



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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**COMMITTEE FOR  
CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE**

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**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(Hansard)**

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**Departmental Briefing on the  
Olympics/Paralympics 2012**

20 January 2011

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

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**COMMITTEE FOR CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE**

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**Departmental Briefing on the Olympics/Paralympics 2012**

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

Mr Barry McElduff (Chairperson)  
Mr Declan O'Loan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Lord Browne  
Mr Thomas Burns  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mr Kieran McCarthy  
Mr Ken Robinson

**Witnesses:**

Mr Mick Cory            )        Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure  
Ms Lorraine Conlon    )

Mr Jonathan Edwards   )        London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games

**The Chairperson (Mr McElduff):**

Good morning. Thank you for coming along. I welcome Mr Mick Cory and Ms Lorraine Conlon, from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and Mr Jonathan Edwards. I believe that this is your first visit to Parliament Buildings, Jonathan.

**Mr Jonathan Edwards (London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games):**

It is.

**The Chairperson:**

Did you run up the mile?

**Mr Edwards:**

If I had known that it was so close to my hotel, I would have done, but, as it happens, I came in a taxi. *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson:**

I invite Mick Cory to introduce his team, make an opening statement and tell us about everyone's various remits.

**Mr Mick Cory (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):**

Thank you, Chairperson. We are grateful for the opportunity to update the Committee on the progress that is being made on realising the benefits for Northern Ireland from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I am delighted to introduce Jonathan Edwards, Olympic gold medallist and deputy chairman of the nations and regions group of the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG). Lorraine Conlon is head of the 2012/2013 Games legacy unit in the Department and is the co-ordinator of 2012 activity in Northern Ireland. I am the director of the sports, museums and recreation division. I also sit on the nations and regions group of LOCOG. We have a few introductory remarks to make, if we may. With your permission, Chairperson, I will ask Jonathan Edwards to say something as well.

**The Chairperson:**

Yes, thank you.

**Mr Edwards:**

Thank you very much; it is a great pleasure to be here. I have always enjoyed my trips to Northern Ireland, both in my former life as an athlete and now, as part of my involvement with the 2012 Olympics.

During my first visit here after London won the bid in Singapore, I was in Ormeau Park at a roadshow, during which I gave a radio interview. About half an hour later, an elderly gentleman,

aged between 65 and 70 years old, told that he had heard me on the radio and had rushed down to speak to me. He said that as soon as he heard the result, when Jacques Rogge said London rather than Paris, he went down to his local sports nutrition store — at that point I did not know where the conversation was going — and he bought a big tub of protein powder. I was thinking that he did not understand that there were no veteran’s Olympics or Paralympics. Anyway, he told me that he ripped off the label and poured it all down the sink, and that he was saving to come and watch the Games in 2012.

I tell that story often, because that is what the Olympics and Paralympics can do. There is a magic dust around the Games that excites and enthuses people, and that gives us an opportunity to build on that excitement. You know, as politicians, and I know, from the world of sport, that it is that enthusiasm, that point of contact, that allows one to build and make positive changes in people’s lives. That story summed up, in many ways, the opportunities that exist because of 2012. The foundation for making the most of that is what I would call the success of the core project — what we are doing to put the Games on — which is a massive logistical exercise.

The two main organisations, LOCOG, which I represent, and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), which is building the Olympic Park, are doing an outstanding job. It is a triumph for UK plc. One of the main bridges in the Olympic park is being built by Lagan Construction, from Northern Ireland. Members should take the opportunity to visit the park, because it is fantastic. It is going incredibly well. So far, LOCOG has raised nearly £700 million towards the overall budget of £2 billion.

So, things are very much on track. That gives us a great foundation to build on the success of 2012.

When we went to Singapore, we talked about it being not just a London Games, but a Games for the whole country. We have made huge strides in that respect as well, particularly here in Northern Ireland. Our Inspire Mark programme is groundbreaking. This afternoon I will activate “Eat well, be well”, the launch of a new primary school project that has the Inspire Mark.

Historically, any Olympic Games has used the brand to raise money. We have a non-

commercial association that has many Inspire Mark projects across Northern Ireland, which is great. It gets education programmes in many schools that build on the Olympic and Paralympic values rather than just talking about the history of the Olympics. That has had a profound effect here in Northern Ireland, and, indeed, across the UK.

The Cultural Olympiad is going from strength to strength. The London 2012 festival has announced some really good projects here. Of course, there is a great resonance with the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture for 2013. There are also many business contracts, from bridges to bags. One of our licensees is Ulster Weavers, and I have here one of their bags, which is very exciting.

Looking forward, volunteer recruitment is well under way. There is an event in Northern Ireland from 20 April 2011. That will run for seven or eight days to recruit volunteers for the Games in 2012. There is a great bursary scheme to help with travel and accommodation, and Mick will talk a bit more about that.

Our tickets go on sale from 15 March 2011. There is a six-week application process, and then a ballot for tickets. That is a great opportunity for people from here to come and watch the Games. There is also the torch relay. Four days have been secured, and it will be a really exciting moment when the torch comes to Northern Ireland.

I thank you for your partnership in what is an incredibly exciting project, and I look forward to working very closely with you leading up to the Games. I also particularly thank Mick, Lorraine and all their colleagues at DCAL, who are doing a great job.

**Mr Cory:**

I would like to update the Committee a little bit more on that. The opportunities from the Games were seen to be much wider than just sport, and include economic, cultural and educational activities. From day one, however, it was clear that the extent to which Northern Ireland benefits from those opportunities depends entirely on the level of our engagement in making sure that we realise those opportunities.

DCAL has worked in partnership with central and local government to deliver on those opportunities. That work is overseen by the Northern Ireland 2012 leadership group, chaired by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and consisting of representatives from Sport Northern Ireland, the Arts Council, the Tourist Board, Invest NI, local government representatives, VolunteerNow, Disability Sport and education representatives.

The vision and strategy for that engagement was agreed by our Minister and the Executive, and presented to the Assembly on 27 May 2008. Three specific Programme for Government targets were agreed. First, that Northern Ireland secures the torch relay; secondly, that we seek to secure up to 10 pre-Games training events; and, thirdly, to deliver on the other important elements of the Northern Ireland strategy.

On the torch relay, DCAL has secured with LOCOG four days of the torch relay for Northern Ireland. Details are being worked on, including dates and routes, and LOCOG is in discussion with local authorities on those details, with the guidance of a Northern Ireland torch advisory group. There will be an evening celebration on most nights of the torch relay, with a two-hour show. The presence of the torch will provide major international promotional opportunities in the run-up to the Games themselves, and can be used to highlight Northern Ireland's people, landscape and cultural offerings.

More than 8,000 people will be involved as torch bearers across the UK. Those will include young people and sports stars from Northern Ireland. Similarly, there will be a Paralympic torch relay, and details of that are being worked on. Further announcements on the overnight stops and dates are expected in the spring. There will also be details of the torch bearer nomination process in May 2011.

With regard to securing pre-Games training events, Sport Northern Ireland leads a working group that is progressing plans to attract a number of Olympic and Paralympic sports and athletes here in the run-up to the Games. There are a number of issues and challenges in carrying out that work, not least of which is the fact that apart from all but the very best athletes few will know whether they will qualify for the Games.

Qualification will depend on qualification events. Therefore, Sport Northern Ireland is actively targeting a number of sports in which, in its professional assessment, Northern Ireland has particular strengths. Those include badminton, athletics, judo, sailing, boxing, fencing, table tennis and gymnastics as well as Paralympic sports.

The Games provide a key opportunity to increase young people's participation in sports. That is being achieved through a number of excellent projects, including the Activ8 programme that Jonathan mentioned, which encourages primary-school aged children to get active and stay healthy and has been awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark. The 5 Star Disability Sports Challenge aims to increase awareness among children about disability and promote understanding that disability is not an obstacle to achieving physical and sporting success. The 5 Star programme, which is run by Disability Sports Northern Ireland, is DCAL funded and supported by the Department of Education. It is being picked up across the UK as an example of what can be achieved. It also forms part of the International Inspiration programme, in which Northern Ireland is twinned with Jordan. A number of schools exchanges and other exchanges are under way, demonstrating how we can raise our profile internationally through the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I will turn to some of the other areas in which Northern Ireland is benefiting. A number of Northern Ireland projects are part of the Cultural Olympiad. The Arts Council leads on the Cultural Olympiad theme, with DCAL providing funding and support. We have secured up to £2 million of Legacy Trust funding for Northern Ireland cultural and arts sectors, and, so far, over 100,000 people have engaged in Cultural Olympiad activity, with more than 100 cultural events hosted. Work is under way on a significant project called "Land of the Giants", which will be one of four major UK cultural festival events planned during 2012. It will also form part of Northern Ireland's DETI-led 2012 event programming and will be a major international showcase opportunity for Northern Ireland. It is also anticipated that a live site will be in place for Belfast this year. Live sites will feature large screens in public spaces screening major events with associated local event planning around the screen. Screens will be placed in all the major cities across the UK, and work is under way to ensure that Derry secures a live site screen, offering a significant opportunity as part of the Londonderry City of Culture programme in 2013.

More than 30 local companies have secured business. The briefing paper mentions a figure of £60 million of business. Unfortunately, one of those companies has since gone out of business, but we are aware of direct contracts worth £24 million that have been secured by Northern Ireland businesses. That level of business compares favourably with those in Wales and the English regions. There are over £700 million's worth of contracts in total to be won, related not just to the running of the Games but to further opportunities for major post-Games transformation. Invest NI leads on that activity.

Volunteers play a valuable and important part in all sports, the arts and across the culture sector. VolunteerNow leads on the Northern Ireland 2012 volunteering theme, with funding provided by DCAL. There are a number of volunteering projects in operation and there has been an excellent response from people in Northern Ireland who are willing to participate as Games Time volunteers. We have established a bursary scheme to provide financial support for local Games Time volunteers. Over £30,000 has been secured, 50% of which has come from the private sector and local government. That money will assist those who qualify to volunteer but would not otherwise be able to afford to get to London to participate as volunteers in 2012.

Last but not least, I want to mention opportunities for young people. Many of the Inspired by 2012-branded projects are aimed at encouraging participation by young people in the Games and promoting Olympic ideals and values. For example, the Young Ambassadors programme in Northern Ireland is providing opportunities for more than 100 young people to develop their leadership skills and use the spirit and values of the Games to promote those ideals. More than 200 schools are participating in GetSet, the London 2012 education programme. The University of Ulster is a key advocate of 2012 and is working to engage the student population in 2012 activity relating to knowledge and skills development.

With only 18 months to go, we will now focus on two key areas. The first is to ensure that the torch relay, the Live Sites, the Land of the Giants and other Cultural Olympiad programmes, plus volunteering opportunities and pre-Games events, maximise our local businesses where those things happen. The second will be to develop our experience and those activities and apply them to the significant Northern Ireland-based 2013 activities, such as the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture and the World Police and Fire Games events, ensuring that that work benefits Northern



Ireland and leaves a positive and lasting legacy.

**The Chairperson:**

Thank you. We are all very disappointed that funding for sporting venues here — a velodrome, tennis centre, rowing centre, yacht centre and basketball arena — has been scrapped. All that came to light in the past day or so.

With regard to the elite facilities for the five sports that will now not be funded, I note that that was ranked as only number 30 in order of priority in DCAL spending bids. However, it was ranked as Sport NI's top priority. The bid submission states that projects were developed to a state of readiness, expending significant design team fees and business case costs to deliver the major facilities brought by the elite facilities programme. Why, when so much was resting on that, did the Department rank it only 30 out of 56 priorities? That is my hard question, Mick, today.

**Mr Cory:**

It is a very hard question. The Budget settlement, as the Minister said yesterday, did not secure the level of funding that was required to achieve all the projects that were required in the culture, arts and leisure sector, and sport is included. However, again as the Minister mentioned yesterday, he secured £130 million worth of investment for sport over the next four years.

The investment priority over the past three years, and going forward, will be in community sports. It is clear that a strong desire across the piece has been that community sports require that level of investment. In that context, the so-called elite facilities were, perhaps, not as high a priority as the community investment required for sports.

Just to give an idea of the scale of that investment, the original 2007 Budget settlement indicated that sport would require £42 million plus the £68 million for stadiums. Actually spent into sport, excluding stadiums, was £52.7 million. We are still not at the end of this financial year, so that may adjust slightly, but that is the level of investment that we had in sport so far. In addition, with regard to the so-called £50 million for elite facilities, we have to remember that a 50-metre pool has gone ahead, so we take that £17 million out of the equation.

**The Chairperson:**

Is it fair to say that that pool will not be ready in time for the Olympics?

**Mr Cory:**

I suppose that the link with the Olympics was one of those opportunities that were recognised to highlight a deficit that existed in Northern Ireland at the elite end. However, the purpose of the facilities was not for the Olympics. They were for athletes, professional athletes and high performance athletes. We have achieved quite a degree of investment there, so the link to the Olympics, in my view, was perhaps blown up far more by the press than was necessary.

**Mr McCarthy:**

Thank you very much for your presentation. My question is about benefits to Northern Ireland, and you covered quite a lot about that in your presentation. We learned back in February 2009 that £39 million was to be taken out of Northern Ireland's Lottery money for the Olympic Games. Do you reckon, given what you have said, that Northern Ireland has benefitted, and is there more money to come out? Has the £39 million been spent, was it spent wisely, and did we get value for money from it?

**Mr Cory:**

Lottery funding is a reserved matter, so DCAL was not party to that decision. The money that was diverted, and it is estimated that the total amount was of that order, has gone into the construction and regeneration of the Olympic site.

We should distinguish between the two activities — and Jonathan will know more detail about this. The running of the Games stands alone, financially, as a £2 billion project. That money has not been supplemented by Lottery money, but Jonathan might be able to clarify that.

Whether £40 million worth of benefit has been realised in Northern Ireland is quite hard to tell at this stage. It may be a difficult question to answer at any stage. As I said in my opening statement, we have always taken the view that benefits to Northern Ireland from the Games will only arise if we participate and are proactive in those Games and in their organisation. So, we

have endeavoured to do that to maximise the value and the benefit. I do not think that I can answer the specific question about whether £40 million of benefit has been realised as this point in time.

**Mr Edwards:**

To clarify what Mick said, our budget is £2 billion and is entirely privately financed; £700 million from local sponsorship, with between £550 million to £600 million from ticketing revenue. Merchandising is also an important part of our budget as are broadcast revenues. The public budget is for the ODA and is specifically for the building of the Olympic Park; 75p of every pound is spent on regeneration.

A question that we are asked, not just here but across the UK, is whether the 2012 Olympics is diverting lottery money away from building facilities for other projects. The original desire of the lottery was to fund capital projects and help run projects, but it was also to fund one-off events. There will be a swing in balance of that. Overall, the hosting of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics will bring that inspiration. The opportunities provided and the investment in sport since the lottery started has been huge. The two together are a powerful mix.

**The Chairperson:**

As regards the two key areas of focus for the Department in the upcoming period, has there been any mention of training camps before the Games and trying to attract international teams here?

**Mr Cory:**

Absolutely; I spoke to Sport Northern Ireland yesterday about its action plan and how it will handle communications on that matter. Sport Northern Ireland is engaging with governing bodies and key sports people to try to attract the key sports that I mentioned in my opening statement to a whole range of activities in the run-up to the Games. That will include, not just camps but also exchanges, coaches and Olympic athletes coming here and perhaps even pre-qualification events.

As I also mentioned, most sports people do not know whether they will qualify, whether it is through times or whatever, for the Games. Part of the run-up to the Games involves a series of qualification events, and Sport Northern Ireland is trying to attract one or two of those events.

**Mr Edwards:**

We have a chef de mission seminar in London coming up in August, at which every national Olympic committee will be represented. Representatives from Sport Northern Ireland will be at that seminar to talk to representatives of all national Olympic committees. As Mick said, many teams will not be making the decisions until the end of the year, because of qualification issues. I will work very closely with our liaison department at LOCOG to make sure that we have the best possible opportunity to attract teams here.

**Mr K Robinson:**

Thanks for your answers and for your attendance here this morning. My comments are prefaced by two wishes; for West Ham United to stay in the Premiership and that, if they do, they become the inhabitants of the rather fine stadium that you will be looking for a use for after the Games.

Is it the idea that international tourists will visit Northern Ireland after attending the Olympic Games in London? Given that no events are going to be held here, how can the Olympics raise the profile of Northern Ireland internationally as a tourist destination? The perception we have is of the London Olympics, and that everything to do with the Olympics is in London, such as the physical structure, the new stadium and all the things that are going on in the Lee Valley. It is very hard for the public here, never mind internationally, to focus beyond London.

**Mr Cory:**

There are three ways in which we can try to improve our ability to attract tourists, but not directly related to the Olympics. It is what we do as a result of the Olympics. I mentioned the Land of the Giants project. That will be a major event. It will be held in Northern Ireland and will be one of four across the UK. So, it will have an international profile and will demonstrate Northern Ireland to be an attractive place post-Olympics.

The second key Olympic-related activity that will help the promotional activity will be the torch relay. We will have the torch. If you list the top 10 places that you would like the torch to visit, and be photographed and filmed, then that is what we are going for. We are working closely with the Tourist Board, the torch advisory group and local councils to make sure that we

get those opportunities, and to show the torch in Northern Ireland locales.

Overall, it is much broader than our activities with the Olympics. It is a DETI-led project to co-ordinate a whole range of events. Those include events associated with the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic, and co-ordinate that, over 2012, to ensure that we position Northern Ireland in what is a very competitive time internationally so that we are able to attract tourists and visitors in the future. Bear in mind that in 2013 we have the City of Culture and the World Police and Fire Games. So, it is a great opportunity, and that is where the focus has been.

**Mr K Robinson:**

You link the Titanic with the occasion. Is there a possibility that the Olympics could submerge the Titanic for a second time?

**Mr Cory:**

A lot of work is going into setting up the appropriate co-ordination of those events to ensure that there is no clashing. There is always that possibility but we are very much aware of all the major events that are happening. Lorraine sits on the various operational groups with London to make sure that there is at least an awareness in London of what we are planning, and awareness here of what London is planning because of course we also have the Queen's Jubilee.

**Ms Lorraine Conlon (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):**

Structures are in place to make sure that we have a proper planned programme of major events. NITB leads on the tourism 2012 agenda with our support. They are also working closely with Visit Britain, which leads for GB on tourism, and Tourism Ireland.

The Titanic centenary in 2012 is a great opportunity to showcase, but the challenge, and real opportunity, is to bring both those together. A product development group has been established to make sure that what we are promoting collectively is the product of Northern Ireland to attract people here. In relation to the overall 2012 Olympics strategy we are linking in the other elements of the strategy. By having athletes come here for pre-Games training in the lead-up to the Games they will experience not just our venues but also our cultural aspects, physical landscape and environment, and go back to their countries and become ambassadors for Northern

Ireland. The old adage “You will not know until you go” is the plan that we have in place.

**Mr K Robinson:**

I want to ask a constituency question. The University of Ulster’s Jordanstown campus is in my constituency. As you know, the elite facilities are there. Will they figure strongly in your plans?

**Ms Conlon:**

We have been working closely with Sport Northern Ireland and the University of Ulster. They have been a great advocate of 2012. They are spearheading with the SINI facility. Jonathan will plan at some stage to visit the site. Seb Coe has been to Jordanstown on each of his visits.

They are working closely with a number of countries to secure teams. They hosted the World Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships, which was attended by a host of countries. That is our plan with major events. The plan is that Jordanstown will also host the World Bocce Championships in August 2011. That will see more than 200 athletes from 40 countries. Therefore, they are already fully engaged in plans to secure the attendance of those teams and those countries. However, as was said, it is about getting those athletes here to train, meet people and experience Northern Ireland’s warm welcome and hospitality, so that they go back and become ambassadors for Northern Ireland on our behalf.

**Mr K Robinson:**

The Department and other agencies are working on those issues, but what role is being played by local government? I will make a personal plea; I am a member of Newtownabbey Borough Council, which has excellent facilities. We have experience of working with folk from Germany and Poland in particular as well as people from other overseas locations. Are you making use of the local government input from places such as Carrickfergus and Londonderry — and Omagh, in case the Chairperson raises it?

**Ms Conlon:**

Absolutely, yes. The purpose of the nations and regions group, which has a co-ordinator in each UK region, is to ensure that local government knows what the opportunities are. We have ensured that local government is linked to each level of the structure. For example, the leadership

group that Mick mentioned is chaired by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) is represented on that group by Philip Faithfull. Belfast City Council is also involved in that group. The Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) is represented on the pre-Games training camp group and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) is represented on our key leads and operations group and our communications group. We have done quite a lot to help support the establishment of those structures so that local government gets the message that there are business and sporting opportunities as well as tourism opportunities.

**Mr O’Loan:**

I welcome you to the meeting and, in particular, I welcome Jonathan to Parliament Buildings. There is a need for some questioning on and criticism of some of the matters in hand, but I do not want that to obscure the fact that there are huge positives for Northern Ireland, which, in many ways, is the biggest message of all. It was a tremendous achievement for London to win the bid to stage the Olympics. Our close proximity to London makes it very easy for people to attend the Games and gives our business and cultural sectors the opportunity to participate in a way that they would not have had otherwise. There will be immense interest here in the Games, which will encourage participation in sport. There are many positives.

I have questions on two areas. Will any main Olympic events take place outside London, and, if so, what are they, and where will they be located? Was there not a lack of realism around the possibility of getting mainstream Olympic events here? As we have heard, there has been a failure to deliver the elite facilities, the planning for which began in 2008. The lead-in time for major facilities is considerable and there has to be a considerable sporting infrastructure, in the form of arenas, to make such projects viable. Should our thoughts on the possible gains from the Olympics not have been directed in other ways from the outset?

**Mr Cory:**

I will ask Jonathan to talk about the nature and location of some of the events, after which I may add some comments.

**Mr Edwards:**

The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) requirements, which they were very strong on during the bid process, are that the Games should be compact. One of our straplines was that athletes should be able to compete, not commute. Indeed, we had to re-jig some of the venues in order to strengthen our bid. There are a number of events outside London; the sailing will take place in Weymouth and the rowing and flat-water canoeing will be staged in Eton Dorney. The whitewater canoeing and mountain biking events will be in Essex. There was a great will in LOCOG to bring the football tournament here, but we could not reach a solution on the stadium. There are events outside London, but we are constrained by the need to make the Games as compact as possible. The IOC wants as many athletes as possible to be in the Olympic village to create that world coming together in one place.

**Mr O'Loan:**

Yes, that is how I expect the Games to be and that brings a sense of realism to it. That addresses my point.

My second question is about pre-Olympic training. Given that we never were likely to be staging main Olympic events, it is all the more important that we are enabled to punch above our weight in pre-Olympic training, in order to give us real contact with the Games and competitors. It is in the interests of the sporting community here to participate in the Games. There would be a huge welcome for participating teams from the local sporting community and also from the wider community. It is terribly important in putting our mark internationally on the games for us to be successful in that. I am very disappointed in the report to date in relation to this matter. I read the written report which you gave us for this meeting:

“A number of countries have expressed an interest in basing themselves in Northern Ireland at Pre Games Training Camps (PGTC), or could be approached to encourage interest. However, benefits will only be realised if clear commitment is made to attract countries and their sports teams to Northern Ireland and a concerted effort is made to align these to business, trade, and investment and tourism opportunities.”

If that had been written in 2008, we would regard it as a reasonable opening remark. For that to be written in 2011, a year before the Olympics, does not pass muster at all.



You said a little about this being led by Sport NI. Can you tell me exactly what is the structure and mechanism set up to achieve the target of at least 10 teams or countries coming here? Please be much more specific than you said in that report or have yet said in your answers about what has been done to date.

**Mr Cory:**

There is a pre-Games training camp subgroup chaired by Sport Northern Ireland. That has been established with representation from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Tourist Board, Invest NI, Disability Sports Northern Ireland and local government. They have been tasked with looking at how Northern Ireland can actually develop its message for athletes, sports and all countries to come to Northern Ireland and also, more importantly, realise wider benefits from them being here. So, if athletes from a country or sport come here, they may well go and train, but it is the engagement with the local community that matters. The value lies in the message and the information that is provided in and around that, both in business opportunities and in selling Northern Ireland as a destination.

That group has been working particularly over the last six months to develop a very clear action plan. I do not have the details of that action plan today. It is largely dependent upon the responses from governing bodies and key sports people, who have the contacts internationally, to develop their proposals for how they wish to engage with those communities to attract people here. I hope to have more information on that in due course, however. Obviously the Committee is more than entitled to see those details at that time.

**Mr O'Loan:**

In relation to that pre-Games training group led by Sport NI, how often has it met in the last six months?

**Mr Cory:**

It meets on a monthly basis, but we will check on that.

**Mr O'Loan:**

Please tell us the exact dates when it met.

You say that the group is led by Sport NI. Operationally, I can see that that needs to be the case. Do you also accept that, given the importance and significance of this for Northern Ireland, which I have outlined, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has a very important leadership function, strategically, in ensuring that this is delivered? Your Department cannot shirk its major responsibility to ensure that it is delivered and not merely say that this is an operational matter for the lead sporting body.

**Mr Cory:**

Absolutely, and I would not like the Committee to think that we are shirking our responsibility for ensuring that at a strategic level. It is a programme for Government target that applies to the Department, and it is one that Sport Northern Ireland shares. We have been working very hard to ensure that the contacts are made and that the case is accepted and that the benefits are there for pre-Games training camps.

It is clear that if the individual sectors were to consider the benefits for themselves, they may not progress this opportunity. That is really where the Department has been working. The Committee will be aware of the level of engagement, particularly in recent months, that the Minister has had to encourage that and to ensure that those plans can allow us to achieve events and camps and to get things in place.

**Mr O'Loan:**

This is something to which the Committee will need to come back quickly and seek much more detail. Even today, it is quite clear that the answers and detail that we ought to be getting are not available.

**Lord Browne:**

I welcome the Olympic Games coming to London. Many people in Northern Ireland take a keen interest in sport, not just competing but, like me, as armchair spectators. Given travel and accommodation costs, it will be very expensive to attend events in London. I have heard that in order to attain tickets for the Olympics one will have to enter a ballot. Is there a special allocation for the regions of the United Kingdom for people to have a definite allocation of tickets to help to

minimise travel arrangements to London?

**The Chairperson:**

Jonathan, did you bring those tickets with you? *[Laughter.]*

**Mr Edwards:**

The simple answer is no. The application process will open on 15 March and run for six weeks. During that time, people will have the opportunity to make applications. If an event is oversubscribed, there will be a ballot; if not, people will get the tickets they want. Ninety per cent of the tickets will be below £100; two thirds will be below £50, and two and a half million will be £20 or less. There will be a pay-your-age scheme: if you are eight years of age, you will pay £8. Senior citizens will pay a maximum of £16.

We have made every effort to make the Games as accessible as possible, and that is not to overlook the special issues for Northern Ireland with respect to travel and accommodation. The ODA is looking at ways to combine selling tickets with travel opportunities; it will also look at scheduling to make it possible to do things in a day rather than visitors having to stay overnight. Therefore, although those issues are very much in mind, there is no special allocation for the regions.

**Lord Browne:**

Will there be minority sports, where one can turn up on the day and purchase a ticket?

**Mr Edwards:**

The organising committee hopes not. Tickets are a big part of our revenue stream, so we would like to sell them all upfront. Potentially, the answer is yes. There are several events for which people will not have to pay. One can see the marathon in central London, the road cycling events or the race walks without paying. We will launch the tickets for the Paralympics on 9 September, although I am not sure when the pricing will be announced. Therefore, that is another opportunity.

**Mr Cory:**

The eight schools in Northern Ireland that are on the GetSet network will be able to access free tickets. It would be good to see more schools and schoolchildren getting involved in that project.

**Lord Browne:**

The success of any Games depends on the expertise of the volunteers and their training. I think that 1,500 people in Northern Ireland have expressed an interest in volunteering. Will there be financial support for volunteers from Northern Ireland to go across to London.

**Mr Cory:**

We have established a bursary scheme that aims to support the travel and accommodation costs of those from disadvantaged groups. Those who get through the volunteering application process can apply for the bursary scheme and get support. I think that we are offering £1,500 per person, and there is up to £30,000 already in the kitty for that scheme.

**Ms Conlon:**

We are also looking to work with other partners in Northern Ireland to see, apart from the financial contribution, what support-in-kind can be provided.

**Mr McCarthy:**

That was exactly my question about volunteers. This place has an abundance of volunteers and we are very grateful for that. I was going to ask whether there would be compensation for them to travel back and forward, but you answered that. However, will those volunteers be representative of the community in Northern Ireland?

**Mr Cory:**

The selection of volunteers is entirely a matter for LOCOG. The criteria for the scheme apply equally across the UK but I do not have the details here. We would like to see the scheme being representative of the community, and would encourage that. Beyond that, however, I am not able to say how precisely that will pan out because it depends on the skills sets that are required. There are also different types of volunteers. There may well be a volunteering selection centre established in Northern Ireland. Some details have still to be worked out but we are working with

LOCOG on that.

**Mr Edwards:**

The organising committee will very much have a view to the regional and national spread of the volunteers, while seeing that we have the very best volunteers for our Games. As you rightly said, however, there is a great history of volunteering in Northern Ireland, and I am sure that that will be recognised.

**Ms Conlon:**

Given that we will be hosting the World Police and Fire Games in 2013, the legacy of our volunteers will continue into those games, which will need up to 5,000 volunteers. It is about using that skills capacity for other major events.

**The Chairperson:**

In your promotion of pre-training camps or facilities, are you marketing any facilities west of the Bann?

**Mr Cory:**

There are 26 pre-Games training camp venues in the guide, and yes, there are. We can provide you with copies of the guide. It has been around for a little but we can certainly give that to you if you wish.

**The Chairperson:**

OK, thank you.

**Mr K Robinson:**

I may be totally off the brief with this question, but it intrigues me: at the end of what we hope will be very successful Games, and when the athletes go home saying that the UK is a wonderful place, will any finance spin down to the regions, including Northern Ireland, either physically or financially? I do not mean things such as the 50-metre pool. Will there be any final reckoning of finances at that stage, and will there be enough money left over in the kitty to see that each of the regions get something that really will be a legacy over and beyond, in our case, the 50-metre

pool?

**Mr McCarthy:**

To get our £39 million back; is that what you are saying?

**Mr K Robinson:**

That is the sort of thing that I am hinting at. You have let the cat out of the bag.

**Mr Cory:**

Some years ago, just before all the financial problems hit the international markets, there was a suggestion that the ODA post-Games would sell the land, and that some of the proceeds would come back out through the Lottery or whatever. I am sure that Northern Ireland will not let the Department for Culture, Media and Sport forget that it took out Lottery money. Subject, of course, to land prices perhaps returning to normal, that opportunity may arise. I am not aware of specific plans at this stage but that is something that we will be keeping an eye on.

**Mr Edwards:**

That is very much the case, and we could perhaps come back to you with a written reply to that. However, that was always envisaged. In fact, the ODA became the developer for the Olympic village when it thought that that would be done through the private sector. Again, I understand that they are looking at big investment corporations buying that from the ODA. That is very much in mind and it just depends on the financial climate at the time.

**Mr K Robinson:**

But you will keep us in mind.

**Mr Edwards:**

Absolutely.

**Mr Cory:**

Of course, If West Ham does buy the stadium we can always use some of that money.

**The Chairperson:**

I thank the delegation very much for engaging with us. Mick, Lorraine and, not least, Jonathan, thank you very much.