



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Office of the First Minister
and deputy First Minister

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Ebrington Barracks/Former Military Sites:
Ilex Briefing

12 June 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr George Robinson

Witnesses:

Mr Caoimhín Corrigan	Ilex Regeneration Company
Mr Mel Higgins	Ilex Regeneration Company
Mr Gerard McCleave	Ilex Regeneration Company

The Chairperson: We welcome three members of the Ilex team. We have Mel Higgins, the acting chief executive; Caoimhín Corrigan, the cultural broker; and Gerard McCleave, director of strategy and regeneration. Thank you for hosting the Committee today. Mel, would you like to make some opening comments?

Mr Mel Higgins (Ilex Regeneration Company): Yes. We first thank the Committee for coming to our city. You will, I hope, have had an opportunity to see the great site on which we are located in Derry/Londonderry.

As you will know, Ilex is the urban regeneration company for the city. We will update you on Ebrington, which Caoimhín Corrigan is responsible for overseeing. Gerard McCleave will do likewise in respect of the strategy and regeneration of the Derry City Council area for which Ilex has responsibility. If the Committee is content, we will proceed to the presentation that is in your meeting papers.

Ilex's mission is to champion sustainable economic, physical and social transformation in the city. As I indicated, we have two main aims: to secure the physical, economic and social regeneration of Ebrington, and to create a co-ordinated regeneration of the Derry City Council area. Those are the two main aims around which the business has been structured.

The presentation includes an overview of what Ebrington looked like in 2006. Since then, there has been significant investment in, and work done on, the site. For instance, in 2008, more than 100 buildings were demolished on the site. We have completed a significant programme of work on conservation, weatherproofing and on ensuring that we can keep the fabric of these buildings in place.

Likewise, we moved to more developments in progressing the Peace Bridge, which I hope you crossed. To date, over 1.7 million people have crossed that bridge in the two years that it will have been open, come the end of this month. We also commenced significant infrastructure projects, including Ebrington Square, which you saw as you came to this building. The square has hosted significant events, more recently Radio 1's Big Weekend, which was attended by almost 40,000.

In recent years, we launched the One Plan for the city. We now have businesses on this site. We have rented one of our offices to the Culture Company. We have opened up Cunningham Square, which is to the left of here, to allow entrance from the Limavady Road. We have entrance to the site from the Peace Bridge and from St Columbs Road. We are making progress in taking forward new initiatives in trying to create shared space on this site. For instance, we are moving forward on using the two redbrick buildings to house a creative hub that will attract 50 jobs. It will be used initially to host the Turner Prize from September this year until December or January. We have successfully worked with our partners to secure on this site a £4-6 million venue that has hosted significant City of Culture events. It holds 2,500 seated, 4,000 standing and 800 banqueting. The significant events held in it include the Sons and Daughters inaugural event, Radio 1's Big Weekend. Phil Coulter and Status Quo are to come. I hope that the Committee takes the opportunity to visit The Venue and experience some of the cultural activities that the city has to offer in this year.

A lot of that would not have been possible without the help of our sponsoring Department, the Department for Social Development (DSD) and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). We have provided £1.5 million revenue to the City of Culture programme. We have also delivered £4 million of DSD's UK City of Culture capital infrastructure fund to create a lasting legacy of capital infrastructure in the city. Moving into 2013 and beyond, we have commenced the development framework that will outline the scale and density of this site; what will be possible to seek planning approval for; and allow further engagement with the private sector in maximising the site's potential.

We have, as indicated, opened up Ebrington Square and the Peace Bridge. Designed by Wilkinson Eyre, the Peace Bridge has been accepted and recognised for significant awards worldwide, for instance in the International Bridge Conference Awards in Pittsburgh. We also represented Ireland at the ninth European Urban and Regional Planning Achievement Awards, for the integration of Ebrington and the Peace Bridge as public space. So, you can see how successful Ilex has been in developing not just structures and buildings but iconic buildings and spaces that are recognised worldwide.

We try to ensure that social responsibility and social clauses are built into projects that we take forward. In the Peace Bridge project, we were able to secure 12 further jobs on that contract. Your meeting packs include photographs, including of the creative hub building that I talked about. It is hoped that those two buildings will generate 50 jobs when the creative hub is in place, this time next year. We have been successful in hosting events. Since Ebrington Square came into use, 160,000 people have attended events here.

Caoimhín Corrigan will take us through some of the challenges in taking Ebrington forward.

Mr Caoimhín Corrigan (Ilex Regeneration Company): Thanks, Mel. The four photographs in the presentation that Mel referred to — the clock tower, the Cunningham building, the officers' mess and the old schoolhouse — are just sample buildings that give some sense of the site and its complexity. It is widely recognised that there was significant scepticism regarding the value or impact of the bridge and of investing in a 26-acre site such as this. It is a complex site that is flanked by main arterial routes, from Belfast on the south, while Limavady Road runs behind us here to the east. The other key complexities concern displacement. It is a site that needs to be regenerated, not just as an end in itself but to serve the city. So, we have to be very careful about the pace of development, particularly in the current market conditions, and that we do not simply displace and move things around in the city from one side of the city to the other. That does not really add value either to the city or the region. We wish to stimulate demand, and we have already made some progress there and in relation to infrastructure.

Finally, as you will see from the pictures, a number of these buildings are listed. There are 19 buildings remaining on the site, 14 of which are listed. That, together with the topography of the site, places other challenges on development. On the four buildings in the images, there has been some initial interest in a potential hotel development at the clock tower. It has also been proposed as a regional cultural facility, of which there is not currently anything of its kind. There are no regional cultural facilities in the city, and the Academy of Urbanism, when it was here, suggested that the site

and some of those buildings would be useful and should and could be used for third-level developments. Interestingly, the Cunningham building, to our left here, the only building that faces on to Limavady Road, has achieved planning permission already. However, it could not be acted upon until the car park development came on site, because service access was not possible to the rear of it. So, working with the Department, it is a building that we hope to take to the market in a more formal way this year.

Today, we are in the ballroom of the officers' mess, which is building 85 and building 83, to the rear. These buildings will come more into play when buildings 80 and 81 are finished, as that will allow the streetscape that comes from the creative hub and the venue for the Turner Prize to sweep south in front of this building and, again, open onto the already completed Cunningham Square.

So, as a site that develops and which has a number of projects ongoing, pieces come into play at different phases, and it allows us to open up more public realm as we move forward. The old schoolhouse is an example further up to the east and north of the site. Again, it indicates the challenges in relation to topography of the site. Although it looks like a very simple building from the front — and it has some interest for social enterprise use and for restaurant development — once people get inside its space may be minimised as one tries to achieve compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) moving through different levels because of the topography of the site. So, it is not as simple in the current climate of achieving universal access, compared with its usefulness when it was originally built as a schoolhouse.

The presentation looks at Ebrington going forward. We are working now on the new development framework for the site. Aside from the basic output of achieving outline of planning permission for the whole site to give investor confidence, the other key aspect of the framework for us is that it allows for an element of market testing but also allows the site to be tested against the One Plan. As I said, the site is not here to serve an end in itself. We are not private developers, and the site is here to support the regeneration of the city. We see outline planning permission being submitted around December or January. The optimum approval period might be in the order of five to six months, but, depending on negotiations with DOE planning, it may take longer.

The creative hub will become operational, initially as a venue for the Turner Prize, in October. The hosting of the Turner Prize, similar to the hosting of Radio 1's Big Weekend, would not have been possible without Ilex; it would not have been possible without the presence of The Venue. Similarly, The Venue will also be used to host the Turner Prize main receptions and main award ceremonies. The creative hub, which, ultimately, is to achieve the 50 jobs and to support small microbusinesses in the creative industries, will come on site in April, after the Turner Prize completes in January.

Infrastructure works are continuing. We have continued to remove gates and helped to demilitarise the site and bring it into civic use. That has seen it become really successful as a shared space. We continue to bring new areas of public realm in as new buildings come online, and we continue to upgrade Wi-Fi to make it more attractive to businesses. Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) is again on site this morning, continuing to look at the power needs and the power requirements of the site as we go forward. Further infrastructure will become apparent and will come online with the framework.

The maritime museum is a Derry City Council-led project and is proposed for completion in March or April of 2016. As things stand, that is a stage 1 pass from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) of £1.5 million and a stage 1 pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) of £3 million. Ilex has budgeted for an amount of up to £2 million, which sees in excess of £6 million earmarked already for this project with an amount of certainty. Obviously, it needs to be bottomed out with a final business case and environmental assessment (EA) approval.

The animation of Ebrington has proven to be important to the reputation of the site, not only through international media reporting on the attractiveness of the site to the likes of Tate and the BBC but, in the Peace Bridge surveys that were carried out, when people were asked to rank their preferences for use of the site, 63% said that they wanted to see continuing animation in relation to community and family concerts and events. So, animation continues to be important for it reputationally and in developing it as a shared space.

Private sector partners are part of the development framework process, securing an operator for the creative hub and progressing with buildings 4 and 11, for which we have planning permission, as I said. We are now in a position to move forward with the car park project on site in our capacity to offer investors certainty, which we were unable to offer prior to that. Finally, Ilex would then relocate to Ebrington and have a position on site to promote it and meet private sector investors.

Mr Higgins: Thanks for that, Caoimhín. Another aspect of Ilex's work, which you will see in your packs from slide 13 onwards, is the facilitation and co-ordination of city-wide regeneration. Work that Ilex has done in that area includes the Citi-Scope research. Three surveys have been completed. Recently, the latest survey indicated that over 84% of people are satisfied with the city. Within that, 91% of those who were satisfied come from the most deprived areas. We also completed a peace survey analysis quite recently. It shows changes in social patterns, such as how people walk to work and how they look at and view their city. For instance, eight out of 10 of the adult population have used Ebrington Square. Two out of three of those who have used Ebrington Square have done so for the purpose of attending events. The majority of respondents — nine out of 10 — would like to see increased provision of cafés and restaurants in Ebrington. The vast majority of respondents see events and community activities as the top priority for the use of Ebrington. So, that gives you a flavour of what people would like to see the space used for.

Furthermore, Ilex has promoted Digital Derry and Culture Tech. Later in 2013, we will, hopefully, host junior Culture Tech in The Venue. It will aim to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) awareness and, hopefully, identify potential career opportunities for the young generation. We supported the learning platform Foyle Cloud and worked with the skills directorate to produce an action plan for the city. Furthermore, as I indicated, we have supported the UK City of Culture to the tune of £1.5 million of revenue. We have hosted City of Culture events in this space. We have delivered DSD's UK City of Culture £4 million programme. In that, Ilex has taken forward and worked with all partners to develop the One Plan for the city, of which the Committee will be aware. Ilex's role in the One Plan is to lead the development of the plan for the city; co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of the plan; guide the local development system; build the capacity and capability of stakeholders; put in place a project-management system; bring forward, with partners, activities and interventions under the transformation themes; monitor the progress and impact of the plan; and seek to maximise opportunities for the Ebrington site.

We have in place a structure, which is on page 16 in your packs, that outlines the role of the strategy board and regeneration programme unit. Ilex —

The Chairperson: I am sorry: we normally have five to 10 minutes of opening remarks. If you could come to the conclusion, we would appreciate it.

Mr Higgins: Yes. That is fair enough. Going forward on the One Plan; there have been a number of key achievements to date. More steps have still to be taken. I will ask Gerard to outline quickly some of the key successes and challenges going forward.

Mr Gerard McCleave (Ilex Regeneration Company): Chairman, I am conscious of your time. A whole range of successes is outlined in the pack as well as a number of challenges that were identified. When we launched the plan in 2011, we gave a commitment that the strategy board would review the plan every 18 months as things change. We brought together all of the catalyst programmes in December 2012 to work through with them some of the successes and some of the challenges that they see in taking forward city-wide regeneration and, very importantly, to identify all of our priorities and actions going forward over the next 18 months and the impact that they will have on their contributions towards a step change. Again, there is a sample in your packs from right across all 11 catalyst programmes and some of the different actions that have been going forward.

The city's priorities, taking in all of the different aspects of the One Plan, are very much about jobs and how we ensure that we create jobs in the city and target those opportunities to people from the city. They also include university expansion, in particular phase 1 of the Magee campus expansion; the City of Culture and its legacy and how we benefit from 2013 into the next 10 years; transport; and looking at new and alternative ways of financing and funding regeneration as we move forward over the next 10 to 15 years.

The Chairperson: Sorry to rush you, Gerard.

Mel, we will take questions from the Committee. I want to put an overarching view on it, which is to say that, from my point of view, it looks as though it is going incredibly well for this city. I was at Magee at lunchtime, listening to the variety of people around, and, if there is a mood in the city, it is the very positive buzz that is coming from yourselves and the City of Culture. It seems to be going extremely well. I do not want anybody to think that, because we are going to scrutinise and delve down, it is to try to take the wheels of your bus. If we scrutinise, it may well be to praise, commend

and help. On the other hand, there will be times when we will scrutinise and come to a less positive conclusion.

Having said all that, I want to ask you about governance within Ilex. You are acting chief executive, so there is no permanent chief executive at the moment, and there is no chairman at the moment?

Mr Higgins: An interim chairman is in place.

The Chairperson: There is an acting chairman and an acting chief executive?

Mr Higgins: That is correct.

The Chairperson: Given the really positive message that you have given us over the past few minutes, it seems strange that those two key positions have not been filled and that there has been difficulty finding the right calibre of person. Having listened to you, I would have thought that people would want to bite your arm off to get those chairs. What can you tell us about the difficulties that Ilex is encountering?

Mr Higgins: The chair competition follows the public appointments process, and that is directed by OFMDFM. Unfortunately, from Ilex's perspective, we cannot comment specifically on that because we are not involved in that competition. However, progress is ongoing for a chief executive. A competition was run earlier in the year. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain somebody from that competition, but the process is still ongoing. In the near future, we hope to be able to make an appointment for the chief executive's position.

The Chairperson: Given that there is an ongoing drive to try to secure a full-time, permanent chair, we have to assume that that means that there is a perceived specific role for that person, whoever that turns out to be, and given that the post has not been filled, what are you missing at the moment as an organisation?

Mr Higgins: Ilex has an interim chairman, who has served on the board for four to five years, so he has extensive experience. He is setting the strategic direction for the company, and he has made progress in taking forward the new projects on site: for instance, the car park enabling platform has commenced; the framework is commencing this year; and the creative hub started last year. Not having a full-time chairman or a permanent chairman, as may be the case, in place yet has not stopped us moving forward and making progress in delivering our business plan targets and working towards the Programme for Government targets, which, for Ilex, is leading on the development of Ebrington and the delivery of the One Plan. In that respect, I do not believe that it is hindering the progress that Ilex is making.

The Chairperson: As you say, you are part of a bigger picture — the One Plan. You are working with other partners, the Culture Company, OFMDFM, the Department for Social Development (DSD) and Derry City Council. The One Plan talks about the step change to achieve 12,900 jobs by 2020; £500 million added to gross value added annually; and fiscal improvement of £185 million year on year. Are you ticking those boxes?

Mr Higgins: We were obviously in different economic times when the plan was first developed. However, we have to set aspirational targets that we can work towards. We are reviewing progress and the targets as we go through the One Plan. We are keen to work towards those targets. Gerard, do you want to say something specifically about the targets?

Mr McCleave: One of the things that we did as part of creating the plan was build a subregional econometric model so that we can test the impact of different projects as they come forward. New projects have come forward since the plan was launched. Part of the work that we do in the company is monitor the impact that projects might have. For example, we are responsible for monitoring the progress and impact of the City of Culture. We also work with colleagues in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Derry City Council and OFMDFM to monitor the impacts of potential job opportunities; that analysis is ongoing.

The Chairperson: Mel, you referred to "aspirational targets". Is that your reading of the targets, or were they always aspirational?

Mr Higgins: No; I use the term "aspirational targets", because they are something for us to aim towards and they are achievable.

The Chairperson: I am still not entirely sure whether you are saying that the targets were written to be aspirational or you view them as aspirational.

Mr Higgins: In the economic climate at that time, those are the targets that we were working towards.

Mr Eastwood: Thanks very much for having us. I am particularly glad to be here today, as it saved me from having to go up the road.

You talked about two aspects: the Ebrington project and the One Plan, which encompasses everything else. I will ask about Ebrington first. Over the last few months, we have seen the tremendous experiences that people have had coming over here, not just walking across the Peace Bridge but going to events. We have all been at those events. It has been terrific, and people in Derry have really supported it. I have a number of points about the legacy and the commercial activity happening on the site. You talked about developing a framework; where is that at? When will we start to see some of these buildings occupied by commercial enterprises? Have you any plans or thoughts around providing a permanent venue, as I know that that one is here for only 12 months? Finally, we have heard stories about the bureaucratic nightmares that people have had trying to set up over here. The story about the sandwich van, for which it took over a year to get permissions, was well-aired in the local media. Are those issues still there, or have you worked through them?

Mr Higgins: If I have picked you up correctly, your questions are in respect of the development framework, the permanent venue and getting commercial activities on the space. I will take each of those in turn.

We commenced the development framework process this year, and that will outline the potential uses for the space. Consultants are about to be appointed. That will allow us to go for outline planning permission perhaps in the third quarter of this year and early into next year. Hopefully, that will then allow for outline planning permission for the site to be provided some time in the summer or autumn of 2014. That development framework will also provide an opportunity for everybody to be consulted and for them to bring forward propositions or ideas of what they would like to see here at Ebrington.

We conducted the Peace Bridge survey. Some residents indicated that they want to see further events and cafes, shops and so forth on the site. We have concessions in place on the site. Significant events have taken place here. Well in excess of 160,000 people have come across to use the space, and 1.7 million people have come across the bridge to the site. That is creating a demand that we hope will allow the extension of the city centre into this space and, in turn, allow further investment by the private sector. The Venue was put in place for a specific purpose; to hold UK City of Culture events for a 12-month period. It is due to be deconstructed in January 2014. There is a significant cost associated with keeping the Venue, and no firm proposals have come forward. If any do come forward, we will assess and value them accordingly. However, at this stage, no firm proposals have come forward for anybody to take over the operation of the Venue in 2014 and beyond.

As regards use of the space and going through a process; at the end of the day, Ilex is a non-departmental public body that is bound by public procurement and public rules and procedures. In that respect, we have to assess any proposal that comes forward to see how it will impact on the site and fit in with our business plan and the One Plan. Sometimes, there can be difficult negotiations. We do not have anything with which to compare new ventures or activities that appear on the site. Therefore, it can take a period of time to get some of those ideas into a meaningful proposition that we can assess and approve. The main idea of having the framework in place is that it will set the context to allow future projects to come on board and get the outline planning permission that allows us to move more quickly on some projects.

I do not know whether you want to add anything further to that, Caoimhín,

Mr Corrigan: As regards the Venue, Derry City Council, working with DSD, is developing the north-west regional sports campus. I am not aware of the precise timeline for that, but, as part of the agreement with DSD, the sports campus now also has provision to provide capacity for 2,008 people. Hopefully, it will function as a legacy venue as it is developed. There is investment to be made in that to ensure that it has the technical capability to carry forward the legacy of the Venue.

As regards developments on the site; developing the car park was a prerequisite for planning permissions being granted on the site, as was accessing buildings 11 and 4. As we had already achieved planning permissions for buildings 11 and 4, we now propose to move forward on those in tandem with the development framework. Rather than just waiting for the development framework, we hope to bring those to market sooner.

Mr Eastwood: I have one further question about the One Plan; it is probably for you, Gerard. Mike has already talked about the jobs figures. One of the key catalyst projects is Magee. The One Plan recognised that, without an expanded university, a lot of this other stuff would not happen. I think that the target figure was 9,400 by 2020. Where are we with that? What are major blockages to delivering that?

Mr McCleave: The target is 9,400 full-time or equivalent students by 2020. It is to happen in two phases. The first phase was an increase of 1,000 in the maximum student number (MaSN) by 2015, with the remaining increase in MaSN to come between 2015 and 2020. Some 57% of the first phase target, namely the 1,000 increase in MaSN, has already been secured. So, an increase of 572 in MaSN has already been released from the Department for Employment and Learning through the Minister's commitments and the Executive's economic stimulus package; that is already in play.

Four new courses will run in the university next year in areas linked to the One Plan and in which we anticipate growth in the economy linked to the economic strategy for Northern Ireland, namely the STEM areas, engineering and so on. We are also working with the University of Ulster to put its programme plan in place between now and 2015. It will look at the following two areas: the actions that need to be taken to secure the additional 400 MaSN to take us to 1,000 by 2015, and what needs to happen in relation to the physical development of the Magee campus to accommodate the additional numbers.

Alongside this, you will have heard the Enterprise Minister's announcement this morning about the intelligence systems centre. A number of other announcements will be made in relation to R&D activity and the commercialisation of R&D activity with intelligence systems in C-TRIC over the next number of weeks.

Mr Eastwood: That is all good work, but we are still not near to where we need to be with the Magee expansion. I think that the Minister said that it would be very ambitious to reach that target, and the One Plan is in the Programme for Government. Do you think that it is ambitious or do you think that it is realistic?

Mr McCleave: I think that it is ambitious: there is no question about that. The step change that I referred to earlier is ambitious, but it is realistic. We are on track with phase 1 of MaSN, the university has already secured 572 halfway through the timescale of that first phase, and the plan is being put in place for the remaining 400. As I understand it, the Department will be receptive to working with us to achieve that.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you, Chair. I agree with your opening comments: there is a tangibly positive atmosphere throughout the city. I am on the Employment and Learning Committee, and this morning we visited the Nerve Centre and FabLab, which has formed links with the world-class Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in America. Some really exciting work is going on.

Will you say a bit more about a couple of key priorities that you have set; in particular, the £3 million urban broadband programme, which is one of only 12 UK cities to receive the funding? That seems to be a positive development. Will you also say something about the Fort George site and the development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with London in relation to CultureTECH 2013-14?

Mr Higgins: Ilex had responsibility for the Fort George site until 31 March this year. DSD has now resumed full responsibility for Fort George. However, up to that stage, Ilex was very successful in working with the Northern Ireland Science Park and the Letterkenny Institute to develop a north-west regional science park project, which, in November 2012, secured £12 million of INTERREG funding. That project is due to commence on the Fort George site in a number of weeks, if not months. Prior to that, Ilex developed a walkway round Fort George and was successful in securing funding from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to take forward the decontamination of the site. At this stage, our role is to

support and work with DSD in the marketing of Fort George, taking forward initiatives and trying to engage with the private sector.

I will ask Gerard to pick up on the urban programme and the MOU.

Mr McCleave: The ultrafast broadband initiative was run from the Treasury in London. A range of cities across the UK had the opportunity to bid to upgrade their infrastructure. Derry City Council led that project and was successful. It is currently rolling out its implementation plan. There is a suite of activities associated with it to allow businesses to tap into that infrastructure and support the council in that overall development.

We have been working with Derry City Council on the MOU with the city of London for some time. As you know, the city has a unique relationship with the city of London. The MOU is between Ilex, Derry City Council, Digital Derry and the Department of Trade and Industry in London. Initially, it is around a business plan that has been developed with the city of London and focuses on CultureTECH and an initiative in London called Tech City. As part of the Prime Minister's initiative, 750 businesses have been created in the digital technology sector. The whole purpose of the first part of the relationship is to link new and small businesses here in this city to Tech City and to link Tech City, through its angel and venture capital funds, back to businesses that might develop here in the city. Keith referred to the creative and cultural hub that will be on that site, and this will be a key part of that.

The second part of the MOU will look at how we might benefit from other economic opportunities coming out of the city of London, whether through foreign direct investment coming out of the city of London or companies in this city selling their services to the city of London.

Mr Lyttle: That is positive. Thank you.

The Chairperson: For my own mind and for the sake of clarity, I want to ask about the ownership trail of the two military sites — here and Fort George. Mal, can you tell me what the trail is?

Mr Higgins: Ilex was set up in 2003. At that stage, OFMDFM, through the reinvestment reform initiative (RRI) and the Strategic Investment and Regeneration of Sites (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (SIRS), was gifted the Ebrington site. So, it came into OFMDFM's stewardship.

The Chairperson: Does that mean that the MOD owned this site?

Mr Higgins: Yes, and it was gifted.

The Chairperson: It was gifted to OFMDFM, whereas Fort George was —

Mr Higgins: DSD purchased the Fort George site in 2004 or 2005, I am not too sure of the year. However, it purchased the site from Londonderry Port and Harbour and retained it on its books but gave Ilex the responsibility for project management and delivery.

The Chairperson: Take me back: did the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners own it before it was a military camp?

Mr Higgins: Yes, I believe that once it was no longer a military camp, it returned to Londonderry Port and Harbour.

The Chairperson: The word that I see being used is "surrendered" rather than "gifted". That suggests to me that Fort George belonged to Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners, the MOD then effectively vested it for the time that it used it, and then surrendered it back.

Mr Higgins: I am not too sure of the arrangement for how it went back, but I know that DSD purchased it from the Port and Harbour Commission.

The Chairperson: Indeed, but the sequence was what I had in my head. Obviously, I will check it with the officials. The land here seems to have been purchased by the MOD, which, when finished with it, told OFMDFM, "It's yours; it's a gift".

Mr Higgins: It was provided to OFMDFM, yes.

The Chairperson: OK.

Ms McGahan: Thank you for your detailed presentation. I have two questions. Regarding your successes, what other skills gaps have you identified apart from those in STEM subjects? Secondly, coming into a big city such as Derry, road infrastructure is extremely important. Have you any concerns about the delays in the A5 project?

Mr Higgins: We have a skills directorate in place, tasked with taking forward an action plan to skill up people in the city. STEM is one area, and a unique one, that the city is trying to gear itself towards in a bid to become a creative industries area. The issue with skills is in ensuring that we have the right base from which to train individuals, and to ensure that there are jobs available for those people, when they are trained, in areas where they need them. At the end of the day, we have to work with a wide range of people. We try to promote them and ensure that the long-term unemployed can come forward and gain jobs. Not everybody will be able to take up STEM subjects. It is about trying to ensure that everybody, at some stage, can get on the employment ladder.

In the One Plan, we work towards integrating transport for the city. Part of that is making progress in the dualling of the A5 and A6. Other areas of work include improving bus corridors and timetables. So, it is working on an integrated approach to ensure that the transport and infrastructure is sufficient for the city. Gerard may wish to be more specific on those two points.

Mr McCleave: The skills directorate is chaired and led by industry through a whole range of private sector individuals from across the city. So, the private sector is identifying what the city's potential future skills needs may be and tailoring training to meet those needs. As Mel said, the A5 is a critical piece of infrastructure and, from the city's perspective, in line with the One Plan, part of a wider integrated transport strategy.

Ms McGahan: Would the delay in the A5 concern you? I live 70 miles away and was not impressed at all in travelling here. With all the infrastructure that there now is in this area, and your efforts to stimulate growth and draw in more tourists, the roads to here are not that great.

Mr Higgins: Yes. It is key to get private sector travellers or any others into the city quickly. Any improvements in the road infrastructure, be they to the A5 or A6, would be greatly appreciated and would help to stimulate the economy even further.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the officials for being before us today. I have a question about the maritime museum. Before the army took it over, the site had a lot of associations with the Royal Navy. I would like to see consideration being given to some sort of history of the Royal Navy being shown at the maritime museum. Is that possible or is it premature to look at it?

Mr Higgins: As Caoimhín said, we working with Derry City Council to take forward the proposition of putting a maritime museum on the site. At the end of the day, it will be a Derry City Council-led proposal, and we will assess anything that comes forward in that respect. Caoimhín, do you want to add anything on the specific aspects of it?

Mr Corrigan: As things stand, the proposal is that the maritime museum will have a specific focus on two key areas. The first is the Battle of the Atlantic, when the population of the city doubled in size during World War II. That was a significant world event. The other significant world event on which the museum will focus is the history of emigration from the city, where, on the island, Cobh in the South and Derry here were the two main ports of exit. Again, it is a universal story but one that is told with a strong local perspective. As things stand, these are the two key areas; the Battle of the Atlantic and the history of emigration. Then, there is to be space for an introduction to the site and provision for temporary exhibitions as they come around.

Mr G Robinson: Bronwyn mentioned the road infrastructure and so forth. Will there ever be any possibility of another entrance, maybe from the Limavady Road?

Mr Higgins: Currently, if you travel down the Limavady Road to King Street roundabout, you can only turn left at that roundabout. Hopefully, this time next year, you will be able to turn right at that roundabout, which will take you into this site, and then you will drive into an underground car park that

will have 220 car park spaces in two floors. On top of that will be an enabling platform, which will allow frontage to King Street and Limavady Road for further buildings to be made. So, once the underground car park is complete, it will allow access in off the King Street roundabout to this site.

Mr G Robinson: That is grand. Thanks for that.

Mr Moutray: Thank for your presentation. Apologies for being late. I missed the start of it. Like others, I am very enthused when I come here and see the big change that there has been; and I hope to be up at several events later on in the summer, time permitting. Last year, as part of the Committee for Regional Development, I visited the local airport out the road seven miles away. It is a great wee airport but is underutilised. Is there, or has there been, any potential to utilise it more this year? Have you noticed more people using it coming in? Is there any potential for increasing the routes in and out of it?

Mr McCleave: As you know, the airport is owned by Derry City Council and is now managed by a private sector grouping. From what I understand, there has been an increase this year in the numbers coming through. Indeed, just recently, the airport has launched its new draft master plan, which includes a whole range of development activity, including route development as well as increasing the number of passengers through. Also, it has just announced some airside operations, working with the private sector around aircraft engineering and the servicing of aircraft and the locating of aircraft in hangars and so on. So, as I understand, a huge amount of activity is currently going on at the airport.

Mr Moutray: Is there any possibility of getting the train to stop there?

Mr McCleave: One of the options that the integrated transport strategy looks at is stopping not only at the airport but at Ballykelly and at various halts along the line.

The Chairperson: I will finish off with a couple of questions about governance. There was the issue that the Public Accounts Committee focused on, but there was also a broader review by OFMDFM and DSD, where your management statement and financial memorandum came from. A single sponsorship project team was established with a view to clearing everything up, with new arrangements to be in place by April 2013. Did that happen, Mel?

Mr Higgins: Yes. Obviously, following the Public Accounts Committee's involvement, we worked with OFMDFM and DSD to develop an action plan. We are glad to report that significant progress has been made in implementing that action plan, not only from Ilex's point of view. Working very closely with both Departments in a supportive role, the accounting officers of DSD, OFMDFM and Ilex have met monthly to go through each of the individual actions.

Likewise, DSD's internal audit has given an independent view and has stated that a satisfactory assurance has been provided on the progress that has been made in the implementation of the actions. As you said rightly, a single sponsor team has been in place since 1 April and Ilex is now under the control of and reports directly to OFMDFM.

The Chairperson: Under the One Plan you have five themes and 11 catalyst programmes, each with a named organisation as the lead. Below that, you have programme activities in support of the catalyst programmes, but again, for every programme activity you have a named lead partner. It sounds like a very solid structure, particularly where you have named an organisation as a lead partner; that means that if something is not happening, you can say to that organisation, "we are coming looking for you". How does that work for Ilex?

Mr McCleave: It works very well. We put a programme management system in place in order to gather all the information that would allow us to report on the progress of the One Plan. Each of the organisations, or catalyst leads, has, in effect, two roles, the first of which is to facilitate and co-ordinate all the various projects under that catalyst.

Secondly, some of those catalyst leads may also be deliverers of projects themselves. It works very well and, in fact, the programme management system that we use is also being rolled out in Departments through the interdepartmental co-ordinating group. That will allow government to report in the same way so that we can get a complete look across the delivery and implementation of the One Plan.

The Chairperson: OK. Thank you very much.