



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Environment

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill:
Department of the Environment

13 May 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Anna Lo (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Ian Milne
Lord Morrow
Mr Peter Weir

Witnesses:

Mr Iain Greenway	Department of the Environment
Mr Desi McDonnell	Department of the Environment
Ms Nicola McEvoy	Department of the Environment
Mr John McMullan	Department of the Environment

The Chairperson: We have with us today Iain Greenway, director of road safety; Desi McDonnell, head of road safety policy and research; John McMullan, also from the road safety branch; and Nicola McEvoy, driver policy branch. You are all very welcome. We have been looking forward to this for some time. We are very pleased to see the legislative process starting. You have sent us a very detailed briefing paper. If you want to proceed by talking us through that, I am sure that there will be lots of questions for you.

Mr Iain Greenway (Department of the Environment): Thank you very much, Chair and Committee, for inviting us here today. From our perspective, we have two main objectives this afternoon. One is to introduce the team, who I am sure will be very closely involved with members on the clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill when we come to Committee Stage. The second, as you indicated, Chair, is to provide a broad overview of the Bill to start to understand and, if possible, deal with any issues that the Committee may wish to discuss at this stage. The Chair introduced my colleagues. Desi will be the lead on the drink-driving provisions, Nicola will lead on graduated driver licensing, and John will lead on the legislative aspects of the Bill. The Bill, as you will have seen, is reasonably concise, certainly compared with the previous Bill that the Committee worked its way through.

The Chairperson: How many clauses are in the Bill?

Mr Greenway: There are 21, rather than 121, in this case. Nonetheless, as you indicated, Chair, it is an important Bill, and one that the Department believes will make a difference to our society and help

to save lives on our roads. In broad terms, the Bill provides the necessary powers to establish a new drink-drive regime, introduce a system of graduated driver licensing and make mandatory the wearing of helmets when riding quad bikes on public roads.

The Committee will be aware of the increase in road deaths so far this year. Although it is too early to identify the reasons for that increase, we can say with some confidence that the causation factors will, once again, include inattention, inappropriate speed and alcohol. The Bill will take steps to tackle drink-driving and address a range of poor road user behaviours demonstrated particularly by young and new drivers, who are over-represented in road casualties year after year. The Committee has already considered the drink-driving aspects of the Bill. There was a consultation on the legislation in 2012. Officials met the Committee on 29 November 2012 to discuss those provisions following that public consultation. Members may recall that, at that point, two options were drafted for the Bill on repeat offenders. The Committee took a view that the Minister supported, and he went with that option in the Bill.

As you suggested, Chair, I will outline the three main themes in the Bill. The first is the new drink-drive regime. The Bill will introduce a limit of 50 mg of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood for most drivers, and a lower limit of 20 mg for learner drivers, new drivers and professional drivers. It may be useful if I reinforce that there is no lessening of any current penalties. The legislation provides that drivers over the current limit of 80 mg will still be disqualified and that repeat offenders will face a minimum of three years of disqualification.

A new graduated penalty regime will reflect the gravity of drink-driving offences, with minimum disqualification periods from between six to 24 months, depending on the alcohol level. For the first time, fixed penalties will be made available for drink-drive offences, but only for first offences at the new lower limits. There is currently no offence triggered at levels below 80 mg.

The Bill also provides for powers for the police to set up roadside checkpoints where a constable can require the person in charge of a vehicle to take a breath test. Those will be conducted under controlled circumstances with authorisation at the rank of inspector or above. It also provides powers for automatic referral of offenders to an approved drink-drive rehabilitation scheme. The Department believes that the case for reducing the drink-drive limit is now well established, with public consultation on the policy in 2009 and on the legislation in 2012 showing broad support for making this step change. Similar limits and laws came into effect in Ireland a couple of years ago, and the Scottish Government have signalled their desire to reduce the limit there. When this work is completed, all parts of the EU except England, Wales and Malta will have a limit of 50 mg or lower. The decision to reduce the limit was also a commitment in the road safety strategy to 2020 and the Programme for Government 2008-2011.

On graduated driver licensing, the package set out in the Bill comprises a number of measures that aim to prepare new drivers for the challenge of driving on their own and to protect them and other road users as they gain experience. It includes lowering the age at which people can start to learn to drive — to obtain a provisional licence — from 17 to 16 and a half, but introducing a mandatory 12-month minimum learning period. It proposes a new programme of training, with completion to be evidenced by an approved driving instructor or a supervising driver and with the learner driver completing a compulsory student logbook.

The Bill removes the 45 mph restriction on learner and restricted drivers and riders. That will facilitate practical tests to be revised to allow candidates to be assessed while driving at up to posted speeds and to allow learner drivers to take lessons on motorways when accompanied by an approved driving instructor in a dual-control car. It introduces a one-passenger restriction on carrying young passengers — those aged 14 to 20 — for drivers under the age of 24 during the first six months post test. It provides for remedial courses for New Drivers Order offences, namely people who have accumulated six or more penalty points in their first two years of driving. It introduces a two-year post test new driver period, in line with the existing New Drivers Order probationary period, and a planned period of application of lower blood:alcohol limits for newly qualified drivers and riders. An identifying plate is to be displayed over that two-year period, with the details of the plates subject to affirmative resolution in the Assembly. The package is a response to the stark fact that, between 2008 and 2012, 43% of fatal collisions on our roads for which car drivers were responsible were caused by young drivers aged 17 to 24. Further to that, there is evidence that young male drivers are four times more likely to be killed and six times more likely to kill than the average road user.

At present, the Department has powers only to make regulations requiring motorcyclists to wear protective headgear. The Bill extends that power to cover all motor vehicles. It is intended that that

power will be used to make regulations requiring quad bike drivers and passengers to wear helmets when using such vehicles on public roads. The detail on that will be in regulations rather than the Bill. The Committee saw the outcome of the public consultation on that measure in 2012 and was content at that time with the policy proposals.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Iain, that was very good. I read through your paper. Obviously, you gave us a very general overview of it. Will we ask young drivers to record how many hours they practise in the mandatory year? Yesterday, I noticed a response from the Driving Instructors Association, which stated that some young people take a shorter time and some take a longer time to pass the driving test. My two sons got through. They both started learning to drive in April and passed their test in the summer, so they were able to drive themselves to school in September. It took them just a few months. It will now be mandatory that learners cannot sit the test until a year has passed. Are we also saying that they must acquire a certain number of hours of practice?

Ms Nicola McEvoy (Department of the Environment): We are not asking for a certain number of hours; we are asking that people take a slow and progressive route towards learning to drive. Within that year, we would ask them to evidence how they learn to drive. We will have a syllabus that outlines a structured training programme for what we would expect them to learn over that time. That will be evidenced by a logbook, which will be completed by the learner and verified by the driving instructor or a supervising driver. Although we specify a year, we have reduced the licensing age to 16 and a half, so a person could still have their full licence by 17 and a half. The aim of giving somebody that year is to let them drive in all sorts of different conditions, be it weather conditions, night-time or daytime. It is an acknowledgement that driving takes a while to get the hang of. That year will mean that they will become a good driver, and it will prepare them better for real-life driving.

The Chairperson: OK. I will bring others in. I am sure that they are interested in asking questions. I have a few more for you, but I will let other members come in first.

Lord Morrow: Thank you, Iain, for your presentation. Are we getting into a state of contradiction? I suspect that, come Christmas, you will run a joint campaign with the PSNI stating that, if you drink, do not drive. However, you are actually saying that you can do both now. Is there a contradiction?

Mr Greenway: Desi will describe how there is not a contradiction.

Mr Desi McDonnell (Department of the Environment): Of course the Department's view is that you should not consume any alcohol and drive. What we are discussing and what we have discussed in the past is when the law should become involved. The first point is that we want to catch people who are knowingly breaking the law. When we talk about zero, we are talking about 20 mg, so I should put that on the table. We do not want to catch people who take cough syrup, use mouthwash or have bacteria in the gut. Our feeling is that it is better to have a zero limit for the higher-risk categories and to reflect that responsibility in certain classes of driver. We believe that the important thing in addressing drink-driving is that we acquire public support. It has not been easy, but we have built up very strong public support for our drink-drive laws over a very long time — a number of years. We want to ensure that people comply with the law that we bring in. For that reason, the zero approach is focused on young drivers.

We have to bear in mind the impact that moving straight from 80 mg to 20 mg would have on society. That would have to be taken into consideration in any decision that the Assembly takes on where it would prefer to set the limit. People have to see the law that we bring in as reasonable. They have to comply with it. If people are detected drink-driving, society must accept that they have committed an offence, and a detected driver must understand that he has committed an offence. As I said, the key objectives in drink-drive terms are to retain that public support and compliance.

At our previous meeting, Lord Morrow, we got into some conversation about Sir Peter North's report. I think that Sir Peter felt that a general limit of 20 mg for the UK would be a step too far at this time and would risk the loss of public support for strengthening our drink-drive legislation. We have to consider whether we want the law to get involved if someone goes out for lunch and has a small glass of wine or a glass of beer. Do we want them to have committed an offence at that level? Again, that is for the politicians for decide.

There were 89 responses to the 2009 policy consultation. About 80% were in favour of change; 69% were in favour of a 20 mg limit for learners; 65% were in favour of a 20 mg for professionals; 49% were in favour of 50 mg for general drivers and 47% were against that. It was quite a close call. That

said, not all of the 47% who were against the 50 mg limit were in favour of having the lower 20 mg for the general driver. It is a tough call. We want people to retain the belief that the law is right and that, if people are caught and convicted, they are reasonably being caught and convicted of an offence. Of course, I have to reiterate that our very strong message is that people should not drink and drive. However, as I said, this is about where we feel the law should get involved.

Lord Morrow: Thank you. Desi, I hear what you say and, to some degree, I understand where you are coming from. I am not sure that the public will be as tolerant of the explanation as you might want them to be. That will not be because they do not want to be, but because they fail to understand how it is acceptable for some to drink a certain amount and drive. I have heard what you said about that. You also said that a learner driver can consume 20 mg. Is that right?

Mr D McDonnell: A level of 20 mg is effectively zero; it is a very, very low level of alcohol. The general limit for other drivers will be 50 mg.

The Chairperson: And that would be a glass of wine?

Mr D McDonnell: I am not going to go into exactly what that would be. It will depend on the strength of the wine, your metabolism, because people metabolise alcohol at different rates, your weight, how tired you are etc. There are lots of factors, so I could not say definitively what level 50 mg is. The 20 mg limit is certainly considered to be a pragmatic zero limit, because people will produce alcohol in their gut, use mouthwash and take medicines that contain alcohol. So, 20 mg is effectively a zero limit. Younger drivers, professional drivers and learner drivers will have to stick to that zero level.

Lord Morrow: Desi, suppose I wash my teeth or use a mouthwash, for instance — surely the word "zero" can be used here somewhere. I know that you are trying to get that across, but I think the message that we are trying to send to the public is that it is never acceptable to drink and drive. I know that you are saying the same thing. However, when you are told that you can consume some, that starts to send out a message. I have heard the argument on a number of occasions that, if I use mouthwash or eat some sherry trifle —

The Chairperson: Are you fond of it?

Lord Morrow: Not particularly, but I acknowledge that there is an alcohol content there. There would be nothing like, for instance, a 20 mg content in a sherry trifle or a mouthwash. It must be more like 1 mg. It may be even less than that. I will be led by you.

Mr D McDonnell: I accept what you are saying. We are talking about very low levels of alcohol but, in general, across Europe and in other countries that have and talk of zero limits, they set it at 20 mg.

Mr Greenway: There is also an element of science. A policeman by the side of the road has to test to a limit of n, whatever n may be, and we have to be confident that, as we get to lower levels and as the equipment gets ever more sensitive, we are not getting false positives. Therefore, 20 mg is set sufficiently distant from the numbers that you are talking about. We have not talked, for instance, about consumption of alcohol during religious ceremonies, sources of alcohol in food and so on. Therefore, 20 mg is set sufficiently above those to allow for the tolerance of the indicators in the equipment when we get down to quite sensitive levels. However, it may be helpful if we look at Lord Morrow's favourite sherry trifle and the alcohol content in a serving of it. That may help indicate where we are.

Lord Morrow: I would not say that it is a favourite of mine. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Greenway: If we could get a few numbers on those types of consumption, it may help to provide some confidence.

Mr D McDonnell: I accept your point that we are talking about very low levels of alcohol, and 20 mg is a very low level of alcohol when it comes to testing.

Lord Morrow: Iain and Desi, it would be good if you could come back and measure it out in spoonfuls for us so that we can see how many spoonfuls gets us to what level. Chair, can I ask another question about young drivers?

The Chairperson: You will have to be quick, Lord Morrow.

Lord Morrow: Yes. I appreciate that others want to ask questions. I have a lot more questions but I will not ask them now. Young drivers must now practise for one year. That will have a knock-on effect on when they get a job and the type of job that they can get. Therefore, it will keep them out of employment for a longer period. You are the experts, but I suspect that the learner driver, at that stage, is not the biggest menace on the road. I somehow think that it is those aged 20 to 25. Maybe that is unfair, but it seems that a lot of accidents are generated by those drivers. It is not the young driver who has just passed who is causing all the accidents; it is the person who has a degree of confidence and ability but is still not, in my opinion, an experienced driver. We will hold back newly qualified drivers for longer and that will add extra cost for them to achieve what they want to achieve. It will also keep them out of employment in certain work. Do you take that point?

Mr Greenway: We absolutely take the point, and moving to 16 and a half to 17 and a half, rather than 17 to 18, is an attempt to counterbalance that factor. We have looked at some figures of what percentage of 17- and 18-year-olds have driving licences and, in both cases, it is less than 50% of that population. The majority of that population are still able to get about and do the things that they expect to do without a driving licence.

We accept that there are particular issues in rural areas such as public transport and other issues that we have rehearsed, but there has been an attempt to counterbalance that by reducing the provisional licence eligibility age and increasing the practical test date. We will look at whether we can further break down the information on that 17 to 24 age group. It is not about making the test harder. People often pass the test with flying colours and then become overconfident. That may happen the week after the test or two years after the test. I know when it was in my own circumstance, and members may or may not have their own reflections on that. However, we are trying to create a balance between safety on the road and the necessary mobility of society and people. We have attempted in these provisions to arrive at a certain place. The scrutiny at Committee Stage will test that further, I am sure, and we will look at whether we can subdivide that 17 to 24 age group.

Mrs Cameron: Thank you for your presentation. This is a very interesting Bill. I have no previous experience of the issues, as I am still fairly new to the Committee. The drink-driving element is interesting. Is the 20 mg limit a safeguard against a false positive?

Mr D McDonnell: Yes. Across Europe, it is considered to be a de facto zero limit. Very few countries have absolute zero limits.

Mrs Cameron: When the Bill has passed through the Assembly and comes into law, the real issue will be making sure that the public realise that that is zero and do not think that they have a limit.

Mr D McDonnell: My understanding is that 20 mg does not allow you to drink alcohol.

Mr Greenway: As the Bill goes through the Assembly, there will be an education element. As the regulations and the operation of the Bill come into effect, there will be clear reinforcement messages of "Forget 20 mg; it means zero", and so on.

Mr D McDonnell: We talk about limits of 20 mg and 80 mg. It is a fair point. Do people actually know what those limits mean? All we can say is that there is no safe level of alcohol that you can drink.

The Chairperson: As you say, it varies from individual to individual.

Mr D McDonnell: It does. There will be differences in breath tests, blood tests and urine tests. You might be measured in the morning and test differently than you would in the afternoon. There is quite a lot of science to it.

Mrs Cameron: I appreciate that it is very scientific. Perhaps you could come back with some figures on sherry trifle. As the Chair says, it depends on who made the sherry trifle, how much sherry has been put in the trifle, the weight of the other ingredients, whether you have eaten before you consume the sherry trifle, how much sherry trifle you consume — you could go on forever. It would be interesting to have a demonstration to give us clarity.

Mr Greenway: We will certainly seek to do that.

Mrs Cameron: Good; thank you. On the graduated driver licensing, will there be a requirement of how many paid lessons young people will have to take within their 12-month provisional period?

Ms McEvoy: There will not be a requirement on the number of hours. There will be a syllabus to guide the training and a logbook to evidence that. It can be a mixture of paid lessons and lessons with a supervising driver who, more often than not, is a parent.

Mrs Cameron: It is reassuring to hear that they will not be forced into paid lessons, as learning to drive is an expensive business.

Ms McEvoy: The costs are very high.

The Chairperson: Sometimes, it is not that easy to get someone to take you out driving. All parents know about stressful moments when their child drives the wrong way down a road or whatever. You have done that too. *[Laughter.]*

Lord Morrow: We have all been there.

Mrs Cameron: It is important. My youngest is approaching 18 and has not started to drive yet, but I also have two older boys, and, for one of them especially, getting through the test was a very stressful time. Instructors are fairly stringent — rightly so. In my experience, they are harder on boys than on girls. We understand why that is; the evidence is there. However, we also need to be careful that the process does not become so difficult that people are discriminated against. I am talking about the difference not only between boys and girls but perhaps young people with mild learning difficulties or dyslexia. There are all sorts of variations and complications. I do not want it to become so difficult that you are actually —

Mr Greenway: We are seeking that balance throughout.

Mr Milne: There is no mention of drug tests in the Bill. Is that already covered in other legislation?

Mr Greenway: Alcohol is one drug among a range. The position on drugs is that the police can undertake impairment testing to see if somebody is impaired, from whatever source it may be. However, the Westminster Parliament has taken forward legislation to set limits for drugs. As with the 80 mg limit for alcohol, there will be a limit for amphetamines, morphine and so on. We talked about the science in alcohol testing. They are finding that combinations of drugs, and drugs that are constantly being mutated into other things, are pushing at the absolute limits of science in drug testing. For that reason, and because, in all the statistics, alcohol causation factors in deaths and serious injuries on our roads are of a bigger magnitude than other drugs, we have said, "Let us get the drink piece done and the young driver piece done". We need to come back to the other drugs, but let the science mature a bit more. It is not one of the primary causation factors at this stage.

Mr Milne: That is fair enough. I just wanted to ask about it. Thanks for the presentation.

Mr Greenway: It is on the list of things to come back to.

The Chairperson: Do we still have a problem testing people who are driving on drugs?

Mr Greenway: For the British police, the Home Office has been looking for roadside-testing equipment for two drugs: cocaine and cannabis. It is asking manufacturers what they can do and how much it might cost. We heard figures the other day that the cost of alcohol testing is tuppence — very simply, it is the cost of replacing a nozzle — but that the cost of roadside drug testing is about €20 per unit. Police operational budgets, and so on, would be severely stretched on those sort of numbers, until the science moves on.

The Chairperson: The test used to be to ask people to walk in a straight line.

Mr Greenway: That is what is allowed for in law: "Can you walk straight with your finger in your ear?" or whatever the test may be. That is allowed for in Northern Irish law and, indeed, was just introduced into Irish law in their most recent Road Traffic Act.

Mr McElduff: This is very academic, but I want to ask about the requirement to wear helmets when driving quads on a public road. I do not have any legal training, but I presume that it will remain permissible not to wear a helmet, for example, when riding a quad on a farm. I witnessed one accident on a farm and accompanied the person to the local hospital. When we got there, there were two other young people who had had similar experiences. If you did a vox pop of the young people in the minor injuries unit — they were more than minor injuries — you would have found that they had all had experiences of accidents on quads. I welcome the legislation relating to quads, but I presume that you have no legislative jurisdiction over farms, and so on.

The Chairperson: No; those are private properties.

Mr John McMullan (Department of the Environment): The Department of the Environment has a remit to regulate only traffic on roads. You are right that we can regulate only on a public road. In bringing the Bill forward, we liaised with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) advised that there is already legislation in place that requires the wearing of suitable head protection when operating a quad for work purposes. The Agriculture Minister advised that its College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) has worked with the Health and Safety Executive and developed an accredited training programme for the use of quads off-road. You have probably seen an increase in health and safety measures around farms. We are legislating for on-road quads, and there is other stuff in place for off-road quads.

The Chairperson: Tom, do you want to ask a question?

Mr Elliott: I have a couple of questions, but I have an oral question in the Chamber, and I do not want to miss that.

The Chairperson: You had better go. Lord Morrow, do you want to come back?

Lord Morrow: Dear knows when we will see the officials again, so I will ask them another question. I have a concern about how we get the message across that it is never acceptable to drink and drive, as Desi said. The Bill does not say that. I listened carefully to what you said, and I understand that. This glass that I am holding — I do not have a clue what size it is. I do not know whether it would hold 80 millilitres. It would be very useful for people like me if, when the officials come back, they demonstrated to us in a tangible way what the 80:20 ratio looks like in real terms.

The Department has to get it across in the Bill that, when you are driving, abstention is the way forward. If you are going to drink, you do not drive. That message has to be put across, loud and clear. I know that you run a hard campaign around Christmas time — well done for that — but that message has got to be put across.

The Chairperson: Do not drink and drive.

Lord Morrow: It is never acceptable to drink and drive.

Mr Greenway: We have not talked about police checkpoints, which is one of the provisions in the Bill. At present, a police constable must have a reasonable suspicion that somebody has consumed alcohol and driven. In the proposed checkpoints, every vehicle, every second vehicle or whatever, can be stopped. People will feel that they are more likely to be stopped without demonstrating any visible signs of alcohol consumption. That is one element of the equation.

Mr Boylan: I apologise for missing the presentation. I want to bring up an issue on passenger restriction, and I know that we will go through that at Committee Stage. A lot of young people, especially from rural communities, work in the hospitality industry. How will that restriction impact on them? I have some concerns about that. What are the departmental officials' views on that?

Ms McEvoy: We are coming from a research base that states that you are at heightened risk when driving with a passenger. If a young driver carries two passengers, they are twice as likely to be killed, and, if they carry three passengers of the same age, they are four times more likely to be killed.

The restriction will apply for only six months. If there is a supervising driver in the passenger seat, the restriction does not apply. We have tried to get a balance between keeping people safe on the roads and not prohibiting their mobility too much.

Mr Greenway: Within our range of options, the Bill states that young drivers under the age of 24, for a period of six months, can carry one 14- to 20-year-old passenger, family members and one more before the restriction cuts in. We looked at a range of options — zero, zero except for family members, and so on — and we set a point on the spectrum, taking full account of the stark figures that Nicola has given, which allows family plus one.

Mr Boylan: I missed the presentation, but I would like a brief answer to my final question. Unfortunately, a large percentage of fatalities is on rural roads at certain times. Are there any measures in the Bill, other than the one that was just mentioned, to address that, because it seems to be a major underlying factor in a large number of fatalities?

Mr Greenway: The Bill covers graduated driver licensing, drink-driving and the quad bikes that Barry spoke about. I am happy to brief you on the road safety strategy. In that, there are 221 action measures, two or three of which the Bill covers. The strategy contains a wide range of material. Not too long ago, we answered a Committee query about rural roads; it may have been on the back of correspondence from a member of the public. The Department, road traffic police and other government bodies are undertaking a wide range of matters, as is the community sector through the grant scheme. Have you any other suggestions, Desi?

Mr D McDonnell: If we get the drink-drive aspects of the Bill right, they will have a disproportionately — that is the wrong word, but I cannot think of the right one — large and positive impact on rural areas because, as you probably know, 79% of all drink-drive deaths and over 50% of serious injuries happen in rural areas. If we can tackle the drink-drive issue, we will also tackle deaths and serious injuries, particularly on rural roads.

Mr Boylan: Finally —

Mr Greenway: Just to add one point, Cathal, we have not yet worked on the detail of the syllabus that we talked about in answering Mrs Cameron. We can look at how experience on rural roads needs to be built into young drivers' experience.

Mr Boylan: I suggest that, in the Minister's introduction at Second Stage, he could touch on the strategy for rural roads. It is important to outline that.

The Chairperson: It is quite confusing for a young driver. Is it correct that young drivers will be allowed only one person under the age of 21?

Mr Greenway: The age range is 14 to 20.

The Chairperson: One person can sit there, but, if there is a supervising adult in the front seat, that is OK. If it is a half-brother, brother, sister or half-sister, that is OK. How are you going to communicate all that to people so that they take it in? Who will monitor it?

Ms McEvoy: An education piece will definitely have to be done so that new drivers and parents understand the legislation. As we go through the Bill, we will look at the campaigns that need to be in place and at how we educate new drivers.

The Chairperson: Also the police.

Ms McEvoy: Yes.

Mr Greenway: We have made it more complicated. Even explaining the restriction, as you said, Chair, is a sentence with several clauses. That has all been an attempt to try to find a balance, picking up the points that Cathal and others made, around societal needs against the figures that Nicola read out. Communication will be important. Young people need to understand the legislation. Generally, most people do not set out to disobey laws. In many cases, parents will have a financial

interest in the car and the insurance before we ever get to police enforcement. However, you are right: understanding it is vital.

The Chairperson: Do you think that graduated licensing and all that could reduce insurance costs for young people?

Ms McEvoy: As collisions reduce, which is what we fully intend to happen, claims will reduce. Consequently, that should mean that premiums reduce. That is what we hope for.

The Chairperson: Obviously, the Department will monitor all the statistics.

Ms McEvoy: Yes.

Mr Greenway: The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has committed to the Prime Minister and to our Minister that any savings in claims costs will be fed back into reductions in premiums. It has given a broad indication that a full range of graduated driver licensing should see a 15% to 20% reduction in premiums for the drivers in that category.

The Chairperson: That would be good for young people and their parents. Insurance is prohibitive at the moment.

There are no more questions.

Lord Morrow: There are plenty more.

The Chairperson: Peter, are you OK?

Mr Weir: I need to go upstairs again in two minutes.

The Chairperson: I am sure that we will have further exchanges with you as we go through the different stages.

Mr Greenway: If the Committee thinks of anything before we get to the formal Committee Stage, we will be happy to try to work up figures.

The Chairperson: Second Stage will be on 27 May. We look forward to that. Thank you very much for attending. There is quite a bit of public and media interest. The BBC rang me about it, and I said that I was very supportive. All the best.