s groups, eight train the trainer events and thirteen parent and family groups thus reaching out to low income consumers. Figure 1 provides a geographical representation of our engagement in the last year.

### Progress on auditing and monitoring

In our Equality Scheme we gave a commitment to carrying out an audit of existing information systems within one year of Scheme approval. A new equality framework for the organisation has been put in place. Phase one in the audit of existing information systems has been completed. This analysis has helped the organisation to ensure that our services remain accessible to all sections of the community. We have identified ways of using this information to better understand the needs of our priority groups particularly in targeting our services towards low income households and the Section 75 groups that are more likely to fit within this.

### Training

The Consumer Council recognises that training plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties. In 2011-12 over 20 members of staff received training in the assessment of policies (screening and Equality Impact Assessment).

Ryan Simpson of the Consumer Council with Stephen Agnew at the Green Party Conference.



Figure 1: Consumer Council exhibitions and talks 2011- 2012



#### Breakdown – Section 75 categories

Age – Older people/retired	7
Age –Younger	9
People with Disabilities	6
Parents/families	13
Carers	1
Women’s groups	2
Members of Minority Ethnic Communities	1
Men and women in general	21
Train the Trainer events	8
Teachers’ Conferences	1
Trainee Teachers’ presentations	1
Businesses	8
Party Political Conferences/ Political Engagement events	6
Government and Voluntary Sector specialists	16
Outside NI	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>102</b>

## Our Commitments to Consumers for the Year Ahead

The Consumer Council is committed to ensuring that the work we do actually brings about beneficial change for Northern Ireland consumers. We recognise that there is always more to be done on behalf of NI citizens. In line with our Corporate Plan 2011-2015, we have long-term plans in place to address key issues across all our statutory remits particularly cost of living and consumer proficiency. The section below outlines our key priorities and challenges:

### Energy

- With high fuel poverty levels still apparent in Northern Ireland we will continue to work to ensure consumers here are protected through maintaining our role as joint Chair of the Fuel Poverty Coalition, lobbying for action to reduce the high fuel poverty levels in Northern Ireland.
- As home heating oil consumers remain unprotected we will work in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Oil Federation to further develop their codes of practice which will give consumers increased confidence when they purchase home heating oil. We will also embark on a major project to assess the impact on consumers resulting from the non-regulation of the Home Heating Oil sector and propose recommendations on the issue of regulation emanating from our research.
- We will ensure that consumers' views are at the fore and taken into account by contributing to the next RP5, IME3 and DETI's proposed Energy Bill consultations during the tariff review and policy development processes. This will ensure that consumers here are paying a fair price for the energy they use.

First Minister Peter Robinson MLA, Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive of the Consumer Council and Killicomaine Junior High School pupils Kamran Shuaib and Rachel Griffin attend the launch event for Money Week 2012.



Fuel Poverty Coalition for Northern Ireland Event at the Ulster Hall, Belfast. Political Party Representatives on Q&A Panel. Alex Attwood MLA, SDLP, Anna Lo MLA, Alliance, Jennifer McCann MLA Sinn Fein and Rebecca Volley, Green Party.

- We will carry out a major review of the existing Regulatory Frameworks for the gas and electricity sectors. This review will be extensive with the aim of identifying the extent to which the existing regulatory frameworks are consumer focused and which aspects of the frameworks need reviewed in line with consumers needs and give consumers a voice.
- We will work with all stakeholders in partnership to achieve consensus and actions in relation to the recommendations set out in Lord Whitty's independent Report on energy policy here.

## Water

- We will call on the NI Executive to use the deferment period of domestic water charging to look at the long-term future of this vital public health service. We will continue to involve and represent consumers as this discussion develops.
- We will continue, through PC13 to work with NIW and UR to set the priorities, targets and costs for NI Water for 2013-2015. We will ensure that appropriate consumer engagement is secured for PC15 (2015-2021).
- We will actively encourage better consumer participation in price controls through making the process more transparent for consumers. Our goals will be simpler regulation, a reduction in complexity and clearer links between NI Water's investment plans and the service that consumers receive at a local level.
- Throughout 2012- 2013 the Consumer Council will be providing local businesses with advice on how to save water to help reduce bills reflecting the tough times for local businesses. We will be working with NI Water to make their bills clearer and more comprehensible.
- Flooding is devastating. Alongside the horrendous immediate impact there are issues such as how it affects household insurance. In the coming year the Consumer Council will examine the availability and affordability of insurance offered to households in flood risk areas.
- The Department for Regional Development is working towards the development of a long-term water strategy setting policy objectives and targets for the NI Executive. The Consumer Council will be working to ensure that consumers' views are at the centre of this.

## Money Affairs

- We continue to lead the Financial Capability Partnership NI which brings together government, banks, building societies, credit unions, education and community groups to ensure that we all help consumer to manage money and make it work best for them.
- We are looking forward to working with government, in the coming year, to shape the new financial capability strategy to ensure that it can deliver real benefits to consumers.
- It is crucial that we continue to empower and inform consumers to shop around and make sure they get access to the most suitable products for their needs.
- We will continue to work with banks to ensure they make the changes that we have advocated in the personal current account manifesto and we will continue our efforts to obtain more free to use cash machines in deprived areas.
- Work remains to be done on our car insurance campaign despite our success to date. We continue to work with the NI Assembly, Westminster, the industry and the legal profession and other bodies. We will continue to take a leading role in improving consumers' abilities to shop around and get the best deals.



Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chief Executive of Craigavon Borough Council, Councillor Alan Carson, Mayor for Craigavon Borough Council, First Minister, Peter Robinson MLA Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive of the Consumer Council and Rick Hill, Chairman of the Consumer Council at the launch of Money Week 2012 in Craigavon.

## Consumer Support

- The Consumer Council will continue to focus on raising awareness of our complaints handling role.
- We will strive to protect and represent the interests of all consumers, especially those who need us the most. In the next year, we will begin to capture additional consumer data to build a profile of the consumers we assist with complaints and to confirm our commitment to delivering an equitable service to all.
- We will use the feedback received from consumers to continually improve the service we offer.
- Having successfully published two complaints reports spanning 2006-2011, we will now move to produce an annual complaints report.

## Consumer Education

- We are committed to strengthening our engagement with consumers in all areas of Northern Ireland to provide clear and accessible information and advice for the vulnerable consumer groups identified in our Corporate Plan 2011–2015 including: low-income households, older people, young people, people with disabilities, rural consumers and the unemployed.
- Our education resources will help key groups gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to exercise their rights, avoid scams and obtain sources of expert advice should they need it.
- We will target new and existing education resources.
- We will also assist businesses in improving customer care so that consumers can benefit from better standards of service and businesses can drive up their performance.

Jenny Li, of Jiani Charms, helps Scott Kennerley of the Consumer Council launch its 'Ferry Report' examining the perceptions and experiences of ferry passengers in Northern Ireland.



## Transport

- A new European Maritime regulation will be introduced in 2012 giving sea passengers improved rights. We will work to ensure passenger awareness and access to redress.
- We will also work with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to promote the rights of passengers if their flight is delayed or cancelled. The ash cloud incidents for 2010 and 2011 highlighted the importance of our role. We will continue in to ensure passengers are aware of their rights and that airlines and airports honour their obligations.
- Consumer Council will seek the views of consumers on key issues in order to challenge and inform the process of the reform of public transport. We will ensure the needs of consumers are prioritised in areas such as health, transport and rural issues.
- We will continue to work with Translink and the Department for Regional Development on the Passenger Charter (Translink's commitment to its passengers) to ensure that it remains relevant to consumers.
- We will continue to be vocal on the issue of high petrol and diesel prices, taking our fight to Westminster and will seek action to reduce the burden of high fuel prices on NI consumers.

## Corporate Performance Indicators

Corporate Impact	Corporate Performance Indicator	2011 - 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active consumer representation, making a difference, at National and Executive policy level.</li> <li>Increased market effectiveness resulting in improved and cost effective service delivery for consumers.</li> <li>Making the consumer voice count in the public consultation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve Assembly support for improving price transparency and service standards of the home heating oil industry.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - motion on regulation of home heating oil debated in Assembly in Jan 2012, currently working with the Northern Ireland Oil Federation (NIOF) to develop codes of practice for NIOF members. Regularly briefed members of the NI Executive on home heating oil issues and the impacts on consumers.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To secure a Parliamentary / Assembly Committee investigation into the high cost of insurance in Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - in December 2011 following evidence provided by the Consumer Council the OFT published their report into the Private Motor insurance market. The final Programme for Government 2011-15 includes an Executive commitment to develop and implement a Financial Capability Strategy for consumers.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A commitment to develop a policy framework for financial capability.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - the final Programme for Government 2011-15 includes an Executive commitment to develop and implement a Financial Capability Strategy for consumers.</p>

Corporate Impact	Corporate Performance Indicator	2011 - 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved consumer protection and service provider regulation to benefit and deliver for all consumers.</li> <li>Work in partnership with service providers to identify and deliver service improvements.</li> <li>Improved redress systems, making them accessible and beneficial to consumers when needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve a beneficial impact for 85 per cent of complaints received by Consumer Council.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - a beneficial impact for 98 per cent of complaints received.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve a 90 per cent satisfaction target on Consumer Council complaints handling.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - 97 per cent complainant satisfaction with the way the Consumer Council dealt with complaints.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify areas of poor water quality service and information and deliver a benefit for consumers in those areas.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved - throughout 2011/12 we worked with a community in County Fermanagh and NI Water to resolve issues with regular interruptions to supply and low pressure experienced over a number of years. In September 2011 NI Water began work on an interim solution to address the historical problems meaning consumers in the area will have a greater security of supply. Work on the long term solution will be carried out in 2012.</p>

Corporate Impact	Corporate Performance Indicator	2011 - 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in partnership to deliver increased levels of financial capability.</li> <li>Increased number of consumers with access to information to support them to manage their money.</li> <li>Increased partnership work to benefit consumers and enable them to access the right information at the right time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of a minimum of 10 training sessions or engagement events to inform and empower on key consumer issues.</li> <li>Increased participation in Money Week 2012 when compared to 2010 event.</li> <li>To deliver an increased number of consumers who benefit from access to affordable credit.</li> </ul>	<p>We delivered 8 Train the Trainer sessions to a total of 178 trainers, frontline community and advice workers in 4 different areas of Northern Ireland including: Ballymena(1), Belfast(4), Craigavon(1) and L'Derry(2). This is an increase of 2 compared to last year.</p> <p>Achieved - we delivered 102 presentations, talks and exhibitions to inform and empower individual consumers on their rights and how to get the best deal on goods and services. This is 4 more than last year.</p> <p>Achieved - the number of consumers who went to High Street Mall in Portadown on the day of the Money Market was 13,459, up 19% on the same Saturday in 2011. Visits to the Financial Capability webpage increased by over 600% when compared to Money Week 2010. Money week achieved 38 pieces of media coverage and extensive coverage through social media.</p> <p>Achieved - we delivered a financial capability and affordable credit pilot project in Ballymena and are currently working with partners to deliver phase two of the project in Derry.</p>

Corporate Impact	Corporate Performance Indicator	2011 - 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance with public sector governance and accountability requirements.</li> <li>Effective use of resources to support the delivery of the corporate objectives.</li> <li>Greater awareness across consumers and stakeholders of the Consumer Council remit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve, as a minimum, satisfactory assurance on all internal audits.</li> <li>Delivery of a fit for purpose governance framework as defined by the Consumer Council MS/FM.</li> <li>Increase in targeted partnerships / opportunities for Consumer Council outreach.</li> <li>Manage sickness absence levels to achieve the target set for NICS.</li> </ul>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p>

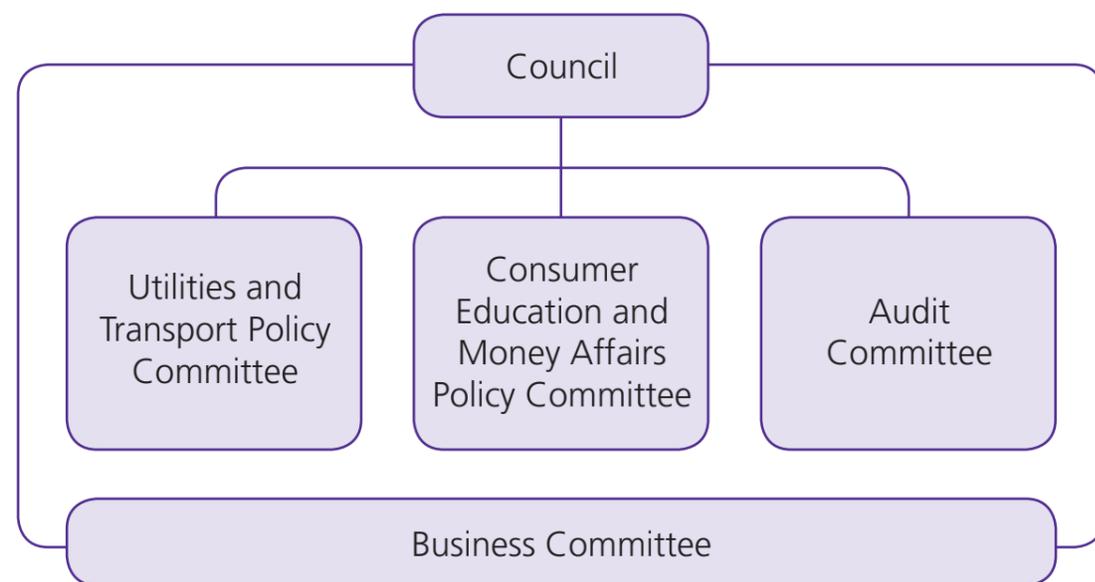
# Corporate Governance Structure

The Consumer Council draws its membership through the public appointment process in accordance with the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. Its membership during 2011-12 is as follows:

**Chair** Mr Richard Hill  
**Deputy Chair** Mrs Mandy Patrick MBE (Appointed: 1 January 2012)

### Members

Mr Sam Snodden (Appointed: 1 January 2012)	Mrs Deidre Fitzpatrick
Mr David Beattie (Appointed: 1 January 2012)	Mrs Jill Gillespie
Mr David Galloway (Appointed: 1 January 2012)	Mr Kit Chivers
Mrs Anne Diamond (Left: 31 December 2011)	Mr Lee Wilson
Mrs Siubhan Grant (Left: 31 December 2011)	Mrs Sarah Havlin
Mr Bob McCann (Left: 31 December 2011)	Dr Margaret Ward
Mr Michael Donnelly (Left: 31 December 2011)	Mr Colm Bradley



Graham Smith of the Consumer Council talks to Danny Kennedy at the Ulster Unionist Party Annual Conference.

The Consumer Council operates a Committee Governance Structure as follows: The Consumer Council’s Board (hereafter referred to as “the Council”) meets six times a year. The Council also has a Business Committee and an Audit Committee. Both Committees meet in advance of Council meetings and provide recommendations to the Council for approval.

The Audit Committee deals with a range of issues relating to governance, internal control, accountability and risk management. The Business Committee ensures that there are appropriate, effective and regularly reviewed structures in place to support the effective implementation of integrated decision making across the Consumer Council.

The Council has established two consumer policy Committees, the Utilities and Transport Policy Committee and the Consumer Education and Money Affairs Policy Committee. These committees meet a minimum of four times a year and their work focuses on strategic issues and principles of policy direction/options being considered by the executive team.

Convenors of Committees are appointed by the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Council and all members have two-year tenure of office. Each committee is authorised by the Council to oversee and promote the activities relevant to its remit. With approval of the Council, committees can co-opt members to bring particular skills and expertise to their work.

## Glossary

**RP5 (Transmission and Distribution Price Control)** Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) owns the electricity transmission and distribution network through which electricity is supplied to customers in NI. Every five years the Utility Regulator reviews the prices which NIE is allowed to charge for network services. The current Transmission and Distribution price control is scheduled to be reset from 1 April 2012 which will mark the start of RP5. As part of the current review NIE has drawn up plans for capital investment in the network and submitted them to the Utility Regulator for approval.

**European Union (EU) 3rd Energy Package (also known as IME3)** The 3rd Energy Package comprises the Electricity Directive, the Gas Directive, the Electricity Regulation, the Gas Regulation and the Agency Regulation. The key elements of the 3rd Energy Package include more enhanced consumer protection measures; more stringent requirements for unbundling network operations from other activities; ensuring fairer competition between companies within the EU and those outside the EU; more powers and independence for national regulators; greater cooperation between Member States; and the creation of a new European energy agency.

**Air Passenger Duty** Air Passenger Duty (APD) is a duty charged on a per passenger basis for flights departing from UK airports. APD was introduced by the UK Government on 1 November 1994.

**Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)** The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which is a public corporation, was established by Parliament in 1972 as an independent specialist aviation regulator and provider of air traffic services. Its activities include economic regulation, airspace policy, safety regulation and consumer protection.

**Consumer Panels** The Consumer Council set up consumer panels to meet face to face with consumers and their representatives. These panels help inform our policy development, consultation, education and campaign work.

**Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)** The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) was established on 1 April 1994 and is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

**Department of Employment and Learning** The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is one of 12 Northern Ireland Departments. The Department's aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

**Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)** The Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) is one of 12 Northern Ireland Departments. The Department plays a crucial role in formulating and delivering economic development policy in terms of Enterprise, Social Economy, Innovation, Energy, Telecoms, and Tourism in Northern Ireland. In addition, the Department has responsibility for ensuring a modern regulatory framework to support business and protect consumers.

**Department for Regional Development (DRD)** The Department for Regional Development (DRD) is one of 12 Northern Ireland Departments. The Department's vision statement is: "A region with modern, safe and sustainable transport, roads and water services which improve quality of life for all."

**Department for Transport** The role of the Department is to determine overall transport strategy and to manage relationships with the Agencies responsible for the delivery of that vision.

**EC Regulation 1107** European law requires that all airports and airlines in the European Union (EU) have a responsibility to assist passengers with a disability and passengers with reduced mobility. A passenger may have reduced mobility because of age, an illness or because of a temporary injury such as a broken leg.

**Energy Bill** The Energy Bill was enacted on 10 February 2011. The Act covers standards of performance and meter tampering in the gas industry and special administrations measures for energy companies.

**Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee** The committee undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

**Equality Impact Assessment** The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

**European Union (EU) Maritime Passenger Rights Regulation** Maritime and inland waterway passengers, and in particular passengers with a disability and people with a reduced mobility, will enjoy new rights that will protect them when they travel anywhere within the European Union.

**Finance and Personnel Committee** The committee undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Finance and Personnel and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

**Financial Capability** Financial Capability means having the skills and confidence to manage money wisely. For instance, it means being prepared for a rainy day, saving in a safe place, having the right insurance cover and being prepared for your retirement.

**Firmus energy** In March 2005, firmus energy was formally awarded supply and distribution licenses for the development of a natural gas network in 10 key towns across Northern Ireland - Antrim (inc. Ballyclare and Templepatrick), Armagh (Tandragee), Ballymena (Broughshane) Ballymoney, Banbridge, Coleraine (Portstewart), Craigavon (Moir, Lurgan and Portadown), Limavady, Londonderry~Derry (Newbuildings) and Newry (Warrenpoint). They also supply natural gas in greater Belfast to over 12,000 business and domestic customers.

**Fuel Poverty** If a household spends more than 10 per cent of its income heating the home to an acceptable level it is said to be living in fuel poverty.

**Fuel Poverty Coalition** This is a group of over 150 organisations within Northern Ireland who have come together to drive forward the fuel poverty agenda in NI.

**House Condition Survey (HCS)** The HCS is carried out every five years by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and examines housing conditions and need. The aim of the House Condition Survey is to provide a comprehensive overview of Northern Ireland's dwelling stock and its occupants.

**Investors in People (IiP)** The Investors in People Standard is a business tool operating within a framework, which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through the effective development of its people.

**Lord Whitty** Lord Whitty has held the position of Minister for Transport in the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions and Minister for food, farming and sustainable energy in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) including the delivery of improvements to those in fuel poverty. He takes a strong personal interest in issues of sustainability, access to services for low-income groups (particularly for housing, education and transport, and financial services) and corporate accountability for social and environmental impacts on consumers and the wider community.

**Northern Ireland Affairs Committee** The Committee was appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Northern Ireland Office and its associated public bodies. The Committee is made up of 14 Members of Parliament and they work principally by undertaking inquiries. They choose their own subjects of inquiry and seek evidence from a wide range of groups and individuals with relevant interests and experience. They produce reports setting out their findings and making recommendations to the Government. The Government has to respond to these recommendations within two months.

**Northern Ireland Assembly** The Northern Ireland Assembly is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. It is responsible for making laws on transferred matters in Northern Ireland and for scrutinising the work of Ministers and Government Departments.

**Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE)** Northern Ireland Electricity is responsible for the planning, development, construction and maintenance of the transmission and distribution network, and for the operation of the distribution network. Since November 2007, NIE Ltd have also been responsible for metering services. NIE Ltd is now responsible for meter installation and reading. NIE is not an electricity supplier.

**Northern Ireland Executive** The Northern Ireland Executive is made up of the First Minister, the deputy First Minister and 11 other ministers. The Executive Committee exercises executive authority on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and takes decisions on significant issues and matters which cut across the responsibility of two or more Ministers. It also agrees proposals put forward by Ministers for new legislation in the form of 'Executive Bills' for consideration by the Assembly. It is also responsible for drawing up a programme for government and an agreed budget for approval by the Assembly.

**Northern Ireland Financial Capability Partnership** The Consumer Council is funded by the Financial Services Authority to lead the Northern Ireland Financial Capability Partnership, which brings together Government, banks, building societies, credit unions, education and community groups to ensure that we all help is given to consumers to manage their money and make it work best for them.

**Northern Ireland Oil Federation (NIOF)** Represent a number of oil suppliers in Northern Ireland.

**Northern Ireland Water (NIW)** Northern Ireland Water is a Non Departmental Public Body, set up in April 2007 to provide water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland.

**Office of Fair Trading (OFT)** The OFT is the UK's consumer and competition authority. Their mission is to make markets work well for consumers and they are a non-ministerial government department established by statute in 1973.

**Omnibus Survey** An omnibus survey is a method of quantitative marketing research where data on a wide variety of subjects is collected during the same interview.

**Payday Loans** Payday or paycheque loans are short-term loans that you get in return for your pay cheque or proof of your income. They represent a way to get hold money quickly but they charge very high interest rates.

Payments Council	The Payments Council is the body with responsibility for ensuring that payment services work in the UK. It was set up by the payments industry in 2007 to ensure that UK payment systems and services meet the need of payment service providers, users and the wider economy.
Phoenix Natural Gas (PNG)	Own and operate the natural gas distribution network in Greater Belfast and Larne.
Power NI	Previously NIE Energy, currently the largest electricity supplier in Northern Ireland.
Price Control 2010 (PC10)	A formal review by the Utility Regulator that sets the overall costs, prices and targets for NI Water. The first price control is for the three years 2010 – 2013 and is called PC10.
Price Control 2013 (PC13)	A formal review by the Utility Regulator that sets the overall costs, prices and targets for NI Water. This price control is for the period 2013 – 2015.
Programme for Government (PfG)	The Programme for Government highlights the key goals and actions the Executive will take to drive forward the priority areas for Northern Ireland for 2011 – 2015.
Regional Development Committee	The committee undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Regional Development and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

Section 75	Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 imposes a statutory duty on public bodies in relation to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.
Sustainable Development	Means that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Translink	Translink is the brand name of the integrated public transport operation of Citybus, NI Railways, and Ulsterbus. The organisation is now one of Northern Ireland's largest employers with approximately 4,000 employees and a turnover in excess of £168m. Over 81 million passenger journeys are made on Translink services each year.
Utility Regulator (UR)	An independent public body set up by Government to ensure the effective regulation of the electricity, gas and water industries in Northern Ireland.
YouthAction NI	YouthAction Northern Ireland works with young people to support them as active and equal citizens whose voices are heard, respected and valued. The organisation strives to make a significant impact to the lives of young people and communities throughout Northern Ireland.

# Accounts

## Management Commentary

The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (Consumer Council) presents its annual report and the audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with paragraph 12(3) of Schedule 1 to the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984 in a form directed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) with the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP).

### Aim of the Council

The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation whose aim is to promote and safeguard the interests of all consumers in Northern Ireland.

Since 1985, the Consumer Council has been championing the cause of consumers in Northern Ireland. Our job is to give consumers a voice and to make sure that voice is heard by those who make decisions which affect us all. We carry out research, publish reports, seek to influence both the public and private sectors and campaign for a fair deal. In addition to specific duties in relation to buses, trains, planes, ferries, natural gas, electricity, coal and water, we investigate and speak out on the important consumer issues of the day.

### History of the Council and statutory background

The Consumer Council was established under the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984. It replaced the Northern Ireland Consumer Council, the Northern Ireland Electricity Consumers' Council and the Transport Users' Committee. The legislation confers a statutory obligation on the Consumer Council to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers including specific responsibilities for energy, food and transport.

In 1992 the functions previously exercised by the Consumer Council in relation to electricity matters were transferred to the Office of Electricity Regulation for Northern Ireland (Ofreg NI). However, the Consumer Council's role in energy matters was enhanced by taking over responsibility for representing coal consumers in 1995 and consumers of natural gas in 1996. In April 2003 the Consumer Council once again took over the responsibility for representing electricity consumers.

The Gas (NI) Order 1996 gave the Consumer Council new responsibilities to represent consumers of natural gas and a duty to advise the Director General of Gas and report to him on certain matters. The Energy (NI) Order 2003 gave the Consumer Council a range of additional powers and representation responsibilities for electricity consumers.

From 1 April 2007 the Consumer Council became the consumer representative on water and sewerage services as defined in the Water and Sewerage (NI) Order 2006.

## Council Members

The names of persons serving during the year ended 31 March 2012 were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>First Appointed</i>
Mr Richard Hill	Chair	Council member from 1 January 2008 Appointed Chair from 1 January 2009
Mrs Mandy Patrick	Deputy Chair	1 January 2012
Mr Colm Bradley	Council Member	1 January 2008
Mr Kit Chivers	Council Member	1 January 2009
Mrs Deirdre Fitzpatrick	Council Member	1 August 2009
Mrs Jill Gillespie	Council Member	1 August 2009
Mrs Sarah Havlin	Council Member	1 January 2008
Dr Margaret Ward	Council Member	1 August 2009
Mr Lee Wilson	Council Member	1 August 2009
Mr David Beattie	Council Member	1 January 2012
Mr David Galloway	Council Member	1 January 2012
Mr Sam Snodden	Council Member	1 January 2012
Mrs Siubhan Grant	Deputy Chair	Council member from 1 January 2002 Appointed Deputy Chair from 1 January 2007
Mr Bob McCann	Council Member	1 January 2006
Mr Michael Donnelly	Council Member	1 January 2006
Mrs Anne Diamond	Council Member	1 January 2009

The names of persons who left the Council during the year were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date of Leaving</i>
Mrs Siubhan Grant	Deputy Chair	31 December 2011
Mr Bob McCann	Council Member	31 December 2011
Mr Michael Donnelly	Council Member	31 December 2011
Mrs Anne Diamond	Council Member	31 December 2011

## Register of Interests of Council Members

Council members are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgement. The register of interest is available for public inspection by contacting the Consumer Council, 116 Hollywood Road, Belfast BT4 1NY.

## Chief Executive

The Chief Executive and Accounting Officer is Ms Antoinette McKeown.

As Accounting Officer, I can confirm that there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are informed of it.

## Sickness absence data

The percentage of available working days lost due to sickness for the financial year 2011-12 was 1.4% (2010-11: 2.5%). There were no days lost due to long term sickness in 2011-12 (2010-11: figure reduces to 2.0% when adjusted for staff on long term absence over 19 days). (For noting: the most recent comparable sickness figure (long and short term) in NI Civil Service as a whole was 4.7%).

## Personal data related incidents

In 2011-12 the Council reported no data breaches (personal data) to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (2010-11: one).

## Corporate / Equality Plan 2011-15

In preparing the Corporate Plan 2011-15 we undertook extensive consumer research and widespread consumer engagement. We also consulted with Consumer Council partners and stakeholder across government and the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Council believes that the Corporate Plan is much richer and more representative as a result. The Plan sets out objectives and actions against four core aims, namely:

- Ensuring public policy reflects the needs of today's and tomorrow's consumer;
- Championing and protecting the interests of consumers;
- Informing and empowering consumers; and
- Ensuring CCNI is fit for purpose and delivers value for money.

Throughout the Corporate Plan lifecycle an annual Operational Plan is developed to ensure the ongoing delivery of consumer impacts against the four core aims. In addition we are required to publish an annual Work Programme, which is subject to public consultation, and forms an integral part of the annual Operating Plan. On a quarterly basis performance against objectives is formally reported to Council, with the end of year position being publicly provided in the Annual Report.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories<sup>5</sup>. For the period 2011-15 we have taken the opportunity to produce our Equality Scheme in parallel to the development of the Corporate Plan in order to ensure consistency and to embed equality considerations into our priorities and activities across the period.

In our equality scheme we establish how the Consumer Council proposes to fulfil Section 75 statutory duties and we make a commitment to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to ensure compliance with the duties.

We recognise the important role the community, voluntary sector and general public have to play to support the organisation with the fulfilment of Section 75 duties. In our equality scheme, supported by the activities and impacts identified in the Corporate Plan, we demonstrate how determined we are to ensure that there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our role and functions in line with Section 75 statutory duties.

<sup>5</sup> Outlined in Section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme

### Performance for the year

The financial results of the Consumer Council's operations in 2011-12 are set out in detail on page 80 of these financial statements.

Total Grant-in-Aid of £2,381,082 (2010-11: £2,361,273) was received in the year and credited to the General Reserve.

A further £116,095 (2010-11: £176,953) was received in other income which includes £12,357 from Atlantic Philanthropies, £29,575 from Department for Transport and £25,000 from the Ulster Bank Affordable Credit.

The deficit for the financial year was £2,469,306 (2010-11: £2,435,063). The deficit is funded by the Grant-in-Aid received. Grant-in-Aid funding covers operational expenditure and capital procurement.

Total net book value of non-current assets were £595,030 at the year end, a decrease of £80,148 on the previous year (2010-11: £675,178).

### Going concern

In common with other non-departmental public bodies the future financing of the Consumer Council's liabilities will be met by future Grant-in-Aid, received from and approved annually by DETI. There is no reason to believe that future approvals will not be forthcoming. It has been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

### Pension Liabilities

Details of pension schemes are set out in note 3 to the financial statements and also in the Remuneration Report on pages 56 to 66.

### Post Year End Events

There have been no significant events since the year end, which would affect the accounts.

### Prompt payment practice

The Consumer Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received, in accordance with the Government's Better Payments Practice Payment Code.

Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods, or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. In 2011-12, 97% of invoices were paid within 30 days (2010-11: 99%).

In December 2008 the Government and Institute of Credit Management launched the new Prompt Payment Code setting a target of paying invoices within 10 days. Under this initiative the Consumer Council achieved 78% of bills paid within 10 days (2010-11: 94%).

The decrease in percentage achieved compared to 2010-11 can be mainly attributed to the introduction of a new finance system and a cash drawdown issue in 2011-12 which during implementation impacted on our ability to pay all invoices within 10 days. The percentage has improved for the beginning of the financial year.

### Charitable donations

There were no charitable donations made during 2011-12 (2010-11: £Nil).

### Employee development and involvement

The Consumer Council is committed to the development and involvement of employees in decision making processes. Staff opinions and views are sought as part of planning processes, for example, corporate planning and annual operational planning, and staff are encouraged to participate in working groups for work programme or corporate projects. In 2011 the Consumer Council developed a new HR Strategy. This strategy sets out four areas of focus in people terms:

- To develop employees to their full potential;
- To grow leadership capability;
- To support employee wellbeing; and
- To encourage employee participation

After being awarded Investors in People (IiP) silver status in December 2010 we worked to implement the recommendations arising from the IiP assessment. One key area of focus was to seek acknowledgement for the work life balance activities that we undertake to support positive health and wellbeing among staff. We achieved this acknowledgment when we were awarded the IiP good practice award in Health and Wellbeing in February 2012.

The Consumer Council's 2011-2015 HR Strategy clearly sets out our commitment to the ongoing professional and personal development of our employees. Staff benefit from access to a range of policies including flexible working arrangements, staff training, further education opportunities and work life balance. Employees are developed and trained to build competence in areas that are directly linked to the performance of the organisation, for example, customer focus, strategic thinking, team working. Staff objectives are set to develop and stretch individual competence and performance but objectives are also explicitly set to deliver overall section, operational and corporate objectives.

### Environmental, social and community responsibility

The Consumer Council is committed to the promotion of community social and environmental responsibility. A number of successful programmes and initiatives were undertaken in the year which effectively promoted awareness of these areas. We will continue to urge the Northern Ireland Assembly to make financial capability and inclusion a key priority within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's Life Time Opportunities: Government's Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland.

### Sustainability and environmental report

The Consumer Council has made a commitment to increased sustainability and corporate social responsibility. We believe in the need to embed the role of the consumer in all sustainability issues and encourage the consumer to change their behaviour to benefit them today and tomorrow.

We represent consumers in relation to transport, water and energy, areas which have a prominent focus in the sustainability agenda. We educate consumers about their

rights and responsibilities and inform them how they can make more responsible consumption choices.

Consumers in Northern Ireland identified responsible consumerism and sustainable development as important issues for them.<sup>6</sup> We believe that Government, industry and consumer representatives should work collectively to ensure the principles of sustainability inform our production and consumption choices.

The Consumer Council wants to ensure that the sustainability agenda takes the consumer viewpoint into account. We believe also that as consumers, exercising our responsibilities is as important as exercising our rights. So, in formulating consumer-focused policy we are committed to promoting responsible consumerism and encouraging consumers to change their behaviour to benefit them today and tomorrow.

Our aim is to ensure consumers are provided with information, choice and value for money whilst the negative environmental impacts of the production and consumption of goods and services are minimised.

The Consumer Council also has a duty as a public body and a consumer representative to contribute to and promote the achievement of sustainable development which if done correctly, will not incur additional costs. We recognise that our day to day operations have an impact on the environment both locally and globally. We aim to lead by example, maximising the conservation and efficiency of our own energy and resource use thereby reducing environmental impact and unnecessary costs and maximising value for money.

The Consumer Council has developed a position policy on sustainability to be incorporated into our Consumer Manifesto document which is a resource to aid stakeholders, policy makers and the Northern Ireland Executive in developing public policy and supporting consumers.

<sup>6</sup> Consumer Council's Corporate Plan 2011 - 2015

## Corporate

The Consumer Council commits to improving its environmental performance by developing and implementing a sustainability action plan, to include staff travel, procurement, energy use and waste management to guide and monitor its efforts towards reducing its ecological footprint.

We work to comply with all relevant environmental legislation and the requirements of the OFMDFM Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>7</sup>.

We are committed to raising staff awareness of sustainability issues and enlisting their support in improving our organisation's performance.

We have tasked a staff working group which has developed an internal sustainability draft action plan to encourage and implement best practice within the organisation.

We dispose of computer related and other electrical equipment responsibly. We have also adopted a waste and printer cartridge recycling scheme and staff manage the recycling of appropriate office and kitchen waste.

Consumer Council staff are encouraged to think before they print and if they are required to print documents, double sided printing should be used. All documents are previewed and tracked changes are used to electronically exchange suggested amendments rather than printing off hard copy documents and physically writing on these.

All internal communications including press clippings are distributed via email. Staff are encouraged to car share or use public transport to attend external meetings and presentations.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sustainable-development-strategy-lowres\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sustainable-development-strategy-lowres__2_.pdf)

## Education

The Consumer Council helps enable consumers to make responsible choices. As consumers, our responsibilities are as important as our rights.

Consumer Council research<sup>8</sup> indicates the majority of consumers do not understand what the term “sustainability” means and require simple, easily understandable information regarding the financial and environmental costs of different consumption choices if they are to make changes to their consumption behaviour.

The Consumer Council will address these issues by building strategic partnerships with organisations working on sustainability issues. We will work to inform and educate consumers by providing reliable and accessible sources of information and assist them in making responsible consumption choices.

We have continued to contribute to and develop the debate on responsible consumer choices; to create a better understanding of responsible consumerism; ensure that consumer needs are kept centre stage in the sustainability agenda and to encourage innovation to promote more responsible consumer behaviour.

Our international influence was acknowledged in 2011 when we were invited to deliver a workshop for a global audience of consumer skills practitioners at the Fourth International Consumer Sciences Conference in Bonn on the theme of ‘Consumer behaviour for a sustainable future’.

We have also continued to produce our International Consumer Skills and Education Roundtable’s e-newsletter to share examples of resources aimed at developing responsible consumer behaviour. The newsletter is disseminated to 200 practitioners globally.

<sup>8</sup> Data taken from a series of CCNI focus groups conducted in December 2010.

## Water and Energy

The Consumer Council adopts a tri-partite approach to sustainability which balances the environment, society and economic development. We work to represent the consumer adequately and appropriately in the development of work on sustainability across the work in water and energy sections.

During 2010-11 we continued to highlight that a debate is needed on the future of our water and sewerage services to ensure that we have a water and sewerage service that is socially, environmentally, politically and financially sustainable.

- The Consumer Council will work with energy companies, the Utility Regulator and other stakeholders to ensure targets included in the Renewable Energy Strategy and the NI Sustainable Development Strategy are met, while minimising the financial impact to consumers, particularly those in fuel poverty.

In June 2010 the Consumer Council took part in ‘Water Saving Week’, a national campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of saving water in the home, in businesses and in schools. Throughout the year we continued to provide consumers with information to enable them to make responsible choices about their water and sewerage services.

We have also worked to ensure that the needs of both the current and future consumers are taken into account during the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment’s consultation into Northern Ireland’s Strategic Energy Framework, which will set the direction of energy policy until 2020.

In general the water and energy sections’ work on sustainability includes supporting the ‘polluter pays’ principle meaning that those who cause a cost have to pay for it. We also help to tackle sustainability issues when we respond to consultations.

The work continues, and as environmental considerations rise up the agenda we must carefully consider how environmental costs can be incorporated whilst continuing to protect consumers, particularly vulnerable consumers.

### Transport

The Consumer Council continues to promote the benefits of public transport and has engaged in direct research with young people to identify and highlight the concerns and barriers they experience which prevent them from using public transport. We continue to work with government and transport providers and Translink will shortly be introducing a ticketing product entitled 'yLink' which offers all young people aged 16-23 savings on the cost of travel. This follows a trial of the smartcard during April to June 2011 which involved the Consumer Council, Translink and Youth Action. The Consumer Council held focus groups with consumers on the use of public transport to access key services and how consumers can be engaged in transport planning to enable greater use of more sustainable travel options. We are also taking steps to promote the use of public transport within our own work place, with the 'Tax Smart' scheme now available to staff which offers discounted bus travel to their place of work.

### Money Affairs

We recognise that financial capability and inclusion are related to the principles of sustainability. By having access to financial products and services alongside having the knowledge and skills to manage our money, plan ahead and save for a rainy day we can become more responsible and sustainable consumers. The Consumer Council will be working in partnership with others to develop and implement a financial capability strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Consumer Council leads the Financial Capability Partnership NI which brings together government, banks, building societies, credit unions, the education and community sectors to ensure that we all help consumers to manage their money and make it work best for them. The Partnership for Financial Capability is led by the Consumer Council.

### Consumer Support

A new fully integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System was implemented on 1 April 2011. This has completely removed the need for paper files to be held as all information pertaining to complaints and enquiries is electronically stored.

### Future development

The Consumer Council will continue to represent the interests of consumers and identify strategic areas of action in line with the current Corporate Plan and through the work to develop our new Corporate Plan 2011-2015.

### Auditors

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland (C&AG) in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. He is head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and he and his staff are wholly independent of the Consumer Council and he reports his findings to Northern Ireland Assembly.

There was no other non audit work carried out by the Comptroller and Auditor General or its subcontractors during 2011-12.

## Remuneration Report

### Chairman and Council

The Council consists of a part-time Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and 10 other Members, plus co-opted Members, as required.

The Chairman and Council Members are appointed in accordance with the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. The Chairman and Council Members are appointed for a fixed period of up to three years. Thereafter they may be re-appointed in accordance with the Code of Practice.

The remuneration of the Chairman and Council Members is set by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Increases are calculated in line with the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body. There are no arrangements in place for the payment of a bonus.

Neither the Chairman nor any Council Members receive pension contributions from the Consumer Council or DETI. The Consumer Council reimburses the Chairman and Council Members for any incidental expenses incurred for carrying out their duties relevant to the organisation. Council Members' expenses amounting to £5,045 (2010-11: £4,514) have been paid during the year and are reflected under other expenditure in note 5 to the accounts.

The remuneration of the Chairman and Council Members is as follows (the information in the table below has been subject to audit):

Council	2011 - 2012		2010 - 2011	
	Salary £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Salary £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)
Mr Richard Hill	20-25	-	20-25	-
Other Council Members (2011-12: 15; 2010-11: 14) as set out on page 42 of the accounts. Figure includes Members appointed and those who left during the year.	0-5	-	0-5	-

In addition, the Consumer Council have seven (2010-11: seven) co-opted Committee Members who can be called upon during the year. During 2011-12, three (2010-11: four) co-opted Committee Members: Ms Fionnuala Cook, Mr David Moore and Dr Chris Strugnell each received remuneration in the range £0-£5,000 (2010-11: £0-£5,000).

### Chief Executive and Senior Management Team

#### Remuneration Policy

The remuneration of senior civil servants is set by the Minister for Finance and Personnel. The Minister approved a freeze on senior pay in respect of 2010-11 and 2011-12 pay awards, in line with the Executive's decision in Budget 2011-15 to mirror the UK Coalition Government's commitment to impose pay restraint. The pay system in place for senior civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service is currently under review.

### Service Contracts

Consumer Council appointments are made in accordance with the Consumer Council Recruitment and Selection policy, which requires appointment to be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition but also includes the circumstances when appointments may otherwise be made.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointment, which are open-ended. Policy relating to notice periods and termination payments is contained in the Consumer Council staff contracts.

The Chief Executive's remuneration package contains a provision for a performance related bonus, in accordance with the Senior Civil Service, to be determined according to the achievement of targets and performance indicators which are set by the Board on an annual basis. Performance against these targets is assessed each year by the Remuneration Committee which makes a recommendation, ultimately for Ministerial approval, on the amount of bonus to be paid. No bonuses were paid during 2011-12 (2010-11: £Nil).

The other members of the Senior Management Team are paid in line with Northern Ireland Civil Service Salary Bands. Increases in remuneration are in line with Northern Ireland Civil Service pay awards and are not performance related. This process for remunerating the Senior Management Team is not anticipated to change in the next financial year.

### Salary and pension entitlements

The following section provides details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management of the Consumer Council (the information in the table below has been subject to audit):

Senior Management	2011 - 2012			2010 - 2011		
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)
Ms Antoinette McKeown <i>Chief Executive</i>	60-65	-	-	60-65	-	-
Ms Elaine Topping <i>Director (from 7 June 2010)</i>	45-50	-	-	35-40 (40-45 full-time equivalent)	-	-
Mr Aodhan O'Donnell <i>Director (from 26 April 2010)</i>	40-45	-	-	35-40 (40-45 full-time equivalent)	-	-
Ms Donna Magee <i>Acting Director (from 21 February 2008 to 6 July 2010)</i>	-	-	-	5-10 (45-50 full-time equivalent)	-	-
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration	60-65			60-65		
Median Total Remuneration	27,115			27,115		
Ratio	2.36			2.36		

### Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation. It does not include amounts which are a reimbursement of expenses directly incurred in the performance of an individual's duties. This report is based on payments made by the Consumer Council and thus recorded in these accounts.

### Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. There were no benefits in kind paid to Senior Management during the year (2010-11: £Nil).

### Bonuses

There were no bonuses paid during 2011-12 (2010-11: £Nil).

### Pension Entitlements

The following section provides details of the pension interests of the most senior management of the Consumer Council (the information in the table below has been subject to audit):

Senior Management	Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31 March 2012 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000	CETV at 31 March 2012 £'000	CETV at 31 March 2011 or start date *** £'000	Real increase in CETV £'000	Employer contribution to partnership pension account  Nearest £100
Ms Antoinette McKeown <i>Chief Executive</i>	10-15 Plus lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	192	175	2	-
Ms Elaine Topping <i>Director (from 7 June 2010)</i>	15-20 No lump sum	0-2.5 No lump sum	201	182	3	-
Mr Aodhan O'Donnell <i>Director (from 26 April 2010)</i>	0-5 No lump sum	0-2.5 No lump sum	15	10	3	-
Ms Donna Magee <i>Acting Director (from 21 February 2008 to 6 July 2010)</i>	-	-	-	70	-	-

\*\*\*The actuarial factors used to calculate CETVs were changed in 2011-12. The CETVs at 31-3-11 and 31-3-12 have both been calculated using the new factors, for consistency. The CETV at 31-3-11 therefore differs from the corresponding figure in last year's report which was calculated using the previous factors.

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in The Consumer Council in the financial year 2011-12 was £60,000 – 65,000 (2010-11: £60,000 – 65,000). This was 2.36 times (2010-11: 2.36) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £27,115 (2010-11: £27,115).

In 2011-12 no employees (2010-11, 0) received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director. Remuneration ranged from £15,619 to £64,000 (2010-11: £14,981-£64,000)

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, benefits-in-kind as well as severance payments. It does not include employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

### Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension arrangements

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension arrangements which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP). Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 may be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' defined benefit arrangements (classic, premium, and classic plus). These arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. From April 2011 pensions payable under classic, premium, and classic plus are increased annually in line with changes in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). Prior to 2011, pensions were increased in line with changes in the Retail Prices Index (RPI). New entrants joining on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 could choose between membership of premium or joining a good quality 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (partnership

pension account). New entrants joining on or after 30 July 2007 are eligible for membership of the nuvos arrangement or they can opt for a partnership pension account. Nuvos is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current rate is 2.3%. CARE pension benefits are increased annually in line with increases in the CPI. For 2012, public service pensions will be increased by 5.2% with effect from 9 April.

Employee contributions are set at the rate of 1.5% of pensionable earnings for classic and 3.5% for premium, classic plus and nuvos. Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic plus is essentially a variation of premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 3% and 12.5% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers' contributions totalled £769 (2010-11: £2,670) Employers also contribute a further 0.8% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement). Employers' contributions in 2011-12 totalled £40 (0.8 %) (2010-11: £230, 0.8%).

Contributions due to the partnership pension providers at the balance sheet date were £Nil. Contributions prepaid at that date were £Nil.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the

scheme if they are at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of classic, premium, and classic plus and 65 for members of nuvos. Further details about the CSP arrangements can be found at the website [www.dfpni.gov/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.dfpni.gov/civilservicepensions-ni).

### Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the CSP arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost. CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

The actuarial factors that are used in the CETV calculation were changed during 2011, due to changes in demographic assumptions. This means that the CETV in this year's report for 31/03/11 will not be the same as the corresponding figure shown in last year's report.

### Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

**Compensation for loss of office**

No awards or compensation payments have been made to former Senior Managers during 2011-12 (2010-11: £Nil).

**Ill-health retirement**

No individuals retired early on ill-health grounds (2010-11: £Nil).

**Third Parties**

No payments have been made to third parties for services as a Senior Manager.



Antoinette McKeown  
Accounting Officer  
21 June 2012

**Statement of Council's and Chief Executive's responsibilities**

Under paragraph 12(4) of Schedule 1 to the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has directed the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland of its income and expenditure, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

The Accounting Officer for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has designated the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer for the Consumer Council. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Consumer Council's assets, are set out in the Managing Public Money (NI) (MPM (NI)), published by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

By order of the Board



Richard Hill  
Chairman  
21 June 2012



Antoinette McKeown  
Accounting Officer  
21 June 2012

## Statement on Internal Control

### 1. Scope of responsibility

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Consumer Council's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and Consumer Council assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money (NI).

I act in accordance with the Consumer Council's Management Statement and Financial Memorandum as agreed with DETI and with instructions and guidance in MPM (NI) and other instructions and guidance issued from time to time by DETI and DFP.

### 2. The purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Consumer Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in the Consumer Council for the year ended 31 March 2012 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts, and accords with DFP guidance.

### 3. Capacity to handle risk

The Consumer Council has adopted DETI's risk management process manual and risk management policy. The Consumer Council carries out appropriate procedures to ensure that it identifies its corporate and operational objectives and risks which might impact on these objectives. A control strategy has been devised for each of the significant risks. As part of these procedures, risk ownership has been allocated to appropriate staff.

Business and Corporate risk registers are in place to define the system for managing risk so as to achieve corporate objectives set. The registers include for each identified risk, the risk rating, indicators, owner, causes and business implications, and details any further action required to fully manage the risk. I report on risk management to the Consumer Council Audit Committee and DETI on a quarterly basis. The Consumer Council is part of the overall DETI risk management system, reporting to the Departmental Audit Committee.

### 4. The risk and control framework

The Consumer Council has in place a framework for risk management, which includes arrangements to identify, assess and manage risks across all aspects of its governance and business. To monitor and review risks the Consumer Council has:

- Complied with the implementation of enhanced Corporate Governance processes advised by DETI;
- Continued to develop, review, monitor, enhance and implement a risk management process in consultation with DETI;
- Further enhanced our risk management approach through the development of sectional risk registers to inform our corporate risk register;
- Reviewed and updated the fraud policy and fraud response plan;
- Reviewed and updated the purchasing policy;
- Held separate quarterly risk review meetings;
- Continued a formal system of risk assessment and reporting to the Audit Committee and the Council;
- Established a system of reporting and approving governance and risk items discussed at the Audit Committee under the Chairman's agenda section of Council meetings;
- Carried out a system of bi-annual risk reporting via stewardship statements;
- Developed an audit plan based on an audit needs assessment undertaken by our Internal Auditors;
- Business Continuity Planning, which includes IT infrastructure resilience and
- Emergency communications plan to respond quickly to a communications issue that may put at risk the Council's reputation.

The Consumer Council has ensured that procedures are in place for verifying that risk management and internal control are regularly reviewed and reported on. Risk management has progressively been incorporated more fully into the corporate planning and decision making processes of the Consumer Council. Appropriate steps have been taken to manage risks in significant areas of responsibility and monitor progress on key projects.

ASM carried out the Internal Audit function for the Consumer Council for the year ended 31 March 2012. The programme operates to standards defined in the Government Internal Audit Manual. The work of ASM is informed by an analysis of the risk to which the Consumer Council is exposed, and annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis.

In 2011/12 three internal audits were carried out by ASM in the following areas:

- Payroll, pensions and travel expenses (including board remuneration);
- Consumer Education; and
- Information Technology.

Assurance ratings of satisfactory were achieved in the areas of Payroll, Pensions and Travel Expenses and Information Technology with a substantial assurance rating being achieved in the area of Consumer Education.

In addition to the agreed internal audit plan for 2011-12 ASM also completed, at the request of management, further work in relation to the historic payroll issue. This work considered the impact of the implementation of "marked time" in relation to the 2010 and 2011 pay awards and quantified the payroll debtor at 31 March 2012.

The Annual Internal Audit Assurance report for 2011-12 provides an opinion that the Consumer Council's systems in relation to risk management, control and governance were adequate and operated effectively thereby providing satisfactory assurance in relation to effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives.

The Consumer Council has in place key Corporate Performance Indicators and has identified one key measure as the implementation of internal audit recommendations within six months of the recommendation being accepted or in line with the agreed timeframe (if that is agreed to be more than six months). In 2011-12 all recommendations were implemented within these timeframes.

### 5. Information and data security

In relation to managing information risk, we have put in place controls and measures around encryption of data, removable media, laptops and data transfer. We have a dedicated Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and continue to link in to all central (Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) or DETI) plans and reviews in relation to information and data security.

The Consumer Council is currently working with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment and IT Assist to develop and agree a formal NDPB Service Level Agreement for network provision which is fully compliant with NICS security and information compliance standards.

There were no personal data related incidents in the year.

### 6. Review of effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, Audit Committee members and the managers within the Consumer Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their Report to those Charged with Governance and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Council and the Audit Committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

As part of the risk management framework, which was established in September 2002 and is subject to review, the following arrangements apply:

- Individual business sections maintain risk registers which assess and mitigate risk against the achievement of team objectives;
- the Corporate Risk Register assesses and manages strategic risks which facilitates escalation and de-escalation with section risk registers;
- the Senior Management Team review and report on the risks associated with their operational areas on a monthly basis;
- the Council approves the Corporate Risk Register on the basis of recommendation by the Audit Committee who regularly review it (incorporating individual review of each risk);
- as Accounting Officer I submit a formal report of the risk register to DETI on a quarterly basis;
- as Accounting Officer I submit an assurance statement to DETI on a bi-annual basis;
- the Chairman and Accounting Officer meet DETI on a quarterly basis;

As a general rule the Audit Committee meets in advance of the Council meetings which take place five times a year formally, and reviews the risk register at least four times in the year. New arrangements have been introduced by DETI in 2011-12 which have resulted in the Chair of Audit Committee no longer attending Departmental Audit Committee. The DETI liaison officer is a member of the Consumer Council Audit Committee and a staff member from DETI Accountability and Casework branch is in attendance at all Audit Committee meetings.

## 7. Significant Internal Control Problems

As Accounting Officer, I am required to adhere to the NICS guidance on "Managing Public Money" and all other requirements as set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.

In respect of the irregular payment position, as outlined in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 Annual Accounts, DFP approval for write-off of the historic element of £273,723 was provided in October 2011 with all relevant employees being placed on "marked time" until such time as individual salary payments have been regularised.

The DFP write-off approval required the Council to submit an annual business case for ongoing irregular salary payments. The quantification of the 2011-12 position was completed by ASM in February 2012 with the information being made available to DETI at this time. In June 2012, the Consumer Council received confirmation of annual (2011-12) write-off approval from DFP.

In addition the Council has confirmed to DETI that the 19 recommendations presented in the Payroll Process Report, completed by Business Consultancy Services in March 2011, have been implemented and all associated actions completed in the 2011-12 financial year.



Accounting Officer  
21 June 2012

## The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2012 under the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland Order) 1984. These comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows, the Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Remuneration Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

### Respective responsibilities of the Council, Chief Executive and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Council's and Chief Executive's Responsibilities, the Council and Chief Executive are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. My responsibility is to examine, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland Order) 1984. I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

### Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income reported in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

### Opinion on Regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

### Opinion on financial statements

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland 's affairs as at 31 March 2012 and of the net expenditure, cash flows and changes in taxpayers' equity for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland Order) 1984 and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment directions issued thereunder.

### Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment directions made under the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland Order) 1984; and
- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

**Matters on which I report by exception**

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Statement on Internal Control does not reflect compliance with Department of Finance and Personnel's guidance.

**Report**

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



KJ Donnelly  
Comptroller and Auditor General  
Northern Ireland Audit Office  
106 University Street  
Belfast  
BT7 1EU

25 June 2012

**Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2012**

	Note	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	3	1,697,713	1,739,774
Work programme	4	327,569	319,483
Depreciation and amortisation	5	39,003	34,174
Other expenditures	5	521,148	518,666
		2,585,433	2,612,097
<b>Income</b>			
Income from activities	6	66,932	122,148
Other income	6	49,163	54,805
		116,095	176,953
<b>Net expenditure</b>		(2,469,338)	(2,435,144)
Interest receivable	6	32	101
<b>Net expenditure after interest</b>		(2,469,306)	(2,435,043)
Tax on ordinary activities	7	-	(20)
<b>Net expenditure after interest and taxation</b>		(2,469,306)	(2,435,063)
<b>Other Comprehensive Expenditure</b>			
		2011-12 £	2010-11 £
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of Property Plant and Equipment		(51,192)	(30,526)
Total Comprehensive Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2012		(2,520,498)	(2,465,589)

The notes at pages 84 to 108 form part of the financial statements.

## Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2012

	Note	2012 £		20101 £	
<b>Non-current assets:</b>					
Property, plant and equipment	8	511,234		583,869	
Intangible assets	9	83,796		91,309	
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>595,030</b>		675,178	
<b>Current assets:</b>					
Trade and other receivables	11	42,230		48,796	
Cash and cash equivalents	13	13,267		28,770	
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>55,497</b>		77,566	
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>650,527</b>		752,744	
<b>Current liabilities:</b>					
Trade and other payables	14	(307,483)		(270,284)	
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>(307,483)</b>		(270,284)	
<b>Non-current assets plus/less net current assets/liabilities</b>		<b>343,044</b>		482,460	
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>					
Provisions		-		-	
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>		<b>-</b>		-	
<b>Assets less liabilities</b>		<b>343,044</b>		482,460	
<b>Taxpayers' equity</b>					
General reserve		263,005		351,229	
Revaluation reserve		80,039		131,231	
		<b>343,044</b>		482,460	

The financial statements on pages 80 to 108 were approved by the Board on 21 June 2012 and were signed on its behalf by:



Antoinette McKeown  
Accounting Officer  
Date: 21 June 2012

The notes on pages 84 to 108 form part of the financial statements.

## Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2012

Note	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Net expenditure after interest and tax	<b>(2,469,306)</b>	<b>(2,435,063)</b>
Adjustments for: Depreciation	5 <b>28,740</b>	<b>30,905</b>
Amortisation	5 <b>10,263</b>	<b>3,269</b>
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	<b>6,566</b>	<b>25,688</b>
Increase/(Decrease) in trade payables	<b>96,016</b>	<b>(98,963)</b>
<b>Net cash outflow from operating activities</b>	<b>(2,327,721)</b>	<b>(2,474,164)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	<b>(19,882)</b>	<b>(56,033)</b>
Purchase of intangible assets	<b>(48,982)</b>	<b>(25,855)</b>
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>	<b>(68,864)</b>	<b>(81,888)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Financing from DETI	<b>2,381,082</b>	<b>2,361,273</b>
<b>Net financing</b>	<b>2,381,082</b>	<b>2,361,273</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period</b>	<b>(15,503)</b>	<b>(194,779)</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period</b>	13 <b>28,770</b>	<b>223,549</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>	13 <b>13,267</b>	<b>28,770</b>

The notes on pages 84 to 108 form part of the financial statements.

## Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity as at the year ended 31 March 2012

	General Reserve £	Revaluation Reserve £	Total Reserves £
<b>Balance at 31 March 2010</b>	425,019	161,758	586,777
<b>Changes in taxpayers' equity 2010-2011</b>			
Comprehensive expenditure for financial year	(2,435,063)	(30,527)	(2,465,590)
Financing from DETI	2,361,273	-	2,361,273
<b>Balance at 31 March 2011</b>	351,229	131,231	482,460
<b>Balance at 1 April 2011</b>			
<b>Changes in taxpayers' equity 2011-2012</b>			
Comprehensive expenditure for financial year	(2,469,306)	(51,192)	(2,520,498)
Financing from DETI	2,381,082	-	2,381,082
<b>Balance at 31 March 2012</b>	263,005	80,039	343,044

## Notes forming part of the financial statements For the year ended 31 March 2012

### 1. Statement of accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance the 2011-12 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Consumer Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Consumer Council are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

#### 1.1 Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet effective

Management has reviewed new accounting standards that have been issued but are not yet effective, nor adopted early for these accounts. Management consider that these are unlikely to have a significant impact on the accounts in the period of initial application.

#### 1.2 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property plant and equipment and intangible assets.

#### 1.3 Property, plant and equipment

The Consumer Council's property, plant and equipment comprise office equipment, furniture and fittings and leasehold alterations. The assets of the Consumer Council are carried at fair value. Depreciated historical cost is used as a proxy for fair value for all the organisation's tangible assets given their low values and short useful lives.

The minimum level for capitalisation of an item of property, plant and equipment is £250.

Leasehold alterations have been stated at net current replacement cost, all other assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses. A revaluation of the premises on Elizabeth House was undertaken at 31 March 2012 and this has been included in the financial accounts. The revaluation was carried out by Land and Property Services, an executive Agency with the Department of Finance and Personnel.

#### 1.4 Intangible assets

The Consumer Council's intangible assets comprise software and software licences. Where computer software is not an integral part of a related item of computer hardware, the software licence is treated as an intangible asset.

The minimum level for capitalisation of an item of intangible asset is £250.

#### 1.5 Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation is calculated to write off the original cost or revalued amount of property, plant and equipment to their expected residual values by equal annual instalments over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Alterations on a straight line basis over the remaining period of lease	
Furniture and fittings	20% straight line
Office equipment	33 1/3% straight line

Amortisation is calculated to write off the original cost of intangible assets to their expected residual values by equal annual instalments over their useful lives at a rate of 10% on a straight line basis.

Depreciation and amortisation are provided from the month of addition.

## 1.6 Impairment review

The Consumer Council carries out an impairment review of its tangible and intangible assets when a change in circumstances or situation indicates that those assets may have suffered an impairment loss. Impairment is measured by comparing the carrying amount of an asset with the 'recoverable amount', that is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its 'value in use'. 'Value in use' is assumed to equal the cost of replacing the service potential provided by the asset, unless there has been a reduction in service potential.

## 1.7 Financial Instruments

### Recognition

- Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised on the Consumer Council's statement of financial position when the Consumer Council becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument on a trade date basis.

### Financial assets

- Financial assets are classified into the following specified categories: at fair value through profit or loss ("FVTPL"); held-to-maturity investments, "available-for-sale" ("AFS") financial assets and "loans and receivables". The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. The Consumer Council's financial assets comprise trade and other receivables and cash and cash equivalents, and are classified as Loans and Receivables and are held at cost, which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

### Financial liabilities

- Financial liabilities of the Consumer Council, including trade and other payables, are measured at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

## 1.8 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Principle Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). Employer contributions are determined following a scheme valuation carried out every four years by the Government Actuary.

### (i) Classic Scheme

Benefits accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three year's pension is payable on retirement. Members pay contributions of 1.5 % of pensionable earnings. On death, pensions are payable to the surviving spouse at a rate of half the member's pension. On death in service, the scheme pays a lump sum benefit of twice pensionable pay and also provides a service enhancement on computing the spouse's pension. The enhancement depends on length of service and cannot exceed 10 years. Medical retirement is possible in the event of serious ill health. In this case, pensions are brought into payment immediately without actuarial reduction and with service enhanced as for widow(er) pensions.

### (ii) Premium Scheme

Benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum, but members may commute some of their pension to provide a lump sum up to a maximum of 3/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service or 2.25 times pension if greater (the commutation rate is £12 of lump sum for each £1 of pension given up). For the purposes of pension disclosure the tables assume maximum commutation. Members pay contributions of 3.5 % of pensionable earnings. On death, pensions are payable to the surviving spouse or eligible partner at a rate of 3/8ths the member's pension (before any commutation). On death in service, the scheme pays a lump sum benefit of three times pensionable earnings and also provides a service enhancement on computing the spouse's pension. The enhancement depends on length of service and cannot exceed 10 years. Medical retirement is possible in the event of serious ill health. In this case, pensions are brought into payment immediately

without actuarial reduction. Where the member's ill health is such that it permanently prevents them undertaking any gainful employment, service is enhanced to what they would have accrued at age 60.

### (iii) Classic Plus Scheme

This is essentially a variation of premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic.

All staff in service at 1 October 2002 will be given the option to join the premium or classic plus arrangements.

Pensions payable under classic, premium and classic plus are increased in line with the Retail Prices Index.

### (iv) Partnership Pension Account

This is a stakeholder-type arrangement where the employer pays a basic contribution of between 3% and 12.5% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, these will be matched by the employer up to a limit of 3% (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.8% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The member may retire at any time between the ages of 50 and 75 and use the accumulated fund to purchase a pension. The member may choose to take up 25% of the fund as a lump sum.

### Early Departure Costs

The practice adopted by the Consumer Council is to provide for the full cost of early departure of employees in the year in which the early departure decision is made.

## 1.9 Financing from DETI

Financing represents grant-in-aid received from DETI and is credited to the General Reserve.

## 1.10 Income

Income from independent project activities:

- Funding receivable from other organisations, including Atlantic Philanthropies, the Department for Transport and Ulster Bank for core programme expenditure and specific staff salaries.

Income from operating activities represents:

- Rent received from Consumer Focus Post who occupy office space within Consumer Council offices. The charge is calculated on a shared service cost allocation and includes rent, repairs, administration, IT support and training; and
- Bank interest.

## 1.11 Operating Leases

Leases are classified as operating leases whenever the terms of the lease do not transfer substantially all the risks and benefits to the lessee. Rentals payable under operating leases are expensed to the net expenditure account on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

## 1.12 Value Added Tax (VAT)

The Consumer Council is not registered for VAT.

## 1.13 Staff Costs

Under IAS 19 Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave as at the year end. The cost of untaken leave has been determined using data from leave records.

## 1.14 Accounting Estimates

Other than the revaluation of refurbishment costs on the premises, no material accounting estimates or judgements were made by the Consumer Council in preparing these accounts.

## 2. Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segment

### 2a. Analysis of net expenditure by segment

2011-12	Energy £	Water £	Other Sections £	Administration incorporating Corporate Services £	Total £
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	500,711	558,692	1,321,914	204,116	2,585,433
<b>Interest</b>				32	32
<b>Income</b>	-	-	66,932	49,163	116,095
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>(500,711)</b>	<b>(558,692)</b>	<b>(1,254,982)</b>	<b>(154,921)</b>	<b>(2,469,306)</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>				<b>650,527</b>	<b>650,527</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>				<b>(307,483)</b>	<b>(307,483)</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	-	-	-	<b>343,044</b>	<b>343,044</b>

2010-11	Energy £	Water £	Other Sections £	Administration incorporating Corporate Services £	Total £
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	511,402	609,893	1,270,676	220,126	2,612,097
<b>Taxation</b>	-	-	-	20	20
<b>Interest</b>	-	-	-	101	101
<b>Income</b>	-	-	122,148	54,805	176,953
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>(511,402)</b>	<b>(609,893)</b>	<b>(1,148,528)</b>	<b>(165,240)</b>	<b>(2,435,063)</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	-	-	-	<b>752,744</b>	<b>752,744</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	-	-	-	<b>(270,284)</b>	<b>(270,284)</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	-	-	-	<b>482,460</b>	<b>482,460</b>

The Consumer Council has two separately reportable sections: Energy and Water. Energy and Water funding is received to enable the Consumer Council to perform its legal responsibility to represent the interests of Energy and Water Consumers in Northern Ireland under the Energy (NI) Order 2003 and the Water and Sewerage Services (NI) Order. The other sections are made up of Money Affairs, Consumer Education, Consumer Support, Transport and Communications. These sections are funded primarily through DETI with project specific funding received from Department for Transport, DRD Transport, Atlantic Philanthropies and Ulster Bank and deal with all other consumer issues within our remit.

The Consumer Council has disclosed all income and expenses in line with the Business Cases as presented to the relevant funder and the Board. The net assets of the Consumer Council are not separately identifiable on a segmental basis and have therefore been disclosed in total under the administration heading. All activities of the Consumer Council and assets held by the Consumer Council are within the UK.

The shared service allocation represents the contribution that the Energy and Water funding makes towards the Consumer Support section and all associated administration costs.

### 3. Staff numbers and related costs

#### 3(a) Staff costs comprise:

	2011-12 Total £	Permanent staff £	Others £	2010-11 Total £
<b>Council members' remuneration and allowances</b>				
Chairman's salary – gross	21,765	-	21,765	21,765
Social security costs	2,025	-	2,025	2,057
Members' fees	10,995	-	10,995	17,820
	<b>34,785</b>	-	<b>34,785</b>	41,642
<b>Staff salaries</b>				
Wages and salaries	1,267,836	1,187,795	80,041	1,327,821
Social security costs	99,744	93,942	5,802	101,436
Pension costs	249,793	240,460	9,333	250,420
Contract staff	45,555	-	45,555	18,455
	<b>1,662,928</b>	<b>1,522,197</b>	<b>140,731</b>	1,698,132
<b>Total staff costs</b>	<b>1,697,713</b>	<b>1,522,197</b>	<b>175,516</b>	1,739,774

#### 3(b) Average numbers of persons employed:

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed (including senior management) during the period, excluding Council Members, was as follows:

	2011-12			2010-11
	Total	Permanently employed staff	Fixed Term Positions	Total
Directly employed	44	42	2	46
Contract Staff	1	-	1	1
Students	2	-	2	2
	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5</b>	49

#### 3 (c) Pension scheme details:

The Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (NI) (PCSPS (NI)) is an unfunded multi-employer defined benefit scheme but the Consumer Council is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. A full actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2007. In accordance with FReM, full actuarial valuations should be carried out every four years. However, formal actuarial valuations for unfunded public service pension schemes have been suspended by HM Treasury on value for money grounds while consideration is given to recent changes to public service pensions and while future scheme terms are developed as part of the reforms to public service pension provision. The primary purpose of the formal actuarial valuations is to set employer and employee contribution rates, and these are currently being determined under the new scheme design. Details can be found in the PCSPS(NI) resource accounts.

For 2011-12, employers' contributions of £248,984 were payable to the PCSPS (NI) (2010-11: £247,520) at one of four rates in the range 18 to 25 % (2010-11: 18 to 25 %) of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The scheme's

Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following a full scheme valuation.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £769 (2010-11: £2,670) were paid to one or more of a panel of three appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 3 to 12.5 % (2010-11: 3.0 to 12.5 %) of pensionable pay. Employers also match employee contributions up to 3.0 % of pensionable pay.

### 3(c) Pension scheme details (continued):

In addition, employer contributions of £40 (0.8 %); (2010-11: £230, 0.8%) of pensionable pay, were payable to the PCSPS (NI) to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees.

Contributions due to the partnership pension providers at the statement of financial position date were £Nil (2010-11: £Nil). Contributions prepaid at that date were £Nil (2010-11: £Nil).

No persons (2010-11: None) retired early on ill-health grounds; the total additional accrued pension liabilities, payable by CSP, in the year amounted to £Nil (2010-11: £Nil).

From 1 October 2002, civil servants may also be in one of three statutory based "final salary" defined benefit schemes (classic, premium and classic plus).

### 3(d) Reporting of compensation and exit packages for all staff 2011-12:

There were no compensation or exit packages made during 2011-12 (2010-11: one; the total exit package amounted to £1,140).

Redundancy and other departure costs are paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland), a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order

1972. Exit costs are accounted for in full in the year of departure. Where the Consumer Council has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the Consumer Council and not by the Civil Service pension scheme. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in the table.

## 4. Work programme

	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
Energy	46,231	24,007
Consumer education	76,796	31,726
Transport	28,793	43,651
Communications including website	45,002	59,792
Water	33,032	17,535
Consumer Support	14,099	34,174
Money affairs	69,624	34,432
Directors	10,666	-
Cross-sectional	3,326	74,166
	<b>327,569</b>	319,483

## 5. Other expenditure

	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
<b>Other expenditure</b>		
Operating leases – rent and service charge	<b>186,199</b>	187,088
Rates	<b>73,290</b>	71,357
Legal and professional fees	<b>15,912</b>	21,295
Recruitment and induction costs	<b>19,861</b>	28,582
Office machinery – annual licences and maintenance	<b>43,209</b>	7,967
Operating leases – office machinery	<b>33,489</b>	7,801
Maintenance, repairs and cleaning	<b>16,274</b>	18,411
Telephone and postage	<b>19,790</b>	14,753
Members' expenses	<b>5,045</b>	4,514
Staff training and development	<b>44,772</b>	32,297
Staff travel	<b>15,554</b>	14,153
Printing and stationery	<b>16,898</b>	15,001
Project costs	<b>7,154</b>	4,398
Electricity	<b>14,473</b>	12,379
Audit fees – internal audit	<b>14,329</b>	14,394
Audit fees – external audit	<b>10,886</b>	9,739
Professional relationships and memberships	<b>5,183</b>	4,752
Hospitality, including catering	<b>1,313</b>	2,297
Library	<b>2,010</b>	1,248
Consultancy	-	19,881
Sundry expenses	<b>731</b>	298
Bank Charges	<b>453</b>	384
	<b>521,148</b>	518,666
<b>Non-cash items</b>		
Depreciation	<b>28,740</b>	30,905
Amortisation	<b>10,263</b>	3,269
	<b>39,003</b>	34,174
	<b>560,151</b>	552,840

## 6. Income

	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
<b>Income from activities</b>		
Atlantic Philanthropies	<b>12,357</b>	-
Ulster Bank Affordable Credit	<b>25,000</b>	-
Department for Transport	<b>29,575</b>	38,916
Consumer Financial Education Body (formerly Financial Services Authority)	-	83,232
	<b>66,932</b>	122,148
<b>Other income</b>		
Rent received – Consumer Focus Post	<b>49,163</b>	54,687
Sundry	-	118
	<b>49,163</b>	54,805
Bank interest received	<b>32</b>	101
	<b>116,127</b>	177,054

## 7. Taxation

### i) Taxation charge in the year

	2011-12 £	2010-11 £
Current tax:		
UK corporation tax charge on taxable income for the current year	-	20
Adjustments to tax charge in respect of previous periods	-	-
	-	20

### ii) Factors affecting tax charge

The Consumer Council does not have Crown exemption in relation to corporation tax and therefore is subject to corporation tax in relation to interest receivable.

The provision for tax in 2010-11 is an estimate of potential tax payable on these sources of income.

### iii) Deferred taxation

No provision for deferred tax has been made as at 31 March 2012 (2010-11: £Nil).

## 8. Property, plant and equipment

2011-12	Alterations £	Furniture and fittings £	Office equipment £	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>				
At 1 April 2011	520,988	144,148	192,035	857,171
Additions	-	-	11,585	11,585
Revaluation	(57,076)	-	-	(57,076)
Disposals	-	-	(8,326)	(8,326)
<b>At 31 March 2012</b>	<b>463,912</b>	<b>144,148</b>	<b>195,294</b>	<b>803,354</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>				
At 1 April 2011	1,596	121,118	150,588	273,302
Charged in year	-	9,940	18,800	28,740
Revaluation	(1,596)	-	-	(1,596)
Disposals	-	-	(8,326)	(8,326)
<b>At 31 March 2012</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>131,058</b>	<b>161,062</b>	<b>292,120</b>
<b>Carrying amount At 31 March 2012</b>	<b>463,912</b>	<b>13,090</b>	<b>34,232</b>	<b>511,234</b>
Carrying amount At 31 March 2011	519,392	23,030	41,447	583,869
<b>Asset financing:</b>				
Owned	463,912	13,090	34,232	511,234
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2012</b>	<b>463,912</b>	<b>13,090</b>	<b>34,232</b>	<b>511,234</b>

At 31 March 2012 the total value of property, plant and equipment funded by finance leases or on-balance sheet PFI contracts amounted to £Nil (2010-11: £Nil).

A revaluation of the premises on Elizabeth House was undertaken as at 31 March 2012 and this has been included in the financial accounts. The revaluation was carried out by Land and Property Services, an executive Agency with the Department of Finance and Personnel, using indices.

	Alterations £	Furniture and fittings £	Office equipment £	Total £
<b>2010-11</b>				
<b>Cost or valuation</b>				
At 1 April 2010	664,028	143,208	187,475	994,711
Additions	20,989	940	35,591	57,520
Revaluation	(164,029)	-	-	(164,029)
Disposals	-	-	(31,031)	(31,031)
<b>At 31 March 2011</b>	<b>520,988</b>	<b>144,148</b>	<b>192,035</b>	<b>857,171</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>				
At 1 April 2010	133,503	108,137	165,291	406,931
Charged in year	1,596	12,981	16,328	30,905
Revaluation	(133,503)	-	-	(133,503)
Disposals	-	-	(31,031)	(31,031)
<b>At 31 March 2011</b>	<b>1,596</b>	<b>121,118</b>	<b>150,588</b>	<b>273,302</b>
<b>Carrying amount At 31 March 2011</b>	<b>519,392</b>	<b>23,030</b>	<b>41,447</b>	<b>583,869</b>
Carrying amount At 31 March 2010	530,526	35,071	22,184	587,781
<b>Asset financing:</b>				
Owned	519,392	23,030	41,447	583,869
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2011</b>	<b>519,392</b>	<b>23,030</b>	<b>41,447</b>	<b>583,869</b>

## 9. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise of software and software licences.

	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>	
At 1 April 2011	100,572
Additions	2,750
<b>At 31 March 2012</b>	<b>103,322</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>	
At 1 April 2011	9,263
Charged in year	10,263
<b>At 31 March 2012</b>	<b>19,526</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2012</b>	<b>83,796</b>
Carrying amount at 31 March 2011	91,309

	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>	
At 1 April 2010	28,085
Additions	72,487
<b>At 31 March 2011</b>	<b>100,572</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>	
At 1 April 2010	5,994
Charged in year	3,269
<b>At 31 March 2011</b>	<b>9,263</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2011</b>	<b>91,309</b>
Carrying amount at 31 March 2010	22,091

## 10. Financial instruments

IFRS 7 “Financial Instruments: Disclosures” requires disclosure that enables evaluation of the significance of financial instruments for the Consumer Council’s financial position and performance, the nature and extent of risks arising from financial instruments to which the Consumer Council is exposed during the period and at the reporting date, and how the Board manages those risks.

As the cash requirements of the Consumer Council are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by DETI, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Consumer Council’s expected purchase and usage requirements and the Consumer Council is therefore not exposed to the degree of financial risk faced by business entities.

Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset and financial liability are disclosed in note 1 “Accounting Policies”.

The Board’s financial assets are classified as loans and receivables and comprise trade and other receivables (note 12) and cash and cash equivalents (note 13). The Board’s financial liabilities comprise trade payables and other liabilities (note 14). These financial assets and liabilities are held at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash and demand deposits with banks. As at 31 March 2012, the carrying value of cash at bank approximates its fair value due to its short term nature.

## 11. Trade and other receivables

	2012 £	2011 £
<b>Amounts falling due within one year:</b>		
Other receivables:		
Bank interest receivable	-	4,101
Prepayments	<b>42,230</b>	44,695
	<b>42,230</b>	48,796
Payroll debtors	-	273,723
Less: Provision for doubtful debts	-	(273,723)
	-	-
	<b>42,230</b>	48,796

## 12. Losses and Special Payments

### 12.1 Losses Statement

<b>Write-off</b>	2012	2011
Total number of cases	1	0
Total amount of cases	£279,693	£0

In October 2011, DFP approved write off of £273,723 in relation to the payroll debtor which arose as a result of non compliance with NICS payroll practices and relate to the gross salary cost for the period 1 April 2004 – 31 March 2011. In June 2012, approval was received to write off an additional £5,970 for the period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012.

**13. Cash and cash equivalents**

	2012 £	2011 £
Balance at 1 April	<b>28,770</b>	223,549
Net change in cash and cash equivalents balance	<b>(15,503)</b>	(194,779)
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>13,267</b>	28,770

The entire cash and cash equivalents balance was held at commercial banks and as cash in hand.

**14. Trade payables and other current liabilities**

	2012 £	2011 £
<b>Amounts falling due within one year</b>		
Trade payables	<b>30,962</b>	555
Accruals and deferred income	<b>223,939</b>	265,911
PAYE and NIC	<b>29,939</b>	-
Deferred Income	<b>22,643</b>	-
Corporation tax payable	-	3,818
	<b>307,483</b>	270,284

**15. Provision for liabilities and charges**

There were no provisions for liabilities or charges as at the statement of financial position date. (2010-11: None)

**16. Capital commitments**

There were no capital commitments as at the statement of financial position date. (2010-11: None)

**17. Commitments under leases****17.1 Operating leases**

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods:

	2012 £	2011 £
<b>Obligations under operating leases comprise:</b>		
<i>Buildings:</i>		
Not later than 1 year	<b>186,937</b>	186,937
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	<b>373,874</b>	560,811
Later than 5 years	<b>560,811</b>	747,748
<i>Other:</i>		
Not later than 1 year	<b>7,967</b>	7,801
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	<b>6,175</b>	13,847
Later than 5 years	<b>14,142</b>	-
	<b>574,953</b>	769,396

**17.2 Finance leases**

The Consumer Council have no commitments under finance leases.

**18. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37****Equal Pay**

During the course of the year the Consumer Council has, under the terms of its Financial Memorandum, adjusted its pay scales to reflect movements in the NICS scales. There remains an unresolved issue with respect to the applicability to Non Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Consumer Council, of the agreement on Equal Pay reached by The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) management and NIPSA. No provision for the terms of this agreement has been made in the accounts.

**19. Related Party Transactions**

The Consumer Council is a Non-Departmental Public Body funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for Northern Ireland (DETI).

DETI is regarded as a related party. During the year the Consumer Council had no material transactions with DETI other than the receipt of grants. During the year £2,381,082 of grant-in-aid was received from DETI (2010-11: £2,361,273).

The Consumer Council works with many public and private sector organisations including companies in which Board Members of the Consumer Council have a beneficial interest. Transactions during the year with such companies, which were conducted at arms length and were subject to normal project and programme rules and tendering procedures, were appropriate, are listed below:

**Margaret Ward  
Board Member**

A supplier, Paddy Hillyward, is the husband of Margaret Ward – services of £Nil paid (2010-11: £5,800).

**Richard Hill  
Chair**

Chair NI Postal Services Committee and member of Consumer Focus Post - Consumer Focus Post paid £49,163 to the Consumer Council in rental income (including shared services) during 2011-12 (2010-11: £54,687).

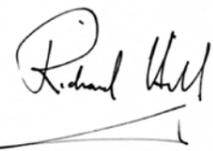
**20. Events after the Reporting Period**

There were no post statement of financial position events between the statement of financial position date and the date the accounts were signed.

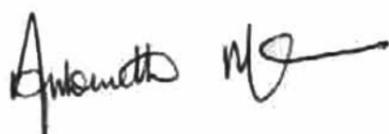
**21. Approval of Accounts**

The financial statements on pages 80 to 108 were authorised for issue by the Council on 21 June 2012 and signed on its behalf by:

By order of the Council



Richard Hill  
Chairman



Antoinette McKeown  
Chief Executive

**General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland****Accounts direction given by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), with the approval of the Department of Finance and personnel (dfp), in accordance with paragraph 12 (4) of schedule 1 to the General Consumer Council (ni) order 1984**

- 1 This direction applies to the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (GCCNI).
- 2 GCCNI shall prepare accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2012 and subsequent financial years in compliance with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the edition of the Government Financial Reporting Manual issued by HM Treasury ("the FReM") which is in force for the financial year for which the accounts are being prepared, together with any additional disclosure or other requirements as agreed with the department.
- 3 The accounts shall be prepared so as to:
  - (a) give a true and fair view of the state of affairs at 31 March 2012 and subsequent financial year-ends, and of the income and expenditure, changes in tax payer's equity and cash flows for the financial year then ended; and
  - (b) provide disclosure of any material expenditure or income that has not been applied for the purposes intended by the Northern Ireland Assembly or material transactions that have not conformed to the authorities which govern them.
- 4 Compliance with the requirements of the FReM will, in all but exceptional circumstances, be necessary for the accounts to give a true and fair view. If, in these exceptional circumstances, compliance with the requirements of

the FReM is inconsistent with the requirement to give a true and fair view, the requirements of the FReM should be departed from only to the extent necessary to give a true and fair view. In such cases, informed and unbiased judgement should be used to devise an appropriate alternative treatment which should be consistent with both the economic characteristics of the circumstances concerned and the spirit of the FReM. Any material departure from the FReM should be discussed with DETI and DFP.

6 This direction supersedes the direction dated issued on 8 September 2010.

IAIN McFARLANE  
Acting Head of Finance Division  
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

29 February 2012



## The Consumer Council

Elizabeth House  
116 Holywood Road  
Belfast  
BT4 1NY



Complaints line: 0800 121 6022



Tele/Textphone: 028 9067 2488



Fax: 028 9065 7701



E-mail: [info@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumercouncil.org.uk)  
[complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk)



Websites: [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)  
[www.consumerline.org](http://www.consumerline.org)



Consumer Council Northern Ireland



ConsumerCouncil