



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

June Monitoring Round and 2012-13  
Provisional Out-turn: DCAL Briefing

30 May 2013

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

June Monitoring Round and 2012-13 Provisional Out-turn: DCAL Briefing

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

Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr William Humphrey  
Ms Rosaleen McCorley  
Mrs Karen McKeivitt  
Mr Oliver McMullan  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

**Witnesses:**

Ms Deborah Brown	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Mick Cory	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Arthur Scott	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Deborah Brown, director of financial and corporate services; Mick Cory, director of the museums, libraries and recreation division; and Arthur Scott, director of culture. I advise members that the briefing will be reported by Hansard. I ask the officials to please make an opening statement.

**Ms Deborah Brown (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** I thank the Committee for inviting the Department to present its proposals for the June monitoring round. I am sure that you are all well aware of the process, but I will briefly recap. This is part of the budget allocations process resulting from the Budget 2010 settlement, covering the years 2011-12 through to 2014-15. That was approved back in March 2011. As part of the process, all Departments outline their future priorities and set out their detailed expenditure plans against those key objectives. However, there is recognition that, over a four-year period, there may be some unforeseen pressures or easements within those financial plans. Therefore, it is desirable that Departments have the ability to adapt spending plans to meet those changing circumstances. The method by which we do that is these monitoring rounds. This is the process by which the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) allows us to bid for additional resources to meet any unexpected pressures, surrender any reduced requirements, transfer de minimis budgets between service areas, or submit a linked bid reduced requirement to transfer a larger amount. As part of the Budget 2011-15 process, a review was carried out of the monitoring rounds, and the number was reduced from four to three in order to simplify the system. So we now have monitoring rounds in June, October and January.

I am sure that you are all very familiar with the public expenditure structure but, just very quickly, there are three areas, which are budgeted for and controlled separately. Those are: recurrent, which includes administration and resource; capital, which includes capital and capital grant; and ring-fenced areas for things like invest-to-save projects. Any movement between those categories must be approved by DFP, as they are regarded as reclassifications. Within the recurrent classification, the

budget for depreciation and impairment is ring-fenced, so movements into or out of depreciation or impairment are subject to DFP approval and they will be limited to corresponding movements in the opposite direction in other Departments.

Departments use the monitoring rounds as an opportunity to manage their emerging pressures through internal interventions. They can request that reduced requirements in one area be transferred to another that is experiencing pressure. We have flexibility to move between service areas, so, in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), we can move between sports and arts, but that is restricted by the de minimis rule, and any moves over that threshold have to go to DFP for approval. The de minimis threshold is £1 million, and DCAL usually actions a number of de minimis internal transfers during monitoring rounds to manage its functions.

I will now move to the detail of the DCAL proposals for the June monitoring round. We propose to make bids in resource to cover pressures in respect of the World Police and Fire Games. That bid totals £1.5 million, which is to cover pressures of £989,000 against the World Police and Fire Games business case, and £500,000 in respect of additional costs for a cultural programme. The £989,000 was an addendum to the original business case, which was approved by DFP in March 2012. As you know, we cannot ask for any changes to future year budgets; the only opportunity that we have to do that is in the monitoring round, so we are using the first opportunity in the June monitoring round to bid for that element of the funding. The £500,000 bid is for a complementary cultural programme to be delivered during the World Police and Fire Games in August 2013. A business case has been prepared and approved for that. The Department is working closely with the World Police and Fire Games, Belfast City Council and a number of cultural organisations to develop and deliver a programme of cultural activities in Belfast during the same time as the World Police and Fire Games, between 1 and 10 August, to ensure that Belfast is an attractive, vibrant and culturally rich place for the visiting athletes, their friends and families, and to encourage local people to attend events and enjoy the celebrations during the games. Given that the games are in August, it is critical that this bid be made in the June monitoring round.

We are also making a variety of proposals in accordance with the Minister's priority to promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion. To that end, we are placing a bid of £2.4 million to cover a number of projects across all areas in DCAL. Those include initiatives such as: Sport in Need, which is an emergency assistance programme for clubs and organisations; the Stadium STEM initiative, which is to maximise the socio-economic returns from the unique investment via the stadium programme; Fab Labs, which are digital fabrication workshops that will focus on tackling areas of disadvantage and the barriers to engagement with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) agenda; an extension of the community iPad initiative; funding for the regional CoderDojo programme, which is a youth computer coding and programming club; a number of projects for National Museums around its extended schools programme; funding for the creative industries and the traditional creative skills pilot, which is linked to Steps to Work and the apprenticeships programme for young people and the long-term unemployed; NI Screen's expansion of the film club scheme; and additional funding for the creative learning centres. Those are examples of some of the projects that are included in that full £2.4 million bid.

The Department proposes to make the following capital bids. We will make a composite capital bid of £1.75 million in respect of the Libraries NI E2 project and the Kilkeel library, which is a tail from the bid that commenced last year. We also propose to make a composite bid of £1.55 million to cover building works and the replacement of mobile library vehicles. We also intend to place a bid of £1 million for the regional stadiums programme. As you know, the profile in the original budget for the regional stadiums programme does not match the current forecast. Therefore, we are bidding for that funding this year. In addition, we are placing a bid for £2.2 million for capital projects that focus on the Minister's priority to promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion. The types of projects that will be funded through that include the Sport Matters community programme, funding for Sport in Need, funding to the creative industries for an interactive stadium STEM exhibition at W5, funding for the Arts Council for an online ticketing system, and funding for the Arts Council for the music partnership, which is delivering a range of classical and traditional instruments to schools in socially deprived areas.

The Department is not surrendering any resource or capital requirements to DFP in this round. The Department is not proposing any reclassifications. DCAL is seeking no internal reallocations above the de minimis threshold. However, we are proposing a number of resource allocations below the de minimis threshold, which are a mixture of housekeeping and managing our internal pressures. The Department is also proposing a number of technical transfers between Departments, the most

significant of which is £363,000 from other Departments to Sport NI for the Special Olympics and a contribution to the after-school film clubs.

In summary, the planned resource spend for the current financial year is £121 million, which is set out in annex B to our paper. The planned capital spend is £40.4 million, which is described in annex A. That is a summary of the DCAL proposals for the June monitoring round. We are happy to take any questions.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Is it possible to provide more detail on the revised business case for the World Police and Fire Games and the associated cultural programme?

**Mr Mick Cory (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** The revised business case was completed in January or February 2012. That was shortly after the company had been established and, essentially, it identified that requirement for additional costs. This bid is to bring it into line with that business case from some time ago, and it is still within the entire expected £13.8 million cost of the games. The £500,000 is for the complementary cultural programme, which is not part of the games themselves. The £13.8 million is about delivering the games, but, from 1 August to 10 August, we will have thousands of visitors in the city, and it is appropriate to have a programme of activities to ensure that it is as vibrant and as welcoming a place as possible. There are also elements of trying to ensure that our arm's-length bodies are fully engaged in a programme of activities to provide events, and so on.

**Mr Humphrey:** Thank you very much for your presentation. Deborah, you talked about £2.4 million for the World Police and Fire Games. What role will DCAL and the DCAL family have in the games, particularly in the opening ceremony?

**Mr Cory:** The bid was actually for £1.5 million. The opening ceremony is designed in partnership with the World Police and Fire Games Federation, which is based in the United States. Therefore, in many regards, the DCAL family has a limited amount of involvement, although, as the sponsor Department, we have been working quite closely and have had briefings with Belfast City Council, which leads on designing and operating the ceremony on behalf of the games. We would expect to see community engagement, so a lot of schools will also be involved, for example. I am cautious about describing it in any way as a showcase for what we are about; it is about opening and setting the scene for the games, and there will be a lot of community engagement. Community arts groups will be involved as well as some well-known acts, as I understand it.

**Mr Humphrey:** So the Department and its arm's-length bodies are not directly involved?

**Mr Cory:** Not directly. Belfast City Council is running the opening ceremony on behalf of the World Police and Fire Games. The World Police and Fire Games board has not yet quite signed off on the detail, although there is an overarching plan to ensure that things are being put in place. We do not have direct involvement in the opening ceremony.

**Mr Humphrey:** Deborah, you mentioned Sport in Need, and moneys being put into clubs that are in need of investment. Will you expand on that?

**Ms D Brown:** The expert on sport is not here, but Mick may be able to help me out. It is a small grant to provide emergency assistance to clubs and organisations to facilitate the payment of unforeseen emergency resource requirements, such as rents for premises and insurances. That area of work directly links with the Minister's priority. The investment will prioritise organisations in difficult situations based in areas of greatest need, and projects that can demonstrate how they will address the poverty, social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal, and mental health and well-being agenda. The proposal is for £100,000 of resource. There will also be a capital element for organisations that are in some difficulty and need funding: £200,000 is allocated to that at the moment.

**Mr Humphrey:** So it is a total of £300,000?

**Ms D Brown:** Yes. Those are proposals. Business cases will be needed for those before funding is provided.

**Mr Humphrey:** How will that be allocated? What criteria will be used?

**Ms D Brown:** It will be linked to how they tackle poverty and social exclusion and promote equality. Those are the criteria that will be used.

**Mr Humphrey:** I strongly represent North Belfast in support of tackling poverty and social exclusion. However, will that actually exclude people who otherwise might get money?

**Ms D Brown:** We are keenly aware of our obligations under section 75. Anything that we do will be equality-screened to ensure that, if there is any imbalance, we take mitigating actions to address it. We are also very mindful that we want to take positive actions, as section 75 requires. Where there are groups that are under-represented, etc, we want to target those as well. I understand your point; however, there is a balance to be struck.

**Mr Humphrey:** So, in your judgement, there are no groups or communities out there that are being unfairly treated because of the policy?

**Ms D Brown:** We will make sure that, if that happens, we will highlight it and take actions to make sure that we minimise the impact.

**Mr McMullan:** At the end of your presentation, you talked about musical instruments for schools in socially deprived areas. Will you expand a little bit on that?

**Ms D Brown:** That is the music partnership.

**Mr Arthur Scott (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** That is a project that the Arts Council will take forward. The intention is to provide classical and traditional instruments and digital music-making devices, particularly to children in schools in socially deprived areas. There are schemes already in place that make subsidised arrangements for instruments to be provided to children who have a talent in that area. The project will increase that range, and instruments will be provided free of charge to areas experiencing social deprivation. The programme will create a stock of instruments and devices. The project, in conjunction with the education and library boards, will select children who have a musical talent and allocate the free use of the instrument or device so that they can develop that talent. If they decide not to pursue that, the instrument will be returned to be loaned again.

A further aim is to encourage parents whose children have instruments but no longer use or need them to hand those in for reconditioning and refurbishment so that they can be added to the scheme and be made available.

**Mr McMullan:** How do you define social deprivation?

**Mr Scott:** There are various ways. Essentially, the programme would target schools in the extended areas, so that would be schools that have been identified as being in areas that are experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The loan of the instruments and devices, as with the after-school film clubs, would be particularly focused on schools that are deemed to be extended schools. It is a proportion of the school population that is in receipt of free school meals.

**Mr McMullan:** Where do I get more information on that?

**Mr Scott:** The project is still in its initial stages. We are still working through the business case. After the business case is completed and approved, there will be a procurement exercise. The schools are approaching the summer holiday period, so I imagine, at the very earliest, it will be some time during the new term. Normally, children are allowed to settle back, so it will probably be around October or November.

**Mr McMullan:** When will that information go out to the schools?

**Mr Scott:** There will be an announcement. The Arts Council, which will take forward the project, will contact the schools and the education and library boards, and there will also be a public announcement to draw the scheme to the attention of the parents or guardians of children who would benefit from it. There will be a campaign to launch it.

**Mr McMullan:** It sounds like a very good scheme.

**Mr Scott:** Yes; it seems like a very worthwhile project. When we get the approval, we can get it under way.

**Mr McMullan:** I think that you will see the benefit of that scheme. Any money or help in that area is terrific.

**Mr Scott:** It will certainly provide access to instruments for children whose parents may not otherwise have the means. There is a similar scheme at the moment with a part contribution. This will remove that contribution and make it free. Hopefully, it will open it up to a wider range of people, with no financial barrier to getting involved. There is the time commitment and, obviously, the child having the musical ear or the wherewithal to operate the digital devices for other forms of making music. Hopefully, it will give them a lifelong skill that will help to build their confidence.

**Mr McMullan:** That is great. Thank you.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Thank you for the presentation. The biggest share of the capital moves is in the Libraries NI sector, and I see that the lion's share of that is on the ELFNI project. There are no new major newbuild capital projects in the libraries sector. Can you explain the ELFNI project, because it is taking two thirds of entire budget requirement?

**Mr Cory:** I will try to explain it. It is a major project for Libraries NI. ELFNI is electronic libraries for Northern Ireland, and it is also called E2, because it is the replacement IT project for the existing systems. It incorporates not just the back-office systems but the systems that the public use in libraries. It provides fast broadband access and technology for the public, as well as lending, ticketing and membership systems. It is a very important project. It was originally scoped to take place over a three- to four-year period a number of years ago. However, as the project progressed and we have put bids in, we have reprofiled the spend over that period. What you are seeing now is a bid that is a consequence of that reprofiling, rather than additional money. It is actually costing slightly less than originally anticipated.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** What is the overall cost of the ELFNI project?

**Mr Cory:** It is £8.72 million.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** The lion's share of that is included in this monitoring round.

**Mr Cory:** It is. There is an element of spend to save as well, but it is the lion's share.

**Ms McCorley:** To go back to the musical instruments, is the call going out widely to the public for unused instruments? This has come up in the Committee before. Lots of people have instruments lying at home that they no longer use.

**Mr Scott:** When the business case is approved and the full scheme is launched, that call will go out.

**Ms McCorley:** Who will cover the cost of tuition? Not all schools have that capacity.

**Mr Scott:** At the moment, we are working with the Arts Council and the education and library boards to sort out the tuition element. It is not only about providing an instrument; there has to be tuition. Clearly, this scheme will generate additional demand, and we are working through the implications of that to ensure that tuition will be in place.

**Mr McMullan:** On the cultural side of things, will the likes of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann be involved in anything to do with the tuition?

**Mr Scott:** As I explained earlier, there will be a procurement exercise for the purchase of the instruments, and so on. We are still in discussions with the Arts Council about the tuition arrangements. My understanding is that they were talking about the education and library boards. I understand that they, as well as the education services, engage tutors to come into schools. Again, it will probably be through public procurement.

**Mr McMullan:** Can we include the likes of Comhaltas in any procurement document that we draw up?

**Mr Scott:** It will be an open procurement exercise. The people from Comhaltas will have the skill set for traditional music, so I do not see any reason why they would be excluded.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** There are no further questions. Thank you very much for your presentation.