



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Social Development

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and  
Amusements Bill: DSD Briefing

7 February 2013



board some of the concerns of members and does not propose to increase the types of premises where gambling is permitted or to increase the number of gaming machines currently on premises. Furthermore, he does not intend to extend the opening hours of establishments where gambling is currently permitted.

A couple of years ago, we carried out a gambling prevalence survey. We found that around three quarters of those aged over 16 in Northern Ireland gamble, and the most popular form of gambling is the National Lottery. The National Lottery is outside the scope of our legislation, because it is a reserved matter, so we will not be dealing with it. At that time, the average expenditure on gambling was £6 a week. There are around 320 bookmakers' shops in Northern Ireland, around 165 amusement arcades, 40 bingo halls, two horse-racing tracks and two dog tracks. About 2,400 people are directly employed in gambling, plus others on the supply side. There are also over 200 local lotteries that raise funds for local good causes.

The Bill will largely be an enabling Bill that will establish a modern legal framework. We will then return to the Assembly and the Committee with the regulations that will put the meat on the bones. We do not have a lot of detail decided here; that will be decided through the regulations. The sorts of issues that we will deal with will be problem-gambling and the protection of children. It will be an offence to permit under-18s to play machines. There will also be an enforcement of bookmakers' contracts. Currently, a bet with a bookmaker is considered to be a gentleman's agreement and is not enforceable in law. In Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe, however, it is a legal contract and can be enforced. The Bill will also update the law around cheating, to make it an offence to attempt to influence the outcome of a sporting event in order to benefit. Even the attempt will be an offence.

Promotional draws will also be legal in Northern Ireland. The view in Europe is that those are a legitimate commercial activity and should not be considered as gambling, whereas our law considers promotional draws, such as the draw recently run by a bank, differently. I know that members received correspondence on that draw, because we did, too. The bank was running a draw for customers who held a particular amount in deposit for so long. Those customers were entitled to enter the draw. Northern Ireland customers of the bank were excluded. We will amend the law to allow Northern Ireland customers to benefit from such draws.

We will also need to make a change, as I mentioned earlier, around compliance with EU law, and on gaming machines in bookmakers' shops and other authorised premises. We intend to adopt the Great Britain technical standards and categories, which will put us on a firm legal basis for the first time. Machines, such as the fixed-odds betting terminals, currently operate in a grey area in Northern Ireland, because our law is so old. The intention is to adopt the technical standards adopted by Great Britain. We are adopting their framework and technical standards, but all that that does is to put a label on various machines telling us what they are. It does not mean that we have to follow the approach in Great Britain as to where those machines are permitted and how many of them are permitted. That will be decided by regulations, and, of course, the Assembly and Committee will have their views on that. The change makes it clear to the police and ourselves what types of machines are operating, and where, and suppliers can be prosecuted if they supply machines to an inappropriate premises, such as a fast-food outlet or a taxi depot, where, sometimes, machines operate illegally.

Remote gambling is a difficult area, and I know that members expressed concern about it, in particular, the previous time I was here to brief members. Section 331 of Great Britain's Gambling Act 2005 extends to Northern Ireland and provides some protection for Northern Ireland consumers. That section is being reviewed in Great Britain, and the Minister is in correspondence with his counterpart in Westminster around the impact on Northern Ireland. In addition, the EU Commission has recently published a draft action plan aimed at improving the regulation of remote gambling. As that is all going on in the background, we decided to proceed with our draft Bill and await the outcome of the deliberations in Great Britain and the EU before trying to legislate for remote gambling. We made it clear at the Executive that there may well be an amendment coming down the road as the Bill progresses if there is progress in either Brussels or Westminster.

In terms of the time frame, officials will now start to draft instructions for the Office of the Legislative Counsel. It is going to be a fairly lengthy and complicated Bill, so we expect that to take several months, but the aim is to have a Bill drafted for introduction to the Assembly before the end of this mandate. I am happy to take any questions.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you for that. There are a number of issues, and a couple of members have already indicated that they want to speak. The Committee raised some issues of concern in the earlier briefings with you. One of them was around the illegal gambling that is supposedly going on in

different bars or clubs on Sundays. Some people asked whether there was a way of legalising Sunday gambling so as to take it out of the illegal scenario and regulate it. I am not arguing one way or the other; I am just saying that those were positions taken by various Committee members and people who lobbied the Committee. When you refer to remote gambling, is that online gambling?

**Mr Quinn:** That is online gambling, generally, yes.

**The Chairperson:** That is the stuff that I am concerned about. Recently, I have noticed what I consider to be very aggressive, glitzy, glamorous TV advertising campaigns. What you are saying is that, subject to what might be happening in Britain and Europe, you want to just hold —

**Mr Quinn:** We did not see any point in bringing forward proposals now that may have to be changed in light of a direction from Europe. We will look to see what Europe decides, and then we will bring forward proposals for the Executive and, in due course, the Committee to consider.

**The Chairperson:** OK. Were there any other considerations around the issue of Sunday bookmakers or illegal activity?

**Mr Quinn:** Yes, it was considered, certainly. It is possible to gamble in Northern Ireland at a racetrack, for example, on a Sunday, but bookmakers are not prepared to open. Given people's concerns around the opportunities to gamble currently, the Minister took the view that he did not want to extend the range of premises where gambling was permitted. He did not intend to permit casinos or to change the opening hours for those premises where gambling is currently permitted, and that includes bookmakers not opening on a Sunday. He did not want to change the rules or what is in place at the moment around the number of machines that are currently there.

**The Chairperson:** You describe it as a lengthy, complicated Bill, but, on the surface, as I read it, it is not that complicated. It might be lengthy and technically complicated, but there is certainly no radical change in the Bill that I can see.

**Mr Quinn:** No, there will not be a lot of radical change, but there will be up to 244 clauses and a large number of schedules. There is a lot to it, covering quite a lot. As we are not proposing a huge, radical change, we may be able to adapt or amend some of what we have in place already. We can also look at some of the articles they have in Great Britain, where they are much further ahead in modernising their legislation. It will all come down to how well and how quickly we can work with the Office of the Legislative Counsel.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you for that. Members, you have been warned — 244 clauses.

**Mr Copeland:** That is bigger than the Welfare Reform Bill.

**The Chairperson:** More annual leave commensurate with that.

**Mr McClarty:** Thanks, Chairman. I want to follow on from the initial question that you put to Liam and Patrick. Thanks for the presentation. Liam, you said that there are over 300 bookmakers' shops, and there is any amount of amusement arcades in the Province, but the worryingly increasing level of gambling is online gambling. We just have to watch satellite television coverage of a football match to see that, every time there are ads, they are advertising online gambling, no matter what company it happens to be. Are you saying, Liam, that the Department is making no provision for the online gambling operators in this review?

**Mr Quinn:** No, what we are saying is that there is a certain level of protection provided already, but it is probably not enough. The EU has launched a review of online gambling, looking right across the member states, to try to come up with proposals that can be applied across the EU to protect the vulnerable, ensure fair play and keep crime out of gambling. Those are the same sorts of issues that we are looking at in our review. So, we did not feel that now is the right time to bring forward our own proposals, as the EU has already kicked off its review. The EU launched its review as recently as last October, and it intends to have a conference of stakeholders during 2013. We expect that its views will be known — certainly, the direction of travel will be known — before any Bill that we produce goes through the Assembly. At that point, we will probably table an amendment, subject to various approvals, to ensure that our new Act complies with any EU directive.

**Mr McClarty:** That is fine. Thank you.

**Mr F McCann:** It seems that we are dealing with 200 clauses of technicalities to try to deal with existing outdated laws. You talk about modernising, but, in fact, it is a standstill Bill. It is not dealing with modernising the gambling end of sports at all. It seems to have gone backwards from the initial days when we talked about what the Bill could encompass — the likes of dealing with illegal gambling, and not only that which takes place on Sundays in pubs and clubs but the whole question of cards, illegal casinos, and so on. They all go on in the background, and it seems that the Minister has taken a position of saying, "Well, that is OK. Just let that work away. We will not legalise it or bring it into the present day." I have major concerns about that.

Obviously, there have always been quite a number of bookmakers. Most of the independent bookies have been forced out by the bigger companies. I thought that David was going to raise that, because we dealt with a case here not that long ago. I think that it was in Lurgan. I would have thought that there would be legislation to protect the independents who are being forced out by the majors. However, I take it that that is not the case.

We had people up here last week from the dog track. They provide employment and entertainment for quite a number of people. Gambling is a part of their trade, but there are three elements to it, and they cannot seem to get a connection there. I take it that no one has spoken to people like that to work out how they are brought into the whole thing. You can go down into the centre of Belfast and walk into an amusement arcade that opens 24 hours a day. I would have had some difficulty with amusement arcades, but the fact is that they are there and they are a feature of life right across the North.

It is back to the whole modernisation of gambling. We are losing an opportunity. I will not ask what the Department's opinion was on how it should be modernised, because I think that there is ministerial influence on how we are taking this whole thing forward. I do not expect you to comment on the last bit.

**Mr Quinn:** On casinos and illegal gambling, casinos are illegal in Northern Ireland as things stand, and enforcement is a matter for the PSNI. That is the current situation, and it will not change. Gambling in casinos, where there are high stakes and high prizes, is considered to be the hardest form of gambling. It is also a cash-based industry. Elsewhere in the world, there have been serious problems with casinos. There is the matter of regulating casinos to ensure that consumers are getting fair play. You need a lot of expertise and resources to do that. You also have organised crime associated with a cash-based industry such as casinos. That has happened elsewhere in the world. So, it is something that the Minister was not prepared to move towards. He did not feel that there was any appetite here for it. Certainly, no one approached the Department during our consultations or the gambling prevalence survey and said that Northern Ireland needs casinos. If there are illegal casinos operating, that is a matter for the PSNI, as with other forms of illegal gambling.

The Bill proposes to modernise the language used and make it clear what is legal and what is not and exactly what type of premises will be permitted to operate machines and when. A difficulty for a lot of amusement arcades is that, because our law is so out of date, machines that are currently legal here cannot be obtained anymore because they are out of kilter with what has been developed for Great Britain. So, they end up cannibalising old machines and putting them together to try to keep legal. There is a temptation for people to buy machines off the shelf that are illegal in Northern Ireland but perfectly legal in Great Britain. In addition, organisations that operate in both jurisdictions have a certain amount of ignorance about what is legal and what is not. There is an attempt to legalise things.

The issue around Drumbo dog track relates to a liquor licence, rather than gambling. We were not lobbied by it in particular about gambling.

**Mr F McCann:** There is an issue with Sunday opening.

**Mr Quinn:** It is permitted to hold races on a Sunday, and it is also permitted to gamble on a Sunday at the racetrack, but its difficulty is that it does not have a liquor licence to serve alcohol.

**Mr F McCann:** The Department for Social Development also looks after that end of it, so you would think that all you have to do is turn your hat around to look at that element of it. It seems a bit crazy

that people have invested heavily in a business and cannot get that wee breakthrough for three or four hours a week on a Sunday.

One of the other elements is to do with the fixed terminals in bookies. We had bookmakers' representatives up here, who were singing the praises of those terminals, but I have talked to independent bookmakers who said that they would not have them about them, because they see them as being equivalent to an element of a casino, where people can walk in and they can lose a fortune.

I am still concerned that although we are dealing with one element, the elements that provide employment and allow local people the opportunity to tap into what may be legally available in Britain or parts of Europe is being denied to them here. Mickey raised the point about where parity fits in, and that is an argument that we have had here for quite a while.

**Mr Quinn:** Fixed-odds betting terminals are a bit of a grey area in our law because they are the result of a technological advance that came after our legislation was drafted. The law will be modernised to categorise them in the same way that they are categorised in GB. Currently, the major bookmakers in Northern Ireland operate using the guidelines that exist in Great Britain. They tend to use four machines, which is what is permitted in Great Britain, and they tend to comply with the various conditions that exist there. As far as we understand, those machines are outside the law currently. The intention is to legalise that and put it on a firm footing, but it will be for the Assembly and this Committee to determine how many machines will be permitted. The bookmakers have expressed concerns, and they carried out an economic impact assessment on what would happen to some of their shops if fixed-odds betting terminals were to be removed. They expressed those concerns to the Committee. The issues have to be balanced up, and, ultimately, it will be for the Assembly to decide how many of these machines will be permitted, and that will be done by regulation.

**Mr F McCann:** What about the protection of independent bookies?

**Mr Quinn:** In Northern Ireland, we operate on the basis of a needs principle, so that if you have a bookmaker's licence, you are fairly well protected in operating your business. The issue in Lurgan was that Mr McCartan purchased premises on another street and wanted to transfer his bookmaker's licence from its current location to the new location. His competitors objected on the basis that there was no justification for it. It was a difficult one, because, in most of our towns, bookmakers' shops tend to be off side streets and in alleyways. Relatively few operate directly on the main streets, whereas in Great Britain, where there are not the same restrictions that we have, you will have main streets in some of the towns where there are rows and rows of bookmakers' shops, most of them operating fixed-odds betting terminals, because they are permitted only four each. The Minister took the view that he did not want a proliferation of bookmakers' shops along our main streets, which is what would follow if we were to change the law to allow bookmakers to move from one location to another.

**Mr F McCann:** This is an important point. The man was just moving a matter of yards, and his family have had a licence forever, but another company that has numerous shops across the North objected to it. There has to be fairness. It was just a matter of yards, and I cannot understand —

**The Chairperson:** Sorry for interrupting you, Fra, but was the case not, in this particular instance — I do not want to just deal with one particular case, but the Committee took the view that it reflected a potential problem. Was it not the case that, before that person applied for a bookmaker's licence around the corner, he had to relinquish his existing one, with no guarantee of a positive outcome in the other case? That is prohibitive, because it puts that businessperson at a disadvantage.

I have no issue with deciding whether you will grant a licence for a particular row of shops because, as I understand it and as Kevin has just reminded me, we have information that tells us that the vast majority of these shops are in the most deprived wards across all the constituencies. So, there is an issue there.

You can decide whether a particular kind of business may operate on a main street, but surely a person who wants to open up a business there should not have to relinquish their licence when there is no guarantee that they will get that back again. We are concerned about that issue, not about whether a person should be automatically allowed to open up somewhere else, because that is a wider retail and social policy matter.

**Mr Quinn:** I visited Mr McCartan down in Lurgan and both premises there. I am familiar with his issue, and I must say that I personally have a certain amount of sympathy for his dilemma — that is certainly what it is. However, from looking at all the issues in the round, we found it very difficult to find a solution that did not allow large multiple bookmakers to come in and open up bookmakers' shops wherever they wanted. Although you may have sympathy for one individual, it is better to look at the bigger picture. I know that the Minister is familiar with this.

**The Chairperson:** Nobody round this table is arguing that that particular bookmaker, or any other business, should be automatically permitted to open up on a main street. For us, that is a wider policy and retail planning problem. However, in this case, it appeared unfair because the person, in seeking to open up premises elsewhere, had to relinquish his licence. We believe that that is inherently unfair.

It is not about permitting that activity at another row of shops. It is about enabling that person to be equalised with everybody else. Surely that person should be able to retain his licence and apply to open up somewhere else. If he does not get the licence, he stays where he is, if that is what he wants to do. It just looks to be unfair.

**Mr Quinn:** One of the principles of our law is around needs. You have to justify to the court that issues the licences that a bookmaker's shop is required in a particular area. They had that system in Great Britain, but they abolished it when they reformed their gambling legislation. If you were to talk to people in Great Britain, a lot of them would say that that was a mistake. As I said earlier, they now have rows of bookmaker's shops along main streets because, as long as you have a licence, all you need to do is buy other premises, and you can —

**The Chairperson:** This Committee never suggested that. We only ever queried why someone applying to transfer their business had to relinquish their licence and why, if they did not get permission, they lost their licence, because that seemed unfair. This is not us suggesting that they should be able to open up premises elsewhere. We are not suggesting that at all. We just think that it is unfair that you have to relinquish your licence. Would a furniture shop have to relinquish its licence to operate if it wanted to relocate? The answer is no. Therefore, it is unfair that this type of business has to relinquish its licence, with no guarantee that it will get a licence anywhere else.

We are not advocating that that person should get a licence, because we think that that is a retail issue. It is almost like the John Lewis argument. That is nothing to do with us. We are simply saying that in this instance, this particular business — and no other business does this apply to — for him to consider relocating, he has to relinquish his licence. That is unfair. That is not us advocating that it should be allowed to open anywhere else. So, the Committee wants that looked at.

**Mr Copeland:** On this point, surely anyone wishing to change the use of any premises from anything to a bookmaker's is required to get planning permission for change of use? Did you have any discussions with the Department of the Environment or the Planning Service to determine whether the difficulty that you are trying to avoid, which I fully understand, can be encapsulated in planning law? It might be possible to apply for a licence for a specific location, but that the granting of that licence is dependent on acquiring appropriate planning permission to change the use of the business. Did you have any discussions on that?

**Mr Quinn:** We had discussions, certainly, yes. To move this one forward, I will write to the Committee, setting out the current legislation, what we had considered and the various options. There will still be an opportunity for the Committee to revisit this as we move forward. I will write to you to explain the background to the current law, the various options we looked at and why we came to the conclusion that we did.

**Mr Copeland:** Do any of these proposals in any way alter the existing arrangements and relationships between on-course bookmakers, who may be licensed to trade in the North, do trade in the North, and may be licensed, if that is required, to operate in the South? Bookies follow the season. Is there anything in this that will change any of those relationships for UK-based bookmakers in the North who are operating in the South or for southern-based bookmakers, of which there are many more, who are operating in the North? What way is taxation worked out, for example, on the profits of a northern-based bookmaker who is trading in the South and a southern-based bookmaker who is trading in the North?

**Mr Quinn:** I am not familiar with the taxation thing at all. In terms of the permit to operate, there was a suggestion during our earlier consultation that we could move to having one bookmaker's licence

across the island of Ireland. However, that has not been pursued. You are still required to have an on-course bookmaker's licence to operate in Northern Ireland, and you need a separate one to operate in the Republic of Ireland.

**Mr Copeland:** Does the Northern Ireland one allow you to operate elsewhere in the UK?

**Mr Quinn:** No. It is Northern Ireland only.

**Mr Copeland:** Does the UK one allow you to operate in Northern Ireland?

**Mr Quinn:** No. You can operate in England, Scotland or Wales.

**Mr Copeland:** Game, set and match.

**Mr Brady:** Thanks for the presentation. This thing about Sunday opening — bookie's shops can open in Britain on a Sunday. I am not sure of the rationale why they cannot open here, because I know, and we probably all know, pubs beside bookies where, on a Sunday when the bookies are closed, people can bet and lose a lot of money. Those arcades with the gambling machines open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as Fra says. I worked in the advice sector for a long time, and the vast majority of people with gambling problems who I had in had them with machines, not with slow horses, in fairness.

I am not being facetious when I say this about parity, but it is constantly rammed down our throat that if something happens over there, it should happen here. So, there has to be another reason. Bookies are part of "working class culture" in most towns, and certainly in the town that I live in. I am not sure of the rationale why you can bet in a pub or go to a machine. To take one instance in Newry, there is an arcade around the corner from a bookie's shop. It is open on a Sunday, and I have passed it on a Saturday and Sunday morning, and people are queuing to get into it before it opens. And yet the bookie's shop is closed, and there is a pub five yards up the street where people can go in and bet on a Sunday. I am not sure of the rationale. There does not seem to be any logic or thought behind it. There has to be another reason for it.

**Mr Quinn:** The Minister took the view that there were enough opportunities to gamble.

**Mr Brady:** There are. That is the point. There are too many.

**Mr Quinn:** He did not want to increase them.

**Mr Brady:** With respect, I do not think he is increasing them. I think he is giving people the opportunity to go somewhere familiar. Sometimes, you will lose a lot more money in a pub or on a machine than you would lose in a bookie's shop. There is an element of control to some degree in a bookie's shop. With machines, as long as you have the money, the machine is not going to tell you to stop. In the bookie's shops that I know locally, the people who work there have local knowledge and know the people. They would actually maybe encourage them not to put on a bet, so there is a human element there.

You say that it is stopping people having more opportunities, but anybody could sit in the house gambling on their mobile phone. As David said, if you watch any football match at the weekend or during the week on Sky, all you see is betting. You can bet on anything. You can bet on the corner flag getting knocked over. It is crazy. So there is no logic or rationale behind it.

**Mr Quinn:** I take your point. All I can say is that the Minister decided that he was not prepared to increase the opportunities for gambling, and one of them would have been to extend opening hours for bookmakers' shops.

**The Chairperson:** We did have presentations from representatives of bookmakers. At one point, they were arguing that they did want to liberalise the laws on Sunday opening to deal with the issue of illegal gambling. However, they came back after talking to their staff and said that they did not want Sunday opening. Those were the bookmakers' associations' representatives themselves. Obviously, that was because of staff issues. They did not want to put additional work burdens on staff, and so on. There are issues around protecting staff and opening on Sundays for the reasons that people outlined.



At this moment in time, the Minister is not proposing any changes. So, it is up to the Committee to consider whether it wants to do anything about that.

One other issue that had been raised with the Committee, which seems to me to be a very small issue that probably affects a very small number of people, is the issue around poker clubs. The case was put to us that a very small number of like-minded people had come together and wanted to have it regulated on the basis of small stakes that involve only the people who are involved in the game. There are very firm, formalised stake and prize-money levels, and so on. I do not play poker, but, at the end of the day, it certainly seemed to be reasonable for consenting adults to have the facility to do that, particularly when it would be governed and regulated. There would not just be open-ended high stakes like some of the Hollywood movie stuff that you might watch. So, had you given any thought to that particular lobby? They did come to the Committee, and made representations to the Department.

**Mr Quinn:** I met the individuals who are involved in that lobbying. We had an interesting discussion with them. However, again, as I said to Mickey, the Minister decided that he was not prepared to increase the range of premises where betting would be permitted. That includes poker clubs.

**Mr F McCann:** He remained poker-faced.

**The Chairperson:** We are not going to go down the puns this morning.

One of the last points that I want to make is that, obviously, people expressed concerns about retaining and protecting jobs in the gambling industry here with whatever measures are taken. Are you satisfied that all the measures that are contained in the Bill will protect the existing workforce, if you like?

**Mr Quinn:** The Bill itself certainly will not have an adverse impact on employment in the industry. However, as Mr McClarty has already said, and as we all know, people's habits and approach to gambling are changing. So, over time, I suspect that more people will start to gamble on the internet and mobile phones. That will lead to a natural decline in the number of bookmakers' shops and amusement arcades. Certainly, there is nothing in our Bill that will impact directly on employment levels.

**The Chairperson:** OK. I have one wee last point to make. In the time frame for all of this, when can we expect the Bill to hit the Committee table?

**Mr Quinn:** I would say that it will be at least a year.

**The Chairperson:** OK. Fair enough.

**Mr McClarty:** The Minister, nobly, is trying to reduce — or, certainly, not increase — the number of opportunities for people to gamble. Surely, however, online gambling makes an absolute nonsense of that, because the Minister has absolutely no control over that aspect of it?

**Mr Quinn:** I cannot disagree with what you are saying. Countries and organisations that are much larger than us have tried to regulate and prevent online gambling or other types of internet use, without any success. We have responsibility for the people who organise gambling on premises here in Northern Ireland. The Minister was not prepared to consider increasing the opportunities that we can legislate for and control.

**The Chairperson:** I do not necessarily expect you to give us a response on this today. Going back to the Drumbo case, the Committee has agreed to seek its own legal advice. If I could put it this way, the Drumbo representatives came here and made a case that I got the sense the Committee was relatively impressed by, without making any decisions or judgments on it. It could see some merit in the arguments. However, it sought legal opinion on whether there could be unintentional consequences if it was minded to support the argument on behalf of Drumbo. You are saying that it is a licensing issue as opposed to gambling legislation. Wearing your other hat, are you in any position to shed any light on that today or will you come back to the Committee on that?

**Mr Quinn:** There was a consultation carried out last year on liquor licensing. We will be doing a report for the Minister, and then we will come back to brief the Committee. I think that that is scheduled for

next month. The particular issue that Drumbo raised was not included in the consultation. However, if a Bill follows from the consultation, there will be an opportunity for the issue to be addressed there.

**The Chairperson:** OK. So, it is a big if at the moment.

**Mr F McCann:** They could be out of business by then.

**Mr Quinn:** Sorry?

**Mr F McCann:** People could be out of business by then.

**Mr Quinn:** There is a certain procedure you have to go through to draft legislation.

**Mr F McCann:** I appreciate that.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, well, obviously the Committee, as I said earlier, has asked for a legal opinion on that matter, without prejudice to any decision it might want to take. You may well be coming back before us. What you are really telling us is that there is nothing in the pipeline at the moment to deal with that.

**Mr Quinn:** No, but there will be an opportunity, if a Bill comes forward, to put down an amendment or to include it in that Bill.

**Mr Durkan:** Thank you, Liam and Patrick, for that. Most of the points have been covered, in various directions. Mickey referred to the prevalence of advertising if you are watching a football match on Sky or whatever. Currently, under the legislation on the advertising of gambling, local operators are not allowed to advertise through radio or television. Is that correct?

**Mr Quinn:** Yes.

**Mr Durkan:** Is that likely to change? I know there are issues around EU states advertising in non-member states.

**Mr Quinn:** To advertise remote gambling from outside the European Union, you have to be on what is known as the white list, which is a list of countries where gambling is properly regulated and there is a certain amount of satisfaction that it is fair. The advertising we get is mainly from satellite channels, which we are not able to prevent broadcasting into Northern Ireland. Generally, they broadcast to the whole of the British Isles.

Strictly speaking, advertising gambling in the media is illegal here. However, the only people who are actually prevented from doing it are local bookmakers and local gambling concerns, so they are not able to advertise. We are proposing in the Bill that advertising would be legal, which would allow the local gambling interests to compete on a level playing field with those from outside Northern Ireland.

**Mr Durkan:** In my constituency, the local radio stations may have advertising from bookmakers in Bridgend, which is less than a minute over the border.

**The Chairperson:** OK. Members are content, then. We have heard from the Department and raised a number of issues. Obviously, we will return to this in due course. Liam, I thank you and Patrick for being here and helping the Committee to consider this issue. Thank you very much.