



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

DCAL Business Plan 2013-14: Ministerial  
Briefing

26 September 2013

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

### DCAL Business Plan 2013-14: Ministerial Briefing

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

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)  
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mr William Humphrey  
Ms Rosaleen McCorley  
Mr Michael McGimpsey  
Mrs Karen McKeivitt

**Witnesses:**

Ms Ní Chuilín Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ms Cynthia Smith Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

**The Chairperson:** I welcome the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Cynthia Smith, the deputy secretary, and I invite the Minister to make an opening statement.

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** Thank you very much, Chair, Deputy Chair and members. At one stage, I began to panic: I thought that we had more officials than Committee members. I remind you that this is Colin Watson's last presentation to the Committee, so, even though it is in closed session, you really should not spare the horses. *[Laughter.]* Do members have a copy of my opening statement?

**The Chairperson:** No.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Rather than going through a six-page opening statement, I will just cover some of the headlines and leave the text with you. Certainly, the last year has been huge. We in DCAL have been through a massive transformation in our business plan. We are looking at ways that we can change the way that arm's-length bodies (ALB) provide services and match budgets to priorities. Obviously, we are also looking at the success of last year and this, given the World Police and Fire Games and the City of Culture. We will give you a presentation on the progress of stadia development. Again, the successes of this year and last should be considered, especially as the Committee will be covering the creative industries at next week's meeting. Rather than take up 15 minutes of your time reading the statement, I would much prefer just to answer your questions, if that is OK with you.

**The Chairperson:** OK. We will go directly to that. I have looked at the business plan, at the introduction and at the priorities that you have set against it. In reading the document from a unionist perspective, I am concerned that I do not find its terminology particularly inclusive. It could be

perceived as being weighted. I am also concerned about whether the business plan will deliver on a shared future.

Set against that, however, I have also heard a criticism of the business plan that it is unambitious and bland. How do you respond to that?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I am unsure how to respond to your comments about reading it from a unionist perspective. I feel that the business plan is about making sure that we deliver across the range of the DCAL family. It sets out how we are going to do that. I appreciate that you are the Chairperson of the Committee, but you are making a somewhat political statement. I do not feel that the language of the business plan is politically one-sided. I certainly do not feel that it is bland. We took our time in making this document to make sure that not only could we deliver it but that it covered a range of services that we hope to deal with in future. Can you give me a specific instance of blandness in the plan? Can you give me an example?

**The Chairperson:** There is no recognition of the terminology of the Northern Ireland Government. Some advertisements went out over the summer, and people who have contacted me from the unionist family feel that they may be excluded from applying for the positions in those advertisements because of the terminology that was used. You talk about "This part of Ireland", which gives no recognition to the status of Northern Ireland. I find that quite difficult, and so does my community.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** OK. I think that that is a pity, to be honest. The language is not meant to exclude anyone; it is meant to be inclusive. If people feel that they do not want to avail themselves of opportunities in DCAL because of a perception, that is something that we will obviously have to look at. However, I reject that we are being exclusive, which I think is your underlying criticism.

**The Chairperson:** Can you give assurances that you are willing to be inclusive towards the unionist family in this document?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I have been inclusive to the unionist family, so I reject your criticism.

**The Chairperson:** We will move to your priority, which, as has been very clear throughout this process, is to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. I find that laudable, but I am concerned about whether that priority, given that it is your main one, is perhaps a straitjacket for the arm's-length bodies in how they deliver their programmes.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** With your indulgence, I will give a few examples. We needed to make sure that groups who were not in the annual support for organisations programme (ASOP) funding or did not receive Sport NI funding through annual rounds, particularly those working in areas that were really hard to reach and in areas that experience multiple deprivation, were visible in the business plans and visible to funding. At a very quick level, we are trying to make sure that people have access to participation. It is very important that we use any opportunity where we can make a difference. However, we can certainly listen to what people say to us and make that visible in the plans. That is a small example of how we can do that very well.

Arts was the other example where communities felt that they were being excluded, but when you start talking about some of the examples and some of the ways in which we participated, it turned out that that was down to a lack of knowledge. So, when we make the ALBs aware of what we all need to do collectively, it has worked out a lot better and will continue to do so.

**Ms Cynthia Smith (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** As the Minister said, we have shifted the Department's whole focus to a renewed focus on our priority, which, as she said, is to promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion. I suppose as the business plan explains, in the past, we were seen as the Department that delivered our range of functions for itself, and, in so doing, achieved the Executive's priority for growing the economy and tackling disadvantage. Now we have shifted round our way of thinking and have put that at the core of what we are doing so that everything that we are doing now is about achieving those objectives. For officials and ALBs, that is a sea change in how we look at things. It is a change of focus that is reflected in the Department's business plan, which has 50 objectives that flow down from the Executive's priorities for growing the economy and tackling disadvantage. It then filters down to the Department's priorities to meet our Programme for Government commitments and then down to the ALBs' business plans. Hopefully, there is a

continuum there. All the actions in the plan are in support of those critical priorities, which are Executive priorities.

**The Chairperson:** Certainly, all of us want to increase participation, whether that is in the arts or through sporting activity. I appreciate that and support it as a measure, but I am also concerned that, given that DCAL has such a small budget, the movement away and making that your core priority may dumb down the product that we currently have or that we are aspiring to have.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** No, I think that it will enhance it. I think that it will provide a better wrap-around and a better service, not just in presentation terms but where better inclusion is concerned. It is certainly not dulling down, and that has been some of the criticism for some of the bigger recipients of funding. When you have children who have never been in a museum, and you have children and younger people and some older people going to theatres and arts events, you see that it has not dulled down what is being provided. It certainly enhanced the participation of those who go to see a film, a play or who visit somewhere. That is the important thing for us.

**Ms Smith:** To give a sports example, we are still pursuing excellence in sport, and while we do, we want to ensure that we are engaging communities in community sport. That is equally important. However, the two are not exclusive. In pursuing excellence in sport, you can take some of our heroes in the sporting field, of which we have many, and they can work to encourage more community sport and more involvement among those people who have traditionally not participated. I think that that is what we are trying to do to encourage participation and engagement in all the services and functions that we have to offer. That involves every group, particularly those groups that, in the past, felt that they could not participate, whether it was in arts, sports or visiting the museum or the library. So, it is about trying to be inclusive and making sure that we involve all members of our society.

**The Chairperson:** In saying that, we cannot live in a bubble where we think that everyone actually wants to participate or to be able to go to the theatre or whatever. There are those who, regardless of what you try to do, will not want to get involved in that type of activity.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I accept that. All that we can do is provide people with opportunities and choices. We cannot make people do anything. It is about providing opportunities that will enhance better access. If people say that they do not want to participate, that is fine. However, the gap has been with those people who did not know that they could participate. Take sport as an example. A lot of sport goes on in communities. Not everyone aspires to be an elite athlete, but they want to play five-a-side on a Saturday. They want to be able to do whatever else they need to do. We need to make sure that sport is not just seen as being for elite athletes and about winning medals. It is about participation and access.

**The Chairperson:** Returning to the programme of work that you have set out, obviously, we have the UK City of Culture, which is closing quite shortly, we have had the World Police and Fire Games and we have ongoing work on stadia. Those three big-ticket projects, for want of a better term, have been in development for quite some time before this year. My concern is that I do not see evidence of something big coming down the line in future years. I do not see the preparation for, say, the pursuit of another large sporting event, whether it is world or city games of some type. We have Giro d'Italia coming next year, and that is being led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), not DCAL. Where is DCAL in the pursuit of those big-ticket events and projects?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The demarcation of sports and events happened well before I became involved. We have the North West 200, which is not primarily a sporting event but is led by DETI and other Departments. Even the Golf Open was led by DETI, not DCAL. However, does DCAL have a role? Absolutely; I agree with you. I think that we need to start thinking big and to start planning for other events. Your colleague asked me about a velodrome and other infrastructure. We cannot wait on an infrastructure build to start planning. Part of those plans is to look for money and make bids for infrastructure that will help to attract those events. We are involved in that process now. We need to look back and see what we can do, but we need to be realistic about it. One thing that I am acutely aware of, particularly around the Olympics, is that there was a lot of criticism of what we had promised to do. We did not meet all those promises. We did not have our 50-metre pool ready for pre-games training. We did not have a lot of things ready. There are reasons for that. So, I think that we certainly need to plan, but we need to be realistic about what we do. We certainly need to work in partnership with other Departments, because that is key.

**The Chairperson:** Without those big events, I think that you are going to find it difficult to increase participation among young people. Once they see sporting heroes coming to Northern Ireland and see Northern Ireland as a place to be that can host those types of events and has the facilities to do great things, that will be a legacy moving forward.

**Ms Smith:** There has been significant progress in meeting our Programme for Government commitments. The stadium remains our big capital project moving forward. We delivered the World Police and Fire Games, and we are well through the City of Culture year and our other commitments for the creative industries, which is obviously a priority area moving forward. You are right: the World Police and Fire Games inspired people. I think that we were all taken by the number of people in the community who came out in support of the games. Clearly, there is an appetite there to come out, both to volunteer and to participate. We have shown now that we can lay on world-class events. It is one of the legacy projects looking forward. We are looking at how we can build on that legacy, particularly in the sporting field, through future events. Similarly, as we are well through the City of Culture year, our focus there is on looking increasingly towards legacy. Although we are well through delivering our headline Programme for Government commitments, we are now just drawing breath and are asking how we can build on those going forward.

**The Chairperson:** I do not see that in this document. However, we will move on to other questions.

**Mr Hilditch:** Thanks, Chair. I welcome the Minister to the meeting. At the outset and in support of some of the Chair's comments, I feel that some of the geographical or identity terminology in the document could have been left out. If it had, there may have been more buy-in and more people from my community would maybe be more comfortable with it. However, you made your points on that, Minister.

I want to deal with a couple of areas of the document. I know that, during the sessions in the weeks that lie ahead, we are going to get into more detail on the stadia, but there is a wee bit of concern in grass-roots sport with that. There is session later today on that, and maybe you do not want to get into the detail of that side of it. However, where there are delays and, potentially, moneys being handed back — there will be another session on finance later today — there is a fear that there will be a knock-on effect on grass-roots sport and that people will miss out at some level. I know that you are trying to bring in the elite sports and those that are at the bottom end of the scale, but there is a whole swathe and section in between. Sometimes I feel that those people are forgotten about. With the stadia and the potential fear of a knock-on effect, that fear has increased a wee bit.

In my constituency, there also seems to be a delivery of sporting facilities through other Departments. That is the case for parts of rural south Antrim, which have received funding through the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) Grow South Antrim programme. People are getting new sports-type facilities, while clubs that are maybe only 100 yards down the road and in more urban areas do not qualify. They have to go cap in hand to Sport NI, but there is nothing available at the minute, and they just feel isolated. Others will qualify when Sport NI opens up for funding and those groups might be left out again. There is just that little bit of uncertainty about where everybody sits in the picture.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Obviously, there is a closed session later on, but, outside that, I assure you as best I can that I am moving ahead and trying to get things resolved. I am also trying as best possible to eradicate any doubt, concern or worry. However, that does not address your first and last points about the concern about grass-roots groups and, particularly, those that are in between.

I do not want to use this as an excuse, but DCAL has the smallest budget. However, I believe that it has the ability to have a longer reach than most other Departments. I have spoken to people in the council area that you represent, and I think that we need to look at future planning through better joined-up approaches, certainly as far as provision is concerned. I believe that there are opportunities to make that happen, possibly through the reconfiguration of councils in the review of public administration (RPA).

I think that the gap is with those groups that are in-between and that want to go into a stadium or a good 3G pitch and play their games and have access. Through Places for Sport and other programmes, Sport NI has certainly made getting information to me about demand and need a priority. However, I am also out and about in communities, and I hear and see it myself.

So, to assure you, although I cannot say that I am going to build something in your constituency — not that you are asking for that, although I am sure that your colleague William will touch on it — it is important to know that I am thinking about what we can do with our small budget and with our partners to get a delivery that will have a long-term impact on the area and on the outcomes for physical activity and sport and that will help us to tackle things such as obesity and ill health.

**Mr Hilditch:** There are five actions under what DCAL will do. I know that one of those is very specific to boxing, but a lot of people who are involved in that middle range of sport virtually tick the boxes for you in the other four areas. I want to make sure that, as things move forward with the plans, those people are not left to the side at any stage.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I give the member a total assurance that, if things are left to the side, it is because I have not found the money. However, that is not good enough. I will find other ways of using whatever investment we have and try to match that with other Departments and with local government to see what fit we can get. At the end of the day, it is about services to ratepayers and taxpayers

**Mr Hilditch:** I want to ask a general question about the arts. When you dig into it, I know that you see that there is more delivery of the arts on the ground than the layperson may see in the documentation. Could the Department look at a better way of getting knowledge of arts on to the ground, whether through some sort of campaign or knowledge-based advertising? Again, referring to constituencies outside Belfast more than anything, I believe that there is a lack of knowledge about the arts. So, whatever could be done on that front would be useful.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I am happy to pass that on not just to the Arts Council but to our other partners. When the Chair raised a question about the gaps that there are, I did not expand on it, because I did not want to present the perception or intention that we are going to try to be all things to all people. You cannot do that.

Access to the arts has certainly been enhanced, because people have the knowledge. Even people in certain parts of Belfast did not have that knowledge, and more often than not, once they got that knowledge they made an informed choice.

**Ms Smith:** Just to add to that, on the question of reaching out and raising the profile of the arts, we are proposing — you will see this in the business plan — to develop and consult on an arts and culture strategy and to finalise a community arts strategy. Those will be good opportunities to reach out and engage with people and make them aware of what is available and how they can participate.

**Mr Hilditch:** I know that I will probably ask a question of the Minister in the days ahead, but could the likes of Culture Night in Belfast be expanded throughout the rest of the country?

**Ms Smith:** That is right. That was a great success, and there was a lovely buzz in the city. It is the sort of thing that we would like to develop so that others can enjoy it.

**Ms McCorley:** Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirleach, agus go raibh maith agat, a Aire, as teacht os comhair an Choiste inniu. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for coming to the Committee today.

In reference to some of the previous comments, I commend the business plan. I found it a good and positive plan. I suppose that it reflects my sense of the world that there is more than one view of the world in the North of Ireland. I welcome that.

I congratulate the Minister on the success of Líoifa. It has been a really positive development, and it has shown that there are thousands of people in the North who are interested in learning Irish. That was reflected in the results.

The Minister will recall that we have talked about this and the need for language planning. We know that, for decades, there has been informal learning of Irish throughout the whole community. That happens in the unionist community as well as the nationalist community, and I think that that is a very positive development. Líoifa also flagged that up. So, that is a really good news story.

In that context, there is a need to bring some coordination to all that learning. There is a richness there, but we must acknowledge that it has happened in a very uncoordinated way. There may be a

need to resource how you bring all that together to bring coordination and to take advantage of the best practice that has been going on. There is also a need to develop a framework for learning. In the context of all that, the notion of an Acadamh Gaeilge has been discussed for a while. Does the Minister have any comment on where that might sit?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** We are still working out the scoping exercise around what an acadamh — an academy — would look like and what services it would provide. There were only three or four or perhaps five terms of reference for it. The criticism of a great deal of long-term learning around languages, since you have raised it, is two-fold. First, to deal with the acadamh: many people who have been learning Irish for different periods have commented, and this has been fed through to language planning experts, that you can go to a class in one place and come out with a certain standard, but go to another class and come out with a different standard. That is not a criticism of the provision; it is a criticism or an analysis of the tools used for teaching.

We must also look at what people need. Is it accreditation? Is it a qualification? Or is it just a certain standard that they want to reach? An acadamh would be responsible for that. I have examined what others do around the Irish language, and we are trying to find out what would be good for people using the Ulster dialect to do. That is where it is at. I recognise that something needs to be done about long-term planning, but I am not quite sure what it is. However, an acadamh, in whatever configuration, seems to be the way to achieve the standards that we need to.

**Ms McCorley:** I acknowledge that from my experience, because I have done some teaching of Irish in that sort of uncoordinated way, where I taught what I thought would be relevant and important, but there may be experts who can put together a package that will be of most benefit to learners. We are all aware of the concept of the serial bunranger, and I know many people who go back to a bunrang year on year. That should not be happening; people should be progressing, and it would be great if this model was developed. Minister, do you have a timescale in mind?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Yes. At the minute, we have put the scoping study out to tender. I hope to get it done. We have an idea of what it is that people hope to do through that scoping study, and we will analyse those results and make bids for a continuation of the Ulster-Scots Academy as well as one for the Irish language. However, the Irish language one is really around language acquisition and planning; the Ulster-Scots Academy is completely different. The scoping study should be completed by the end of the year.

**Ms Smith:** You will see from the papers for 2014 that there is a capital exercise —

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Yes, there are bids in there for both of those.

**Ms Smith:** As I say, it is in the papers for the 2014-15 exercise.

**The Chairperson:** Minister, you said that the Ulster-Scots Academy was "entirely different". How is that?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Ulster-Scots Academy has not agreed on a standard for the Ulster-Scots language; that is why it is entirely different. It has identified for itself where the needs are and made bids and presentations on those needs. That is how they have been receiving funding. An academy of the Irish language is purely around language; it is not about culture and heritage. That is where the difference is.

**The Chairperson:** Is it your intention to have a physical academy for the Irish language?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Yes, absolutely. That keeps coming through as a need, not just in the Irish-language community in particular, but many Ulster-Scots supporters with whom I have talked feel that there needs to be some sort of value from government by way of a physical building. I have listened, but, at the minute, we need to find out exactly what those activities will be. However, we need to have a physical building to continue the ongoing work.

**The Chairperson:** Is work going on to identify a site for that?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Yes, work is under way, but, at this stage, I am not aware of a particular building. The Ulster-Scots Agency and network will move into one building. However, that does not take account of what we will do with the academy.

**The Chairperson:** The network and the agency are already in one building.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Yes, but they are now moving. I hope that the academy, in the interim, will move there with them until we can identify a building. And not just one in the city; we need to look at rural areas as well. It may mean that the academy has to occupy a physical satellite of a physical building.

**Ms Smith:** There is recognition of the value of a hub, as it could consolidate and bring more cohesion to the Ulster-Scots community. As the Minister said, one of the options is looking, in the short term, at rented accommodation. Several options are being considered, but the longer-term aspiration is to have a building to be the focus of a hub.

**Mr Humphrey:** Good morning, Minister and Cynthia. You are very welcome. Minister, it will come as no surprise to you that, like my colleagues, when I read the document I also had difficulty with some of the language used in it. I absolutely understand the political ideology that you come from and the political and constitutional direction that you want this place to go in. However, if a document from a Government Department is to gain respect from my community and me, it needs to be more inclusive than this document is. That is unfortunate.

My colleagues asked about the arts. Given the constituency that you and I represent and come from, there is a huge problem with the working-class community and, in particular, with the Protestant working-class. As I said only a few weeks ago in this Committee, the Protestant working-class unionist community see their culture as culture, and the concept of "the arts" is not something which the Protestant working-class community in this city buys into at any great level. Decisions by Belfast City Council and the regional government on investment in the Lyric and the MAC have been of great benefit and I welcome them. However, I am not so sure that they offer a tangible benefit to the people in Ballygomartin, Ballymurphy or Ballymacarrett. Do you agree? How can we make them more beneficial to those communities and reach out to them? It is about the reach that they have and the access that the communities that you and I represent have to those facilities.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I consider Artability as part of my constituency as well as part of yours. Artability is not just a group that services your community or mine alone; it services the community of north and west Belfast — and indeed beyond — very well. It was one of the first groups that I visited. It provides arts, access to the arts and creativity for people with learning and physical difficulties. There are many such groups across all the Ballys that you mentioned and those yet to be mentioned. Some of the criticism was that they did not feel that people from their area would ever go to places such as the Lyric or the MAC. However, that has changed from when I first met them. They are still very concerned that what they consider as art and part of their culture and identity is not yet visible in the big plans of the Arts Council or Belfast City Council. They want to know what we are doing to correct that.

The community arts strategy, when it is finalised and published, will go some way to help. However, it is also incumbent upon us as elected representatives to articulate the needs of those groups as best we can and to do so in a persistent way. Some elected representatives have done that more than others; it is a part of their constituency work. They are their neighbours and family who live around the corner; it is not something that they get a lobby about, mention in Committee and then forget about. Not that there is anything wrong with that, but it is something that we deal with all day every day.

There are gaps; I do not say that there are not. However, I am confident that we try to bridge those gaps as best we can. Will we do it completely? I do not think that any of us can ever claim to do that through a particular strategy. However, we will never be forgiven if we do not even try. If we attempt something that does not work, we are totally responsible for going back and looking to see what will work. We should keep trying until we at least get into a position where people can appreciate where we are going. We must provide access and participation. That is what it is all about.

**Mr Humphrey:** I take your point that it is incumbent upon elected representatives, but it is equally incumbent upon those who manage these hugely significant and largely publicly funded institutions to reach out to those communities. I remember that, a few years ago, the Ulster Orchestra had a concert in the Shankill Leisure Centre, which I attended, and I think that it had one in Andersonstown as well. That outreach that people other than the BT9ers can buy into is very important. We understand as a

Committee the difficulty of the issues, and that is why we agreed a few weeks ago to do a piece of work around getting working-class communities to buy in.

Minister, I want to move on to talk about legacy. I was not at the World Police and Fire Games because I was at scout camp, but I heard from others that it was a very good event and hugely significant. The heid heidyin of it said that it was the best event that he had attended, which was a tremendously good advertisement and publicity for Belfast. That is to be welcome, and I congratulate everyone involved. How can we build on that legacy? I appreciate that your Department has the smallest budget, but, working across government and with councils, how realistic is a Northern Ireland or a Belfast bid for the Commonwealth Games, not next time or the time after but at some stage?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** To be totally honest, I am not too sure how realistic it is, because we have not even begun the exercise of looking to see what we need to do. We have to do that, because, at the most recent Question Time, I gave a commitment that I would. I do not have anything in front of me on that, but I give you the commitment that I will bring that back.

Legacy is hugely important, because changing the business plan and the relationship and how arm's-length bodies spend their money is not just about delivering for the here and now; it is almost about future-proofing services as well. It relates to the first question that you asked. I have been to the MAC and the Lyric, and they are trying their best to outreach to communities that have been hard to reach in the past. They are trying not to do that in a patronising and piecemeal way; they are genuinely involved in relationships. There are kids from the Markets and Donegall Pass who go to the Lyric regularly, and there are kids from areas surrounding the MAC who go there. In fact, they were part of the consultation in building the MAC and the final outcome of it. That is also about legacy. The World Police and Fire Games were, by all accounts and according to Mike Graham, the friendliest games ever. He is in a position to say that. You would expect me to say that because I am the Minister for sport, and it sounds like propaganda. However, when he said it, I think that he meant it.

The other aspect is what the games meant, not only for the 10 or 12 days and the publicity and the tourism that they attracted. Schools were involved, and a pool of volunteers was developed. The relationship with the services is one of the most telling examples of good legacy. We included neighbourhood renewal areas because they had not been particularly involved before. We went from a request for 3,500 volunteers to having more than 6,000, many of whom were from those areas. That was one of the good examples. We can show that we can stage world-class events. We need to work out what the next big events will be, a point that the Chair raised at the very start of the meeting. The Commonwealth Games has been mentioned as a potential event for the future, but we need to work out what we need to host the Commonwealth Games, and we need to start planning, if the agreement is to do so. Should we stop there? Absolutely not. There are world games for schools, as well as other events. The Transplant Games happened here. We need to ensure that the momentum, the value and the support that government give to big-ticket events is also given to smaller, yet extremely important, events.

**Mr Humphrey:** Chair, I am not sure whether I am in order or not, or whether indeed the Minister will answer my question, but is it possible for me to ask a question about Windsor Park.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** We are going into closed session. I want to answer the member's question on Windsor Park, although I do not know what the question is. Let me put in a caveat. There is absolutely no question that I will duck, and I want to ensure that the member and other members are happy that they are asking a question that will not cause a newspaper headline at a time when we are trying to get things resolved. Ask your question, but your answer may be deferred to a closed session.

**Mr Humphrey:** I appreciate that. I am not trying to be awkward or to score political points. After the previous Question Time, when you were asked a question by one of my colleagues, I received text messages from Northern Ireland supporters who were in Luxembourg because what went out was that the Minister had put a halt to what is going to happen at Windsor Park. I do not want to get involved in the elections and whatever in the Irish Football Association (IFA), but work was due to start this month. To Linfield supporters, primarily, but also to Northern Ireland supporters, the development of Windsor Park is hugely important and significant, not least for spectators who come to watch their teams play, be that the national team or the visiting teams, and the facilities that it has. I am a bit concerned that I see slippage moneys later on down the line, which we will deal with. There are two things: can Windsor Park be delivered on time and on budget, as has been set out? There is £3.6 million-odd down here as stadia slippage. Will that have a knock-on effect on other stadia and Irish League grounds across Northern Ireland?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Last question first: it will not have a knock-on effect. There will be slippage in the process that we are going through, but we will deal with it. The main concern is whether I am still committed to making sure that Windsor Park happens. Absolutely. I am as committed to that as I am to Ravenhill and Casement Park. I am taking, and I have taken, a can-do approach. Are there problems? Yes, there are. Like yourself, I will not get involved in any democratic process. As for the outcome, the old adage is that you get who you vote for. However, given the concerns that the previous Minister had about governance, I want to make sure that not only are those assurances still standing but to go better and beyond to make sure that the soccer family is confident that that is happening and that, when it comes to subregional development and other opportunities, everything that needs to be done will be done. I am taking a can-do, problem-solving approach. Am I being whimsical or light-hearted about the issues that have been presented, or am I being too tough in certain areas? The main contention is governance. There were issues around governance before, so I am going to make sure that we are all properly satisfied and that we move on. My intention is to move on and move forward. I am confident that we can get those issues resolved with the IFA and move on to deliver a world-class facility.

**Mr Humphrey:** A few weeks have passed since Question Time. You gave a commitment that day to work with the IFA to try to work through the problems to reach a resolution. Has that work with Jim Shaw and his team continued since then? Are you getting closer to that resolution?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** That work has continued, and I am confident that we will achieve a resolution. I cannot say much more than that. I have been very straight with people. I have also had representations from fans. I have been very straight with people about what we all need to do collectively. I do not want anybody to think that the deadlines or targets will not be met because we have encountered a problem.

**Mr Humphrey:** I think that Windsor was due to be finished in March 2015.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Was it not June 2015?

**Mr Humphrey:** OK. You are —

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** We are confident that those deadlines will still be met.

**Mr Humphrey:** OK. Thanks.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Thanks, Minister, for coming this morning. A great deal has been said about the business plan and the ideas around it, such as equality, social exclusions, velodromes, the City of Culture, culture nights and knowledge of the arts. Ms McCorley mentioned coordination. Is there enough co-ordination in the business plan to deliver the like of the STEAM idea, the regional library, the big-ticket events and the velodrome? The World Police and Fire Games were a success. Yes, the bigger picture was looked at a couple of years ago. The games were delivered very well and not just in Belfast; many areas benefited from them, including my own south Down. With the extension of the Lyric, the building of the MAC and all that has happened over the past couple of years, there is a healthy knowledge of the arts. The increase in the all-Ireland work and co-operation is to be welcomed. I just worry about the co-ordination to sell the brand and to deliver the bigger picture. Do you think there is enough coordination in the business plan?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The benchmarks for arm's-length bodies' budgets are their business plans and how they deliver outcomes, and they will be done through monitoring and evaluation. Even from other business plans and action plans that some of the arm's-length bodies have had themselves, not only do they meet their targets, but, more often than enough, they go beyond them. Do I believe that there are the skills and expertise to make sure that we meet what we need to do? Absolutely. Is there something more that we could do? Yes. From what I am hearing this morning, and through other events, yes, there is. However, given STEM and STEAM and the Committee's work on creative industries, there is much more synergy for us to work with to use creative industries as a medium across Departments.

Not only am I confident that it will happen, but the value and knowledge of creative industries has been elevated in many areas, including libraries, sport, the arts, public records, and events big and small. That is healthy. It is important for me that although Belfast applied for and hosted the big event that was the Police and Fire Games, we made a conscious decision to take them out of the city as

much as possible, as places in south Down need to see what DCAL does just as much as south Belfast does.

**Ms Smith:** We recognise, and the World Police and Fire Games showed, the value of co-operation. It showed the strength, even within the DCAL family. All our arm's-length bodies were there to lay on cultural events and to support in whatever ways they could. We in the Department recognise that there is much more that we can and should be doing to work across the DCAL family. We recognise that there are many more synergies that can get us more bang for our bucks if our agencies work more closely together as a family. In the creative industries framework we recognise that and the need to reach out to other Departments, academia, and to the voluntary and community sector. That is absolutely the direction that we need to follow. You are right, and the success of that has been shown by recent examples.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Personally, I feel that we knew for years that the Olympics were coming and we were just not ready and many areas lost out. You gave the example of not having the pool ready. If we are going to look at the bigger picture, we need to be ready to deliver. Your Department has the smallest budget. Have you any plans to work on that?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I always have plans to ask for more money. However, like any Department, you cannot make bids unless you have evidence of need. There is no way of applying for additional moneys unless you have done your homework. I appreciate what you say. It is all very well to be aspirational and ambitious and to make sure that you are constantly stretching what you have agreed to do while trying to do more. We must do that in such a way that we position ourselves in the Assembly and Executive to make bids, to host events and to provide opportunities. However, we need to make sure that full business cases are done and that the events stand up economically and socially. We must also make sure that we can deliver. We are where we are. We all accept it with reluctance and a degree of disappointment. We were not ready to provide the 50-metre pool for pre-games training, but we were ready in other aspects of sport for pre-games delivery. When we go forward to provide big opportunities like that again, we will build all that in. I agree with you. We need to ensure, before we make any announcements, that we are in a position not only to host events but that we have all the facilities needed in order for them to happen.

**Mrs McKeivitt:** Just one other thing. In my opinion, there is not enough in this document for rural areas. It is very important that you co-ordinate with rural areas. That is lacking in the business plan.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** That is fair enough. However, many people, when they see a business plan, make the mistake of thinking that it is just for cities. There is a need to make more mention of rural communities. With respect to libraries, I am looking at a protocol procedure with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. She has assisted before by making provision in rural areas for libraries, and, indeed, as David Hilditch said, in some areas of sport. The rural White Paper is an example of how government, across the board, needs to provide better services particularly with regard to rural communities. I am very conscious of that. Just as there are people in deprived city areas on the outside looking in, we do not want people in rural communities constantly seeing bright headlines about cities while nothing passes down their street. I will have a look at that, incorporate more into the plan or even just expand on it where I can.

**The Chairperson:** I will use Mrs McKeivitt's question to segue into another question. The issue of the Exploris has arisen over the past couple of weeks and there is now a call for the Assembly to do something, given that it is Northern Ireland's only aquarium and that it services Northern Ireland as a whole. What are your thoughts on investment in that project?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I heard your colleague Jim Shannon speak this morning. He was factually incorrect in saying that DCAL had aquariums. He said that we had aquariums in Derry, managed through the Loughs Agency. However, as a representative of that area, he is right to call on government because it is a regional facility. I heard that last night there was a stay of execution for two months; and I hear this morning that DCAL is supposed to have a major role to play. I have not had an opportunity to find out what that role, if any, might be. That is a straight answer. I imagine that representation will be made to various Departments about what, if anything, we can do to help Exploris. I took my children and my grandchild to Exploris, and it would be a real pity if it were to close. I came up from Belfast especially; even the journey on the ferry was an adventure. We are so sad in north Belfast. Perhaps that is just us BT14ers, 15ers and 13ers. It would be a shame if Exploris were not retained.

**The Chairperson:** Is it something that DCAL will look at? Would it consider options for assisting Exploris if it comes to the table?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** We will consider everything that comes to the table, and we will give it the same consideration that we give other proposals.

**Ms Smith:** I can confirm that we have had no formal approaches on this. I also heard this morning's media coverage that DCAL was responsible for the Loughs Agency. The Committee knows that we are not responsible for that, and that DCAL does not support an aquarium in the north-west. We do not do that. The Committee is also aware that our role relates to inland freshwater fisheries. We are not responsible for sea fisheries, and the aquarium is a sea fishery; it is a sea-water aquarium. As I said, we have received no approach as yet.

**Mr McGimpsey:** I want to revisit the question of the regional stadium development programme because of its importance and the public interest in it. Ravenhill is coming on very well. Casement is held up in planning at the moment, but all that is resolvable. With Windsor Park, there are concerns mainly because of its location in my constituency. A very large investment has gone into housing, and investment is anticipated in a new primary school. The development of Windsor Park also levers money out of Belfast City Council, as I am sure you are aware, of about £20 million. An awful lot is riding on this. Your officials came to us before the summer and raised the issue of EU state aid; that this may be breaking EU state aid and that, therefore, there would be difficulties; and that if it did break EU state aid, they would have to get clearance on that before they could allow the process to proceed. Presumably that also affects Ravenhill and Casement, but the issue was raised in relation to Windsor, and it appeared to be putting a stay on Windsor Park.

If such an important issue was liable to interfere with the development and the moneys that the Executive voted to go into Windsor Park — bear in mind, for example, that we have just had an Olympic stadium built in London, which presumably would have gone through the same process — should this not have been cleared before we got into the process? It seems to me that this issue should have been properly covered and cleared before we got to the point of announcing this and going forward with it.

You put out a statement a couple of weeks ago — and I thought it was quite a tough statement — around how governance could potentially block the investment and therefore had to be resolved. I hear you this morning, and you sound more upbeat about the process. However, there are serious concerns about what is happening around governance. As I understand it, IFA governance is laid down by UEFA; its governance arrangements exactly merge with what is required by UEFA and mirror, for example, the FAI, the Scottish FA and so on. I am interested to know where we are with that.

There is a process here. We are currently in negotiation with the builder. He is over the money, but that is not unusual in a huge contract such as this. I have no doubt that there will be negotiation around that. However, when are we going to actually see this going forward? When are we going to get the announcement? You are saying that it will be June 2015. I welcome that. However, when are we actually going to see the off? When will we see the contract going forward and the builders being on site, so that we can get this essential public investment moving forward? We have to bear in mind that Northern Ireland play there. They are the only international team, as I understand it, that play with the Northern Ireland logo. So, they are very, very important. Let us get this moving forward. I am interested to hear what you have to say.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The member has raised a couple of issues, and I will try to answer as best I can. I am sure that you will want to put questions to officials during the closed session. Not to duck the question, but I will repeat what I said to your Committee colleague William Humphrey about the IFA and Windsor Park: I am confident that we are moving ahead.

The statement was tough, because it was a governance issue, which was a serious matter. Although UEFA, the IFA and the FAI set the rules and standards by which soccer is played, they do not put £61.2 million into delivering a stadium. I do; and I do it on behalf of the Executive and take that responsibility very seriously. I want to make sure that, when we are investing huge sums of public money, there is huge confidence with that.

I think that we are working in the right direction. I am acutely aware of what a big investment like this means, particularly in areas such as south and west Belfast. Short of the stadia development, and

even with the relationship of working with Belfast City Council to provide other opportunities, there is not that much construction going on. There are not many cranes in our communities and, therefore, not that many opportunities for jobs for the long-term unemployed, apprenticeships and the rest. The stadia developments are an opportunity to bring other investment in. I am acutely aware of all that. Having said that, I am confident that, when we resolve those issues — I am taking the can-do attitude that we can resolve them — we will just move on. Am I going to be weak or take a different view from a set of governance for an organisation that had issues in the past when the other two sports did not? I am absolutely not. However, I am also working with them to help resolve the issues.

**Mr McGimpsey:** You are aware that the IFA is setting up a Windsor Park company. That will be a stand-alone company. No members of the IFA, for example, will be on the board of that company. That company will build and manage Windsor Park, and DCAL will play a role in that company; certainly, as I understand it, DCAL will select directors and so on. It seems to me that they have taken extra steps to make sure that you have comfort as far as all that is concerned. Therefore, I welcome your optimism, but I want to hear a date. When will we be at the real start line to get this going?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** There is a lot of detail that I am still very reluctant to go into in an open session. As far as I am concerned, we are moving in the right direction but we are not there yet. You can talk to officials later about the details of how it will happen and what we need to do. I am confident that we need to meet because the funding is there in a time-limited way, not just the funding from the Executive through DCAL but the funding from councils and other partners to provide the capital infrastructure for south Belfast. In this case it is vital. We are not just working through certain options; we are looking at everything we can do to make sure that it is done.

I have not received any indication that it is not going to happen by 2015. I do not believe that we have come up against a brick wall or met so many challenges that would put things at risk. We are moving forward, we are moving ahead and we are taking a can-do attitude. We are working through the detail and we are going to get it done. There is nothing much more that I can say on that.

**Ms Smith:** I will cover one point that Mr McGimpsey made in relation to state aid. Again, it is one that you can explore in further detail later, but as we have reported previously, the Department is liaising regularly with EU officials on this matter. We are confident of getting an appropriate response that will enable us to ensure delivery within the programme timelines.

You asked whether it was not thought of at the time. At the time of the outline business case, expert opinion was that the funding of sport infrastructure did not constitute aid. You also made the point that Casement Park was stuck in planning. The planning application was submitted in June. The commitment that Planning Service made, as it does with all major strategic applications, was to turn it around in six months or less. That is the time frame that Planning Service has indicated to us. Clearly, we are hopeful that with our pre-application discussion —

**Mr McGimpsey:** It is stuck in planning because, as you know, there are a number of objections to the development going right to the edge of the GAA ground. A lot of people feel that the overhang creates such a shadow for their houses. We have all had the knock on our office doors, as you have, I am sure. That is resolvable; it is a process that can be resolved with a bit of give and take. However, I welcome the Windsor Park thing.

Can I ask one other question?

**The Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mr McGimpsey:** It is about libraries. The issue, which was raised with me just a few days ago, is about the use of libraries and ensuring that adult content is not available on PCs that are provided in libraries.

I have had a complaint that adult content was observed in a library in Belfast. I want to be absolutely certain about this. An individual was taking photographs of the content on the PC screen with a camera. Are your library staff aware of that? There is a simple regulation, using Tech Giants, for example, to make sure that adult content is not available under any circumstances.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I am alarmed by what you are saying. We need to see what we can do. I totally agree with you. I was in a library yesterday for a community meeting. There are children and young people,

and young adults, who do not have the space at home to study and are using libraries a lot more. It is really important that we have safeguarding and child protection issues sorted.

**Ms Smith:** We take our safeguarding duties very seriously indeed. Recently, for example, I know that this has been a focus for the Committee too, understandably. We have put out revised guidance for all our ALBs and we have reinstated our forum. We take that very seriously. If there is any indication at all, we will act on that in consultation with libraries.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** If the member wishes to give me details, I will be happy to pass them on.

**Mr McGimpsey:** I will get you the details.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I appreciate that.

**Ms McCorley:** Go raibh maith agat. I want to raise two issues. Following on from the stadium commentary; Casement Park sits in the middle of my constituency, so I am acutely aware of the residents' concerns that have been raised. There seems to be a view from some residents that there will not be any community benefits and that it will all be negative. I understand that the people who will be directly affected by the height of the stadium will not be looking at the positive benefits for the whole community and wider afield. I want to flag up two elements. It is very important that the residents are engaged with so that their concerns can be resolved to the best of the ability of all concerned, namely the Department and the GAA. There are community benefits, because lots of people have said to me that they are really looking forward to the stadium being developed in west Belfast. Will you comment on that?

I also want to raise an issue on behalf of my colleague Oliver McMullan who is unable to be here due to illness. Oliver is always raising the issue of disability; he is a stalwart of that cause. What is your Department's commitment to disability?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** First, to have it on record, I pass on my best wishes. Even though Oliver is a party colleague, it is important to have that done.

As part of Delivering Social Change, we are, on behalf of the Executive, trying to bring forward a disability programme. We all have an obligation under section 75 to make sure that, through the provision of public services, in particular, and access and participation, we have regard for disability and that we have the physical access for that to happen. We are looking at that project and others.

One of the things that enhanced the whole issue of disabilities, particularly through sport, was the Paralympics last year. Those games and the pre-games training did awful lot for the sport. People in Disability NI, through sport, and even Kate and the rest, through arts and culture, have done a huge amount of unsupported work. We are looking at ways in which, through the provision of better services for people with disabilities and through tackling social exclusion and poverty, exclusion and deprivation, we can lift up exemplar projects and bring them forward.

Best efforts are being made to have the Casement Park issues resolved. Like you, I have received a lot of requests. I am really loath to get into the nitty-gritty of anything, particularly when planning applications are in progress. I had a request from a family in west Belfast whose kids are going to America and elsewhere. They want to know what is going to happen if there are no construction opportunities in Belfast. It is fair to say that they have no axe to grind with me or anybody else. They are concerned because, when people get an opportunity and profiling is done, agreements have been made in government before and U-turns have been done. I think that they are concerned that that will happen with the stadia programme as well, in that context and others.

These projects have social benefits and social clauses in the middle of, over, underneath and around every aspect of the developments. Ravenhill has done a great job through outreach; it has provided great services to and partnerships with people who live in the Cregagh estate. Michael McGimpsey raised the importance of Windsor Park, as did William. It is important from the point of view of opportunities for people who have had very little coming their way at all.

So, it is not only about construction, which is very important for people who are long-term unemployed, it is also about the ability to get a trade and an apprenticeship and to have the involvement of local residents who are in the middle of the development of these projects. That is crucial. I am confident. We are going through a process now. The consultation has taken place and is still ongoing for some.

We need to look at what the challenges are and work at them, work through them and work with them to have them achieved and resolved and meet the very challenging deadlines to have these stadia developed. Despite some of the problems raised, I have no indication that that will not happen.

**Mr Irwin:** The Chair and both of my other party colleagues have touched on the language used by the Minister in that the document refers to Northern Ireland as "the North of Ireland" or "this part of Ireland". It does not instil confidence in the unionist community when the Minister cannot use the terminology of the country as it is. I do not want to labour that point, but it certainly does not instil confidence or equality and all the things that you purport to try to represent when we cannot even use the name of the country in our language. That is unfortunate, but that is where we are.

One of your priorities is:

*"To Promote Equality, and Tackle Poverty and Social Exclusion"*

I have no problem with that. Promoting equality is quite easy, but tackling poverty and social exclusion is quite difficult. Given that this Department has no remit to do that and no budget for it, how on earth do you expect to tackle poverty and social exclusion?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** First, I assume that you are the last member from the DUP who will raise an issue around the language used in the business plan. You are quite entitled to raise whatever issue you want, but, as a member of Committees in previous mandates, I have looked at documents and have not felt that my identity was included in them. You are quite entitled to raise that issue. I am trying to be as inclusive as possible, and we are dealing with people who live in the North of Ireland or Northern Ireland — call it what you may — who consider themselves to be both British and Irish, British or Irish or neither. So, I am trying to be as inclusive as possible, and I make no apologies whatsoever — none — for doing that.

You asked how you can tackle poverty with a small budget. The question is not "Why should we do that?"; the question should be "Why not?".

**Mr Irwin:** How do you propose to do it?

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I propose to do it by ensuring that there is better inclusion of groups who live in deprived areas. Your colleague raised some of those issues earlier. For example, we introduced a scheme, albeit on a pilot basis, where we purchased a small number of iPads and put them into an area that had the worst reports on child poverty and disease to try to tackle poverty and social exclusion. We are using creative industries and linking up with the Department of Education to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and to promote science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) and engineering, science, technology, economics, art and mathematics (ESTEAM). That can help to feed into arts, for example in design and graphic design. That will also raise esteem in the children and young people who are using it, and I have heard that at first hand. So, in the case of kids whose parents cannot afford to provide technology, you are providing the technology to the schools to help to ensure that the children will not be further disadvantaged. That is a simple example of how we are doing it that I have not previously given to other members. So your question is "Why are you doing it?", or is it "How are you doing it?"?

**Mr Irwin:** I did not ask "Why are you doing it?", but I said that it is difficult to do, and I asked how you propose going about it. It is not an easy issue to deal with.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I appreciate that, but it is not impossible either. You need to use the arm's-length bodies and the public services in those to make different and, at times, specific, departmental interventions to ensure that you are not widening the gap between those who have and those who have not. The gap that I am more worried about is the gap between those who have and those who will never have. It is the expectation of people who are disadvantaged and deprived, and I believe that we are in a prime position, not only to ask how we do it but to ask "Why not do it?".

**Ms Smith:** Just to add to that, there are over 50 actions here and they extend across all our arm's-length bodies. For example, in sport we have a five-star disability challenge programme. You are right. These are not easy issues but long-term and, in many cases, intergenerational issues that are really tough to deal with. However, until all the Departments of the Executive put this as a priority, as

we clearly do, we will not make progress. We are determined that this is our priority and, working with others and through our ALBs, we will make progress on it.

**The Chairperson:** No other Member has indicated a wish to speak and we are out of time on it, but we will return to it again as we go through our weekly business. We will certainly be in correspondence on a number of issues which have been raised today. No doubt, we will see you again very soon.

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Thank you, Chair, and I thank the members for their questions. I look forward to future visits. I will make sure that where members have made suggestions, I will try my best to incorporate them as amendments to our plans. It is just the nature of where we are all at. Some political points were made, and we just have to leave them as such. We respect member's prerogatives and their ability to make those points. I do not question that at all, far from it. I am keen to work with the Committee in future. We are happy to provide any clarification that is needed in a timely way.