



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**COMMITTEE
FOR THE OFFICE OF THE
FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

Maze/ Long Kesh Update Briefing

2 June 2010

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kennedy (Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Tom Elliott
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jim Shannon
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Kyle Alexander)	
Mr Alan Maitland)	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Ms June Wilkinson)	

The Chairperson (Mr Kennedy):

Good afternoon, lady and gentlemen. Thank you for attending. You are welcome. The Committee is considering the Maze/Long Kesh redevelopment and the proposal for a new corporation. In the absence of any advance briefing, I assume that the witnesses will give members an overview or update on the current position, before making themselves available for questions. The session is being recorded by Hansard, which will document every word and punctuation mark.

Mr Alan Maitland (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

Before the Committee questions us on costs, I thought that it would be helpful to take advantage of the presence of programme director and head of the programme development unit for the Maze/Long Kesh, Kyle Alexander, and have him present an outline of where we are with getting the site ready for development.

The Chairperson:

Yes, that would be helpful.

Mr Kyle Alexander (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

Thank you for the chance to come back to the Committee and update you on the current situation. I am keen to do so because, to some extent, recent media reports have given the impression that not much can be done until the development corporation is formed. However, as I will explain, a great deal of work is under way to prepare for that.

The Ministers' statement last April made the case that they wanted to build on work that was carried out under the previous master plan. That work is being done by the team that I am now involved in. As you are aware, a programme delivery unit was formed by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). That unit was able to draw resources from the Strategic Investment Board. Therefore, during the past few months, my team has worked to review plans for the site.

I will outline three or four aspects of our work. We are looking after the work that is under way on the site to prepare it for development. All demolition is now complete. One phase of remediation, which was to remove lead shot linked to the firing range on the site, is now complete. The final phase of remediation works, which is to deal mostly with oil pollution from the site's use as an airfield, began in March 2010 and will proceed for the next year. Part of that work will involve the removal of asbestos that was found on the site. That work is required to be done to prepare the site for development for any future use. If, at some stage, we want to sell the site to the private sector, we need to be able to sell a site from which many risks have been removed. Our work seeks to achieve that.

We have also done a lot of work around the site boundary. We have removed much of the security infrastructure. We have removed the large military gates and much of the tin sheeting

and razor wire. Therefore, someone approaching the site or driving around it can now look in and see it. When people come to the site, they will not enter through military gates. Again, we are trying to prepare the site for development. That has been well received by the local community. In a sense, it has changed their view of and into the site.

During the past few weeks, the team that is working on the plans for the site has moved into a Portakabin office there. The aim of that is to change the nature of the debate because we can meet people on the site and they can see the work that is being done and the site's potential.

Obviously, a lot of work was done on the original master plan. We have spent the past number of months carrying out several scoping reports. We have looked at the market; supply and demand; and the mix of uses that we might want to incorporate in the revised master plan. We have looked again at the level of infrastructure works that would be required.

We also want to look at the site's social regeneration aspects. Therefore, work is under way to look at the needs of the communities living around the site so that we can base our master plan work on needs that we want to address. That work is now well under way and we are now starting to shape the revised master plan for the site.

We have also done some work with potential end users. We are aware of a number of end users that would be interested in being part of any development of the site. One is on the site now: the Ulster Aviation Society, which occupies the aircraft hangars linked with World War II that are on the site. We are keen to speak to that organisation to see what its role will be in the future.

You will also be aware, again from reports in the news, that there is still a lot of interest in the site from the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS), which is keen to move the Balmoral Show from the King's Hall and, in a sense, to do much more than it does at the King's Hall. It wants to create what it has called a centre of rural excellence, and we are working with it on a potential scheme. That will need to go through negotiations and we will need to look the terms of that and produce a business case, but we have explored with the RUAS in quite some depth the potential that the site might offer.

One aspect that I am interested in is that the RUAS is keen to move to the site on a temporary

basis at quite an early date. We have walked the site with representatives from the RUAS, and they have looked at it in relation to where the Balmoral Show and a number of other events might be held. There is every prospect that the RUAS could move to the site by 2012. We have also looked at a number of other end uses. There has been interest from those who want to hold a range of motorsports events on the site, which would start to bring the site back into use.

That is a sweep through a range of the work that we are doing, but we are now close to the stage of being ready to move to thinking about how we might want to progress with the site. The other work that we are doing is on the potential use of the listed and retained buildings. Again, there has been no decision on that as yet. We are looking at the potential for a conflict transformation centre, and we have been doing some early scoping work on what that concept might be. There is a lot of work under way that will start to shape the way forward for the Maze/Long Kesh site.

The Chairperson:

Thank you very much. Does that complete the presentation?

Mr Maitland:

It does, and we are happy to answer questions.

The Chairperson:

Thank you for the presentation and for the figures that you produced earlier in response to the public debate about the matter. It is good to be updated about the work on the site and the ongoing clean-up of the site, involving the removal of the lead shot, asbestos and oil.

I have a couple of questions. Where are we on the formation of the corporation, which seemed to provide a significant opportunity to move things forward in a comprehensive manner? In relation to an overall master plan, can you allay the suspicion that the whole project is being held back simply because of a lack of agreement on the conflict transformation centre? In the public perception that seems to be an issue as to why things are not progressing as quickly as possible.

Mr Maitland:

I will take your last point first. Kyle Alexander has said that the retained and listed buildings on

the site could be used for a conflict resolution centre. That is something that Ministers are deeply involved in, but no decision has been made about the location of any such centre. As Mr Alexander has shown, his unit has been working since the previous plan was closed down to try to get a lot of preparatory work done to enable us to move forward with a new master plan. We are busy working with Kyle Alexander in supporting him in that work, and nothing has held us back from doing that.

The chief area of work has been the extensive decontamination of the site. That has been more costly and has taken much longer than any of us ever thought would be the case. It is the largest regeneration site that we have ever had here. At 350-odd acres, it is twice as big as the Titanic Quarter. We have had to test-drill into every acre of the site to locate the contamination. That has been a huge area of work.

In parallel with that, we have been using our time to build up work to go to a further stage of development in deciding what the site can be used for and bringing forward another framework for a master plan. That has involved a lot of work on infrastructure, and we know that it will involve a lot of consultation. We do not have the same components as we had the first time round, when we had the twin major projects of the conflict transformation centre and the multi-sports stadium. Therefore, Mr Alexander has been spending a lot of time trying to see what the possibilities might be, trying to get the site prepared and working with master planners to see what the framework going forward might be. All of that is preparatory work, and we are ready to take it to the next stage whenever Ministers are ready.

The Chairperson:

What about the corporation? Where are we with that?

Mr Maitland:

Ministers are aware of the details that are involved. On foot of the statement that they made last April and the work that has been done since, we know that they will be making a decision in the not too distant future on how we go forward with that.

The Chairperson:

To be clear; are the corporation proposals with Ministers for consideration and decision?

Mr Maitland:

Yes.

The Chairperson:

Has all of the preparatory work for that been carried out by officials?

Mr Maitland:

I will not say that all of the preparatory work has been carried out, but a lot of work has been done, and there is a lot of work still to do.

The Chairperson:

Enough work has been done to allow Ministers to make a decision. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr Maitland:

We are still working on some aspects of it and, at some stage, we will need Ministers to say what the timing will be and whether the details are absolutely correct.

The Chairperson:

The statutory rule allowing for the creation of the corporation has not yet been approved.

Mr Maitland:

That is correct. We would have to bring that back to the Committee again with another operational date. I cannot say when that will be, but Ministers will direct us on that when they are ready.

The Chairperson:

It will come back here at some stage.

Mr Maitland:

It will, and then it will go to the Assembly.

The Chairperson:

A number of members wish to ask questions. I will begin with Dolores Kelly, who is making a welcome return to the Committee.

Mrs D Kelly:

Thank you, Chairperson. It is pretty depressing that another two years have passed and we are discussing the same issues. It is even more depressing that £12 million of public money has been spent thus far on Maze/Long Kesh and we have a nice new set of gates and a flattened landscape, albeit with —

Mr Shannon:

It is as if you never left the Committee, Dolores.

Mrs D Kelly:

It is indeed. I will not need to read much into the Maze/Long Kesh brief, but nor will I need to do so for a range of issues.

The stalling point on Maze/Long Kesh seems to be the political will. I am not getting at officials, but it is quite incredible that so much money has been spent on a master plan and consultants' reports on what to do, such as a retail development. All those wonderful plans were presented to the Committee 18 months or more ago, yet Mr Alexander spoke in his presentation about —

The Chairperson:

Do you have a question for the officials, or is this a statement?

Mrs D Kelly:

Yes, I do have a question. There is an issue about the amount of money that has been spent. However, my question is: how are the buildings that are under a protection and conservation order being preserved and maintained? Why can the Balmoral Show, for example, not be accommodated on the Maze/Long Kesh site, other than for those remedial issues that were mentioned earlier?

Mr Maitland:

With regard to the overall cost, about £4 million was spent over that period on demolition, remediation and ongoing site security and maintenance of the buildings; more than double the cost of the original master plan. A relatively small sum — less than £500,000 — was spent on

maintaining the listed and retained buildings. We had to put on new roofs, because they were letting in water a couple of years ago. Another round of maintenance is due shortly. I will ask Kyle to comment on the RUAS.

Mr Alexander:

We have met the RUAS since the statement was made last April. Before we can agree that they can move onto the site, we need to undertake more negotiations with them to agree the terms of any deal. We would need to get a business case approved. Therefore, I expect to advance those discussions over the next number of weeks and months, so that we can bring a clear recommendation back to officials and Ministers. I am working closely with the chief executive of the RUAS on that.

The RUAS could not move to the site until remediation work is complete, which we do not expect will happen until next spring. However, the RUAS is indicating that if we can agree the terms of a move, it would be willing to start to move a number of events, including the Balmoral Show, to the site. The RUAS has timescales to meet and is looking at other options, as well as its plans for the King's Hall site. Therefore, there is some degree of urgency that we move to conclude a deal with it, or it may decide to go elsewhere.

Mrs D Kelly:

I have to say, who would blame it?

Mr Spratt:

Thanks for the presentation. I know that there has been a lot of criticism of the money spent, and we have just heard what Dolores said, for her own political ends. Land has had to be decontaminated on a number of other government sites, particularly on Army bases, such as the Londonderry site.

If someone buys a site, they normally do the work on it themselves and pay the market value. Does decontaminating land increase the value of the land, or is it government gone mad with EC regulations or whatever? That seems to be a lot of money to spend when the land will be passed on to someone else to develop. Why does decontamination have to take place? How much will it cost? Will the value of the land be substantially more because it has been decontaminated?

Secondly, it has been the preferred site for the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society for some time. It would be a tragedy if the RUAS did not get its preferred site. There is a degree of urgency, and we should all do what we can to try to move that on and get that site sorted out for the RUAS. I assume that the centre of excellence would be part of the flagship of the whole project. The RUAS wants to do more through the Rural Network than it does currently, and I know that it holds many events and fields a lot of other projects. There has also been some chat around the possibility of motorsport events; can you tell us something about that?

With all due respect, I do not think that the money that has been spent has been in any way misused. It has been misused by political parties and people to try and have a go, as usual; that is all that has been happening. I will not ask you to comment on the last part of my statement, by the way.

Mr Maitland:

Thank you; I am off the hook on that one.

I will ask Kyle to comment on the motorsport option. Our Ministers are very aware of the view of the RUAS. They know the importance that the show could bring to the site and the fantastic potential of the show to ground the site and make it a beacon for further development.

Mr Alexander:

In response to your first point, the decontamination work is the standard approach to any major regeneration site. That was the case with Belfast gasworks and a number of other sites. If we are to take the site to the market, we will be asked whether the site is clean and what underground structures there are. If we are not able to respond to that, that site would present a risk to the developer, which would affect the value of the site.

The approach taken by Laganside and other organisations to such situations is to do some works up front, in the expectation that that will attract investment to the site. For example, when I was chief executive at Laganside, my key objective each year was to attract investment of £5 to the site for every £1 of government funding spent. The public sector needs to spend that £1 before it can attract the £5, so I do not think that what has been spent to date is a waste. It will only be a waste if we do not go ahead and develop the site.

If £12 million has been spent to date, the test will be whether, in four or five years' time, we have attracted £50 million of investment to the site. That is what the frustration is now. I do not think that what has been spent to clear the site was wasted, but we have got to show that we can move on and achieve the regeneration that we want to see.

Mr Maitland:

By the time the project is finished, around £8 million will have been spent on demolition and decontamination. That is a huge amount.

The site is so unusual because it is so huge. If it were the size of Ebrington barracks, say, or Crumlin Road jail, we would be spending a couple of hundred thousand pounds on it. The Prison Service was the biggest user of the site; the Army was on another part of it. There were hundreds of buildings, and every part of the site was developed. Where there is development, vehicles and vehicle stores, diesel fuel gets spilled. That is our experience of these things. Grossed up for 350 acres, we have ended up with a huge bill.

Mr Spratt:

That explanation better represents what has been done, compared with the misrepresentation that has been trotted around for some time now.

The Chairperson:

You seem to be saying that the decontamination process has the potential to increase the interest in the site for future development, but not necessarily its value.

Mr Maitland:

I can be absolutely clear on that. If we did not spend that money, a future developer would simply knock that amount off the value of the site.

The Chairperson:

He or she would lose interest or would not pay as much.

Mr Maitland:

There are two things to consider, based on all our experience and the advice that we have been given. First, buildings that are a burden on the site — if it is known that there is asbestos or fuel

oil contamination — will put people off.

The Chairperson:

Is there an argument, then, to accelerate the decontamination work?

Mr Maitland:

There would be, if it could be. We want to get that work done as soon as possible. We ramped it up as fast as we could, because the sooner we get rid of the contamination, the sooner we can market the site as a clean site. Government valuers and lawyers and the people who are responsible for selling assets have always told us that if we do not do the work, they will knock it off the market value. If they are going to do the work, they might knock off a larger amount than we would; that is why we do the work in advance.

Mr G Robinson:

Is the decontamination process almost complete? Is there much more to be done? How much more do you anticipate will be spent on it?

Mr Alexander:

Work is under way that is planned to take another nine or 10 months. We have funding in place for a scheme worth about £2.7 million. We require another £1 million in the next year to complete the work, and we are making a bid in the June monitoring round for that funding. If that comes through, we will be able to do that work in the current financial year. Failing that, we will need to secure money in the next financial year to complete the work. I am keen to get all the work done so that we can move ahead, but we do not currently have funding to do all the work that we need to do.

Mr G Robinson:

Will that work complete the decontamination of the whole site?

Mr Alexander:

Yes.

Ms Anderson:

I am sorry for being late. Fourteen months ago, in April 2009, the First Minister and deputy First

Minister made this statement:

“As we seek to maximise the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site we will continue to work with all those bodies interested in contributing to the development of the site.”

Given that you have carried out a scoping exercise since that statement was made 14 months ago, what indications have you had from Europe about the contribution that it will be making to the conflict transformation centre? What kind of money from Europe are we talking about? What will it take to draw that money down?

Ms June Wilkinson (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

Through the Barroso task force report, the European Commission has expressed a clear indication that it is interested in a peace facility in Northern Ireland, and, as we said, the Maze/Long Kesh site is one of the considered locations. Europe has indicated that it would be receptive to a Peace III funding application for the centre, and current estimates have shown that a centre would cost in the region of £20 million. Those very broad estimates were established a year ago. The European Commission has continued to support us because it understands the international value of a centre of excellence in peace and reconciliation.

Ms Anderson:

What has been done in the North to engage with Europe to try to secure the drawing down of that £20 million, which is sitting in Europe?

Ms Wilkinson:

We have to engage in the normal process. You account for its being earmarked in Europe, but it is not as straightforward as that. We will have to be considered through the Peace III funding programme. An application will have to be made to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and go through its normal process, which takes around six months.

Ms Anderson:

Is an application form ready, or has one been processed? Has one been submitted to the SEUPB?

Ms Wilkinson:

SEUPB has indicated that part of the application will need to determine the location of the facility, so, once the location of the facility is confirmed, the application will be submitted.

Ms Anderson:

So, thus far, nothing has been done to try to draw down that money.

Ms Wilkinson:

Well, that is the process, and SEUPB —

Ms Anderson:

The process has not been initiated yet?

Ms Wilkinson:

No, we have not got any further than making contact with SEUPB. We have kept SEUPB in the loop. We have been to Brussels a number of times and spoken with the Barroso task force working group to ensure that it is fully au fait with the position.

Mr Shannon:

I am sorry that I was not here at the beginning of the meeting. I can well remember my journey around Long Kesh to see around it and to get a better feel for it. It is important that members get the opportunity to do that, if they have not done so already. Probably everyone here has done that. Who owns the land around Maze/Long Kesh (MLK)?

Mr Maitland:

The site is so big that a score of owners own the surrounding land.

Mr Shannon:

Does the state own any of that land?

Ms Wilkinson:

No, the state does not own any of it as such. However, it should be considered that a development is taking place at Blaris, adjacent to the Maze/Long Kesh site.

Mr Shannon:

I asked that partly because one of the things that is not widely known is that special permission is needed to go shooting on the land around Long Kesh. *[Laughter.]*

Mrs D Kelly:

I knew that was coming.

The Chairperson:

Unlike in the past, when apparently no approval was needed.

Mr Shannon:

That land yielded 100 woodcock this past year. The interests inside MLK and outside of it are slightly different. I digress slightly, but I wanted to get the point on record, if nothing else.

The Chairperson:

Is this bird shooting?

Mr Shannon:

Yes, woodcock shooting. You could get your name in one of those wee books across the water and become an excellent shot as a result.

I understand that a lesser road structure is required for the project. What is the cost of that, compared with the other option? We have talked about costs, and that might put things in perspective in relation to the financial obligations of progressing the site based on what we would do now and what we were going to do in the past.

Have any other bodies expressed an interest in relocating to the MLK site? When we were down there some 15 months ago, we noticed the aircraft stock. There might be some potential there. Where do you see that going? Is there a possibility for a museum?

Mr Maitland:

There are huge possibilities as regards the Ulster Aviation Society. It has expanded its show fantastically since it moved from Langford Lodge. The society has some big purchases under way and would be cross if I named them, but it is bringing in some big-name aircraft. Kyle will agree that there are lots of opportunities for an aviation museum and for aerospace in general.

Your first question was about roads. Under the first proposed development, namely the stadium and conflict centre, something like £20 million to £30 million was discussed as being the

cost of the motorway junction, dualling the Blaris Road up to Sprucefield, and other access.

Mr Alexander:

Mr Shannon is right to raise that point, because one of the concerns with the scheme was the expense of the works that would be required to provide access to the site. That was due to the fact that access to the sports stadium requires enough road capacity to get large crowds away within an hour of any event. That required not only a junction on the M1 but extra lanes along the M1, which would have been very expensive. The figures that I have show that the cost of those roadworks would have been about £75 million; that is the cost of lanes on the motorway. We can still achieve a significant scale of development on the site with a junction off the M1 but without working on the motorway itself. Therefore, we are now talking in ballpark figures of around £30 million for roads access.

The other issue that we need to address is that there are two ways to access the site. We would all prefer to create a junction off the M1, so that people coming to the site from the west and the east can come straight off the motorway to it. However, the other option is to access the site via what is called the Knockmore Link. It is to be built as part of the Blaris development and will link into the existing junctions. That would provide access via a more roundabout route, but it would be much less expensive.

That will be one of the calls that we need to make. Do we start the development, spending less on infrastructure and providing access via the Knockmore Link, or do we recognise that direct access from the M1 is required given the site's significance? We will need to think through a number of those factors. The decision will depend on what public funding is available. If we go to the private sector, should we insist that part of the deal is that it builds the junction off the M1? Those of you who are involved in the Titanic Quarter scheme will know that there is a debate about who should pay for a new junction near the airport to provide access to that site.

Those are a number of the issues that we will need to address. We understand that budgets will not be what they were before. The key to the Maze/Long Kesh project will be to find a way of starting development with the money that we have and then trying to engage with the private sector in a long-term scheme.

Mr Elliott:

Thank you for the presentation; I apologise for not being here at the start. I declare an interest as a member of RUAS. You said that an announcement was made in April last year. I assume that you mean April 2009?

Mr Alexander:

Yes.

Mr Elliott:

Have you had only one discussion with RUAS since then?

Mr Alexander:

No. I began to meet RUAS in April last year, and I have worked with the chief executive since then. We had quite intensive discussions in the first two or three months of the year, when we began to shape out the terms of a deal. Those discussions have gone on, and we are now seeking approval to move to the next stage, when we could start to thrash out a deal.

Mr Elliott:

Are you and RUAS saying that you are on target to move the Balmoral Show to the Maze/Long Kesh site for 2012?

Mr Alexander:

I have to take care here, but that is what I want to aim for. I would like it to be there next year if possible, but we need to negotiate; I need to come back to the Department with the terms of the deal; that case will need to be approved by DFP; and it will need to go to the Minister.

Mr Elliott:

Who are we waiting for at the moment? Are we waiting for you to go back to RUAS, or are we waiting on RUAS to come to you? Who should make the next move in this jigsaw?

Mr Maitland:

The next move is ours. RUAS has asked us to indicate how seriously we view what it is saying to us, and we are discussing that with Ministers at the moment.

Mr Elliott:

How long will it be until that next move is made?

Mr Maitland:

I cannot say how long that move will take, but I assure the Committee that our Ministers are aware of the opportunity.

Mr Elliott:

Are we talking about weeks as opposed to months?

Mr Maitland:

I cannot venture a suggestion. However, RUAS has been involved with us for many years and has been interested from the outset. It was very keen when Kyle opened the discussions last year. The society has been on a bit of a journey and has put certain proposals to Ministers that they will need to consider seriously. Kyle mentioned the business case. Although I know that many people want to see RUAS at the site, it is still a public site, and public money is being spent on it. We must ensure that the deal is good for the whole community.

Mr Elliott:

At one stage, there was a rumour that the decontamination process was added to because some asbestos from the site was buried on it. Is that accurate?

Mr Maitland:

It was not added to. We have been aware of that issue, and any time we found asbestos on the site, we immediately raised health and safety issues. We have thoroughly checked through those over the past number of months. The last time we found asbestos, that operation was put in place again and the area was isolated. We made sure that it was safe and that there was no risk to public health. That is part of our ongoing clean-up campaign.

Mr Elliott:

Yes, but was some of it buried, either inadvertently or purposely, on the site that should have been cleared at an earlier stage when it was being demolished?

Mr Maitland:

We found asbestos and other materials that had to be decontaminated at various parts of the site. Some of it was dumped, and some of it was part of heating pipes in existing buildings. Almost all the buildings had to be removed, and we had to take great care to remove the asbestos. We found some in underground heating pipes over the past year and took action to remove it.

Mr Elliott:

Is the conflict transformation centre still a preferred item for inclusion in any proposal?

Mr Maitland:

It is certainly a serious issue for the site. Our Ministers want to maximise the historical and reconciliation potential of the site, and that was a component of their agreed statement in April 2009. The site has listed buildings as well as some other retained buildings of historical value. It is our job to make the best of those buildings by making them a compelling centre for future development. Kyle and June talked about the proposed peace centre that has been raised under the heading of Barroso. A lot of discussions and work have been carried out on that, but a decision has yet to be made about the centre's location.

The Chairperson:

Have the negotiations with RUAS been affected, in any way, by the hold-up with other aspects of the site?

Mr Maitland:

No.

The Chairperson:

Those discussions can be concluded on an ongoing basis as quickly as possible?

Mr Maitland:

Yes.

Mr Molloy:

Thanks for your presentation. This is around the issue of the £20 million that, it was said, may be available — and maybe more. Given that the Peace III programme is in its last two years, what is

the hold-up in making an application? Is ministerial approval required for that? Is there any thinking about how we maximise that? The time from application to approval of that would be quite a while, and getting it in place and spent is another time. We could actually run out of time.

Mr Maitland:

You are absolutely right. The money would have to be spent by the end of 2015, and, working backwards, it would be good if we got some of that work under way now. As June said earlier, in order to get the Peace III funding application under way we need to design and create a business plan — a detailed document that sets out how the centre would work, what it would do and who its users and partners would be. We would also have to have a decision to locate the centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site. Colleagues, including Kyle and June, have already done a great deal of work to get ready for that. The next stage is to complete the business plan and to fill in the EU funding application.

Mr Molloy:

At the last Balmoral Show, RUAS indicated that it was the last show at the present site and that RUAS would be on site in 2011. Is that still possible with the present programme?

Mr Maitland:

Kyle will know better than me. At the last show, Colin McDonald indicated his desire to have the next show at the Maze/Long Kesh site. It just depends on timing. There is a lot of work to do to ensure that public money is well spent and that there is a proper business case. The site is very attractive, and it has been worth the discussions so far. The society wants to move to another stage; we have to make a decision. Quite a bit of work remains to be done, and I think that that is why Kyle was being cautious about 2011.

The Chairperson:

I think that that is a definite maybe.

Mr Moutray:

In relation to the possible relocation of the RUAS — I was going to say “in 2012”, but maybe I should say “in 2011”. By that time there will not have been any changes to the roads infrastructure. What are your thoughts on that? At the moment, the roads infrastructure would

not be in any position to cope with RUAS.

Mr Alexander:

We see this as a temporary move. Take Down Royal next door: it draws quite large crowds along the same roads. There would need to be traffic management, but access to large sporting events is managed elsewhere. Certainly, that is not a long-term solution, but, on a short-term, temporary basis, the traffic could be managed in and out on the road network that is there. Quite often, I go over to watch the British Open golf, which is held in the most obscure places with poor access, but it is managed. It can be done in the short term, but that is why we need to move to the Knockmore Link or the link from the M1 in the longer term.

The Chairperson:

How do you think Tiger will do this year?

Mr Elliott:

You certainly get everything in this Committee, from woodcock shooting to Tiger Woods.

[Laughter.]

Mr G Robinson:

It is a very sporting Committee.

The Chairperson:

I assume that what you have said will not come as a surprise to Down Royal. It must be involved in some negotiation with RUAS in that regard at this stage.

Mr Alexander:

I was simply saying that Down Royal events can be accessed by the crowds that want to get there. In the same way, people could get to the RUAS show.

Mr Spratt:

Access to Balmoral is not all that good if you live around there.

Mr Molloy:

Especially because of the Twelfth and things like that.

The Chairperson:

There is always access to the Twelfth, Francie.

That completes the briefing. Thank you very much indeed for your information and for answering our questions. We may seek additional information. If so, I have no doubt that you will provide it and continue to keep us informed on an ongoing basis. Thank you and good afternoon.