



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Environment

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Scrap Metal Dealers Bill: Mr Roy Beggs MLA

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clearly indicated that problems have arisen at sewage stations, such as pumping stations and treatment stations, as a result of metal theft, and that results in damage to the environment. Another environmental aspect that is important is that, whenever metal ends up being stolen, it goes through the recycling process. That then damages the environment by wasting energy and resources to reshape things into their original format for someone's profit. So, there is an environmental aspect to this that I hope the Department will fully appreciate.

Where does stolen metal go? As we are aware, it goes to scrap metal dealers. There is a voluntary code, but not all have bought in to that scheme. Then there is the issue of the smaller mobile scrap metal dealer, who is, I suspect, under the radar and does not even appear in any departmental waste management system. At present, they go undetected and potentially provide a route for this metal to enter the recycling system. So, I hope that everyone appreciates that there is a problem.

What we are about is finding a solution. I hope that the solution is the outcome of the purpose for the legislation, which ultimately is that we catch criminals and even more importantly that we deter theft in the first place. If we can create traceability for where stolen metal is going and who is profiting from it, we will deter such theft in the first place for the betterment of our community. The discussion we are having at present is about how best to achieve that. I hope that everybody agrees with that aim. So, how best do we deter this theft and prevent criminals from profiting from it?

In shaping the Bill for the consultation, I tried to minimise cost and bureaucracy. I identified that we already have a waste management structure and licensing arrangements. If I went to the Justice Department, it would say, "We can deal with the justice issues, but you can take those environment issues somewhere else; we do not want them". The Environment Department has said that it does not want this because there are justice issues in it. What do we do? Do we do nothing? That seems to be what is being promoted by the Department. It does not want it, yet it is not a priority for Justice either. I would have thought that, going forward, there is the potential to dovetail into waste management legislation. If there are problems doing that, let us identify and solve them. I will go through that in detail subsequently.

As part of the consultation, the Department disclosed that the current waste management infrastructure — its management team, etc — cost £1,154,500 during 2014-15. If this went to Justice, it would start off with a blank bit of paper, and you would immediately have that cost. The point I have identified is that the Department should already have a database with the details of every waste management site, and it will already have people who have inspected those sites. Why can we not link the two things for the betterment of joined-up government and our local community? If there is to be a silo mentality, with everybody looking after their little box, the Department is exactly right in its approach. That seems to have been its approach: it is looking after its little box. But we ought to be looking after the interests of the public.

It is almost two months since the Bill was transferred to the Committee. It is very disappointing that the Committee is saying that it has not had engagement with scrap metal dealers. Why is that? I pose that question to you.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We have tried. As I explained to you yesterday, Ballyvesey was supposed to come last week, but it was not able to.

Mr Beggs: It may be that it does not wish to engage. That is the point that I am making.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We have tried; we have asked members to give us names and —

Mr Beggs: During my consultation some time ago, I had about 25 members of the industry in Parliament Buildings. It is disappointing that they have decided not to engage, given that it could affect them. If they refuse to engage, what do we do? Do we do nothing? It would be very serious if legislators adopted that approach: just because someone does not engage, you do not do anything.

I will first go through the Department of the Environment's response, which has been provided to me.

Mr A Maginness: Would it be possible to raise a point? I do not want to interrupt Roy's flow, but if scrap dealers do not give evidence deliberately to try to frustrate the process, I understand the point that you are making. It would be unfortunate if that were the case. However, the situation for the Committee is this: given the time that is in it, irrespective of what our individual attitudes may be to the Bill, if, in the time available, we are not able to get a good handle on the situation in relation to the

problems that you very properly and well highlighted, how does the Committee properly scrutinise the Bill in the absence of good, solid evidence coming from the scrap dealers? That is a problem for the Committee as I see it. We would be wrong not to raise that with you.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Obviously, it is the industry that will have the greatest impact. The changes and regulations are all targeted at the scrap dealers. We need to hear their voice. We now have a list of dealers. I will consult members later to see whether we can make an effort to try to invite them to come and talk to us.

Mr Beggs: OK. Do you want me to continue?

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Yes.

Mr Beggs: There is a danger of me dealing with issues twice if I go through the document and the clause-by-clause table, so I will just pick out a few issues and then go through the clause-by-clause table. I will then go back to the descriptions and detail at the front.

Looking at paragraphs 15 to 20 of the Department's paper, I see that it highlighted the range of legislation under which the scrap metal dealers currently operate, but it failed to acknowledge that there has been scrap metal dealers legislation in England, Scotland and Wales since 1964 while there has been nothing here since then specifically for scrap metal dealers where there has been a known potential issue with stolen metal. It also indicated, and I welcome that it is making some changes, that it has recently required a certificate of technical competence to be introduced. That seems to be quite a basic requirement for someone who is managing a waste site. Apparently, in future, everybody will be required to have one. I ask why it has taken so long to do that, but I welcome that the Department has done it now.

It also indicated that it is tidying up and removing exemptions, because it has recognised that, on occasions, that is where there are problems. In particular, there are problems with illegal and unlicensed sites. In its commentary, it acknowledged that that is the area where there may be potential for the greatest improvement. However, again, how are you going to identify those? It is important that there is a process that enables that.

Turning to the clause-by-clause paper, on clause 1, the Department indicates:

"in the near future, only the storage of scrap metal and de-polluted end-of-life vehicles at a quayside prior to loading a vessel will be allowed under exemption. All other scrap metal activities will require a full licence."

I welcome that, but, again, I ask this: is it possible to dovetail everything so that, when you apply for this new licence, if you want to deal in scrap metal, there is an extra page with extra boxes so that you get on the specific scrap metal licensing radar? It does not necessarily mean that you have to have two systems running in tandem. Why is it not possible to do it in an efficient manner? The Department indicated that its changes — not my changes — will increase the cost of exemptions, etc, and that some exemptions may remain. Obviously, it is concerned about overall costs. I deliberately tried to link this to waste management legislation to minimise the costs, because, if you go elsewhere, you are setting up a completely new structure.

The Department later highlights its concern in clause 1 for having a maximum £5,000 fine if someone does not have a licence, whilst other fines could be up to £50,000. There is concern about how the lower fine for not having a licence will work. The Department seems to be indicating that it could cause problems. What I will say on that is that, in England, Scotland and Wales, they have a scrap metal dealer licensing fine and a waste management fine, and it does not seem to have caused a problem there. I notice that the wording is that it "could" weaken it, etc. It does not seem to have caused a problem in England, Wales and Scotland. Is this a real concern, or is it chaff? If it is genuine, we need to find the solution. The Department has not said what the solution is. It is posing the problem without suggesting a solution. Is it that you simply amend the waste management legislation to have a specific fine for not having a license? What is the solution? The Department has not been constructive in its comment; it is trying to throw a certain amount of doubt on it.

I point out that its current mechanism has been particularly slow and ineffective in dealing with issues. I will illustrate that. There is an example in the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) report for 2014-15, which I think was published in the latter half of last year. It illustrates a case where an illegal scrap

metal dealer was identified in June 2010. The Department issued a warning letter. A year later, it went back to the site and found that he is still processing, and it estimated that he had a £3 million turnover. Following investigation, a confiscation occurred. In November 2014, four years after the discovery of the illegal site, a court ultimately imposed an order, with half a million pounds and a default period with potential imprisonment set to fix the site.

I would have thought that it would have been much better if, in June 2010, the legislation had been here. We simply would have gone to the court to seek a £5,000 fine for failure to have a licence. That would have been very quick. You either have a licence or you do not. It is quick and simple, and, hopefully, the message would transmit very quickly that there is a problem that needs resolved. If there is a need for waste management prosecution to commence as well, preparatory work could start on that. There could be a very quick initial legal direction given that would hopefully bring about improvement, rather than people having to wait four years for a court order to solve the problem. I can see benefits to having a quick resolution issue and a quick court judgement. That extended wait is not good governance. In fact, mention was made of a £3 million turnover. This is big business. That was the estimated turnover for the one-year period between June 2010 and June 2011. What is happening at present is not good enough.

Under the clause on the form and effect of the licence, the Department has indicated that the Bill would need reworking to allow dovetailing, and then it adds the words "were it required". I am pleased that the Department is saying that the Bill would need reworking to allow dovetailing. I am pleased that it acknowledged that, but it is deciding that it is not required. Do the public believe that it is not required? Do those who have had lead stolen from their roofs, including the churches, the schools and the homes, believe that? Do people where electricity and telephone supplies have been disrupted and where the public have been exposed to risks believe that? Do people in residential areas where manhole covers have been stolen think that it is needed or not? The Department clearly thinks that this is not needed. That is the implication of the words "were it required", but I am pleased that it has said that the Bill needs reworking to allow any dovetailing. Dovetailing is what I am trying to achieve. That is why I think that the waste management side of things is the best place to allow this to happen. That wording seems to imply that the Department thinks that it could happen as well, but again it has not given any detail or suggestions on what would need to be adjusted to allow it. That is something that I suggest to the Committee.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): What would you suggest to allow the dovetailing of the Bill?

Mr Beggs: The draftsman has written the regulation, with a bit of guidance from me. It generally refers to the regulations that are required. Personally, I thought that the main bit of dovetailing had to occur when the regulations got written. Guess what? The Minister and the Department write the regulations. If there are other bits of it that do not allow that flexibility, tell us what the problem is. What bits of the legislation need to be adjusted so that they can dovetail? I have not been able to engage with the Department, other than it saying, "We don't think this is for us. This is for Justice". Therefore, I have not got into those discussions. It has offered me a date on 29 January, I think, to have a meeting with it. That was arranged last week, and, again, I am surprised that that is the length of time that it is taking before it will engage with me. I thought that it should be a matter of urgency to have discussions, but that is the date that I was given.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): That will be too late for us.

Mr Beggs: I will allow people to read into that themselves.

There was a discussion here about mobile collectors. One engagement I had during my consultation highlighted in particular the need for scrutiny of mobile dealers. A mobile dealer can be one man in a van who is not known to the Department and does not operate with waste transfer notes. How do you identify who that one man with a van is? He can be someone who can gather up little bits of lead from all over the place. He can become the respectable face who goes to a scrap metal dealer and introduces the lead, for instance, into the waste management system.

I think it is important to know who the mobile operators are. I pose this question: how are we going to identify who they are? I do not believe that the current system is doing that. If you were to require the recording of the suppliers of material and the police and the Department having access to that information, you could easily identify regular suppliers to scrap metal dealers and who the mobile operators are. You could legitimately ask this question: where did you get your 500 kg of lead from? Without some sort of improvement to our legislation, I do not see that there is an ability to do that.

At this point, I will highlight what has happened in the Republic of Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland. In England and Wales according to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which I have tried to introduce here, the supplier of the material has to be recorded to create that traceability. Again, knowing that there is traceability will deter the theft in the first place. How do you enter the material into the legitimate recycling industry without leaving a trace? It would be very difficult. That is the situation in England and Wales. When Scotland did not have the legislation, they discovered that the thefts moved north. They have introduced their equivalent legislation.

Interestingly, we are the only place in these islands that does not have any traceability of the source material. In July 2014, I think it was, the Republic of Ireland identified traceability as a problem. Under their waste management legislation, the Irish authorities introduced the Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. Guess what? Waste operators in the Republic of Ireland have to show a valid passport, an Irish driving licence, a public services card issued by the Department of Social Protection or a recent utility bill. They have to show traceability for where the material came from. If anything, at this minute in time, stolen metal from the Republic may well be coming to Northern Ireland because we have no mandatory traceability. We have a voluntary code of practice, which most of the large dealers have implemented. However, I was advised of one dealer who did not. Guess what? I was also advised that, on occasions, some people choose where they go, depending on what load they have and whether they want traceability. The question I pose again is this: why are we the only place in these islands where scrap metal can be introduced into the recycling system without traceability of the supplier?

Again the comments from the Department seem to want to rely on the fact that it has its waste management system with transfer notes, etc. I go back to my point about the one man in the van who operates outside of all that. He is under the radar — nobody knows about him. How do you ensure that there is a method of enabling those who may be introducing illegal material into the system to be identified? That is why there needs to be traceability of metal being supplied. I dare say that that was the original purpose of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 in the rest of the UK. There is nothing here. Traceability has been corrected in England, Wales and Scotland by enhancing those powers and in the Republic of Ireland through its waste facility permit.

On the issue of licences, the Department's comments are critical of the legislation, stating that there is potential for duplication. The Department seems to be hiding behind the fact that, after I had gone to the draftsman, it introduced new legislation and enhanced the fit-and-proper-person test. If there is duplication, it can easily be resolved. There is a solution. Again, the Department is not presenting that solution. I found the engagement to be very disappointing. There is always a solution if there is a willingness.

The Department has stated that environmental issues, financial issues and other offences are required to be taken into consideration. If that were dealing with everything, the fit-and-proper-person clause of my Bill would not be required. There would be a solution. The test has just recently been introduced.

The Department's final comment under clause 3 is:

"Neither of these proposed measures relate to the protection of the environment and/or human health and under the proposals contained in the Bill regulation of both these conditions would be the responsibility of the PSNI. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for DOE to legislate for these elements."

I have acknowledged that DOE has said that it is ultra vires. That is why this is a private Member's Bill, because there are two different Departments involved. One Department cannot legislate on its own: it has to be done by some joint mechanism or through a private Member's Bill or else the thing will not be done. I do not understand why DOE is still hiding behind saying that it is inappropriate for it to do this because it does not have the power. I go back to the point that we need joined-up government to get things done efficiently. We should not be operating in silos and boxes.

On clause 4, the Department's comment that catches my eye in particular is this:

"the Department believes that these provisions should not fall under the responsibility of DOE".

Somebody has really got it into his head that DOE does not want anything to do with scrap metal. It is putting that into print once again, stating that it:

"could be construed as dual regulation; and could very much undermine existing waste provisions by 'muddying the waters' between environmental offences and trading offences."

Again, I pose this question: why is there no difficulty in GB with having scrap metal legislation and waste management legislation? Is there is a way of dovetailing legislation to avoid such issues? The Department is playing on the word "could" and is not providing ideas for solutions. That is how I see it.

On clause 5, which deals with further provision about licences, the Department is again critical and states that it is specific to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. This is a private Member's Bill. You write legislation to try to provide what is needed, whichever Department it applies to. I think that the clause is relevant and should be in the Bill. If a company changes its name, the Department should obviously be notified. That is why the clause is in there. Therefore, I do not understand the Department's comment. It is again saying that it is beyond its remit. That seems to be a fairly standard response from it.

Under clause 7, which deals with the closure of unlicensed sites, the Department again thinks that it has nothing to do with that. I go back to the point that this is a private Member's Bill to try to introduce legislation that is required, largely based on the Scrap Metal Dealers Act.

Clause 8 deals with display of a licence. The Department seems even to oppose the displaying of a licence because it holds the copies of them and because it is not required under waste management legislation. Personally, I think it would be helpful, particularly in the mobile scrap metal dealers Act, if people had to display their licence to say that they were a legitimate scrap metal merchant. Not everybody will know whether the person coming into the yard is registered or not. I do not see why the Department is holding out on waste management legislation. I think that it would be helpful for it to know whether the public were selling or giving their material to somebody who potentially did not even have an operator's licence to move the waste material from A to B. I understand that any waste material should be moved by someone who is authorised to do so, so I am aghast at why the Department appears not to think that it is important that that should be displayed. I think that that goes back to the idea that it does not seem to want this legislation.

Clause 9 deals with verification of a supplier's identity. The Department states that it is "gold-plating" and "overburdensome". I am aghast at it saying that. It is saying that it is not required under environmental legislation. I have shown that that is exactly what has been done in the Republic. It has been required under environmental legislation in the Republic, but somehow the same European legislation that governs us seems to stop us from introducing it here. I ask the Committee to ask the Department why there would be any problem. Why would it be gold-plating to be made aware of the source of the scrap metal that is being introduced into the system? I hope that I indicated earlier why I think that is reasonable and important. It would help the Department to identify those who move waste materials around without a licence.

There is then a comment stating:

"A consideration, should the Bill be brought forward further, would be the inclusion of vehicles registered in the Republic of Ireland."

The Bill simply states that the registration plate and details of licence should be registered. That includes other European licences and, from memory, passports as well, so the clause is actually very widely drawn. I hope that there would be a good working relationship between waste authorities in Northern Ireland and in the Republic so that, if there were reason to seek to trace the owner of a registered vehicle, that information would be shared if it could be identified that there was a particular concern about material that had been moved. I hope that there is no difficulty with the clause regarding other waste materials that have historically been abandoned in Northern Ireland, causing environmental problems. I do not know why the Department put that comment in. Perhaps the Committee can seek further information from it.

Clause 10 deals with the offence of buying scrap metal for cash. Again, the Department is saying that it is "gold-plating" and "overburdensome". The industry in the UK has adopted that measure. A reduction in the levels of metal theft in England has been attributed to it. Scotland was forced to adopt the measure when it found that it did not have it.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Roy, I will quickly stop you there. Do any members need to leave? Will we let Roy continue, or do you want to jump to asking questions?

Mr Boylan: I have to leave for Question Time.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Do you want to ask questions before you go?

Mr Boylan: I have too many questions, to be honest. I will leave them to whoever can stay behind. To be fair to Mr Beggs, I have to say that I have my own views on the Bill. I do not think that this is going to be resolved today. I certainly have questions for Mr Beggs, but, unfortunately, I have to go to the Chamber.

I do not think that we have enough time today. I do not have enough time anyway. We will have to come back. Serious issues have been raised about the Bill, and I am quite concerned myself, to be honest.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Maybe we can continue to talk on Thursday.

Mr Boylan: I think so.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Members, are you content for Roy to continue, or do you want to ask questions before people need to go?

Mr Milne: I have to go anyway. I am on the ARD Committee, and questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development are taking place now.

Mr A Maginness: Chair, I think that it is unreasonable to expect Mr Beggs to answer all our questions in the time available. We have simply run out of time, as far as I can see. We will need another engagement. That would be the wisest course to take.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We could schedule for you to come back on Thursday, Roy. Things are not too bad this Thursday.

Mr Beggs: Would that be in the morning or the afternoon?

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We meet in the morning.

Mr Beggs: I will have to prioritise my time with you. *[Laughter.]*

Mr A Maginness: A wise comment.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Sorry, you will prioritise the time?

Mr Beggs: I will have to.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Maybe we can try to schedule for you to come back and continue. I am just conscious that members have to go to Question Time.

Mr Boylan: Can we put him first on the agenda?

The Committee Clerk: I will check with the officials. We have a briefing from the Research and Information Service (RaISe) first. We will need to check with it regarding availability, as RaISe is going around a lot of Committees presenting on the Budget. I will check, Mr Beggs, and then I will liaise with you to see what time suits you.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Do you want to continue with your presentation? We still have a quorum.

Mr Beggs: That is fine.

I will return to the offence of buying scrap metal for cash. As I said, the Department has said that it is "gold-plating" and over burdensome". Look at the way in which the legislation has been crafted. I have reflected GB legislation, in that there is the potential to move to a cashless system. GB introduced that straightaway. I recognised during the consultation that there would be a problem with

doing that here, but I have allowed for the Minister to adjust the figure through regulations. I have suggested an initial figure of £100 under which cash dealings are allowed. That can be adjusted. The Committee may wish to go for a different figure. On top of that, there is the ability to decide to have no figure.

I am very keen to get clause 10 through, even as an enabling power, because the same conversation could be happening down South, and guess what the outcome would be? The South would say, "Well, we cannot do it, because all the goods will move North if we go to a cashless system here". It may be that what is required is for Northern Ireland and the Republic to go cashless at the same time for scrap metal goods being sold. If the enabling primary legislation were in place, the detailed discussion could occur later. The Committee would be free to set a different initial figure or, indeed, not to allow a figure to be introduced in the early stages, as I know that there is some concern around that.

I know that going cashless helped improve traceability of stolen goods, because the money had to go into a bank account, and, as such, you had the banking ID provided by the account holder. There was thus an additional method of tracking an individual down if problems arose.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): That concern was raised by the British Metals Recycling Association. It said that the system is working in England, so why are we not doing it?

Mr Beggs: I am saying that I can see the benefits of introducing it. I realise that there are concerns in the industry that it may affect sales going across the border. Is the solution to go completely cashless at some point but leave the time for it to be introduced to be determined by the Minister and, indeed, the Assembly through secondary legislation? That could happen if the Republic ever decides to go down that route as well.

On clause 11, which deals with the receipt of metal, the Department does not think that you should have to give details and believes that it would be:

"would be ultra vires, be seen as gold-plating and be challenged in the Courts"

if there were a separate waste transfer note specifically for scrap metal.

The legislation states what we are trying to achieve, which is to record who sold the scrap metal, what the vehicle was, how we get that person, what material was sold and what its value was. That seems reasonable to me, and I do not see how that could be challenged in the courts. If somebody wanted to create a completely duplicated waste transfer note system, that would certainly seem a bit ridiculous, but that recording could come down to a line in a book and photographs being taken of driver licences to prove identity, and so on. It could be done through registration numbers being written down or images being taken from the CCTV cameras that most scrap metal dealers have on their premises. It does not have to require a huge shake-up of the system. In fact, under the voluntary system, which is heavily respected here, most of that is already being done. Therefore, for most of the dealers, it will not mean a big change. A degree of traceability is available through the current voluntary code system.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): What is that at the moment under the voluntary code?

Mr Beggs: Vehicle registration numbers have to be recorded. That gives a degree of traceability and allows a matching-up of what has been sold. I do not see why the Department has said that that could be challenged in the courts. We should bear in mind that the provision is already in place in England and Wales.

The Department has invented duplicate waste transfer notes. It is the only one that is talking about them. If it were to amend its current waste transfer notes and add another line at the bottom to enable everything to happen, that might be a way of solving it, but a waste transfer note is not necessarily required. What is required is that scrap metal dealers record sufficient information to identify who supplied the goods. The Department is attempting to overcomplicate this, and the Committee should ask why.

The Department is also concerned about the idea of quarantining metals that are suspicious. Originally, the thinking was that waste materials should be set aside to allow the police to identify them. I visited a couple of scrapyards and quickly identified that to do that was totally impractical, so I

narrowed it down to burnt or defaced materials — things that are obviously suspicious. The material that was most frequently in that category was burnt cable. When you burn off the plastic coating from cables — guess what? — it is very bad for the environment. We ought to be trying to stop people stealing electricity or telecommunication cables and burning off the plastic to remove the BT or NIE identification on them. In my local village, there were new lights put in, and the underground cable was ripped out within two weeks. That will have been taken away and somehow introduced into the recycling industry. There is a pollution problem if plastic-coated copper cable is being burnt and that burnt cable, which has no identification on it, is being traded.

That is not to say that all NIE cables should be identified and quarantined. If the cable is bought from NIE, it is not suspicious. Everybody will know where it came from. That is old, end-of-life cable, and therefore not suspicious. The big quantities that may be renewed do not come under the Bill. There are small quantities of burnt cable being traded, and if you had this legislation, I suspect that you would not have any, because of the trouble that would occur where there was burnt cable. Those stealing cable would stop burning it, because they would not be able to sell it easily. Therefore, I do not understand why the Department of the Environment thinks that the clause would be problematic as a result of space being limited for smaller operators. Having seen a couple of yards, I believe that there is not a huge amount of space required for cable. When I visited yards, I did not see any defaced or suspicious cable.

The Department appears to be making a problem, and I am asking it what the problem is, because I certainly do not see one. It would be interesting to know whether it has any figures on the amount of burnt cable traded in Northern Ireland.

Clause 12 deals with disposal of metal. The Department does not like the word "disposal". It is in there because that is what the draftsman lifted from elsewhere. I will be pleased to change the word if the Department does not like it and instead wants "trading" or "reselling" used. Again, instead of just telling us what the problem is, it would be helpful for the Department to tell us the solution. I am sure that there is a solution if there is a willingness.

Clause 14 deals with the right to enter and inspect. It gives constable rights to enter and inspect. The Department is concerned that that does not include its officials. That is easily amended, but I thought that the Department's officials already had the ability to enter and inspect waste management sites. If the Department wishes us to amend the clause and add "departmental officials" or "NIEA officials", that will be easy to do.

There is a lot of material that the Department has not commented on. I hope that I have picked up on most of its issues. One of the Department's other concerns is that this is happening while it is going through a major review of its entire waste management system to try to minimise bureaucracy, and so on. The target for completing that review is 31 March 2016. It is a review of official controls and inspection services across DARD and DOE. Cognisant of that, I decided to extend the introduction period from one year to two to allow more time for that.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Roy, we have just lost the quorum, so we will continue on Thursday. We will let you know the time of the meeting. Is that OK?

Mr Beggs: OK.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Thank you. You have certainly given us a lot of food for thought. I am supportive of the Bill. My main concern is about the timing.