



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure**

# **OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)**

**Stadium Development: Gaelic Athletic  
Association**

**2 February 2012**

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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

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

**Witnesses:**

Mr Tom Daly	Gaelic Athletic Association
Mr Ryan Feeney	Gaelic Athletic Association
Ms Michelle McAleer	Gaelic Athletic Association
Mr Stephen McGeehan	Gaelic Athletic Association

**The Chairperson:** I welcome the officials to the meeting.

**Mr D Bradley:** Are there any papers, Chair?

**The Chairperson:** The association did not forward a paper. We wait in anticipation of what they have to say.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** I declare an interest as a GAA member, club official and representative of the county board.

**Mr D Bradley:** I do likewise; not to the same extent, but as a member of a club.

**Mr McMullan:** I declare an interest, too, as a member of the GAA.

**Mr Hilditch:** You will have to leave now; out you go. *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson:** Mr Hilditch? Mr Swann? Anything to declare?

I welcome Tom Daly, chair of the stadium board; Ryan Feeney, head of strategy and public affairs for Ulster GAA; Michelle McAleer, head of finance and business planning; and Stephen McGeehan, project sponsor of Casement Park stadium project. Mr Daly, would you like to lead off? We will take your statement, and members will doubtless have plenty of questions.

**Mr Tom Daly (Gaelic Athletic Association):** First, madam Chairperson and members of the Culture, Arts and Leisure committee, I thank you for the invitation to come here today. We are delighted to be here on behalf of the Ulster GAA stadium board, which I chair, and to be able to present to you the opportunity, ambition and progress of the GAA in the delivery of the Casement Park stadium project so far.

As chair of the stadium board, I am the designated senior responsible owner for the project. I am a former president of the Ulster Council of the GAA.

I am accompanied by Stephen McGeehan, who is our head of operations and designated project sponsor for the Casement Park project. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Ulster GAA and inputs into the whole stadium process.

Ryan Feeney, our head of strategy and public affairs, is central to our community engagement work in the province and is very involved in work on the stadium. He will be familiar to many elected representatives because of the work that he does on our behalf in a wide area of cross-community contact, and so on.

Michelle McAleer, our head of business and finance, is centrally involved in the governance and finance of the project and deals with the financial aspects of the stadium on a day-to-day basis. With us as an observer is our newly appointed independent technical adviser (ITA), Tim Harkin, who came through the full procurement process in co-operation with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) and Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). Geraldine McKavanagh, the full-time stadium administrator, is also here to observe.

Let us look at the project from a strategic point of view and where it came from. Members will be familiar with the commitment of the GAA, pre-2009, to the Maze/Long Kesh (MLK) project. After long-term involvement in the discussions and proposals, ultimately, we signed the intention to commit. At the point at which the decision was made not to proceed with that project, the GAA — along with the other principal sporting organisations, the IFA and the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) — was asked to come forward with proposals for meeting our strategic stadia requirements into the future. That happened in February 2009, when we engaged with the then Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Gregory Campbell. The strategic requirement of the GAA was defined first in 2002 by the organisation centrally, when it was decided that each of the four provinces should aspire to the development of modern, fit-for-purpose stadia with a capacity in the range of 40,000 and 60,000 in each province.

In Ulster, we have had adopted three consecutive formal strategies for the development of the games and all aspects of the GAA throughout the province. That also picked up on the ambition to develop a modern stadium, which we pitched at a capacity of 40,000. We went for the lower quartile of what was being asked of us by the organisation centrally, and that was based on our best estimate and judgement of what the requirement would be.

Since that time, we have been involved for three years in a very detailed process, principally through Sport Northern Ireland and also through a lot of collaboration with the Department and departmental officials on the development of an outline business case, which, ultimately, was accepted. We have put in place project management structures that involve a project board, chaired by me, and a steering group, chaired by Stephen McGeehan.

We have two important subgroups, one of which is on finance and governance and is chaired by a former president of the GAA and the Ulster Council, Peter Quinn. He is supported in that work by Michelle. A critical group for us is the community consultation and public affairs work group, which Danny Murphy, our provincial director chairs. Ryan Feeney supports him in that work. As I have mentioned Danny's name, I want to acknowledge the fact that he would like to be here but cannot because of personal circumstances. He has had a very long association with the concept of meeting strategic stadia requirements in Ulster and continues to be involved with us in that work. The project management structure that we have in place represents the three levels of the GAA that are involved — the organisation centrally, through the membership of the director general, Páraic Duffy; Antrim County

board, through the memberships of its county secretary, Frankie Quinn; and the Ulster Council GAA has several personnel involved.

Our overall ambition, which has now been approved at business plan stage, is to provide a modern and fit-for-purpose stadium at Casement. The designs will be developed in consultation with the stadium board by a procured integrated consultant team, which we intend to have in place in early July 2012. We have just made the arrangements for the prior information notice (PIN) for the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) for that public procurement process, the advertisements for which will appear next week.

Our design brief, at a high level, seeks to provide a 40,000 capacity, all-seated stadium. At this stage, it will have a minimum of 80% cover, 2,000 premium seats, a top-class playing surface and changing and warm-up facilities. We also plan to have corporate facilities that will include hospitality areas. We want to do something by way of community facilities, which will be defined through our consultation process with the community living in the area. Obviously, there will be some commercial facilities and car parking. Our engagement with local community residents and business owners commenced recently, and, in the coming months, we have much more work to do in that regard as we formulate our proposals for the site. For us, what brings that to life is the imminent release to us of the letter of offer, which means that we can begin serious engagement. We will work collaboratively with the local community in the west Belfast and greater Belfast areas, for which it is a very significant project.

I will briefly outline our achievements and current work. The stadium personnel have been in place since July 2011, and the business plan submission was completed in August. We have agreed in principle with the GAA centrally on partnership funding, which is very significant, and we know where we are going with that. In October, we appointed an interim ITA, and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) approved the business plan in December. Earlier this month, the legal team was appointed through a public procurement process, and we have undertaken some brief precedent visits to stadia in Britain to formulate thinking. So far, we have looked at five venues built in the past 12 years. On 1 February, the draft letter of offer was released to us, and that has to be considered by the board of Sport NI. We anticipate that we will have that within a week, and that will move things forward significantly for us.

Currently, we are signing off on the pre-qualification questionnaires for the design team and working on the letter of offer. We are due to participate in a round-table discussion on 23 February, which the Minister has called to discuss social clauses and how to make a beneficial impact on disadvantage in the local community. We are working to copper-fasten the governance approvals that we need, both within our own organisation and externally.

So far, we have made significant progress. We want to recognise the good working relationship that has been established with Sport NI. We have many dealings with the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), which is the nominated centre of procurement excellence for our project — I want to acknowledge its co-operation — and with officials in DCAL. As well as taking forward this huge project, we have to be mindful of our core business of promoting games and various aspects of our culture. That will continue to happen under the leadership of Danny Murphy. So we believe that, so far, we have put in place the strategy, staff, systems and safeguards to maximise the opportunity for everyone — obviously, for our association and members but also for the city of Belfast and Ulster. We really are very enthused about the opportunity, and we look forward to bringing it forward successfully.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. It is clear that you have put in place a very professional organisation for the project. Will you share with us what you consider to be the challenges and risks associated with it?

**Mr Daly:** The project is significant in scale, and, in terms of the financial security that will enable us to complete the project, we have mitigated the risk to the point at which it is of no concern to us because of the capital funding from the Exchequer and the support of our organisation. The critical factor is the delivery time frames in the current comprehensive spending review (CSR), in which there is an obligation to try to achieve the public spend by early 2015. We were mindful of that when producing the Gantt charts for delivery. We are involved in active and ongoing discussion on that with Sport NI and DCAL at programme and sponsor board level to ensure that we are realistic about what can be

achieved. Our project involves the complete demolition of an existing facility. Clearly, it involves a complex planning application and a significant construction project. That is one area on which we are working together very closely.

Now that we know that we will have the approved letter of offer on development costs within a week, we view the whole question of community engagement as being very important. We know from the experience of those who have provided stadia in other cities on this island and elsewhere that, if that is done well, the organisation and the community benefit greatly. If it is done badly, it creates problems, so we are paying a great deal of attention to that. Ryan might comment further on that.

The other risk is the rigour attached to the general area of procurement, both for consultants, and, ultimately, for the integrated supply team. This will be an exemplar design that will reach a point at which it is novated to an integrated supply team, which will complete the design and provide the project. There is a high level of complexity involved in delivering all that. When the question of risk is raised, I point out that risk is something that engages Sport NI, CPD, officials from DCAL and us weekly. Good systems have been put in place to identify the risks in an open way and to try to identify strategies to mitigate them as best we can.

Achieving planning permission within the stipulated timelines is important. We have already had a significant engagement with the strategic planning people, and, now that we are at the letter-of-offer stage, we can really accelerate that.

**The Chairperson:** You have been very good at covering many of what would have been my supplementary questions. Obviously, community engagement is critical, but I am mindful that it might delay your design and planning permission if it were to go on too long.

**Mr Ryan Feeney (Gaelic Athletic Association):** Over the past two years, we have had high-level community engagement with all of the local representatives and local businesses. In the past two weeks, a local community forum has been established for the residents of areas surrounding the stadium. The first meeting took place two weeks ago last Friday. Anecdotally, I can say that there is a lot of positivity towards the development because of what it will do for local employment and the Andersonstown area. However, we know that our challenge will be to work with the residents to ensure that they feel part of the stadium. Part of our plan is to have representation from local residents on our subgroups during the planning consultation process and the engagement process. We will possibly look at representation at a higher level. We are in the process of getting that model right.

As Tom said, we made mistakes in that area in the past, and we openly admit to that. We have learned from those mistakes, and we see community engagement and involvement as vital to the stadium, particularly in the sense that we recognise that, for the two years of the build, we will be putting people at a bit of a disadvantage because of where they live. We are working on that at the moment, and I hope that, if we back to report to you again in the next number of months, we will be able to show some progress.

**The Chairperson:** At what stage do you hope to be on site? I know that that may be aspirational at this stage.

**Mr Daly:** Our Gantt chart states autumn 2013. Clearly, there are a lot of things that we need to close down between now and then, but that is the target that we are working to. Stephen may wish to comment on the risk issue, because we had a significant engagement on that yesterday.

**Mr Stephen McGeehan (Gaelic Athletic Association):** It is important for Committee members to understand the way in which the programme is being delivered via Sport NI on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. The first of two levels is the programme level, which Sport NI manages and which has three stadia projects attached to it — ours and those of our colleagues in rugby and soccer. The GAA also has its own project board, which Tom mentioned. As recently as yesterday, a high-level programme risk workshop dealt with some of the very points that the Chairperson raised about CSR time frames, planning, finance and complexity. We joined representatives from rugby and soccer in attending the workshop, and it was reassuring to find that we all face similar risks in the planning process and similar issues with cost control. It is a highly collaborative process, and we are

beginning to learn from some of the other experiences. For example, Ulster Rugby has recently appointed its innovative consultancy team. The IFA is further on with the appointment of its consultancy team than we are, given the scale, size and complexity of our job.

You asked specifically about the impact of consultation on the design, Chair. One of the lessons that we learned from our national stadium at Croke Park is not to present to the residents a fait accompli. As part of the consultation, we intend to get feedback from the local community on what community facilities they seek. One of the special things about Casement Park is that it will be not only a facility for Ulster finals or high-level games but part of the fabric of west Belfast. Antrim County board will have fixtures there, so there will be a wide range from those with the highest capacity down to local community games.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Tá fáilte romhaibh uilig chuig an Choiste seo. I pay tribute to the Ulster Council for the most exciting development ever to happen in the province. Everyone, not only in Antrim but across all the nine counties, is very excited about the development. Casement is a great place for games. It is a great place to access and to get away from, and we all look forward to its completion. Unfortunately, it may have come a bit late in my career for me to be able to play there, but that is another story.

Stephen and Ryan, you touched on the consultation. My colleague the MP for the area, Paul Maskey, has done quite a bit of consultation work with the business community, which sees it as a wonderful opportunity to develop that entire area and increase footfall, business and trade. That is something to look forward to. The issue is with planning. Tom, you said that you will put install 2,000 premium seats and some corporate boxes. In GAA circles, the cost of going to games has increasingly become an issue. In September, I took my nine-year-old to the all-Ireland hurling final, and two tickets cost €180. That is a significant cost for anyone who wants to go to a match. I welcome the fact the Ulster Council addressed that this year at championship level and, more recently, at McKenna Cup level. Do you keep cost in mind for all events that might run at Casement? I am thinking of events outside the GAA's remit, such as concerts. Might that be reflected in admission charges for the average punter who turns up to games regularly each week or more often? Will that be part of the strategic planning for the stadium at Casement Park? Ádh mór leis sin, agus tá súil agam go mbeimid ann go luath. As I said, I hope to be there very soon.

**Mr Daly:** A relatively low percentage of the seating capacity has been retained for corporate facilities. On the revenue side of the business case, that becomes a very important contributor — as it does for all sports — to ensuring that the stadium can be properly managed and maintained into the future. There will be about 2,000 corporate seats but 38,000 family seats. One of the most important reasons for our opting for an all-seater model is that our experience is that, increasingly, it is complete families who come to matches. There are large numbers of children and a high level of participation by women, both in the games and attending. It is the way of the future, so we have that in mind when considering the stadium design. You acknowledged that the Ulster Council provided family packages for the recent club championship and McKenna Cup. Plans are in hand to take a similar approach to this year's championship.

**The Chairperson:** I am amazed that Mr Ó hOisín welcomes the development of Casement Park, rather than having it relocated to east Londonderry.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** That is plan B, Chair.

**Mr D Bradley:** Tá fíorchaoín fáilte romhaibh, agus go raibh míle maith agaibh as an chur i láthair a chuir sibh romhainn. Thank you very much. You are very welcome, and I appreciate your presentation. The GAA has a wealth of experience in the business of providing stadia, especially from the Croke Park perspective. You referred to a number of lessons that you had learned from its development. What general lessons from Croke Park will be of help to you in the Casement project?

**Mr Daly:** One is the all-seater model. Also, the playing field should be of a high standard, because, at the end of the day, it is all about the games. So we will put a lot of thought and expertise into that. There should be state-of-the-art facilities for players and those involved in coaching and mentoring. We will look very closely at that area.

Provision for the media is one of the most difficult things to resolve in an existing stadium, where it was not planned from the beginning. There should be good media facilities because of the massive interest in the games. Much of what we provided in Clones, for example, was by way of adaptation, but it is very hard to bring that provision to a fit-for-purpose level by way of a retrofit. We are paying a lot of attention to IT provision and accommodation for outside broadcasting units. Some stadia in Britain have done simple but terrific things, including the provision of external power points, designated parking bays, and so on. Those are the kind of provisions that we are considering, as well as a good level of accommodation for all patrons so that everyone has an equally good standard of facility.

**Mr D Bradley:** When Croke Park was being redeveloped, there were a number of issues with the local community. If memory serves me right, there were issues with the Hill 16 end along Clonliffe Road. Obviously, you worked closely with the community in the Croke Park area. Will lessons learned there be of use to you in Belfast?

**Mr Daly:** Absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, the director general of the GAA is on our stadium board. We have had significant engagement with the director of the Croke Park stadium, Peter McKenna, and, at the feasibility stage, we received consultancy advice from people involved in the development of the stadium. The message came through loud and clear to us that there was a requirement for community consultation. It is for that reason that somebody of the standing and stature of Danny Murphy chairs that committee, and he has Ryan's support. We place a high premium on that. The working group dealing with that is representative and knows that it must get out and talk to people on the ground. It is chomping at the bit to do that. There is a chicken-and-egg situation when it comes to knowing when we should intensify our efforts in certain areas. The arrival of the letter of offer allows us to crank up our activity in all of those domains.

**Mr D Bradley:** I have enjoyed many great games in Clones. On some occasions, I was your guest, so thanks very much for that. One obvious problem with Clones was access. Cathal referred earlier to the fact that access will be better in Belfast. Can you do anything further to enhance access?

**Mr Daly:** During the planning phase and in the construction of the integrated design team, traffic management will be a critical part of the process and there will be experts in that field. We must bear in mind that the capacity is going up by about 10,000. The old Casement, on occasion, accommodated crowds in excess of 50,000. No organisation would get away with that level of attendance in a facility of that nature any longer; we simply would not do it. However, the point is that the area and location have a long history of handling large crowds. We know that more has to be done, and we will work in an integrated way with local authorities.

There are many options, depending on when the games take place. Commercial and industrial parking spaces will be available. On these islands, sports organisations have entered into arrangements to resolve such issues. We know of the strategic aspiration for a light rail system going to that area. Clearly, that will not happen during the period in which we are going through the planning phase of the project. We are anxious to have a stop just opposite the front entrance in due course. That would be terrific from the point of view of public transport, and so on. We will be very well tested on access issues as we go through the planning process, and we are up for dealing with that.

**Mr Feeney:** We are talking about the rapid transport system.

**Mr D Bradley:** Although located in Belfast, it will be a provincial stadium, and there will be spin-offs for the immediate local community. Will those spin-offs extend into the wider province? I very much welcome the inclusion of social clauses in the contracts, but will Ulster in general experience spin-offs rather than those being confined to Belfast?

**Mr Daly:** Absolutely. There are two essential drivers in meeting the strategic requirements of the three sporting organisations: the requirement to modernise and meet public safety standards; and the stabilising of the revenue stream of all the sports organisations. That is a critical part of what we are trying to achieve. We hope that the stadium will become an engine that generates revenue that can be reinvested in the games in Antrim and throughout Ulster. The track record of the GAA nationally and in the province is that we put back about 85% by way of investment through our clubs and counties, and we support capital and coaching projects. We hope that that will go from strength to strength.

**Mr Hilditch:** Thanks, Tom, for your very helpful presentation. I had a number of questions on infrastructure, delivery time frames, the potential for social enterprises, and so on, but you certainly covered those points.

I will pick up from where Dominic left off: will Casement have an impact on the other stadia throughout Ulster? It will be the gem, as it were, and everybody will want to play their finals and various other fixtures there. Perhaps other stadia may be left wanting. Something similar happened in soccer, with the Irish Premier League's change in rules on stands. Some wee team broke the mould last year when it got into that league — I do not know who they were — but the others were left behind and became the poor relations. Do you envisage anything like that happening?

**Mr Daly:** Antrim is the ninth of the nine counties in the province of Ulster to have its stadia development sorted out. It has been on the back foot with the quality of its stadia for some time. At a county level, with the support of DCAL and Sport NI, we made significant investments in Omagh, Newry, Armagh, Enniskillen and Derry. The stadia developed there are, essentially, primary county grounds that meet the requirements of those counties for all their domestic competitions and home inter-county games. Games at that level are well provided for and will continue at those venues.

Where we have been particularly caught is in relation to the quality of the provision for the higher-level games: qualifiers, semi-finals and finals. We anticipate national fixtures coming by way of qualifiers, and there are also National League semi-finals, and so on. During an era in which the whole issue of spectators' public safety has changed, in GAA terms, Belfast will have something that it has not had for long time. We would like to think that it will be back in the market for significant Gaelic games as a result. From that point of view, we do not see the redevelopment of Casement having a negative effect. Clearly, if Ulster semi-finals or finals move from Clones, that will be a change for Clones. However, notwithstanding that, because of its geographic location, Clones has a track record of attracting a huge number of non-Ulster Council fixtures from the organisation centrally. Those games even involve counties outside of Ulster, and we are confident that that will continue because we have installed a new pristine pitch. The facilities will remain there and will be maintained.

**Mr Hilditch:** In another role outside of the Assembly, I work closely with the PSNI operations teams for west Belfast and north Belfast. I was interested to hear your comments about infrastructure. I heard about one instance of fans travelling up from the country to a junior final. They saw the floodlights at Casement from the motorway, pulled in, parked their cars and walked up to the match.

The business case has been accepted. Was consideration given to the use of Casement for other events outside of GAA?

**Mr Daly:** Yes. When we made our precedent visits — we spent two days doing so recently — we looked at what we could build in, at the design stage, to facilitate events such as large concerts. There are some exemplars of good practice in that regard. For example, doing relatively simple things, such as making wider gangways and having sufficiently wide circulation space in a bowl design, will facilitate other events. In approaching the design, we like to think that we will learn from other places and build that capacity into the stadium.

**Mr McMullan:** I congratulate you on your presentation. The Gaels in north Antrim are looking forward to the new stadium. We seem to spend all of our time at finals in Casement — *[Laughter.]* — especially my club.

I am glad to hear that there is so much ongoing dialogue with local residents. Given the number of fans going to matches, parking was always an issue in the area around Casement.

On the broadcasting side, what level of discussion have you had with, for example, the BBC about securing more coverage of Gaelic games in the new stadium? Have you discussed its broadcasting club games such as county finals? How far on are those discussions?

**Mr Daly:** I can speak only from my past direct involvement with the Ulster Council. Engagement with all media outlets, in respect of giving them access and encouraging them to publicise and broadcast



Gaelic games, is ongoing; that is happening all the time. It has been always an aspiration of the organisation that more and more games are covered, not just at inter-county level but at inter-club level. In the past five years, one of the innovations in the association has been the fact that a hurling or football club, even at junior level, can get as far as all-Ireland level in competitions, so there are terrific games at all grades and in all codes. I include camogie and ladies football, because there is increasing participation and interest in those. So there is an ongoing dialogue.

From the broadcasters' point of view, the stock issues of resources, stretching coverage across all sports and available time slots habitually come up. The GAA is open to media coverage. At one time, we had a restrictive approach to broadcasting and television, because there was a concern that coverage might impact on gates and revenue, which help to keep our huge voluntary organisation going. The modern approach, however, is that we want to stimulate interest in the games through the media, because that has a tremendous promotional effect. All I can do is reassure you that our dialogue with the media never really stops.

**Mr McMullan:** That is good. Will you run a programme in schools on the concept of the new stadium? I know that you do that through the clubs, but it is vital that young people get the concept into their head that Casement Park is "the" stadium. I think that all finals should be at Casement anyway, because the ultimate goal is to play in a final there.

**Mr Feeney:** Tom said earlier that we reinvest 85% of all our income in clubs and counties at grass-roots level, and we are very proud of that. I think that we were recently called the "big society in action". Last year, 25,000 primary-school children were coached by coaches employed by us, over 90,000 people participated in Gaelic games in the province, and we have 250,000 members.

Mr McMullan, we work with schools right across the province. Throughout the association and through everything we do, we promote messages about road safety, alcohol and substance abuse programmes and other social messages. We also promote the importance of good mental health and the idea of community identity and place. When it comes to getting people to engage in Casement Park, our plan is to get as many children in there as possible when the big lights are on at night, and, when the stadium is empty, it will be used as a community facility, and we will run school tours there. We are also talking about having a museum or an educational aspect to it, but we have not confirmed that yet. So there will be massive engagement at grass-roots level. The players of the future are in school at the moment, so we will target them and want to get them into our stadium.

**Mr Swann:** Thanks for your presentation. A total of £6.14 million will come from government funding. How much is the GAA putting in?

**Mr Daly:** It is £61.4 million. We have to provide a partnership contribution of £15 million, which, in relative terms, is probably onerous, but we are happy to do so.

**Mr Swann:** Are you fit to meet that?

**Mr Daly:** Yes.

**Mr Swann:** Tom, you referred earlier to the old Casement Park. I assume that that is how you will term the new park. I take it that the name will not change, because you will not want to lose that brand.

**Mr Daly:** Casement Park, as a brand in Antrim, Ulster and throughout the association, is a hugely well-known venue. It has been the venue for hugely iconic games, including Ulster finals, so there is no proposal to change its name.

**Mr Swann:** May I seek reassurance that no part of the new facility will be named after individuals or actions that may cause offence to the wider community?

**Mr Daly:** The GAA has very strict rules on such matters. We changed our non-sectarian rule within the past three years. One might have said that that was a passive rule; we changed it to an active anti-sectarian rule. That obligated us to get involved in a lot of cross-community work, in which Ryan and others are involved on our behalf. We believe in that, and we are putting resources into it. Beyond the

naming of the stadium, I do not see, at the moment, where other opportunities would arise for naming, and so on.

It is always open to a stadium owner or proprietor to consider commercial naming rights. We have never considered that. Some counties have done that, but, at the moment, in terms of the business case and how we develop sustainable revenue streams to keep the stadium active in the future, we have not given consideration to anything like that at all.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Thank you for your presentation. It might have helped a wee bit more if we had received a copy of it. May I request a copy?

**Mr Daly:** Certainly.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** It would be very helpful.

**Mr Daly:** I am working more from notes than from something formalised, but we can tidy it up and circulate it to you.

**The Chairperson:** The session is being covered by Hansard.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** OK.

As the mother of a player who will, I hope, benefit from the new stadium, I welcome your presentation. The stadium marks a new level for the GAA and an exciting time for all of the counties. Many of my questions have already been covered. As a Down supporter and a Down lady, I and my family attend Páirc Esler. You talked about community engagement and involvement. I was involved in a partnership between Down GAA, Páirc Esler and Newry and Mourne District Council. The council invested a few pounds in the refurbishment of that stadium, the idea being that it was to use it a certain number of times a year. It has just hosted a successful Jedward concert. The stadium was full, and it was a brilliant event. The GAA played a big part in that, and something like that could be offered to the community around Casement Park.

At the more serious end of the project are the complex planning issues and access to the stadium. Having been to Casement Park with my family, I know that there are parking issues. I have dealt with numerous planning applications in the past in which travel plans were introduced. Given that the GAA is such a big voluntary organisation, do you intend to introduce a travel plan as part of your planning application?

**Mr McGeehan:** Tom mentioned the work that we have begun and our discussions with the strategic planning unit. As part of that work, traffic impact assessments, pedestrian modelling and all of the various models are being examined and analysed. Even though the additional capacity is in the region of only 8,000, we do not expect that everyone will be able to travel by car and park at Casement. We are looking at a mixture of private and public transport means of getting to the stadium. The traffic impact assessment will be important.

You are right to recognise that we have a voluntary structure that manages the overall project. By virtue of the funding that we receive, we will employ consultant teams, including people who specialise in those areas, as part of the design team that we hope to have in place by July. That is one of our major considerations.

The first point that you made was about local authorities. You talked about Páirc Esler, and we were involved in that development with Down GAA. We will have a very strong relationship with Belfast City Council, not least because it will grant the licence to the new stadium, as it currently does to the existing Casement Park. David will have experience in that area. As for the regulation and how we fit with the Red Guide, that will be a very important relationship. From a strategic and partnership perspective, we also hope to work hand in glove with Belfast City Council on other events and on some of the community aspects of the project.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** I commend the GAA on its Live to Play programme. My children have grown up with the GAA. We have lost a number of players in our area in road traffic accidents, so I wish you every success with that programme in the future.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you for your presentation and for taking the time to answer questions. No doubt, we will receive an update from you in due course.

**Mr Daly:** Thank you for the opportunity to come here. I also thank members for their courtesy and interest. We look forward to delivering this project for the city and the province.