



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Boxing Strategy: DCAL/Sport NI Briefing

26 June 2012

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Boxing Strategy: DCAL/Sport NI Briefing

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

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)  
Mrs Brenda Hale  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mr Michael McGimpsey  
Mrs Karen McKeivitt  
Mr Oliver McMullan  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín  
Mr Robin Swann

**Witnesses:**

Mr Ciaran Mee	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Colin Watson	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Dr Shaun Ogle	Sport Northern Ireland

**The Chairperson:** I welcome Colin Watson, director of sport and stadiums from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); Shaun Ogle from Sport NI; and Ciaran Mee, who is head of the sports branch at DCAL. Thank you very much for coming; you are very welcome. I invite you, Colin, to make an opening statement.

**Mr Colin Watson (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** Good afternoon. It is always a pleasure, as I keep saying.

**The Chairperson:** It has been a few weeks.

**Mr Watson:** It has been two weeks since I was last here.

The purpose of our presence today is to provide the Committee with a briefing on a number of issues relating to amateur boxing that were raised by you in a letter to the Culture Minister in May. These include the progress on implementing a strategic plan for boxing; issues facing the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council (UPBC); the legacy for amateur boxing following the Olympics; and addressing imbalance and promoting inclusivity within the sport.

By way of background to the development of a strategic plan and business case for boxing, it essentially stems from a report on boxing produced for the sports Minister by Sport NI in August 2011. The report stated that there were a number of challenges to the development of the sport here, namely deficiencies in governance arrangements within the governing body for boxing in the North, the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council. As a result of that, in April 2011, the UPBC were given an

unacceptable level of assurance. Since then, however, I have to say that Sport NI has been working with the body and its audit rating has recently improved.

The report also highlighted that many boxing clubs here do not have the skills and experience at official or senior member level that would enable them to compete favourably for public funding or to administer effectively. Sport NI reported that a number of boxing clubs faced serious facilities and equipment issues, including the use of temporary equipment in ageing buildings with limited or inadequate ancillary facilities.

In response to that report, the Minister asked Sport NI to commission a business case for the infrastructure that would be required for the development of amateur boxing. The business case would be informed by two documents — the Irish Amateur Boxing Association's strategic five-year plan for boxing across Ireland, and a more focused implementation plan which was developed by the UPBC with investment and considerable guidance from Sport NI for the development of boxing in Ulster.

I will move on to the progress that has been made in implementing the strategic plan. Sport NI's business case was completed and approved by its board at the beginning of May, and Sport NI officials met representatives of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) and UPBC in early May to discuss the way forward, including an investment package that has been ring-fenced for boxing for the period 2012-15. Sport NI has identified an indicative funding package in its lottery funding of up to £3.27 million over this period, and it is anticipated that the investment programme will consist of three distinct funding streams for equipment, new club facilities and repairs to existing facilities.

To support clubs in sourcing these funds, Sport NI has developed and agreed with the boxing authorities a job description for a boxing club development manager. The post-holder will work with stakeholders to develop club-based resources, ensuring safe and attractive environments for young boxers and their families. Sport NI is currently finalising an agreed list of equipment requirements, based on the needs that have been identified in the UPBC's implementation plan and IABA guidance from a similar programme that operated in the Republic of Ireland.

An application process for the equipment funding stream is being designed and is to be completed by the end of June. Between June and August, Sport NI will host information workshops and carry out a test run with a small number of clubs before the application process goes live to test out that it works and that people can access it. Sport NI is presently finalising the timeline for opening the two capital elements of the programme, and, once agreed, all the relevant parties will be advised. It should be pointed out that Sport NI's usual stringent criteria around accountability and control will apply to this investment programme, and we make no apologies for that. We make sure that all our funding streams are subject to stringent controls.

Following on from recent media reports about the vetting of boxing coaches, Sport NI has a policy of requiring robust child protection and safeguarding checks from all clubs that are seeking funding, in compliance with DHSSPS endorsed standards for safeguarding children and young people. It is our Minister and our Department's position that anyone who is working with children should be appropriately cleared and vetted through that system. It is just not acceptable that people who are not vetted would be working with children.

There will be a legacy for amateur boxing following the Olympics. We are now only 31 days away from the Olympics, and we are working hard to maximise the benefits of the games for the North. The Department and Sport NI are confident that this will result in a significant legacy for amateur boxing. A number of successes have been achieved to date, including four London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) accredited boxing clubs: Banbridge, Glengormley, Holy Trinity and Monkstown. They will have Olympic-standard high-performance equipment at their facilities, including rings, pads, gloves, punchbags, speed balls, etc.

The team representing Cuba, which is the most successful and number-one ranked amateur boxing nation in the world, will be based in Belfast in advance of the games. In their time here, it is envisaged that the profile of the sport will be raised through increased media coverage. Open coaching sessions will allow local coaches to watch and learn from the world's best and transfer many of the training techniques and skills to their own club environments.

It is also hoped that having Olympic medallists in Belfast may inspire young people here to become more involved in the sport. The team representing Australia, which is the top boxing nation in the

Oceania region, will also be based here, at Queen's University. It has 10 boxers who have qualified for the games.

Sport NI continues to work closely with boxing to try to attract more teams to the North before the games commence. In addition, Sport NI and the Sports Institute will continue to provide services to amateur boxers and boxing after the games. As for addressing imbalance and promoting inclusivity, in June 2012, Sport NI invited the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council to be one of the first organisations in the North to go through the new equality standard for sport. Given the current equality-related issues in boxing, Sport NI believes the equality standard is a mechanism for widening access and increasing participation in the sport by under-represented individuals, groups and communities. Sport NI has invited the Ulster Boxing Council to complete the foundation level of the standard, which it believes will help the governing body to achieve democracy and sound governance of the sport, while potentially increasing participation levels by reaching new audiences. If necessary, Shaun will be able to provide further detail on the equality standard.

As for the way forward, we will continue to work closely with all key stakeholders to assist in the implementation of the strategic plan. We need to determine the baseline needs in respect of equipment and facility requirements of boxing clubs in the North, and develop the application process to deliver that £3.27 million of funding towards the development of the sport. The appointment of a club development manager will help support clubs to source not only this funding but, with the development of the necessary skills, to source future funding when opportunities arise. It is all about capacity-building, and the idea of putting this person in is that he can capacity-build throughout the clubs and help them to reach a level of expertise in that.

Sport NI will continue to work with the Ulster Boxing Council to assist in addressing any perceived issues of imbalance within the sport and in promoting inclusivity. It will also assist the UPBC to address the identified governance weaknesses in the organisation with a view to further improving its management audit rating. As I said, that has been improving, but there is room for further improvement.

The Minister met recently with Belfast City Council's parks and leisure committee, which is developing a boxing strategy and investment package for Belfast. That strategy aims to address a number of issues in the sport, some of which are similar to those I have outlined here today. Sport NI will, therefore, be working closely with Belfast City Council to ensure that the two strategies fully complement each other and they will not duplicate what the other has done.

Finally, I would like to say that this is a very positive story. It is an investment in the grass roots of a sport, based on need. It is a good-news story: £3.27 million going into amateur boxing in Northern Ireland. That can only be good news. I will finish with that, and I am happy to take any questions.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Colin. You have delivered a good-news story to us today in relation to the investment, but the story that hit the headlines a couple of weeks ago was in relation to vetting, as you outlined in your statement. The Ulster Boxing Council has responsibility for ensuring that coaches are vetted in order to ensure that those clubs are then affiliated. In the statement, Mr McMahon said that he would like to be able to go round all the boxing clubs to ensure that they meet criteria, but there is an issue around funding. Could this be a role for Sport NI to become directly involved in? Perhaps Access NI checks, and so on, could be delivered through Sport NI?

**Mr Watson:** We have asked Belfast City Council to try to source where this information came from. It said that there are eight boxing coaches who have not been vetted. Which clubs are they at, and who are they? Are they being vetted at the moment? We are trying to get to the bottom of the reports and find out exactly what the position is. It may very well be that they are sports coaches who are currently going through the vetting processes but who have not got there yet. However, the point is that they still should not be coaching if they are not vetted.

**The Chairperson:** This is part of a survey that was carried out in Belfast, not across Northern Ireland, so we are not aware of the current situation in other clubs.

**Mr Watson:** The first thing that we are trying to do is to find out the currency of the available information. We will have to do something to try to ensure that this is not prevalent across the whole of the North and that there are not coaches or volunteers out there who are not appropriately vetted. As I said at the beginning, the Department and the Minister's position is that that is not on.

**The Chairperson:** One of the issues highlighted to us by the Ulster Boxing Council was that people working for it are volunteers who work in their own time, and they have taken on a huge responsibility. The issue around vetting has added to the pressure of organising competitions, and so on, as well. I appreciate that you are looking at having a club development manager within Sport NI, but I am conscious as to whether any further assistance could be given to it as an organisation in order to assist with the smooth running of boxing across Northern Ireland.

**Mr Watson:** One of the other things to remember is that the vetting does not cost anything; it is free. The Access NI checks for volunteers are free. However, we have got to ensure that everybody who has access to children —

**The Chairperson:** The important point is the management and oversight of that: to ensure that it is adhered to.

**Mr Watson:** Yes.

**Dr Shaun Ogle (Sport Northern Ireland):** Through the NSPCC, we provide an advisory service to all governing bodies, including the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council. Its approach to this whole thing has been very strong. It has been one of the best organisations as far as putting this right is concerned. I am sure that having these eight people, regardless of what stage of vetting they are at, is causing them much concern. The NSPCC will deal with it quite quickly, and we have been assured that that will be the case. We think that the club development officer that we are proposing to put in will be an extra source of support.

**The Chairperson:** Obviously, Belfast City Council is looking at its own strategy, which, as you say, will work in tandem with your own piece of work. Will there be any additional funding coming from Belfast City Council?

**Mr Watson:** Yes. At the meeting, Belfast City Council assured the Minister that it is prepared to put funding into boxing in Belfast. We need to identify the needs of the clubs in Belfast and how much it is going to cost to tackle those needs. We have funding to put in from the £3.27 million, and Belfast City Council will have funding to put in from its resources. It has assured us that it is prepared to put funding into it. There is no point in having a strategy otherwise.

**The Chairperson:** Indeed. Has the level of audit that has been carried out in Belfast been replicated with yourselves in the other clubs across Northern Ireland?

**Mr Watson:** For our funding, we will have to look at clubs right across Northern Ireland. There are other council areas in Northern Ireland with boxing clubs. Once we get ourselves sorted out with Belfast and get the complementarity, we will be looking to other councils to see if they are prepared to do something similar.

**The Chairperson:** You also mentioned a gap in provision. I am conscious that a couple of groups in my area would be interested in setting up boxing clubs, but the difficulty is in accessing a facility and then accessing funding. What type of work will you do to try to address where there are gaps?

**Dr Ogle:** In the Belfast area, for example, trying to maintain the facility is a real weight on the clubs. It might be possible to utilise some of the existing stock in the city council, for example. The club could move into that, and that would take the weight off them. Then we could do any repairs or changes to the buildings that are needed to house the boxing clubs. That is one way forward. We would probably have to look at that across Northern Ireland to see if it is possible to do it.

The actual setting up from scratch of a new club would probably exhaust our £3.27 million very quickly. Again, I think it comes down to building a good working relationship with representatives of the Provincial Boxing Council and the Irish Amateur Boxing Association. When we identify the needs in the clubs and the repairs that are required, we must make sure that they are going to be sustainable before we undertake them.

**The Chairperson:** Is any work being done with regard to looking for a centre of excellence for boxing, such as a high-performance gym at the University of Ulster, for instance?

**Mr Watson:** As part of looking at what the needs are, we will be looking to see if there is any scope for centres of excellence and where you might put them. We have to look at whether it might be better to have one or two. I mentioned LOCOG centres for the Olympic legacy. Those four clubs are going to have the best of equipment. However, it is not equipment that makes a centre of excellence; it is having access to the best coaches. We will be looking at all of that. We will be asking what the need is, and centres of excellence are on the agenda.

**The Chairperson:** Colin, you and I have had a number of conversations about the perception of neutral venues and the difficulty that some clubs might have with the location of certain competitions, for instance, and how competitors might be received in those venues. Have you any comment to make on how the strategy may assist with inclusivity?

**Mr Watson:** It is important that we look at inclusivity as part and parcel of the whole package. It is important that everyone who is going to be involved in the sport has the opportunity to participate in it as far as they can and in the best facilities possible. That is what this is about. Finding neutral venues, as you said, is problematic, no matter where you are. We have tended to look at using existing resources because the funding is not there to set something up for just one day for tournaments, etc. That will all have to be looked at. If we can get centres of excellence in what might be described as neutral areas, it would enhance the opportunities and might create opportunities for doing that.

**Dr Ogle:** We made available the House of Sport for weigh-ins, for example. On a Sunday morning, if you go past it, you might see boxers queuing up to get into it. That is one way. The thing about centres of excellence is that, when you try to build on local strong clubs, there is a real pull on the athlete, the boxer and the coach. Setting up the centre and getting the personnel to sign up to it is a really tricky issue in all sports, but we are up for trying.

The University of Ulster and the Sports Institute is one possibility down the line. Boxers such as Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlan are using that centre as part of their build-up to the Olympics. It is a longer-term process. The £3.27 million would just disappear, but hopefully we will not have to do that.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Thanks, gentlemen, for the presentation. St Canice's ABC is my local boxing club; my 10-year-old boxes there. It is a small club of about 100 members, and its record of achievement never ceases to amaze me; it has titles all the way through to European and Commonwealth titles. It could and probably should have had a world and Olympic title as well. I am very proud of its achievements. I recently met the club committee in what are really quite spartan conditions. The centrality, particularly in GAA, rugby and soccer, of club development officers is critical. What is the sort of timescale for the delivery on a development officer and also for the equipment funding streams?

**Dr Ogle:** We have agreed the job description personnel spec, so that is due to go out to competition any day now. It is our fervent hope that we will be able to make letters of offer available to all the clubs that are in need by December this year.

**Mr Watson:** That is for the equipment programme.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** When does that go live?

**Dr Ogle:** It will go live in or around August.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Has the current backlog in Access NI had any effect?

**Mr Watson:** No.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** OK. Thanks.

**Mr McGimpsey:** Thank you, folks. I recall that we put on the World Amateur Boxing Championships in Belfast about 10 years ago. Of course, the Cubans cleaned up, but it was a very successful tournament. A lot of the success was down to the boxing community in Belfast and Northern Ireland coming together and giving us the support that we needed. It seemed that boxing was going in a new direction. I was a bit surprised when I got some of the information; it appears to have been an area of neglect. I do not know whether it is the Department or the House of Sport or what it is, but boxing

does not appear to get the support that it merits, not least because of the very proud history and tradition of boxing in this country and the number of very fine athletes that boxing has produced. We have had Wayne McCullough, and you think of all the boxers we have produced, such as Jim McCourt and Freddie Gilroy, and so on. It is a very proud tradition. It is also a tradition that has a very valuable contribution to make. Although the sport is for both genders, most of the participants are young males. As you are aware, in areas of disadvantage, young males are most vulnerable to issues around self-harm, and so on. There is another side of this: it is not simply about stepping into a boxing ring; it is about building the confidence and the robustness of individuals.

A lot of this sounds promising. I am just sorry that the support did not occur several years ago, particularly around facilities. Belfast City Council and others have excellent facilities; if they would just give boxing support. You talked about fields of excellence. I understood that when we set up the Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) 10 years ago, boxing was going to be part of it. Our boxers did extremely well at the most recent Commonwealth Games, and their record was one to be really proud of. It seemed to me that SINI would have been in place by now.

I know about the Access Northern Ireland and about the protection of children and vulnerable adults (POCVA), but what is the timeline for this? When is the boxing community going to get the support and the facilities that we are talking about here, pulling in local government and the investment that you are talking about? When are they going to be given the help that they need? They are all small clubs, and many of them have only two or three people who give of their time and spend it in the hall, coaching youngsters. It is about giving them support.

Sport Northern Ireland is ideally placed. It is there to give this sport the support that it needs. The product that comes out is so valuable, and it is coming from areas where there are large numbers of young people who need the support. It is an excellent sport that has so many things going for it. It is one of things that we are good at in Northern Ireland as a community.

What is your timeline? We do not want to be back here in five years, hearing that there have been access problems and other problems. The folks need the support now.

**Mr Watson:** I accept everything that you have said. Boxing is one of Northern Ireland's success stories. We got five medals at the Commonwealth Games, and it is something in which we do punch above our weight, if you will pardon the pun. That is why it has been recognised that we need to put something in here, and £3.27 million is a substantial investment. It will be rolled out over the next two to three years; it is not going to be five years.

We will start to roll out the equipment programme this year. Obviously, any building work that is required for facilities takes that little bit longer, because we have to go through the planning process and everything else. We are looking forward to working with Belfast City Council on this, because some of the existing facilities are not fit for purpose, and by looking at the estate that the council has available we may be able to rehouse some of the clubs into something that is much more fit for purpose. It is not just about looking at a decrepit building and fixing it up. We will ask whether there is a better way of doing it, and, working with Belfast City Council, we may be able to come up with more innovative solutions for that. That might replicate itself around the rest of Northern Ireland.

I will turn to your comments about the Sports Institute. Paddy Barnes trains out there. It is fair to say that we could do with more people using the facilities, which are excellent and provide good training.

**Dr Ogle:** We the performer development centre, which is a doorway into the Sports Institute. There is one based in St Mary's University College, which is used by a clutch of boxers. Michael Conlon was based there, and he has moved into the institute on the basis of the success that he has had. We have had a long-standing relationship with Paddy Barnes in particular, who has been fantastic about opening the eyes of younger boxers to what is available if they become successful. It deals with the high-end athletes.

We have supported all the athletes who went to the Commonwealth Games through training programmes and competition programmes. A couple of representatives of the UPBC are here today, and through their good offices we managed to get a training camp set up in SINI prior to the Commonwealth Games, which everyone said was a roaring success. I agree with you; it is a start. I agree that it has taken a bit longer to get there, and I sincerely hope that we are not here in five years. I hope that it will all be put to bed.

**Mr Swann:** Colin, you said Access NI was free. Is that just for Ulster boxing?

**Mr Watson:** It is free for all volunteers, I think. If you are a volunteer, access checks are free, no matter what sport you are involved in.

**Mr McGimpsey:** The problem was always the backlog. There was an enormous backlog. I do not know where we are with that, or how you fast-track that. If you have eight people who have not been through Access, it could well be because they are sitting on waiting list somewhere.

**Mr Watson:** I was not aware that it was an issue, but we will look at it.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** I am glad to see you here with the report and the good-news story that there is £3.27 million to be spent and invested in boxing. Will all of it be invested in Belfast?

**Mr Watson:** No.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** So it is open right across?

**Mr Watson:** That £3.27 million will cover the whole of the North of Ireland. That is what it is for. Belfast City Council is going to put in some funding for itself, so that will support the funding that we are putting in. Therefore, it will be sort of a joint venture. We will also be looking to see if other council areas are prepared to do the same.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** I agree with Sir Reg Empey — sorry, Michael.

**Mr McGimpsey:** You have been waiting for weeks to insult me. *[Laughter.]*

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Apologies. It has been a long day. The medals list for not only the male boxers, but the female boxers, in Northern Ireland, is second to none. You wonder how we achieved that with the facilities that we have. I am reading down the list: 65% of clubs have male changing facilities; 24% have female changing facilities; one in five clubs have toilets for males; and one in four clubs have toilets for females. You wonder why people would be interested in joining the boxing family, but we all know why they do. Its agenda for building confidence and the friendships that come out of it are very important. Boxing is something that I have a passion for.

Since 80% of the clubs believe that new facilities are the top priority, I welcome the move for a club development manager for right across the region. Hopefully, it will be able to deliver on the facilities, because we have access to the best coaches, but we need the facilities that are expected for boxing in Ireland. I welcome the news that that money will be spent.

**Mr Watson:** That is right. This will be based on need; need is paramount. There is no point in just running off and giving a lot of money to clubs that have excellent facilities. It is the clubs that do not have the facilities that we need to spend the most on. We will be looking at getting a baseline of what level of facilities clubs should have, and then measuring against that to see what we need to do to get those clubs up to that level.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Can I ask you to put Newry at the top of your list? I have been at a club where, when it snows, its gets inside the facility.

**Mr Watson:** Someone told me once in Newry that adversity breeds success.

**The Chairperson:** Colin, some of these clubs are probably in some of the most deprived areas of our towns and cities. What discussions have you had with the Department for Social Development (DSD)?

**Mr Watson:** We have not opened up discussions with DSD yet, but it is an area that we will pursue. Once we get Belfast City Council in, we will have a look, because there is no point in us putting something in if DSD is putting something in as well. We will talk to them and try to make sure that we are complementing, not duplicating.

**Mr Hilditch:** Carrickfergus Boxing Club does not have any facilities; hopefully, we might get to the top of the list at some stage. Today's presentation has answered a lot of the issues that I spoke to the groups about the last time. They included governance and help for volunteers. That is very welcome and useful as a step forward. In the provision of new facilities, would it be possible to join with other sports and use joint facilities, particularly in cases in which other sports are looking for similar facilities. I can think of a couple of examples where that might work. Rather than going head to head in a certain area, a joint approach could be useful.

**Mr Watson:** Absolutely. If you take Belfast City Council's report and look at the map that is drawn up, you will see that there could be half a dozen clubs in one area that have substandard facilities. There may be opportunities for the sharing of facilities.

**Mr Hilditch:** What about sharing with other sports?

**Mr Watson:** Yes. You can look at other sports as well. You can look at using existing sports clubs or existing leisure centres. As I said, when working in tandem with Belfast City Council and looking at the asset base, we can ask what that asset base can be used for. It does not necessarily have to be a leisure centre or an old building that Belfast City Council owns or whatever; we can start looking at other clubs. Football clubs and Gaelic clubs may have the facilities and the space; you are looking for somewhere that can provide the requisite level of facilities that people should have, such as changing rooms for males and females, showering facilities, or whatever.

**Mr Hilditch:** You do not want to take the ring up and down; you want it to be in a permanent location that could still marry in with other sports as they look for new facilities. I appreciate and understand that the administration is organised on an all-Ireland basis. Would there be any advantage in a Northern Ireland federation helping you with the administrative side of things?

**Mr Watson:** Sorry, the sports foundation?

**Mr Hilditch:** A Northern Ireland federation for boxing, perhaps? You cannot go cross-border under this —

**Mr Watson:** No, but the Irish Amateur Boxing Association has drawn up a strategy for investment in the sport in that jurisdiction.

**Mr Hilditch:** Does it work with you?

**Mr Watson:** We will dovetail with that. Our business case is based on its strategy to try to ensure that we complement what it does.

**The Chairperson:** You talked about the new equality standard for sport for 2012-13. Can you tell us what that is?

**Dr Ogle:** The equality standard was drafted in 2004 and has gone through various iterations since then. It is a mechanism that allows the sports councils to be held accountable to the public side for investment, but it is also a very useful tool for clubs themselves. It brings roughly 13 benefits. I can read them all out, or I can give you a copy of the standard so that you can take a close look at it. We found that, where we have used it with clubs, it has been extremely beneficial. We have opened discussions with the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council. There is a resource issue, and it seems like more work for it. We want to look again at the timetable for the introduction of it with the council and utilise the services of the club person who we are going to put in. It attracts families to the sport, it creates a wonderful environment in which young people can box in a safe environment, and it helps to increase participation and, hopefully, improve performance. It encourages better governance and administration issues through the equality framework. I will provide a Committee with a copy of the standard.

**The Chairperson:** Do you plan to go through it with the Ulster Boxing Council and work alongside it?

**Dr Ogle:** Yes. It has embraced the standard, as has the Irish Amateur Boxing Association. It is very conscious about the environment in which young people are boxing, and about who coaches them in those environments.

**The Chairperson:** What came across very strongly to us at the meeting that they attended was the fact they are volunteers and that they have a mammoth task. That was not lost on us.

**Dr Ogle:** As Colin said earlier, the whole side of accountability to the public is vital for putting in investment. Mr McGimpsey will know well from the work that we did with the Irish Football Association that there was a false start a number of times. We tried to get the governance and the accountability structures right so that, when we make a public investment into it, the public are assured that that money is going where it should. We are working very closely with boxing to prove that. Putting that person in at the start will take a bit of weight off the volunteers and will let them do the things that they want to do in the sport; whether that is referring, setting up rings, or whatever. Fundamentally, the approach of Sport Northern Ireland is to build a relationship with the sport. Once that is built, we can do the business. Too many times in the past, we rushed into doing things. We are now in a position in which we have a very solid relationship. That is perhaps a dangerous thing to say, but there is a solid relationship now. There is more of an understanding of where we are coming from and there is more of an acceptance of the need for accountability. We have to follow that up with support to the sport.

**The Chairperson:** When do you hope to have the club development manager in post?

**Dr Ogle:** Allowing for a recruitment and selection process, it will probably be at least two or three months.

**The Chairperson:** Colin, are you in a position to tell us which four boxing clubs will host the Cubans?

**Mr Watson:** I have that information with me. There are four LOCOG accredited boxing clubs, and the Cubans will be going to Queen's. The four LOCOG accredited boxing clubs are in Banbridge, Glengormley, Holy Trinity and Monkstown. The Australians are also at Queen's, so there will be two boxing teams based there.

**The Chairperson:** Are the four clubs that you highlighted those that will receive the high-performance equipment?

**Dr Ogle:** In many ways, those clubs are geared up for that already. The way that it will work is that the boxers will leave Queen's, for example, and get involved in open sparring with whomever they can.

**Mr Watson:** They will not be sparring with me.

**The Chairperson:** We will leave that to the Committee. *[Laughter.]* Thank you very much.