

## **Committee for Regional Development**

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

### **DRD Briefing: Delayed Start to Phase 2 of the Londonderry Rail Scheme**

.....(Start of briefing inaudible)....

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Issues and notification of grand ultimately and pays for those capital projects, since the Belfast to Bangor public accounts report, my division will attend Translink project boards in certain circumstances normally that would be for large projects, new trains programmes ended in last year, we attended that project board, and there's a few other projects, for the majority of projects that are taken forward by Translink we do not attend those project boards, in the case of the Derry to Coleraine track relay or improvements to that rail line you will be aware that that was subject to statement to the assembly in late 2011 and in essence it is a program consisting of three elements to, the first phase of that project was to restore the line by April 2013, the second phase which is essentially what we are talking about today is for a new signalling infrastructure to be put in place and a passing loop, with the intention that that would be completed by end 2015 and then a full relay with indicative timetable of about 2021. The first phase of the project which was also attended by the department was completed in March 2013 ahead of schedule, and that allowed for the reopening of the rail line for the city of culture year. Phase 2 as a project started in parallel with phase one, and it essentially started late last year, the member of staff in my division who attended the project board provided updates based on monthly reports that were provided by Translink who managed that project, from my perspective there no indication of either a cost escalation or timeline difficulties until the meeting on the 19th of June which has been referred to previously, however I think it is worth pointing out at this stage that it is a complex project, and there are significant risks involved in that project and that has been the case since

the outset, the fact that only one tender was received and that advisers deemed that the bid from that tender not value for money was notified to the department on the 19th of June, and it was actually mentioned at an accountability at a meeting on the 20th of June to the minister and to senior staff in the department. At the meeting on the 20th of June the Translink chief executive was asked to produce a scoping or options paper that to allow the minister to consider options at that stage, that request was actually recorded formally in the minutes, and it is our understanding had been accepted by Translink, from the perspective of the department there as some delay in ascertaining relevant facts before formal submission could be put to the minister, that formal submission took place on the 3rd of September, a press release referencing the delay in the project was issued on the 5th of September and the committee was notified around the same time, before the issue of the press release. From the departments point of view the issue of value for money in the project in terms of the information that has been provided to us, there is no issue from the departments point of view that the procurement processes weren't followed correctly and that the decision on value for money grounds was not the correct one, in our opinion it looks as if that is the correct decision essentially the project if had have been pursued at that point would have cost between four and five million extra, the issue from the departments point of view is that there was insufficient time built in for minister for minister to consider option in the early part of the summer, that view has been communicated in writing in writing to the Translink chief executive and those issues have been communicated to the Translink board, it is our understanding that the Translink board accept that position. That's essentially all I would like to say quite happy to take questions.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Thank you Ciaran, can I apologise to the Committee, I had to attend another meeting there for a short period of time and thanks to Cahal for standing in, I will save my questions to the end. Cahal.

**Mr Cathal Ó hOisín** - Thanks chair, chair people will be are aware people particularly in the North West will be dismayed in further delay in the delivery of the rail link, signature project we wanted to see delivered at the earliest opportunity, the question is this, and I appreciate what the official has said, the Department were aware of this in mid-June and committee were not aware of

it to the start of September here, and could I ask when was the minister was informed that there were difficulties in the procurement process?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well the minister was formally told by submission on the 3rd of September, but there had been an informal notification a general reference to this on the 20th of June, but from the departments point of view, when that reference was made there was a request made to Translink to produce a scoping paper, that scoping paper has not materialised, and that to some extent was the reason for the delay over the summer.

**Mr Cathal Ó hOisín** - And that's why the committee wasn't informed as well then?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Yes, from my point of view the protocol would be we should have informed the minister formally before the Committee, and we did attempt to inform committee as soon as possible, and on the 5th of September that was the case.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Just to clarify in terms of telling the committee Ciaran that was twenty minutes before you made the announcement public, secondly in terms of the scoping paper that you've just mentioned, what have you done about getting the scoping paper? Is this another Translink SHAMBLES?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - The issue I think if I restate the position, there's two aspects to this chair, the value for money of the decision has been looked at in quite a bit of detail the department is not questioning that, the issue at point, from the departments point of view is whether it was a formal notification to the department in the later part of June to allow the Department to consider this formally, that didn't happen, and that for that reason, there was subsequent set of queries raised with Translink right the way through into August and that's what delayed the submission. By that stage Translink had embarked on an alternative procurement strategy. So the decision had actually been made by late June, early July to undertake a different procurement which would result in, or will result in a delay to the project.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – Well in terms of, it was you that made the comment to Mr O Hoisin, you made the comment that Translink were to prepare a scoping which hasn't transpired, that was your words, now why is that? What have you

done about it as a department? and why did officials not choose to formally advise the minister until the 3rd of December?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Well we have communicated the request and did communicate the request to Translink on a consistent basis through the summer the information that was being supplied for example about the costs involved in the different projects came into the department in the early part of August, but there was a subsequent set of questions that we had, which we required answers to provide a full submission to the minister. What I can say is that the delay in producing the fact that the scoping paper has been produced has been subject to communication with Translink and there has been concern expressed to Translink about this, I think from Translink's point of view they believe that some notification made in the early part of June but the department would consider that insufficient.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – Well do you not consider Translink having some of the highest paid people in Northern Ireland, the highest chief executive of any other organisation do you not think that it is disgraceful that this organisation is allowed to not pony up for what the department has asked for from it, and I mean I think the department needs to be a lot stronger, given the amount of public money that's going into the Translink organisation, and it simply points farther to the fact that here's an organisation that's out of control that the department or nobody else has control over.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well again we have clearly expressed our disappointment with the way this was, this particular aspect was handled but at the same time the department did indicate initially for this project a budget essentially of about twenty million, for this project. Translink in looking at the value for money of the project indicated that based on the tender that had been received it was likely to cost substantially and its decision to undertake a different procurement strategy is ultimately about value for money but that doesn't negate the department's view that this hasn't been handled properly.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – Just finally for now before I bring John Dallat in, at what, you say you've expressed disappointment or the department has expressed disappointment, at what level has the department expressed disappointment.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - At the most senior levels.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – What is the most senior levels?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Departmental accounting officer and the minister has expressed disappointed that the project is going to be delayed but the departmental accounting officer has expressed disappointment with the way that this particular aspect was handled not about the value for money argument.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – John Dallat.

**Mr John Dallat** –Chairperson thanks, chairman to be honest during the summer time I reflected on the relationship between ourselves the department and Translink and thought it might be useful to go and meet the chief executive of Translink, a sort of a you know, white flag job, and I met her interestingly enough on the 2nd of September, a day before you issued your press statement and after I met, and I met her as my party spokesperson, nothing to do with the committee, do you find that total coincidence that your Department, sitting on a problem from the 19th of June put out a statement after I issued a public statement expressing confidence that the Belfast area railway project was on time and everything was smelling of roses? Is that pure coincidence?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I can't really comment on whether it was a coincidence what I can say that the department would not consider it appropriate that the Translink chief executive would be talking about those issues without allowing relevant protocol in other words for the minister to be formally told about these issues, or to be going into the public domain, before that had happened that didn't happen until the 3rd of September.

**Mr John Dallat** – So that's, your protocol was more important than the credibility of public representatives who have worked tirelessly for up to twenty years who tried to stop you closing the railway in the first place, and then encouraging you to actually do something about it and giving you credit for having, making a success so protocol's really the issue is that it?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – No I think as I tried to explain it at the outset this is a three stage project, first stage had already been completed, and the line has been opened, it is clearly disappointing that there is going to be a delay to second

phase of the project, I think the emphasis at this stage is to try and ensure that that project can be taken forward as quickly as is feasible.

**Mr John Dallat** – Chairperson, with your indulgence, I'm long enough in this building to remember the project you mentioned in your introduction, the Belfast Bangor project and I would have thought that shambles would have been a guide to ensuring that this type of thing never happened again, clearly the lazy fair relationship between yourselves and Translink is exactly the same and we have heard nothing this morning to suggest who was at fault who was to blame, why did you go down the road of a procurement which everyone would chairman, knew, would not attract any degree of interest from Britain because all the railways in Britain are being upgraded why at this stage are we only embarking on alternative procurement?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well again I can only comment on the basis of my knowledge, I'm not ultimately responsible but what I can say Translink started this process with a procurement strategy based on combining the sign and build that is based on best practice guidance for construction projects I accept the point that for rail project of this nature with hindsight there's clearly evidence that there's not a huge amount of interest in the market, but Translink did begin that process in that way, that clearly hasn't resulted in a huge amount of interest in relation to Belfast Bangor I think the department would be very conscious of the lessons that had to learned from the that project, one of which is that we need to make sure that we manage the costs in projects of this kind and be fair about this process a decision has been made that hopefully will actually save public funding.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – David McNarry.

**Mr David McNarry** - Thanks, following last week's presentation by the project manager here at this committee he refused as I'm sure you aware to name the department's representative on the board can you name that person?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well what I would say about that is I would be happy to name that person but I would prefer if it would be done in a private, private session, what I would also say but is that the individual works within my division and that ultimately I'm responsible, I'm the sponsorship director, and

what I can say is that if the chair and the members want the name of the individual.

**Mr David McNarry** - I want the name and I want it now.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – As I said Mr Mc Narry, I would prefer if that could be done in private session. I am making it clear that I am the director.

**Mr David McNarry** – What, I can understand protection, what are you trying to protect?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – I'm not trying to protect anything, it was an individual, a middle manager within my division who sat on the project board.

**Mr David McNarry** – Okay.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Let me ask you, David if you don't mind in terms of the, we take it it was a junior member of staff

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I wouldn't describe him as junior, he was essentially a middle manager who had sat on previous project boards.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – Let's accept this middle manager, took place in the middle of June. One assumes that that middle manager then told you of the situation, and disgracefully you didn't tell the minister until the 3rd of September.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Chair if I just go back over this again, essentially what happened was that project board meeting took place 19th an official from my division sat on the project board, was aware that the board had made a call that the initial procurement had failed, that they ended up with on tender, that, the essence of that was actually referred to in a subsequent meeting the very next day on the 20th of June but, and this is the key point, when that reference was made to this project a request was made by the department to produce a scoping paper, that has not materialised, and that was why there was a delay in formally submitting a full submission to the minister and that didn't take place until the 3rd of September.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – So the minister, you knew obviously in June did you?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I knew that there was problems with the procurement, I wasn't aware until August that Translink had undertaken steps to go down a different procurement route and that became clear in the early part of August.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – So the department was kept in the dark by Translink?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Well Translink did indicate to the Department that they had made a decision but the departments views was that Translink had to produce an options paper, to allow the department to consider their options at that point, they went ahead without doing that.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – That's the options paper that they still haven't produced, these highly paid executives they have in this organisation totally disgraceful sorry to interrupt but I felt that that needed to be brought out.

**Mr David McNarry** - On previous occasions the existence of this project board has been sung by you and your department high praise the importance the cooperation that goes on yet this morning you have told us that this person, whom I'm not satisfied chairman that we're not going to find out the name and I must say I don't, with no disrespect chairman I don't want to hear from you, I want to hear it from the man who knows, but what you've said this morning Ciaran is that this mystery person actually doesn't attend the majority of project board meetings, what did you say, because I have written down the majority we do not attend, that's what you said this morning.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Sorry, Mr Mc Narry what I meant was Translink's capital programme has up to 150 maybe more projects within it, it's only the most material projects which are exceptional that we would tend to attend, I can list the projects over the last number of years.

**Mr David McNarry** – No let's stick with this particular project, on this particular project are you saying there fore that from start to where we are finishon the 19th your representative hasn't missed a meeting?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I'm not aware, as far as I'm aware yes they attended every one of those meeting.

**Mr David McNarry** – We are being told the project board meets monthly, did it meet in July and August?



**Mr Ciaran Doran** – It met towards the end of July.

**Mr David McNarry** - Didn't meet in August

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – I'm not aware that it met in August, I can check that but I'm not aware that it has met in August.

**Mr David McNarry** - I'd like you to answer this, are you not a bunch of highly paid amateurs and you don't know bloody well, excuse me, don't know what you're doing.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well Mr Mc Narry, all I would restate that the department funds the capital programme, it is disappointing that the project is going to be delayed but it is being taken forward at this point in time, it is important that a project of that kind is procured properly for value for money, there's complexities involved in this project signalling on a rail project particularly between Coleraine and Derry is a complex area and it's important that it's done safely is value for money as quickly as is feasible, and it's a balance between those three things.

**Mr David McNarry** - We were also told Ciaran, so important was the project that the Translink project manager and the project board didn't have plan B, in other words so tight were all the little ducks in a row, so well had the project been put together that no body needed to think something would go wrong, so that's why I say you're a bunch of amateurs in a commercial world that you really don't know what you're doing, because to have no plan B seems to me to be inconceivable so can you tell me between the 19th of June and the 3rd of September and maybe I've picked up wrong again you said there was no time for the minister to consider early options in the summer why was that?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Because essentially

**Mr David McNarry** - No alarm bells you hadn't really realised something's gone wrong here, or you didn't want to tell the minister because you didn't want to admit complete mess had been made, and that really you were trying to tie it all up and hide something from him?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I wouldn't portray it in those terms the project, the decision in terms of plan A and plan b understanding is that once you undertake a

particular procurement route, you have to see it through, before you can stop and undertake a different procurement route.

**Mr David McNarry** - No one was asking anybody to stop, the position was you were stopped you didn't have plan B to revert to in time, the minister couldn't make an announcement until the 3rd of September of something that happened on the 19th of June.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well the decision was made at the project board on the 19th of June but there was actually an internal decision making process.

**Mr David McNarry** – A decision on the project board that your man or your woman on the board agreed to.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I wouldn't portray as the official agreed, the official was a member of project board.

**Mr David McNarry** – What's his or her position on this board, just to go there and listen and report back to you, if that's the case why don't you go to it?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - It's a matter of resources and the responsibilities on a range of different things within the division, the individual concerned has represented the department on other project boards for example the new trains programme which was actually a programme costing 120 million and was successfully delivered

**Mr David McNarry** – He or she is no fool.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I wouldn't consider them a fool.

**Mr David McNarry** – That's what I'm asking because they obviously have a background, the burning question now is what are you going to do about it?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – I have been in contact with Translink in August about the options available at this stage, I think it's been referred to by Translink last week that in terms of procurement which is underway at this stage which separates the sign and construction there may be some potentially to run those two processes parallel to allow that project to be taken forward as quickly as possible it's probably too early at this stage to be giving

commitments about that, certainly what I can say is that the department will be emphasising to Translink of taking that forward as quickly as possible.,

**Mr David McNarry** – So just one final question if I may, what is the time lapse between your department, you in particular evaluating this scoping paper and then a recommendation to the department that still involves public money, and the minister making a positive rather than negative statement in trying to repair the damage and the let down to the consumer in this particular area.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – The purpose of the scoping paper was not to question the value for money process employed in deciding to stop this procurement and undertake a different one allowing the minister whether he should intervene possibly by informing exec too late alternative procurement is already underway what we will be doing is trying to work with Translink and to try and make sure this project is completed as quickly as possible.

**Mr David McNarry** – At any extra cost?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – An indication has been given of how much is it expected but because that's still subject to a procurement it wouldn't really be appropriate for me to start quoting figures.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – I think what Mr McNarry's question was is it going to cost the public purse extra money? Yes or no?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - The intention of the procurement process is to ensure that the tax payer receives value for money and that's all we can say at this point in time.

**Mr David McNarry** – Let's say the criteria for original project was a decision on value for money is that criteria in any way adjusted to upgrade or downgrade the value for money content of what your about to embark on?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – Well clearly if as a result of the second procurement the estimated cost is not less than the original tender, then there would be an issue but we're not in any position to comment at this stage.

**Mr David McNarry** – Hang on a second, this started on the 19th of June the minister makes a comment in September and you can't comment, you are a bunch of amateurs because you are telling me, you don't know what the cost

is. I ask the Translink man that last week and was more or less just as evasive as you were. We don't know what the cost is, what are you doing? Can you count?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Mr mc Narry with respect what I'm saying is a budget has been established but because it is subject to procurement and that procurement is not completed it is not possible to say how much it's going to cost at this stage, it was known, if the decision had been made to go with the first tender. How much that would have been, but this is subject to procurement process, it really wouldn't make sense to talk about those figures because it is subject to procurement, it's not about trying to be evasive.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** – Brenda Hale.

**Mrs Brenda Hale** – Thank you chair, I must say my first meeting here with DRD and I'm really quite confused as to who is in charge of the department. Is it the minister, the department or the unnamed person we're hearing about. I'm going to pick on Mr Mc Narrys point on lack of contingency the project is going to be delayed beyond 2015. Are you confident that the money will be available in 2015, and have you received an agreement from DFP on this?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** – In the case of the money adjustments have been made to the budget for 2014 15 next financial year, but we can't guarantee a position in 2015 16 at this stage, but clearly this project would be of top priority in terms of real capital budget for that year, but that would be subject to a new budget.

**Mrs Brenda Hale** - Do you then foresee further delays then?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - We would be confident that the funding required for this project will be secured but I can't guarantee about that, that is subject to a budget process.

**Mrs Brenda Hale** - Thank you chair.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Okay Stewart Dickson

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - Ciaran expressing disappointment doesn't solve the problem, is there now a clear action plan between you and Translink to move this forward put this in context, you made comment that the line had successfully reopened, successful yes, all that happened is its reopened, not half

as successful as it would be, if the project had been carried through to its conclusion. Remember this is an hourly service competing with a 15 minute bus service, on the same route essentially, this is a railway service not with one hand but two hands tied behind its back and it seems to me to be being deliberately failed by people who do not have the relevant competence to see these things forward, can I ask about the person from the department on the board, are they a board member, with a vote, say decision making process or are they simply an observer?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - From the department's point of view we would see the individual's role essentially as an observer, we would accept one of the lessons to be learned maybe from this issue is that we need to clarify that position, Translink may not have seen that individual in that position.

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - Chair this is a total smoke and mirrors answer to the question is the person a full voting board member, or are they an observer, what is their role? Where is the written down remit for this individual, where are their terms of reference?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - There is no formal written down position for the member in that particular project.

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - You would think with Mr Dallat making reference back to the Belfast Bangor line and I assume that was the problems from having somebody in this particular role, that's where the terms of reference for that individual would have been clearly set out, in fact I was going on, it seems to be completely pointless to say that when there's a highly technical project going on with respect placing a broad ranging civil servant that is dealing with highly technical issues doesn't seem to be most sensible way surely what you should actually be doing is going out and getting a technical person who can represent your interests on the board and reporting back independently to you, that would seem to be a more effective way of dealing with this, I have to say chair some of my colleagues were being rather harsh in their comments but in reality that harshness is necessary.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Sadly that is the case.

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - Sadly that is the case, what are we going to move this process forward... mired down in a lengthy procurement process and as you have already asked Mr McNarry we can't even be told about the sort of prices for fear of alerting the contractors to the sort of ballpark figures that we are looking at. If that were the case, this will just muddle on for another year and a half.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - No what I can give the member assurance about is there will be a focus on taking this project forward as quickly as is feasible with value for money in mind, I have already referred to the fact that's there has already been some discussion that instead of taking the sign and subsequently construction as two separate distinct phases there is a possibility that these two things could be overlapped which might save some time, in relation to the importance of the project on a number of occasions when the department sees the importance of this project in developing the railway line between Coleraine and Derry, there is no question about that.

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - With respect chair the information that we were given last week by Translink was the process of separating the design and construction was the only way they could take this forward are we now being told by the department that that's is not the best way and we can actually now put the 2 back together again which is where it came off the rails in the first place.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - No I think Mr Dickson and with respect you were told last week the revised procurement strategy is to separate the sign and build

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - Yes and you have just told us they want to put it back together again

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - no what I said was it might be possible for us to run those two separate processes in parallel, not completely but to some extent and I think that is what was referred to last week.

**Mr Stewart Dickson** - Chair I remain unconvinced that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, thank you.

**Mr Alex Easton** - you mentioned there had been an adjustment to the budget for 2014-15

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Yes

**Mr Alex Easton** - How much is that?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - The estimated adjustment was about 6 million pounds

**Mr Alex Easton** - was that 6 million pounds extra on top of the 22 million?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - no what essentially happened is that originally in the budget 6 million had been set aside for Coleraine Derry, that has been reassigned to other railway projects in the budget for 2014-15.

**Mr Alex Easton** - I thought I was catching him out there.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - finally a couple of questions, do you believe that Translink has deliberately ignored your repeated calls for the scoping paper?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - from the departments point of view it hasn't been explained why that scoping paper has not been produced it maybe and I am not trying to defend anything here maybe there was a misunderstanding around this issue but from the departments point of view it was absolutely clear that a scoping or options paper had to be produced to fully inform the minister and that did not happen.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - By when?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - As soon as possible and given that that indication was made on the 20 June

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - That's open ended, I mean would the department normally do that?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - it was open ended in a sense that a date hadn't been set but clearly it was understood by the department that a decision should not be made to move ahead with an alternative procurement until that had happened, that didn't happen in this case.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - is there a possibility that value for money concerns will mean no project?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I have no reason to believe that at this stage.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - that's not the question, the question is, is there a possibility that value for money concerns will mean no project?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - an economical appraisal has been produced for this project and it is our intention to take this project forward clearly at this stage I am not in a position to inform you what the overall cost of this project will turn out to be or what it is estimated to be because that is subject to the new procurement that is underway.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - A good guesser would probably say it would probably cost more, Mrs Hale did you want to come in?

**Mrs Brenda Hale**- No thank you

**Mr John Dallat** - Finally leading on here there is a lot of people who have put their whole heart and soul and their money and their feet into saving that railway from closure and they are asking the very same question that you Chairman are asking this morning, where is it now? Your position this morning has not been an easy one because you are very much the messenger being shot at, what powers have you to go and sort out the incompetence in Translink and give back to the people of the North/West the growing confidence they had in that they were going to have an early service from Belfast to Derry in the same way that anybody else would expect, you are leaving here quite frankly, I certainly have no confidence that you have any authority nor control over the incompetence that happened in Translink and that defiance that happened between the 21st June and 19th June and the 3rd Sept, I don't



know, I have certainly got nothing out of this meeting that reassures me that I can reassure my electorate.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - what I can say and I am not sure how much reassurance this will provide to the committee I certainly will be getting directly involved in this project going forward in terms of the way in which the project has been handled we do accept that there is a balance to be struck here between the cost of the project and the need to progress it as quickly as possible and with respect to some of the other Members in terms of the reference back from Belfast to Bangor one of the major lessons there was that the department had no involvement at all in the project management in projects of this kind. Translink has in the last number of years introduced 20 new trains that was a major project; it has also undertaken a number of other projects which we feel have been successfully implemented, I am not in any way trying to use that as an excuse for what has happened here but I think it's important that I put those things in context.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - well you keep going back to 20 trains and that seems to be the only thing you have produced, but do you not think it is somewhat disgraceful, I took from what Mr Dallat said, he had a meeting a couple of days before the statement was issued, he was not told by the chief executive of Translink, a man who has as he said for some 20 years been pushing that line making sure it didn't close along with others who have supported that as well, this committee has been supportive in terms of supporting the 27 million coming off the A5 project at that particular time basically as a loan to make sure the project was done and dusted in time for the city of culture year, I think this committee remains passionate about that line because not only is that line a commuting line it is also a tourist line as well in terms of beauty, we have heard Michael Palin and others saying how beautiful line that is and the potential of that line is probably amazing in terms of tourism and all the rest of it and taking people up into North West Coleraine and Londonderry, do you not really think that Translink have shafted the public, public representatives, the department and everyone else? That they are really a bunch of amateurs

who in any other organisation would be sacked for messing up this procurement process in the way they have messed it up? Is it not somewhat disgraceful that people at that level and on that level of pay are treating the public purse the way it is being treated and yet the department keeps running with millions and millions of pounds to this organisation that's not really fit for purpose?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - in terms of this project I think I have already explained the department is concerned at the way in which the project at the start of the summer was handled, insufficient contact with the department at the most senior levels to allow options to be considered in terms of the value for money of the project the information that has been supplied to the department would have suggested that if a decision had been made to go ahead with the one tender that would not be deemed the most effective use of public money and the department has not queried that call so on the one hand in terms of the management of the project Translink do appear to have given consideration to the cost of this project in terms of looking at options available to make sure the timeline which is very important is also considered, the department would be of the view that that has not been handled properly. That's all I can say.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - well the bottom line is it's a rather disgraceful situation and one which now we find will be 2 years and in all probability its going to cost the public purse a lot more than what it was going to cost it anyway probably more than what the extra money was at the end of the day because 2 years down the line its bound to cost more, I think anybody would understand that and maybe just one final thing do you not think that there needs to be a serious exanimation of your departments relationship with Translink and that heads should roll within Translink about this botched up procurement process and that heads should roll within the Northern Ireland Holding Company as well?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - all I can say is those decision will be a matters will be a matter for the Minister and those senior officials within the department, what I can say is...

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Ciaran you have to advise the minister on this particular aspect would your advice not be that there should be a major investigation into Translink and this botched up project?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - Generally my opinion; is that a letter has been sent to the Translink accounting officer and the disappointment with this aspect has been expressed very clearly to the Translink board and it's my understanding they have accepted those criticisms.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - do you not think some of those people should be hauled in front of the Permanent Secretary?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - the permanent Secretary made those comments directly to the individuals concerned.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - what about heads rolling?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I really can't comment on that

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Well you have to give advice to the minister, what advice do you give him?

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - I would have to consider that if I was asked I haven't been asked that on this particular issue

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - would you not be seriously enough concerned, I think you have expressed concern about this whole botch up and that Translink are treating the department like second class citizens by not providing this scoping paper do you not think really you should be recommending to the Minister since you are the senior official in charge of this that a serious look needs to be taken at Translink, at how they operate and how they have dealt with this particular fiasco because it is public money at the end of the day and I am not sure of this committee has confidence any longer that they are good spenders of public money and I think the public would have the same views.

**Mr Ciaran Doran** - All I can do is communicate your views Chair to the department, that's all I can say.

**Mr Jimmy Spratt** - Thank you.