



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Office of the First Minister
and deputy First Minister

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Maze/Long Kesh Site: Departmental Briefing

16 May 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Maze/Long Kesh Site: Departmental Briefing

16 May 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Danny Kinahan
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr George Robinson
Ms Caitriona Ruane

Witnesses:

Mr Tim Losty	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Mrs June Wilkinson	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Mr Kyle Alexander	Strategic Investment Board
Mrs Mary McKee	Strategic Investment Board

The Chairperson: We will now receive a briefing from departmental officials with an update on the redevelopment of the overall Maze/Long Kesh site. We welcome Tim Losty, Mary McKee, June Wilkinson and Kyle Alexander. There are four of you. Talking of Barry McGuigan, are you looking to fight? Tim, you and your team are very welcome. I invite you to give us your update and then take questions.

Mr Tim Losty (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Thank you, Chair, for giving us the opportunity to come here today to present to the Committee. It was an opportunity that we did not want to lose, because, hopefully, next year, this show will be on one of our sites at Maze/Long Kesh.

We have brought the gang today, though it is not for backings. Kyle Alexander and Mary McKee are employed by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). They are part of the Maze/Long Kesh programme delivery unit and have specialist knowledge about the future project there. My colleague June Wilkinson works with me on our management of overall sites.

Before we try to answer some of your questions, I want to make a few comments on where we are with some of our sites. After that, I will be happy to take any questions. If there is anything that I am not able to answer today, I will come back to the Committee in writing.

The sites we are responsible for were gifted to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Those were all former military sites, so they were symbolic of the past here. Since taking them over, we have converted them into assets for all the community in their areas. We have a responsibility to regenerate some of the sites, such as Maze/Long Kesh, Crumlin Road jail and Ebrington Barracks. We have been gifted other sites for the purpose of disposal to maximise income for the Executive and some of their priorities in the future.

There has been some significant work lately on the Maze/Long Kesh, Crumlin Road jail and Ebrington Barracks sites. We are also engaged with a number of businesses and external organisations about developments on those sites that will help to bring jobs and community benefits to the immediate area and throughout the region.

We have received an offer of €20 million to build the international peace-building and conflict resolution centre on the Maze/Long Kesh site. As you have heard, we are also in discussions with the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) about relocation to the Maze/Long Kesh site.

We have carried out significant work at Crumlin Road jail in north Belfast. The Committee has visited the site, so you will have seen that it is a tremendous asset to the community and the city. An announcement will be made tomorrow about a major private sector enterprise that will take place at the jail, which will hopefully go on to create some 60 jobs.

Ebrington Square was officially opened in February. It is now ready to play its part in helping to host activities that are part of the City of Culture year. There are also plans at an advanced stage to develop amenities that will help to create business clusters on the site.

There has been criticism recently about the length of time that it takes to regenerate the sites. Although we share a lot of that frustration, we are also mindful of what is involved in regeneration and of the circumstances around particular sites that we have responsibility for. Regeneration takes time to do properly. We are also mindful of the economic climate in which we have been trying to regenerate a number of the sites. One of the benefits of having Kyle Alexander work with us is that he was previously chief executive of Laganside, so we have a benchmark for the length of time it takes to secure successful regeneration. In Laganside, that was around 20 years.

We have consulted with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has highlighted that the current economic climate contributes to a slowdown in the pace of regeneration. That said, a significant amount of work has taken place on the sites that we would class as having been below ground. Such work involves the demolition of buildings that are no longer needed and decontamination works on preparation. What you will see now on many of the sites is the regeneration and construction work taking place at a faster rate.

Much of the preparation work has been completed, and we are now moving into the construction and the development and delivery of projects. We expect to see the Maze development corporation established very soon, and we are interviewing for board members over the next few weeks. That will also increase the pace of regeneration and development on the site.

Overall, to date, we have invested some £62 million in the development of the sites that we have responsibility for. In total, that is over 1,000 acres. So far, we have also managed to realise almost £40 million from external funds as part of the development of those sites. We are already seeing how they can be turned into productive use for the community. We expect to create a lot more opportunities, and we are engaged with businesses and other external organisations to move onto the sites.

That is a quick overview, and we are happy to take any questions.

The Chairperson: OK, I appreciate that. Thank you, Tim.

I will start with decontamination because you talked about the plurality of former military sites. A week or two ago, we were given information about Fort George in Londonderry, which went originally, I think, to the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners, who sold it on to the Department for Social Development (DSD). It appears that within that process, at all times, there was an agreement that, if there was a decontamination issue, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) would pick up the tab. Eventually, the MoD paid something north of £3 million for everything that was proved to have happened during its watch. It seems to be different with the military bases gifted to OFMDFM. Would that be correct?

Mr Losty: It is different, the difference being that our sites were gifted whereas DSD had to purchase the Fort George site. In the purchasing arrangement, the MoD agreed to pay the costs of decontamination.

The Chairperson: But the MoD gave it to the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners.

Mr Losty: There were two agreements involved in the transfer of that site. One was an agreement with the harbour commissioners and one was between those parties and DSD for the purchase of the site. In that relationship of the MoD selling the site to the harbour commissioners, it still had a responsibility, as the polluter, in a financial transaction to carry out decontamination work.

The Chairperson: And that was not the case with any of the sites coming our way.

Mr Losty: No, because our sites were gifted. In that particular case, there was a cost to DSD to purchase the site. I am not sure of the complete acreage and the amount that DSD paid — we will come back to you on that — but it cost DSD a certain amount to buy that site. Although we are looking at the cost of decontamination, we have been gifted over 1,000 acres.

The Chairperson: You probably understand that my underlying question is this: did we pay enough attention to the fact that the "gift" came at significant decontamination cost?

Mr Losty: That is a fair point, because when it costs money to decontaminate a site, you have to assess whether the site is worth it. We were made aware of the contaminants and their location on the sites, but we were not totally aware of the extent of the contamination, and we had to find that out when we took over ownership.

We have been involved in discussions with the MoD to see whether there would be some funding from it to help with the cost of decontamination. However, the MoD's view was that it had hoped to sell the sites so it was losing out by having to gift them to us. Under the gifting arrangements, it was our responsibility to prepare those sites so that they would be ready to be passed on. However, we believe that we have sites that will be assets and will create and maximise economic and social benefits. So, they will be able to cover their costs and will generate money for the Executive.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you for your presentation. I attended a presentation at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors the other day on public/private finance as is happening in Scotland, where they seem to have various ways of raising funding. Have we looked at their models to see whether there are ways of doing things?

Mr Losty: We have. We work closely with the Strategic Investment Board and the assets management unit. Certainly, over the past couple of years, SIB has been looking at various forms of finance, including public/private sector finance and revenue finance, in respect of how a number of major projects can be taken forward. Those initiatives would be discussed with the Budget review group.

Mr Kinahan: Let us hope that it is successful.

Mr G Robinson: I thank Tim and his team for coming along today. My concern is the Shackleton Barracks site. We visited it a few weeks ago, and it is a vast site. What is the up-to-date situation with that site? Will it be sold? I have always thought that the site would lend itself to a Department, such as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, due to the amount of land there and its upkeep. It has cost a fair amount to look after the drainage and so forth, and the site is vast. I think that you or someone from your Department had meetings with Limavady Borough Council recently.

Mr Losty: We did. You are right; it is a vast site of some 730 acres. When you are on the site, you cannot help but be impressed. We have three runways, equestrian centres and gymnasiums there. It is bound to be of major community benefit in the medium to long term.

The Shackleton site was given to us as part of the Hillsborough agreement for onward disposal rather than for the purposes of regenerating the site. However, when we received the site, the market was not great for selling. You try to buy low and sell high.

We have had some meetings with Limavady Borough Council, and we intend to meet local MLAs and community organisations to determine the overall needs of the area. We have also been talking to a number of private sector organisations. Over the next few days, we hope to be able to announce a private sector arrangement that we have made this week and to detail how the site will be used and will create jobs. We are looking at all possible uses for the site, and we are working with the assets management unit on the target marketing of the site to potential end users.

The market is not good for selling now, but that will change in years to come. In the interim, we want to be able to identify opportunities for community use. We have agreed that a local organisation may hold some events on the site over the summer, one of which will be a similar activity to the Festival of Speed that took place at the Maze/Long Kesh site recently.

We hope to have more consultation. In the medium to long term, we will look at onward disposal, but we will also look at immediate community uses for the site.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your presentation. As a North Belfast representative, my interest is obviously in the Crumlin Road jail. I want to pay tribute to the Departments for the work that they have done there. The streetscape, the general layout and the presentation of the site has given a major boost and uplift to the Crumlin Road. It has also served as a catalyst, and all four political parties that represent North Belfast have agreed on the creation of a cultural corridor because of the many buildings of significant architectural merit and interest on the road between Cliftonpark Avenue and Royal Avenue. That has been a pump-primer for the development that will come in other areas.

Following the tours, the Departments went out of their way to ensure that social clauses were written into the contract to ensure that local people got employment. Those should always be written into such public sector development contracts.

The jail obviously presents a great opportunity for tourism, and it is important that it is part of the Belfast tourism product, particularly that of north Belfast and the greater Shankill area. I am interested in how you will develop that, because, in a sense, that is how it will pay for itself.

Behind the Crumlin Road jail is the Girdwood site. Will you give us some background on how that will link in?

Finally, how do you see the Crumlin Road jail providing a boost for the people in the lower Oldpark, the lower Shankill, the Antrim Road and the Cliftonville Road that immediate about the site? How will the development of the site, coupled with the development of the Girdwood site, improve that area for the well-being of the people who live there?

Mr Losty: It will be a major asset to our whole tourism product. We know that already because we opened the jail for tours on two occasions, and 50,000 people came through the doors, including people who paid for tours, local schools and specialist organisations. So, we know who will want to see the place, how much we can charge and how we need to market and promote it. It is an asset to that part of the city, to the city itself and to the region. We see it as being part of our international product. We want to get people coming in and staying a lot longer in Belfast and travelling further afield. Therefore, we need to have venues and events for people to go to.

We will shortly be making an announcement on a management company, which will organise the tours and manage events that will take place at the jail. We have had plenty of requests from organisations and groups that want to use the facilities at the jail, for everything from music and cultural events to cookery and open-air events. One part of the jail will be used for a commercial operation, but it will also include linkage with a major international company. That will bring people in to have a look at that part of the jail. C-wing will be used as a prison museum. We will also have activities for other parts of the jail that will target different markets but will bring people to the site.

You asked about how it is going to change the area and improve things for people who live there. People who live in the area will say that north Belfast has been separated from the rest of the city and that people who come to spend money in the city centre do not come up to north Belfast. Therefore, we need to have something that will bring them there. We need a gateway to north Belfast. That will be achieved by the development of the Crumlin Road jail. People will go up there to see it.

It will act as a catalyst for further regeneration projects. We want people to come to north Belfast, and, as I say when I see people, we want them to come in with big fat wallets. We want to take every penny they have off them, give them a good time and make sure that they go back and tell their

friends so that they come to visit. That means that we have to have a domino effect, where developments with other organisations link in, so that you have a complete tourism product, and people will come and spend a day or longer in north Belfast. There will have to be shops, coffee houses and other amenities. We have the basic raw materials in north Belfast, with Cave Hill Country Park, Belfast Zoo and Clifton House. You have the cultural corridor, with the old Jewish synagogue, the Orange hall, the Russian Orthodox church and the Hindu temples. We have everything there, and we want to build that tourism product.

It takes time to change perceptions, but we know that people were prepared to come and visit the jail previously, and, with an active marketing campaign, we will get even more people coming to it.

In relation to what is happening with the Girdwood site behind the Crumlin Road jail, Ministers and local political leaders have carried out a significant amount of work to get agreement on the development of that site, and my understanding is that we are very near to securing that agreement. That will help to create a vibrant community hub for that area. The site will be supported by all communities in the area, and it will be able to provide services, jobs and amenities that will bring people in from outside north Belfast. That will help to create jobs in areas of chronic social disadvantage. So, it will be a win-win situation for everybody.

Mr Clarke: There has been criticism that some of the sites have been gifted but there are ongoing running costs. I appreciate what you said about the fact that we will not obtain the best possible price in today's market. In the short term, what can be done to reduce the costs? It seems as though some of the costs of securing sites are running away. I mean the ongoing running costs of security. I am not an economist, but it seems that we are not likely to bounce out of recession so quickly that we will obtain big prices for land. I would love to see some sort of plan and for your Department to come forward and say, "We are going to do x, y and z, because we have spent x, y and z on securing sites". To all intents and purposes, it is a waste because the sites will be sold on for completely different purposes in most cases. So, it concerns me that we are spending so much on security.

My next point follows on from the Chairperson's remarks. I know his train of thought. I did not realise that he had a Ballymena thing in him — by that I mean getting something for nothing and expecting more along with it. But that is by the by. Look at the police station scenario. If we apply the Chairman's thinking to that, surely we would be saying that, if we sell those off, we have to decontaminate police stations as well. While we may sell something on the cheap, I imagine that whoever gets it at a cheap price should accept what they have got, warts and all. It is ideal-world, fantasy-land stuff to get something for nothing and expect somebody to tidy it up and decontaminate it for us. I can see that only as fantasy land.

Mr Losty: There is a general principle, which in part is included in legislation, that the polluter pays. However, that is in a commercial transaction. So, if we get involved in a commercial transaction with organisations, we may be able to negotiate on some of that. The costs of decontamination will also depend on the eventual use. We may be able to negotiate on who pays for what with whoever wants to use some of the sites for a particular purpose.

You make a valid point about running costs. We were gifted these sites. By the time some of them were gifted to us, they were in a state of disrepair. For example, Crumlin Road jail ceased operations in 1996. We took it over in 2002-03, and it was in a very poor state. We had to spend money to renovate it. However, we look on that as an investment.

In relation to some of the other sites, security is important for a number of reasons. There are assets on the sites. Even if those assets are as simple as manhole covers, we want to keep them there. We also want to make sure that, for health and safety reasons, people do not get onto the sites and do themselves harm. We are looking at a number of options for how we can reduce the costs of security. We can look at group purchasing power because we have a number of sites in total. We are also looking at the use of new technology and at some innovative schemes to put people onto sites and thereby provide some protection.

We are looking at some of the costs. As we have already discussed, we were up at Shackleton. The big issue there is flooding, and there is a need to maintain pumps. We have invested money to upgrade some of the pumps to ensure that they will not be continually breaking down and we do not have to keep spending money on maintenance people going out. So, we reduced those costs.

We also have to find some way of generating money in the short term to offset some of the security costs. We have a number of projects for doing that, and we will be looking for more. The intention is to try to get those costs down to the minimum possible.

The Chairperson: Trevor mentioned my fantasy land. Trevor, if you said to me, "Here are my car keys; I am gifting you my car, but you have to put it through the MOT," I would not shake your hand until I knew what I had to pay for the MOT.

Mr Clarke: You should not take it, then.

The Chairperson: And we would not have had the fallout between the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and the accounting officer over Shackleton.

Mr Lyttle: I hope that, in relation to the prison refurbishments and regenerations, we do not lose track of the fact that the sites are, at their core, a representation of a fundamental breakdown in human interaction. However, I welcome the way that they are being regenerated.

I have three questions. First, is the RUAS on course to be at Maze/Long Kesh for 2013 in terms of departmental planning? Secondly, in relation to the peace-building and conflict resolution centre, mention is made of four work strands. What are they; how were they decided; and is it possible to get a copy of the business case for the centre? Thirdly, what other negotiations are ongoing on the use of the rest of the site at Maze/Long Kesh?

Mr Losty: You had a presentation from the RUAS about its overall plans. It is an exciting project, and we are on schedule to achieve that. You will be glad to hear that you do not have to listen to me on this one. Kyle Alexander has been working very closely with the RUAS, and I will ask him to provide an update.

Mr Kyle Alexander (Strategic Investment Board): I will also deal with the plans for all of the Maze/Long Kesh (MLK) site. In respect of the RUAS, all approvals are through. OFMDFM and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) have signed heads of terms with the RUAS, which is the foundation for the deal that we will do with it. If the members' vote goes in favour of the MLK site, we will then enter into a contractual agreement with the RUAS. All that is under way, and, from our point of view, everything is in place for that deal to be done.

The site is ready for the RUAS. All the work that we have been doing to remediate and clear the site is now virtually complete. From our viewpoint, everything is in place for the show to be there next year, and we are working with the RUAS on its plans for the site.

In respect of the overall plans for the site, it is worth saying that, in the past two or three years, we have tried to create momentum on the site, and we are now well placed. We expect the board of the corporation to be in place by the end of August or by the autumn. By that time, we, as a team, will be able to present to the board the plans for the overall site, and the deal with the RUAS will be done. We have confirmed funding for the resolution centre, and work to clean and clear the site has been completed. Therefore, I believe that the corporation will come in and will be able to make a very strong start on advancing plans for the overall site.

It is a 350-acre site, and the RUAS is taking about 65 acres. Therefore, there is significant potential for a mixed-use scheme on the rest of the site. Ministers have said that their priority is to maximise the economic development potential. We see scope for a landscaped campus-style business park on a substantial part of the site, and you mentioned, when you spoke to Colin earlier, that there is scope for agrifoods and agritech. The move of the RUAS to the site with its centre of excellence will create an opportunity to build on economic development.

We are looking at a number of other uses for the site. When the Committee came to the site last June, we went to see the work of the Ulster Aviation Society. We are currently undertaking some work with the society to establish the future use for the two aircraft hangars, and we want to work with the aviation society on that. Last week, we met the local community association. People there lived on the edge of the prison for many years. The previous master plan included a commitment to have a community zone that would start to address the community's needs, and we are working with the local community and with Lisburn City Council on that.

Sorry, we are starting to hear Riverdance in the background.

The Chairperson: Dancing is not compulsory.

Mr Alexander: You can see that we have begun to move forward on a number of fronts, and, when the corporation is in place, it will be able to confirm the overall plans for the site.

We are preparing the way to go out to the private sector to get it to invest in the site, which is key in all these sites. We have talked about the level of expenditure to date on these sites. These sites are tools to secure major investment. We are spending now so that we can attract private sector investment. Certainly, the work that we are doing at Maze/Long Kesh suggests that there is scope for £250 million of private sector investment in the site, and that is what we are working towards.

Mr Losty: The peace-building and conflict resolution centre is an exciting project, which has already attracted a lot of international interest. A conference was held in Dublin a number of weeks ago, and a lot of people wanted to find out more about it. When Ministers were in Europe, they met a lot of organisations that were very keen to hear more about it.

I am going to ask Mary McKee to talk through the project's four key strands and where we are with it.

The Chairperson: Just before you do, I want to pick up on one thing that Kyle said. He said that the development corporation board would be up and running by August or early autumn, yet your March 2012 update says that it is hoped to have the corporation board operational by early summer. Where has the slippage come from?

Mr Losty: A recruitment competition was run to recruit people for the position of chair and for a number of director positions. A number of people would be considered suitable to serve on the board, but, when we looked at the skills and experience required for a development corporation of that nature, it was felt that we should go back out to the marketplace to try to get more people with more of those skills. We have done that. We have re-advertised, and we are interviewing people the week after next. Although we are behind schedule, it was felt that it was important to make sure that the skill mix was right.

The Chairperson: Why do you think that you did not attract a suitable chair for such an important core bit of business?

Mr Losty: We attracted what I would consider to be some big hitters in terms of broad regeneration work. However, we are looking for various skills sets. The people who applied previously are able to reapply. We are looking for skills to develop a huge site — a site that will include economic, community, hospital and housing opportunities, an aviation centre and a peace-building centre — and to take that forward, ensuring that it has the confidence of all stakeholders in our community as well as MLAs, the Executive and Ministers. It is a big job.

The Chairperson: If it is that exciting, why are you not flooded with suitable chairs?

Mr Losty: We are flooded. We are using the whole of next week to interview people, given the amount of interest.

The Chairperson: So it is different from the first trawl?

Mr Losty: The way in which the positions were advertised the first time meant that some people may have felt that they were excluded from applying, which was not the intention. Although we got applications from all sectors — community, political and business — we just felt that we needed to get more applications from some of those sectors.

Mrs Mary McKee (Strategic Investment Board): I have been working on the project for three and a half years. The junior Ministers' original ask was to work with Kyle and the team to look at four things. First, should there be a conflict-resolution facility? Secondly, if so, what should it contain? Thirdly, how do you take it forward discretely? The fourth thing was location, location. I carried out a scoping study and talked to all the key stakeholders. We came back with a scoping study that included ideas on whether there should be a conflict-resolution facility. We did a mapping exercise that looked at where activities like this happen throughout the world. We came back with a number of activities, including what happens in Northern Ireland, with four distinctive strands.

The first one is international exchange. What does that mean? If you look at the police as regards exchange, you see that they are in about 18 countries at the moment, trading in lots of things. I am conscious that you would know that from being on the Policing Board. Those things include civil order, human rights and counter-terrorism. There is lots of activity. Indeed, our own MLAs — yourselves — are prolific travellers. There is quite a lot of activity in international exchange.

The second strand is education and learning. In Queen's University alone, conflict resolution is studied in 14 of its schools, although there is no corporate response. The University of Ulster has a bespoke institute that does it. The North American market, from Columbia University with its United Nations Studies Program to Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, has lots of activity in the area of education and learning.

The third strand is around archives — what kind of stories should be told and what kind of archives should be presented. The fourth aspect is that, if your business is conflict resolution, you should be based here.

As I said, lots of activities in the area of conflict resolution happen in different countries, but no one has tried to actually land those four strands in one bespoke, particular institute. That makes the conflict-resolution facility a unique offer and that is why it has attracted €18.1 million from the European Union, which is the biggest allocation of Peace funds to date. Furthermore, as was mentioned in the press last Friday, we have received a development grant of £364,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is part of its support for a £6.4 million bid.

Mr Lyttle: I have a couple of quick follow-up questions.

The Chairperson: Caitríona is next, Chris. Do you mind allowing her and Francie to ask questions first?

Mr Lyttle: My quick question is this: how do you identify what a key stakeholder is and how are you working to decide what stories are told?

Mrs McKee: If I may, I will answer that briefly. Key stakeholders are anyone we could talk to who would listen. I have talked to, and I am still talking to, the five ex-combatant organisations — they are all in one, what we call, reference group or constituency group — and victims and survivors. Key stakeholders are anyone who is interested and is prepared to listen.

We submitted our application to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) this time last year. The key stakeholders designed that application form and the one for the Heritage Lottery Fund. I think that that is why we were successful in our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which called the process exemplary.

Mr Lyttle: Will there be any public consultation around the stories?

Mrs McKee: As part of putting the applications together, we employed an international firm that looked at best practice in capturing stories. They designed a number of principles, one of which is that there is not one key story here but about 33. Another principle is that every story will be told with sensitivity and equality. A number of principles went into the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, and that was, perhaps, why we were so grounded and successful.

The Chairperson: As we are prolific travellers, there are no fewer than eight of us across town today. Caitríona is next. *[Laughter.]*

Ms Ruane: I have two points. Mary, I think that you are absolutely right. There is huge untapped potential in conflict resolution in Ireland and abroad. Unfortunately, I have not travelled recently. I have been home-based. However, for four years in the early 1980s, I worked for the Dublin-based aid agency, Trócaire, in some of the worst conflict areas at the time: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. We worked in Africa, Asia and Latin America at a time when the conflict was raging in Ireland. Thankfully, that is no longer the case, and, because that is now so much part of day-to-day life, I think that we underestimate the impact of the work that was done. Whether that was by politicians — we fight the bit out, but we have come to some amazing agreements — civic society or civil servants, it has all become so humdrum that we take it for granted.

Yet, last weekend, I was in Mayo, where some Karen people from Burma who have been granted Irish citizenship are living. Negotiations are starting, and we see what has happened with their wonderful leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. They are coming to me in Castlebar and telling me that they want to learn from what has happened. People in Africa also want to learn. I think that, rather than picking holes in it, we need to embrace it. There is huge potential. I do not think that we can even begin to understand the extent of that potential.

Secondly, Tim, I know that the contamination issues are difficult. I have to declare an interest. During the previous term, I lobbied hard for Lisanelly and other areas as part of the Hillsborough agreement and in my role as the Minister of Education. There were two reasons why I did that. It is hard to get land like that, and we had to fight to get the sites gifted. Often, that land is in very strategic locations. In Omagh, it is right in the heart of the town. That site has huge potential to really move things forward in respect of education and the sharing of education.

It is unfortunate that the MoD polluted land with military equipment. It is very disappointing, though not unexpected, that the MoD is walking away from its responsibilities, as it did in every part of the world where it was. That is my analysis; other people may have a different one. I have seen it everywhere. That is why people are still being wounded by landmines left behind. But that is another story.

I am glad that your Department got the gift of those sites. If you had not, what we would see is what I see in my constituency, in Bishops court in Ballyhornan. There, the MoD sold the land irresponsibly to developers with no conditions on the sale. Now, people are living in terrible conditions on those sites, and it is an absolute disgrace. So, yes, some costs have to be picked up, but I am glad that we fought the good fight, and I would like you to take that point back to the Department. It is very important now that we maximise the use of those sites, because they have huge potential. I thank you for the work that you are doing.

Mr Molloy: Thank you for your presentation. I have two questions, and the first is about European funding. Have we any idea of other European funding that we could look for? We have information in our papers for today's meeting about Máire Geoghegan-Quinn acting in relation to the European funding of research and development projects under Horizon 2020. Is there the opportunity to do that on these sites? I am thinking about agriculture, waste and all that sort of stuff. It is ideal for that because of the size of the site and its remoteness. You could do a lot of research there that you could not do elsewhere, if you had the opportunity to do it. Are our Departments looking for all possible sources of funding? As the Barroso task force identified, there a number of other sources of funding. We are inclined to look at just Peace and rural funding and to forget about all the other sources.

My other question is in relation to Ballykelly. George knows the situation better than I do. There is much talk about commissioning a new prison. If we are to build prisons, surely, we should be looking at that as one of the possible sites? I do not want to get involved in the local community issue there. However, sometimes integration can work in such a situation. I have looked at the site, and it is massive. Buildings are already there, and it has potential for both community and other use.

We have received a partial answer to the other issue that I wanted to ask about. Why has it taken so long to get the management, the corporate body, in place? I see a danger that we take this project so far and then a new board comes in, which starts from the beginning again and reverses a lot of the stuff that has already happened. The earlier the corporation can be in place, the better.

Mr Losty: Let me make a few comments in relation to those points. I will take the last one first. You are right. We do not want to stop this work and then have a development corporation starting all over again. We have a programme/project delivery unit with Kyle and Mary on board so that there is continuity in that work. Not having a development corporation in operation at present is not holding up significant aspects of the work. Obviously, when the corporation is established and those skills are brought to bear, it will add significant value to the work in the future. So, there will be that continuity.

In relation to EU funding, OFMDFM has responsibility to co-ordinate our response to the Barroso task force across all Departments. So, we are working with colleagues to make sure that we are actively targeting where there is potential for other forms of European grant. We are trying to put together projects to submit for that money. As regards work that we could generate through the peace-building and conflict resolution centre, the EU and other organisations around the world will put out to tender projects for people to work with other regions and other conflict zones. They are commercial contracts. We have organisations — community-based, police or political organisations — and we would like to try to harness that expertise so that they can tender for that work as part of the peace-

building and conflict resolution centre (PBCRC). So, we do see potential for an awful lot more money to come in from Europe.

Mr Kinahan: Is the Massereene site, which is very small and a bit more local, being considered for anything at the moment — perhaps moving government Departments out to it in Antrim?

Mr Losty: At this stage, Massereene has not been part of any discussions. I will confirm that and get back to the Committee, but it has not come up in any work that we are involved in.

The Chairperson: Did Colin McDonald say that a name change was imminent for the conflict transformation centre? Did I pick that up correctly?

Mrs McKee: He said "rebranding" but the name is, unfortunately, not in our gift. The name is with politics, but he did say "rebranding".

The Chairperson: And that is happening?

Mr Losty: "It does what it says on the tin" at this point in time. The development corporation will be established, and part of that organisation will be responsible for running the peace-building centre. That is when it will go through rebranding, and they may decide to consider a name change.

The Chairperson: Mary, you talked about the junior Ministers asking you to go out and scope. You may recall that, with my victims' commissioner hat on, I attended one of those meetings. It was under Chatham House rules, and I do not intend to breach those, but I have a clear recollection that it was put to the victims' representatives in the room that we were going to go through various points — should we have a centre, and, if so, what should it look like — and the final point was venue. Everybody went straight to the point about venue, ignoring all the other issues, and stayed there for the rest of the afternoon. There was a lot of heat and very little light. I am just asking you to confirm that there is resistance to the Maze as a venue.

Mrs McKee: Yes, I do recall that because it was a long afternoon. I think that location became almost the proxy to discuss dealing with the past and all the other very complex issues. It was a very robust exchange, and, if I remember, those attending were split right down the middle. Sorry, what was the last part of your question?

The Chairperson: Just to confirm that there is resistance to the venue.

Mrs McKee: I mentioned earlier the principles of how we got there. We said that we heard and will hear every voice. There are voices that will never support this project, but we are prepared to have them at the table and to continue to talk to those people. So, yes, there is resistance.

The Chairperson: To the point of never supporting.

Mrs McKee: In certain quarters, but that would be a minority, in my experience. I have worked on this project for three and a half years, and it is a minority.

The Chairperson: Mary, Tim, June and Kyle, thank you all very much indeed.