



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Ulster Scots Academy: DCAL Briefing

11 October 2012

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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### Ulster Scots Academy: DCAL Briefing

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)  
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mr William Humphrey  
Ms Rosaleen McCorley  
Mr Oliver McMullan  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

**Witnesses:**

Mr Jerome Dawson	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Brian McTeggart	Ulster Scots Academy
Dr Bill Smith	Ulster Scots Academy

**The Chairperson:** I welcome to the meeting officials for a briefing on the ministerial advisory group for the Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUS) consultation on the development and research strategy and grant scheme. We are joined by Mr Jerome Dawson, head of languages and Waterways Ireland branch of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); and Mr Brian McTeggart, secretary, and Dr Bill Smith, chair of the ministerial advisory group on the Ulster-Scots Academy. You are all very welcome, and we appreciate that you delayed going out to consultation to give this briefing. I will give you the opportunity to make an opening statement, which we will follow up with some questions.

**Mr Jerome Dawson (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** Thank you very much, Chair. Good morning. First, I thank the Committee for giving us this opportunity to provide an update on the forthcoming public consultation on the development and research strategy and associated grant scheme that has been prepared on behalf of the Department by the ministerial advisory group for the Ulster-Scots Academy.

Before I go any further, however, I will introduce my colleagues. Indeed, given that this is my first time before the Committee, I thought that I should introduce myself properly. I am Jerome Dawson, head of the languages and Waterways Ireland branch in DCAL, and I am responsible to the Minister and permanent secretary for the governance and accountability of the three North/South agencies — Foras na Gaeilge, the Ulster-Scots Agency and Waterways Ireland. I am also responsible for the sign language partnership group, the Líofoa initiative, the cultural awareness strategy and the governance and accountability of the ministerial advisory group's budget. I thought that, as this was my first time before the Committee, I should let members know what that remit is and what I have responsibility for. I am joined by Dr Bill Smith, chair of the ministerial advisory group, who will talk in detail about the development and research strategy and the associated grant scheme; and Brian McTeggart, who is also from DCAL and who heads up the group's secretariat team. With the Committee's permission, I want to set the scene for today's briefing and the proposed consultation.

As members will be aware, the ministerial advisory group has prepared a consultative document containing proposals for an Ulster-Scots development and research strategy, including the associated grant scheme. The document sets out how the group intends to work with various partners to build a deeper and broader knowledge of the Ulster-Scots heritage and culture. On Monday 15 October, the strategy will go out for an eight-week public consultation ending on Friday 7 December 2012. Letters have been sent to the Committee — members will have received embargoed copies of the documentation — Ministers and MLAs to advise them of the launch of the consultation. We will also be writing to everyone on the DCAL equality unit's list of consultees to inform them of the consultation and to tell them how to obtain a copy of the consultation document. Details of the consultation will also be published on the DCAL website, and a separate e-mail address — [Magusconsult@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:Magusconsult@dcalni.gov.uk) — has been set up to receive responses to the consultation. In addition, a press release from the Minister will be issued, and advertisements will be placed in the three main newspapers on Monday 15 October.

We have also had discussions with the Ulster-Scots Community Network, which will facilitate two public events that are planned for November. On its advice, it is proposed to hold one event in Lisburn and the other in Omagh to achieve maximum coverage. The network will assist the Department in planning the two events and will provide advice on whom we should invite. The ministerial advisory group and the Department will be represented at the events. Members of the group will be actively promoting the consultation through their individual networks and the Department will take every opportunity to promote the consultation, which the Ulster-Scots Agency has also been asked to do.

With the Chair's permission, I will hand over to Bill Smith, who will explain the proposed strategy's aims and objectives.

**Dr Bill Smith (Ulster-Scots Academy):** I thank the Committee for giving me the opportunity to talk to it again about the ministerial advisory group's work and to follow up the meeting that we had on 1 March, when I outlined our remit and the progress that we had made. I indicated then that the group had produced a draft strategy and a proposal for a grant scheme and that we were working with the Department to prepare that documentation for public consultation.

We are pleased that the necessary documentation has been completed and are delighted that a date has been set for publication next Monday. Credit is due to the Department for the completion of the foreword and the equality impact assessment (EQIA), which are part of the package of documentation. The bundle of documents that we are looking at today, particularly the section on the academy approach, will advance progress with three elements of the remit that the then Minister set for us in March 2011. The first element was to produce a holistic, multi-year development and research strategy for the Ulster-Scots sector. This document is that strategy. The second element was to produce progress on the Ulster-Scots Academy approach, and the third element was to identify and support discrete projects under the three workstreams of language and literature, history, heritage and culture, and education and research.

The draft strategy is set out in the documentation. As members will know, we are already financially supporting a range of discrete projects on the basis of our interim work programme for 2012-13. That work programme reflects the goals and priorities that are set out in the draft strategy, so in the strategy we are building on what we have already been doing. I will not talk you through the strategy paragraph by paragraph, but I refer you to section 3, on the academy approach, which sets out our strategic objectives. They are to:

*“contribute to building broad knowledge and understanding of Ulster-Scots traditions in Ireland, Scotland and further afield”,*

*“promote ... coherence within the sector”,*

*“maximise the impact of the resources available to it”*

*and*

*“secure the broadest possible support for its work across the community in Northern Ireland.”*

We have also pledged ourselves to 10 core values, which are set out immediately after the strategic objectives. They are things such as authenticity, transparency, partnership working and community involvement.

In identifying projects to support financially, we are looking in particular for excellence and authenticity. As well as new research, we want to open up access for scholars and the public to existing archives and collections, to use the research to grow understanding and appreciation of Ulster-Scots cultural traditions more widely, and to apply the fruits of that research in the marketplace of today to make it clear that Ulster Scots is a living tradition and not an academic subject.

Section 4 of the document, which is headed “Financial Support”, sets out our priorities under each of the three workstreams — language and literature; history, heritage and culture; and education and research. By way of illustration, it gives examples of actions that would be eligible for financial support. We are already funding some actions under most of the priority headings, including some of those that are listed.

Section 5 identifies two specific areas of activity that we particularly want to focus on. Those are two specific, large commitments. The first, which we have called the academy online, is a programme of work that aims to open up access to material through the internet and to offer support in developing and connecting existing Ulster-Scots websites. The other area is the communications and engagement strategy to support the rest of the approach. The consultation, which is to begin next week, will be an important starting point for that public engagement strategy.

In sum, we believe that the academic approach as set out in the draft strategy provides a robust framework for action that will benefit everyone who lives in this place.

Do you want to ask any questions on the strategy before I talk about the grant scheme?

**The Chairperson:** No, it is fine. You can continue.

**Dr Smith:** I will introduce the next part of the documentation, which is on the Ulster-Scots grant scheme.

The Department has earmarked a budget of about £2 million for the academy approach. That is less than was originally planned, but we are working on the basis that future allocations will be decided on the basis of solid evidence of achievement, and we are working with our partners to that end. When the final strategy has been in operation for a year, we will review it to take account of experience and the lessons learned.

To support the strategy, the grant scheme is designed to complement the established procedures that we are already using to finance research and developmental work. Again, it will cover the three workstreams, and it will advance the academy approach. As distinct from the financial support that we have been giving up to now, it will allow groups and organisations in the voluntary and community sector and universities, as well as other organisations, to initiate proposals rather than to take up ideas that come from us in the group or to wait for an invitation to tender from the Department.

That will open up financing opportunities to a wider group of participants. We hope that it will also tap new veins of creative energy, stimulate enthusiasm and produce innovative ideas, particularly on how to introduce this unique heritage to the younger generation.

Under the grant scheme, the Department will invite proposals for projects that advance our strategic objectives as set out in the academy approach and that are consistent with our values. The range of grants offered will be from a minimum of £5,000 up to a maximum of £75,000. For projects that cost more than that, applicants will be expected to demonstrate how they intend to secure the balance. Third sector, private sector and public sector organisations will all be eligible to apply either as individual organisations or in consortia. Capital funding will not be available.

All projects will have to be completed by 31 March 2015, which is the end of the current comprehensive spending review (CSR) period.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the MAGUS. Members have been constructive and good humoured in all the business that we have done together. I also thank the many people who have contributed thoughts to the proposals that you are looking at today. We are genuinely looking forward to hearing more suggestions through the consultation process. We will take them all seriously and will try to respond positively. We hope that the Committee will consider making a collective contribution or that members will contribute to the process through their networks. The area is not likely to have huge popular support or to receive a huge number of written responses from

the public, so it is important that organisations that have a particular interest give us their considered proposals.

Perhaps the best way to take it forward is if, once the Department has the responses from the public consultation, we prepared a synopsis of the discussion among ourselves and with the Committee and used that as the launch point for the final version of the document, the strategy and the scheme.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. I suppose that, at the outset, I should declare an interest as a former member of the Ulster-Scots Academy implementation group. At one stage, I had an interest in some of this work.

Did the work that was carried out in any pre-consultation reflect entirely the thoughts of the members of the group, or was further consultation taken into consideration?

**Dr Smith:** We talked with 30 or more people or organisations during the first year of our work. In that time, we were gathering ideas and proposals from them about how best we could achieve our objectives and about what those should be. So, there has not been a formal consultation on the document and its wording, but it reflects the views of the people that we spoke to about what our strategic objectives and priorities should be and the proposals that we have had from people until now.

**The Chairperson:** You set out how you plan to consult via the website and so forth. I welcome the work that you are doing in collaboration with the Ulster-Scots Community Network, because I think that it is well placed to go out to the communities where the strategy will have the greatest impact. I also welcome the public events.

I suppose the difficulty that you face at the moment is that another consultation is going out at the same time. Will you be very clear in differentiating between the two?

**Mr Dawson:** Yes. They will both be led by different branches of the Department. My branch will lead on this one, and Dr Michael Willis, who was here a couple of weeks ago, is leading the other strategy. Michael and I are working very closely together to make sure that any public events that we hold do not clash with those for other strategies. We will make the difference between the two strategies clear at the events. In fact, there are three strategies, because, obviously, there is also the Irish language strategy.

**The Chairperson:** I am concerned that some people will feel that they have already contributed to a consultation but might not be aware that there is another consultation that they might have a greater interest in.

**Mr Dawson:** That is where we are hoping the Ulster-Scots Community Network will help us to make sure that we get that message out through the agencies and make it clear that we have two strategies out for consultation at the moment. It is unfortunate, in a way, that they clash, but we are where we are, as they say.

**The Chairperson:** It is timing.

**Mr Dawson:** It is the timing. We were loath to delay this consultation any further because, as members will appreciate, if we did not get it out now, we would run into the Christmas period, which I do not think is a great time to hold a consultation. That would mean that we would then be pushing it into January next year, which would delay the work even further. So, we in the Department are very keen to get it out before Christmas.

**Mr Brian McTeggart (Ulster-Scots Academy):** We have agreed with the Ulster-Scots Community Network that, through it, we will target particular community and voluntary organisations and others that we may link up in partnership with consortia. We will target those organisations and invite them to the two events, so that we can reach out and identify the people to whom we want to talk about this particular strategy and grant scheme.

**The Chairperson:** The academy approach is very high level, and one of the criticisms from the previous consultation was that it may not have seemed real to those who are involved in Ulster Scots. Do you feel that you still have the same issues?

**Dr Smith:** The same issues as what?

**The Chairperson:** The same issues that were raised in the previous consultation on an academy for Ulster Scots.

**Dr Smith:** We are trying to provide a solid base of evidence and facts that people can use in developing projects of their own in communities and organisations. For example, we have funded the heritage trails, and individual councils have produced their own trail maps, audio guides, pamphlets and booklets, iApps, and so on. That is all based on prior research that has been done on the places that are in their districts and areas and on the stories of those places.

We see ourselves as supporting the fundamental research that is necessary before things such as that can happen, such as, the research on the places, the stories, the people who live there and the things that they did. We also see ourselves as opening up access so that other people can use that research. We ensure that the research is solid and based on fact, that it is accessible, and that people know that it is there and know how to use it.

Broadcasting is another example. There is a broadcasting fund. The broadcasters' job is to make the programmes, and people watch those programmes, so they become popular through the programmes. We do not actually fund the programmes, but we make it easier for people to make programmes by commissioning and doing the research, and opening up the libraries so that the programme makers can find their way through when they are writing or editing a television programme.

**The Chairperson:** When do you plan to finalise the strategy?

**Mr Dawson:** The closing date is 7 December. We will then take forward and analyse all the things early next year and try to get something on the outcomes of the strategy to the Minister. I know that they are very keen for us to finalise the outcomes and have them known publicly as quickly as possible.

**The Chairperson:** So, you are not working to a particular date?

**Mr Dawson:** The danger is that, until we get the number of responses in, we do not know how much work will be involved. So it is very hard to set a specific date. However, we will give it a priority, and a member of my team has been allocated to working on that as soon as it is completed. We will be working on it after the responses; we are not waiting until 7 December to start analysing the results. Until we see the number of responses, it will be very hard to say that we would have it prepared by 31 January.

**Mr Irwin:** Thank you very much for your presentation. You mentioned that funding is available at a minimum of £5,000, with a limit up to £75,000. Is that subject to a percentage of the cost of projects? Is it tied strictly to that up to a certain percentage of the overall spend?

**Mr McTeggart:** It is linked not to percentage, but to need and additionality; in other words, what public money the project will need to enable it to proceed to ensure best value for public money. Projects could receive 100% of funding up to £75,000. That would be particularly important for voluntary and community organisations or smaller organisations.

For other organisations, such as councils and local authorities, that have bigger projects, we would be capping the funding at £75,000 but looking to them to demonstrate that they have the balance of funding available.

**Mr Hilditch:** My question is about grants. I should declare an interest in that I chair two project teams that have been the recipients of grants. Those grants are much appreciated, and they have worked very well. Some research work has been done in conjunction with Carrick, Newtownabbey and Lisburn, which is very beneficial to those areas.

There has always been a very short period of time to submit applications for grants, but, in the summer, I think that we were down to perhaps a week or 10 days. Where an application is successful, the work then has to be rushed and carried out before the end of the financial year on 31 March. However, one group that I know of was still waiting for payment by mid-August. Have you identified where things are potentially falling down and causing this delay in payment? I think that the group was finally paid at the end of September, but the application was finished in March. The paper

transactions should have been completed fairly quickly, but the group was still waiting for up to four to five months for payment. Have you identified how to eradicate those problems?

**Mr McTeggart:** I was not aware that there was a problem with particular projects, but I am certainly happy to look at the issue to ensure that we deal promptly with any issues that are identified.

**Mr Hilditch:** I am referring to the second phase of the Andrew Jackson project.

**Mr McTeggart:** Once claims are sent in, there is no reason why they cannot be processed promptly, provided that the basic information that is necessary to clear the payments is also provided.

On the short response time for applications to the grants scheme that were made back in July, I should say that the grants scheme has a three-month period between the start of applications and the point where a decision is conveyed back to the applicant. There will then be one or two years — depending on the length of the project and what it proposes to do — up to March 2015 to complete the projects. In July, when we looked at the budget and programme situation for this year, we could see that, with normal slippage and movement in projects, there would be a shortage in the workflow and a possible shortfall in budget spend. I had only moved into post at that stage, so I decided quickly to put out a call for fallback projects. So, I apologise that there was such a short time frame, but it was necessary to be able to give people an opportunity to apply and to get the money out, which needs to be spent before the end of this financial year in March. That was an exceptional situation. It was a valid point, but there was a good reason why it was necessary in that case.

**Mr Hilditch:** How did you settle on the figure of £2 million?

**Mr McTeggart:** That is the budget allocation for the remaining two-and-a-half years of the MAGUS project, which goes on to 2015. There was already a budget allocation last year.

**Mr Hilditch:** So, was that figure not in your hands?

**Mr McTeggart:** Originally, the budget was £4 million. In the first year, there was a period where the organisation was setting up, getting its procedures in place and writing a strategy, so as is normal in the ramp-up of any programme, all the money was not spent. Following pressures on the Department that led to a realignment of budgets across the Department, that budget was then realigned and is now £2 million for the remainder of the period. The grants programme will be funded out of that.

**Mr Hilditch:** To finish, and as a side issue, I want to raise a point that I raised with the Minister on Tuesday morning. The Castle Chester manor house building in Whitehead, County Antrim, is now on the market for private sale. On Tuesday morning, the Minister gave a commitment to have a look at that at some stage. Do you have any input about what the future use of, or access to, that manor house could be? In my opinion, it would certainly make for a nicer headquarters than some of the rented city centre accommodation. I will leave that with you.

**Mr Dawson:** I was one of the officials in the Chamber supporting the Minister when she made that statement, so I can confirm that we have made note of that. We are carrying out research in the branch to find out and will advise the Minister accordingly.

**Mr Hilditch:** It is a very important building

**The Chairperson:** Of course, Mr Hilditch is not at all biased.

**Mr Hilditch:** The research papers showed that.

**Mr Dawson:** Sorry, just to go back, can you confirm that the project you referred to was the Andrew Jackson stage 2 project?

**Mr Hilditch:** Yes. There was a delay, but I know that Colette Quinn and others have been under pressure.

**Mr Dawson:** I will look into that and come back to you. We have a commitment to pay out as quickly as possible, but an error in the validation exercise or other query may have led to a delay. We will have a look at that.

**Mr Hilditch:** An inspection had not even taken place.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** The preamble to the consultation contains the broad-brush statement that 49% of those surveyed in the 2010 omnibus survey said that Ulster Scots was important historically, culturally and what have you. However, the rest of the survey tended not to bear that out, particularly on linguistic matters; 98% said that they were not speakers of Ulster Scots or had never heard of it. What weighting, bias or emphasis will be put on one or all the consultation's three strands — the language and literature aspect, the history, heritage and culture aspect and the education and research aspect — to reflect the interest that exists on the ground?

**Dr Smith:** I think that the funding will reflect the spread of proposals that we get. Up to now, most of the money has been given to the area of history, heritage and culture or education and research resources. There have been some very specific projects in the area of language and literature. In the literature area, the concentration tends to be on Ulster Scots and the influence that the Ulster Scots have had on the tradition of writing in English. For example, there is a poetry project at the University of Ulster looking at the work of John Hewitt and the people who influenced John Hewitt, and so on, that covers both elements.

Language is important, but the money that is going to it is not likely to be of the same magnitude as that which is going into other workstreams. There will be very specific things, such as a spelling guide and a pronunciation guide and those kinds of things. We are working towards resolving some of the issues that there have been down the years on what we can loosely term language standardisation and are working towards a dictionary. At the moment, there is no agreed form of spelling, grammar or other things that we are going to look at. That requires work by ourselves, along with experts in the field, rather than spending money from the fund.

**Mr McMullan:** Does the de minimis allowance threshold on the European side for funding outside Northern Ireland?

**Dr Smith:** I will defer to the secretariat on this, but my understanding is that the de minimis allowance is about the total amount of money that people get from European sources in the North, rather than about whether the money can be spent outside this jurisdiction.

**Mr McMullan:** What is the turnaround on that? I know that some applications for European money can take a longer time. The time frame for grant aid can be three years or so, I think.

**Dr Smith:** It is up to March 2015 now. It can take as long as people need, but the cut-off point has to be March 2015, because that is when our money runs to.

**Mr McMullan:** I would worry that, possibly in the first year, the programme could be gone before any European funds came through. Have you looked into how long it would take European funding to come through?

**Dr Smith:** We are not necessarily anticipating European funding. If people can get the matching funding from somewhere —

**Mr McMullan:** It is up to the people themselves.

**Dr Smith:** Yes, I am afraid that there is not much that we can do to help them, apart from advising them about what might be available.

**Mr McMullan:** When a project gets its funding, can it be spread over one or two years?

**Dr Smith:** Yes.

**Mr McMullan:** Do you hold the balance of it so that it can be used again?

**Mr McTeggart:** Yes, we will do that. If the project says that it needs 18 months, it is spread over two financial years and allocations are made in the budget to allow for that in the second year.

**Mr McMullan:** So, you hold that money for the second year before it is —

**Mr McTeggart:** Obviously, in the budget we have contractually committed expenditure that we obviously honour as a top priority. Other things come in after that. So, if a project already has a letter

of offer and a legal agreement, that takes priority in funding into the second year or whatever, up to March 2015. Obviously, we are all bound by the new CSR settlement after that.

**Mr McMullan:** I cannot remember the other thing I was going to ask about. I will come back to you on that.

**Ms McCorley:** Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirigh, agus go raibh maith agaibh. Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the presentation.

I understand that a decision was taken not to merge with the Ulster-Scots Agency. Why was that, and what is the role of the Ulster-Scots Agency?

**Dr Smith:** I think that that refers to the independent consultant's report, which was done before the MAGUS was set up. It looked at various options and concluded at that point, which was towards the end of 2010, that it would not be a good option to combine the agency and the academy.

There is an overlap between our work. We fund research and development, and the agency can do that as well. We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the agency that sets out clearly what we are going to be doing and what it is going to be doing in the areas where there is an overlap, particularly in education and heritage tourism, into which we both have an input.

There are regular meetings between MAGUS's secretary and the agency's chief executive; indeed, the chair of the agency, Tom Scott, is represented on MAGUS, and, in the past six weeks, we have had two very successful meetings with representatives of the agency on developing an Ulster-Scots education programme. So, we are working together successfully. I suppose that the issue of how the relationship evolves after 2015 is one of the things that we will be looking at when we come to look at future options for developing the academy approach, which will, in fact, be the next item on our to-do list once we have put the strategy to bed.

**Ms McCorley:** What is the vision for Ulster-Scots? Is it envisaged that at some stage there will be communities of people speaking and using Ulster-Scots on a daily basis?

**Mr Dawson:** At the previous North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meeting in July the agency brought forward a draft paper on a heartland project. Ian Crozier, the agency's chief executive, is developing that idea, which is about having something similar to the Gaeltacht areas. Ian will bring forward another paper on that to the next NSMC meeting in December. The agency certainly sees developing that as part of its remit and is looking at the Ulster-Scots community having similar environments as the Gaeltachts.

**Ms McCorley:** So, do you see it having a future similar to that of the Irish language, with schools, and so forth?

**Mr Dawson:** I do not know whether we would go too far down the education side, but that would be the vision. The Ulster-Scots Agency is a North/South body.

Bill mentioned the memorandum of understanding between the agency and the academy. I understand that in two weeks' time Ian Crozier from the agency and Bill are going to talk to the Committee in detail about those issues, so you will have more of an opportunity then to hear more about all that.

**Ms McCorley:** My final question is both partly related and unrelated to what we are discussing. You said that you had responsibility for Líofo. Why was it not included in the consultation document for the strategy?

**Mr Dawson:** Líofo is the Minister's own initiative, and we take it forward on her behalf. This strategy is about the long-term development of the Irish language and community throughout the North of Ireland; Líofo is the Minister's initiative to give some impetus to that, and it will last only for the duration of her tenure. The Minister who comes in after her might not wish to pursue it. After all, the target is to have 5,000 fluent Irish speakers by 2015. Although the Minister did not include it in the strategy, it might be that, as a result of the strategy, it may be commented on and be brought in to it.

**Mr McTeggart:** On the question that the member asked, language is certainly an important strand of the workstream, but Bill highlighted two other areas: history, heritage and culture and education and

research. The idea is to mainstream a lot of that to reflect the common contribution that Ulster Scots has made to the heritages that we all share. So, that is also part of what we are doing.

The other point to mention about the academy approach is that although there is overlap with the Ulster-Scots Agency there is a distinct academic approach in which development is based on research and the availability of that research for councils and organisations to draw on and use to do things locally. That is the distinct difference between the agency's approach and what the MAGUS and the Ulster-Scots Academy are meant to be doing.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you for that very helpful clarification.

**Mr Humphrey:** Thank you very much for your presentation, gentlemen. You are welcome to the Committee.

If we deal with the consultation first, I, too, am concerned about overlap in certain issues where value for money is concerned. The organisation might be deemed to be the ministerial advisory group, but, having read the document, I think that it is clearly very strategic. To me, it looks as though it is much more than an advisory group, so I want to make some points about that.

Paragraph 1.2 in the document gives the organisation's remit. I think that, as we go forward with the consultation, it is important to understand what has been achieved so far since the revised business case was produced in 2011. What successes have there been to date with the MAGUS's taking Ulster Scots forward? Coupled with that, how has your organisation scored in its strategic objectives?

Dr Smith: One of the items in the remit was to produce a strategy. The document is that strategy. We have been discussing it with the Department for some time, and we have finally reached the point at which it can be published. Another item in the remit was to:

*"oversee the implementation of the strategy."*

We will do that once there is a strategy in place, but, in the meantime, we have been working on the basis of an interim development plan, which we inherited from our predecessors in the Department and which is very similar to the strategy that is to be published.

Other items in the remit were to progress the academy approach, and this work is doing that, and to support discrete projects. Brian, do you have the figure for the amount of money that has already gone into projects that are in the pipeline?

**Mr McTeggart:** Yes. With the Chair's agreement, I will give the figures. To date, we have spent an accrued spend of over a quarter of a million pounds on 11 projects, and we have a further five projects committed at a spend of £397,000. We have a tender award imminent for two further projects at £92,000 and a tender about to go out on a further project at £450,000. Finally, a further 10 submissions, which are mainly the fallback projects that were called for in July, are with the Minister for approval at a value of £281,000. So, in total, when that has been processed, there will be 29 projects at a value of £1.47 million.

Since the MAGUS was established in May last year, the spend to date is just under £570,000; the figure is £569,736. As with any new programme, it has taken time to get a strategy in place, get procedures in place and get things to flow, but a bit of momentum has started to build because so much is either in train or in the process of going out. I think that we will start to see benefits being delivered on the ground, which was a point that your colleague raised.

**Mr Humphrey:** Five hundred and how much thousand pounds?

**Mr McTeggart:** To date, £570,000.

**Mr Humphrey:** Out of a budget of?

**Mr McTeggart:** The budget is now £2 million —

**Mr Humphrey:** Per annum?

**Mr McTeggart:** No, for the remainder of the period.

**Mr Humphrey:** Right, so you have spent £570,000 in what period?

**Mr McTeggart:** Since the MAGUS was established in May 2011. When I say “spend”, that is money out the door — money that has been paid out. When we have processed the projects, the total commitment will be £1.5 million.

**Mr Humphrey:** In paragraph 1.5, you mention working collaboratively with existing bodies, such as the agency and the community network.

At this point, I should declare an interest, having been, in a previous life, director of the community network, a board member of the Ulster-Scots Agency and a member of the Ulster-Scots Academy implementation group. I make it clear that I have no connection with any of those organisations now.

What ventures has the MAGUS undertaken to date with community organisations, such as the community network and the language society?

**Dr Smith:** The community network is represented on the MAGUS. We and the language society worked up a proposal of priority actions under the heading of language and linguistics and so forth. From memory, that had a value of about £120,000. That would have been a two or three-year project. We have incorporated those proposals in our work plan. It is not yet clear whether the language society will be doing those things, but we have agreed with it that they need to be done.

**Mr Humphrey:** So, have you not actually done anything with the groups that represent the community?

**Dr Smith:** When we spoke to the Ulster-Scots Community Network about that, it identified three or four large community groups that would have a particular interest in doing research and development work of the kind that we anticipate. We do not expect to be asking hundreds of local groups to be doing small pieces of research. They have to have certain capacity before they can be eligible for this kind of fund.

**Mr Humphrey:** Those in the network in particular would have that capacity. I am disappointed with that, I have to say.

I presume that the proposed research and development strategy was submitted to DCAL.

**Dr Smith:** Yes.

**Mr Humphrey:** When was it submitted?

**Dr Smith:** Do you mean the original draft strategy?

**Mr Humphrey:** Yes.

**Dr Smith:** It was submitted about a year ago.

**Mr Humphrey:** What was the outcome of that?

**Dr Smith:** This strategy.

**Mr Humphrey:** Having been involved in the academy implementation group, I think that we ought to look at the comparator with the Irish language speaking community. The agency is the equivalent to Foras na Gaeilge and the community network is the equivalent of Pobal. The important thing that we need to learn from mistakes that have been made in the past with Ulster Scots is that, if the Academy is to work, it needs to be bottom-up. It cannot be academically or intellectually detached from the community; it cannot be apart from the community. It needs to be a part of the community, and the community needs to feel part of it. I think that there is an inherent danger that we could find ourselves in that situation. I just wanted to make that point.

A good example is the Fryske Akademy in Friesland in the Netherlands. It is a fine example of how to get everyone to buy in to a concept that the community, from wee totes right through to academia, is comfortable with. I think that that is important.

I have other questions, but I appreciate that I have taken up quite a lot of time.

**The Chairperson:** You can have another question.

**Mr Humphrey:** I just want to move on to the grant scheme. Who will administer that?

**Mr McTeggart:** The secretariat will administer it through the Department.

**Mr Humphrey:** Which secretariat?

**Mr McTeggart:** The MAGUS secretariat.

**Mr Humphrey:** Are you guys convinced that the people of the Ulster-Scots community are clear about the difference between the agency, the network and the MAGUS? Is that not going to lead to further confusion?

**Mr McTeggart:** I think that that is very important and is the very point behind getting the strategy and the grant scheme out. It is also the point behind using the Ulster-Scots Community Network to engage directly with the right people through the consultations and to encourage them to come forward. It is a valid point; we want to avoid confusion, and we want to reach the right people. Those are very important elements.

Now that we have a strategy and a grant scheme, we can engage. As Bill explained, up to now a lot of the ideas and the generation of proposals have come either through MAGUS members in their contact with people on the ground who they know or through councils. I would be the first to say that we are talking about the long term, but, to get the programme off the ground, we had to get things running. Now is the opportunity to make the change, to make a difference and to reach out. So, those are valid points.

**Mr Humphrey:** It is a potentially huge pitfall, and I am glad that you are aware of it.

The grant scheme says that individuals are not eligible to apply. Why is that?

**Dr Smith:** The MAGUS was open to that. The Department introduced that because of the difficulty in establishing an individual's track record unless they had audited accounts and company records and so on.

**Mr Humphrey:** If an individual has those things, they still cannot apply, however.

**Dr Smith:** Not unless they have the status of an organisation with a track record of accounts and so on.

**Mr Humphrey:** I know of some bona fide individuals who have done some fantastic work who would be excluded under that criterion and would not be eligible to apply for the grant.

Funding focus is hugely important, as is, I think, cultural tourism. The diversity of this place is now widely accepted and is seen as a strength, rather than a weakness. It is important that the Ulster-Scots community joins up with councils, regional tourism partnerships (RTP), tourist boards and so on. Collaboration among all those bodies is vital so that everybody is on the same page so that we do away with wastage and maximise value for money. Do you agree?

**Dr Smith:** Absolutely. In fact, we had a very successful heritage tourism event last month that brought together about 50 people in Bangor to look at these issues. Those involved included people in local government, tour operators and the tourism agencies. There is a clear need for some resource or capacity to develop the heritage tourism aspect. We do not have the capacity to do that, and we are not convinced that the tourism agencies are taking all the opportunities that they might, although they are doing very good work. So, we will be providing a report to the Culture Minister, and, in due course, perhaps also to the Minister who is responsible for tourism, about how they might support us in that.

**Mr Humphrey:** Finally, Brian mentioned that the budget had been cut from more than £4 million to £2 million. Is that right?

**Mr McTeggart:** The original opening budget for the academy was £4 million.

**Mr Humphrey:** Has the Department made such stringent cuts of 50% in any other area?

**Mr Dawson:** There has been an exchange of correspondence between the Minister and the Committee on the rationale for that.

**Mr Humphrey:** Excuse my ignorance, but I am a new member of the Committee, so I would like more details in the answer.

**Mr Dawson:** They were not cuts. As the budget had not been spent at the end of the year, some of it was surrendered. I do not have all the details to hand, but there has been an exchange with the Committee about that. We could reissue those letters, which give an explanation.

**The Chairperson:** We will get that information to you, William. I think that there was really an overestimation at the outset about what could be spent and what was spent. We raised that issue at the time of the monitoring rounds when the money was surrendered. The Committee had a concern about that.

Just in conclusion, the consultation closes on 7 December. At what stage is it likely that your report will be issued, and when might it be brought before the Committee? Obviously, there is interest here.

**Mr Dawson:** We will issue the report as soon as we can. Obviously, the Committee will appreciate that we need to get the report to the Minister first. If she clears it, we will be in a position to bring it forward. I would love to be able to commit to a date today, but —

**The Chairperson:** You can anticipate a letter from the Committee at some stage.

**Mr Dawson:** We will respond as quickly as we can, because we appreciate the time constraints.

Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to speak today. I should also say that the copy of the report that the members have is embargoed, but we can have fresh copies for Monday morning for anybody who wants them. They will also be available on the website on Monday morning.

**Mr McTeggart:** We would also be delighted to hear any suggestions, such as Mr Humphrey's about a bottom-up approach, that can be developed more through contact with community organisations. We will review the point about individual applicants as part of the consultation.

**Mr McMullan:** Just on that, what do you deem a community organisation?

**Mr McTeggart:** We are not prescriptive. I would just be honest about that. We cannot be, and we would not want to be.

**Dr Smith:** However, we require people to have annual reports, audited accounts and all those kinds of things.

**Mr McMullan:** What do you mean by a community?

**Dr Smith:** I suppose that it could mean either a local community or an interest group community. In this context, we are probably talking about local or neighbourhood organisations, but it could be either.

**Mr McTeggart:** We want to be broad and flexible in our interpretation so that we can accommodate as many applicants as possible.

**Dr Smith:** We recognise that community and voluntary organisations have kept the issue alive for 20 years, with and without state support, and it will continue. It is not basically a state initiative; it came from the sector.

**The Chairperson:** Gentlemen, thank you very much.