



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

January Monitoring Round: DCAL Briefing

6 December 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

January Monitoring Round: DCAL Briefing

6 December 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley
Mr William Humphrey
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín
Mr Robin Swann

Witnesses:

Ms Deborah Brown	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Mick Cory	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Arthur Scott	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Mr Colin Watson	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

The Chairperson: I welcome Deborah Brown, who is director of finance and corporate services; Colin Watson, director of sports and stadia; Arthur Scott, director of the culture division; and Mick Cory, director of museums, libraries and recreation. Deborah, are you going to lead off?

Ms Deborah Brown (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Yes, thank you. Good morning and thank you for inviting the Department to present its proposals for the January monitoring round. With me this morning are Colin Watson, director of sport; Arthur Scott, director of culture; and Mick Cory, director of museums, libraries and fisheries.

You will be aware that the Budget was set in 2010, covering 2011-12 to 2014-15. That was agreed by the Executive in March 2011. As part of that process, all Departments set out their strategic priorities aligned to the Budget. However, we recognise that, over a four-year period, priorities can change and there can be unforeseen pressures. Therefore, it is desirable that we have a process where Departments have the ability to adapt their budgets to their changing circumstances. The formal in-year monitoring rounds are the method of doing that.

This is the process by which we bid to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) for additional resources to meet any unexpected pressures, surrender any reduced requirements, transfer de minimis budgets between service areas or submit a linked-bid reduced requirement for a larger amount.

So, this December/January monitoring round is the last opportunity for the Departments to make changes to their budgets. That informs the spring Supplementary Estimates, which are the method by which we obtain the statutory authority to spend and draw down our cash. It is, therefore, essential that, in this particular monitoring round, we include all our easements and internal reallocations.

As with last year, DFP has commissioned this final monitoring round in two stages. DFP has to be informed of all transactions that do not require Executive approval by 7 December, including internal reallocations or technical adjustments. All those transactions that do require Executive approval, namely bids, easements and reclassifications, have to be submitted to DFP by 3 January. Due to the timing of this, and the need to obtain the relevant approvals and to ensure that we reallocate our budget and spend it by the end of the year, the Department has treated this exercise as one, with all bids, easements, internal reallocations and technical transfers collected together. The results are in the paper that you have received. However, should any changes occur between the first deadline of 7 December and the second deadline of 3 January, we will inform the Committee and provide an update paper.

I will give you a quick outline of the structure of public expenditure. As you are aware, the departmental expenditure limit (DEL) is the key control for public expenditure, and it is within that control that resources are planned, managed and redistributed during the monitoring process. DEL is split into three categories that are budgeted and controlled separately: recurrent, which is your administration and your resource; capital, which is capital and capital grant; and other ring-fenced areas, which is things such as invest to save. Any movements between those three categories must be approved by DFP and are regarded as reclassifications.

Within recurrent, the budget for depreciation and impairments is ring-fenced, so movements in or out of those are subject to DFP approval. We also use the monitoring rounds as an opportunity to manage any emerging pressures through internal interventions by requesting that reduced requirements in one area are moved to an area that is experiencing a pressure. So, flexibility to move between service areas, such as sport or arts, is restricted by the de minimis rule, which is £1 million. During a monitoring round, we usually action a number of de minimis internal reallocations.

Moving to the detail of the Department's proposals for this round, we do not propose to make any resource bids to DFP. On capital, there were some indications from Minister Wilson, on the back of the October monitoring round paper, that some capital might become available in January. We have had a look at our pressures and any new proposals. We are proposing to submit bids of £2.6 million as part of the January monitoring round. Those bids are for a specimen purchase at National Museums; the replacement of boilers at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; the purchase of some new storage by National Museums; the replacement of a Waterways Ireland towing vehicle; a mountain rescue vehicle for Sport NI; and some equipment for Parkrun, which is run by Sport NI.

At this stage, the Department is not surrendering any reduced requirements. However, we have been given some indications that the City of Culture team may be unable to utilise its full £6.5 million budget this year. Officials are working closely with Derry City Council to ascertain the level of underspend that might occur. We will be working between now and Christmas to clarify that, and if we need to surrender any money, we will come back to the Committee with an update and will outline the implications of that for next year's budget.

We are not proposing any reclassifications in this round, and we are not seeking any internal reallocations above the de minimis threshold. However, we are proposing a number of resource and capital reallocations below the de minimis threshold. This is a mixture of housekeeping and addressing the Minister's priority to tackle poverty and social exclusion. As part of that exercise, we have identified easements across a number of areas, amounting to approximately £1 million. The sorts of projects that we are proposing to take forward with that money to tackle poverty and social exclusion include: Sport NI's midnight soccer initiative; NI Screen's Cinemobile Science on Wheels and Beginner to Band projects; the creative industries' early years, stadium STEM and Fab Labs initiatives; and Disability Sports' 5 Star Disability Sports Challenge education project. Some money will also go to architecture and the built environment; the Sport NI promotional campaign on mental well-being in sport; feasibility studies on an Ulster Scots hub and the creation of an Irish language academy; the creative industries' regional Codea Dojo programme and traditional creative skills pilot. Those are projects that we have identified and agreed with the Minister that they could be taken forward to tackle poverty and social exclusion, and we continue to pursue those projects and new ideas to ensure that we maximise the use of that current underspend.

We have one technical transfer for £362,000, which is to come from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and will be provided from the childcare strategy budget. That will be provided to NI Screen to extend its after-schools film club.

In the October monitoring round presentation to the Executive, Minister Wilson announced the allocation of £5 million of resource and £5 million of capital to meet jobs and economy proposals submitted by Departments. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) had submitted a number of proposals, and the following have been met: the apprenticeship scheme, the additional creative learning centre and the creative credits in Northern Ireland. There was also, as part of the October monitoring round, an announcement that £0.5 million would be allocated to the governing bodies of each of the three main sports: the GAA, IFA and IRFU. That will be allocated as part of the January monitoring round.

To summarise, our planned resource spend for the current financial year is approximately £116 million, which is set out in annex B. Our capital spend is approximately £25 million, and that is set out in annex A. That is a summary of the proposals from DCAL for the January monitoring round. We will be happy to take any questions that the Committee has.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Deborah, for your presentation this morning and the additional information to go with that paper. In relation to the additional moneys that went to the three main sporting governing bodies, we had a presentation last week from all three in relation to their stadia. Questions were asked of at least two of them about the money. Obviously, the GAA has indicated where its spend is going to be. The IFA said that it was surprised by the money coming to it, and was putting together some proposals, as was rugby. Why was the money allocated to those three governing bodies and not others? That is a question that the Committee is going to be asked.

Mr Colin Watson (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Minister sought funding from the Executive to tackle poverty and social exclusion through sport. A good place to start, when you are this late in the year, is with the three main sports. You can start there and see where you go with it. We are in the process of speaking to the three governing bodies to get a list of projects and to ensure that they meet those priorities and that they tackle poverty and social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal and even things such as suicide prevention. It is about trying to ensure that the projects that are coming forward will deliver on those. That was what the funding was for.

The Chairperson: I appreciate that, and I appreciate that they will reach a very considerable number of people. The Committee has had representations from various other sporting governing bodies, and the accusation could be made as to why those three and not others.

Mr Watson: Again, that is what the funding was allocated for, so you have to work within that.

The Chairperson: Can you talk to us a bit more about the detail of the creative learning centre and the creative credits in Northern Ireland? Who will administer that fund? Where will the centre be located?

Mr Arthur Scott (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The additional money is for extra activities at the three creative learning centres. They will be used by Northern Ireland Screen to provide outreach opportunities from the three centres. Those will be targeted at hard-to-reach groups and people who do not normally come to the centre to avail themselves of the skills development training that is provided.

The creative credits are based on the Manchester experience through Nesta. It brings together two businesses, so you are bringing together, say, designers and engineering to add value and improve products. It is really to facilitate greater collaboration across the creative industries and other more traditional forms of business to help them to improve the quality and competitiveness of their product.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your presentation. I ask you two questions, one on Irish and one on Ulster Scots — that is "on", rather than "in". The Minister is very passionate about the Liofa website for the Irish language. She set it out as one of her goals and objectives. Is that website going to be run by the Department or will it be administered by Foras na Gaeilge or Pobal? How is it going to work?

Mr Scott: The Department is considering a detailed business case and a number of options as to how the website might be delivered, including some of those that you have just mentioned. The intention of the website is to provide a source of materials and support to those who have signed up to the Líofa campaign, which is now in excess of £3,000. It will involve the development of the site and the development of learning packages that will help people on that Líofa journey, be they a beginner or someone who is reasonably competent in Irish but wants to develop towards full fluency. No actual decision has yet been taken on that; we are still working through the business case. The aim will be to identify the most efficient way of delivering the service.

Mr Humphrey: Obviously, as with all things in government, it is important that there is no duplication. Those organisations already have websites and are administering them. They have lots of contacts and hits. It makes sense.

Mr Scott: Absolutely. There is a definite option. Foras na Gaeilge, as part of its preparations for the 2013 plan, has signalled its intention to develop a portal for Irish, which would be all-encompassing. That option is included in the business case. It is a question of going through the detail and looking at the various costs, such as the set-up costs and then the actual resource running costs when the site is developed for updating and running it. That will have to be considered as well. That option is clearly in.

Mr Humphrey: It is important, obviously, that it is value for money, cost-effective and not duplication. Can you expand on what the plans are for the Ulster-Scots hub?

Mr Scott: A business case for the Ulster-Scots hub is under preparation to engage consultancy support to prepare a detailed business case to consider the options, one of which is the potential use of the Oldpark library, which was previously part of the Libraries NI estate and is now surplus to requirement.

Mr Humphrey: Deborah, you said that you might not be able to spend the full allocation of £6.5 million for the City of Culture. Is there any reason for that?

Mr Scott: There was slippage in the amount of contracts that have been signed on the various elements of this extensive, 140-event programme over the 12 months. However, I am aware from my update meeting yesterday that there are emerging pressures, so the actual amount is yet to be identified in what will be, in a sense, not used this year. We are working to try to ensure that as much as possible is spent this year, and we are looking at what, if any, flexibility exists to carry that forward beyond this year.

Mr Humphrey: So, at this stage, we have no idea about the figures, even approximately.

Mr Scott: I cannot say exactly. Work is ongoing on that. The oversight meeting of the City of Culture is happening at this moment in the north-west. My colleague will be engaging with officials from Derry City Council and the Culture Company to try to ascertain the exact figures.

Mr Humphrey: Obviously, that is of concern, given that the council and the Culture Company were here and assured us that everything was on line. We need to watch that closely.

The Chairperson: Over the past number of months, the Committee has been concerned about the inability of the Culture Company to acquire the required level of sponsorship to deliver on the original programme. In our last conversations, it said that this would impact on the programme. The fact that there is now likely to be an underspend is a further concern.

Mr Scott: At this stage, it is a timing issue. We received assurances, which I previously indicated to the Committee, that this profile would be spent. There certainly appeared to be the volume of contracts to be let in relation to the programme to spend this money. We are working on it, but I do not believe that, even if we do not spend this money this year, it will detract from the programme that has been launched or the benefits that will be realised from the programme. We have explained in detail before the oversight arrangements and the scrutiny that we employ to keep a watch on the project and make sure that it delivers its outcomes, and that continues.

The Chairperson: Is it that the Department needs to take more control of the project, as opposed to having a watch of the project?

Mr Scott: I explained before that the senior responsible officer is the chief executive of Derry City Council. She will be reporting today to the OFMDFM oversight group, which includes the permanent secretary from the Department. I believe that the project is robust. It is a matter now of looking at what additional support is necessary in why this slippage occurred and —

The Chairperson: Sorry, Arthur, can you speak up? The Hansard staff are having difficulty.

Mr Scott: Sorry. It is a matter now of looking at the reasons why the slippage occurred and at what additional support is needed to ensure that the moneys that have been allocated by the Executive can be properly utilised to deliver the programme.

Mr D Bradley: William raised a point about the £60,000 for the Líoifa website. One of the functions of Foras na Gaeilge is education, and its deputy chief executive's main responsibility is education. There is already a section on the Foras na Gaeilge website for education. Why can Líoifa not be incorporated into it, rather than creating a separate website? Surely, the idea behind all those things is to have a one-stop shop where people who are learning Irish go to the same place and do not have to search through a variety of websites to get what they are looking for.

Mr Scott: What you have just described has not been ruled out in the business case. I briefed the Committee previously on why the decision was made for Líoifa to be taken forward by the Department and not by Foras na Gaeilge. When Foras na Gaeilge was asked whether it could do it, it was not in a position to do it. That is why the Minister went ahead and launched it in the Department. Obviously, we are keeping that under review. The Líoifa campaign has developed quite a bit since it was first launched. Now, we are looking at those options. Clearly, it would make sense to link it to the website where most organisations that are interested and actively engaged in the Irish language would go to look. Certainly, I have no difficulty with the principle of a one-stop shop. However, it is being kept actively under consideration as one of a number of options in the business case.

Mr D Bradley: OK. Is the £140,000 for Raidió Fáilte new funding?

Ms D Brown: We are reallocating that money at this time because of delays in funding for Raidió Fáilte.

Mr D Bradley: So, you are taking that back?

Ms D Brown: Yes. We are reusing it.

Mr D Bradley: Because of delays?

Ms D Brown: Yes.

Mr D Bradley: Right. What was it originally intended for specifically?

Mr Scott: It was a contribution towards Raidió Fáilte's desire to acquire new premises. Basically, it was based in Cultúrlann at Broadway, on the Falls Road. During the renovation and extension of that facility, Raidió Fáilte moved out and decided that it would be interested in finding newer and bigger accommodation to provide a vehicle for training and skills development as well as broadcasting in the Irish language. So, it is simply a timing issue as to when that money will be spent.

Mr D Bradley: Will that money be available to Raidió Fáilte in the future?

Ms D Brown: What we will do is have a look at the proposals when the business case is finalised. Then, we will have a look at our budget allocations to see how we would best meet that funding. It just depends what else is happening as to whether we could manage it internally or would have to consider a bid.

Mr D Bradley: Deborah, I think that you mentioned the CoderDojo. Can you give us more detail on the amount of funding for it and what exactly it will be used for?

Ms D Brown: I think that it is approximately £50,000. Arthur might be able to tell you a wee bit more about the initiative.

Mr Scott: The CoderDojo is a youth computer coding programming club. Its primary purpose is to spark an interest in software development at a young age. So, it is really an attempt to create the next generation of software engineers and creative entrepreneurs. It exposes children to those concepts at an early age and gets them interested in that whole angle.

Mr D Bradley: There is an educational aspect to that. I was wondering whether you have had any discussion with the Department of Education on that issue.

Mr Scott: DCAL has a learning strategy, which was developed in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Education and Training Inspectorate. The strategy seeks to provide lifelong learning with regard to achieving the aims of particular projects across all our arm's-length bodies and the bodies that we fund. Some of that could be fairly straightforward. Some of it could be linked into the STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and mathematics. So, yes: we have those linkages through the creative industries and the learning strategy. Those contacts are being made.

Mr D Bradley: OK. Thanks.

Mr Swann: I am sorry that I missed some of your answers earlier. Perhaps, we could go over them. With regard to the £1.7 million for off-site storage for National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI), how long is it since you sold the old Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) offices?

Ms D Brown: The PRONI offices are still up for sale.

Mr Swann: Was there any business case that looked at other Executive facilities that could be put to use for that purpose?

Mr Mick Cory (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): That is a facility that is used for storage by National Museums. It has been extensively converted for that purpose in terms of security and climate control. NMNI rents that facility and is looking to purchase it in order to reduce its running costs; it will be part of its future savings. The business case looked at a number of options rather than purchasing the existing site, but the cost of moving the items in storage and converting other buildings would have been prohibitive.

Mr Swann: What was the rental cost for that?

Mr Cory: I do not know off the top of my head. I can come back to you on that.

Ms Brown: I think that it is £200,000 a year.

Mr Swann: Are there rates related to hiring the road as well?

Mr Cory: I think so, yes. I should just mention that it is actually under negotiation at the moment, so it may not be helpful for any further detail about costs, and so on, to be in the public domain.

Mr Swann: That saves you having to answer; is that what you are saying to me?

Mr Cory: It depends what your next question is. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Swann: I had my own personal website built for £500. What sort of website do you get for £60,000? I have never come across a £60,000 website.

Mr Scott: It is not just the website. The £60,000 is an estimate of the cost that will be required to develop the learning packages that will be hosted on the website. So it includes setting up the site, developing the packages and learning materials that will be available on the site, and it includes £5,000 for the resource running cost of operating and updating the site. It is an estimate. It will be refined as the business case is — *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Swann: If it is about learning and all the rest of it —

Mr Scott: Sorry, I did not catch your first point.

Mr Swann: Sorry, I am having trouble hearing you as well, Arthur. If it is in regard to learning, is there any engagement with the Department of Education?

Mr Scott: We have a learning co-ordinator who assists the Department and its arm's-length bodies in developing and providing the learning strategy. That person is a retired education and training inspector, so they are a professional educationalist. They have offered advice and have input to the business case for the Líofo website development.

Mr Swann: And they are from the Department of Education?

Mr Scott: They are an ex-employee of the Department of Education but are now retained by DCAL to advise the Department and its arm's-length bodies on our learning strategy. They are instrumental in helping the Department and all its arm's-length bodies in implementing the learning strategy.

Mr Swann: So are they there as a fixed cost already?

Mr Scott: The cost is shared across the Department and all of its arm's-length bodies. It is a part-time position. The cost is around £25,000 a year.

Mr Swann: So that will not be an additional cost to the £60,000?

Mr Scott: No, it is already there as an allied service.

Mr Swann: Can I ask about social inclusion? One of the other projects you mentioned was going to be brought forward. I was having trouble hearing your presentation, but I think you said it was an Irish language academy. Have you any further detail on that? It is not referred to anywhere in the paper.

Mr Scott: The Irish-language academy addresses the concern that there are a number of people who need help and assistance in standardising how the language is spoken. Quite a number of people speak Irish with English phonetics, but Irish phonetics are quite different. That is one of the concerns. What is being proposed with the money allocated towards that is a feasibility study to look in more detail at the needs, what an Irish-language academy might do, what it might look like and how best to go about it. At this stage, it is a feasibility study.

Mr Swann: I do not want to steal your thunder, Dominic, but is that not Foras na Gaeilge's remit, or am I wrong?

Mr D Bradley: I would have thought that the type of work you have described could be carried out by Queen's University or the University of Ulster.

Mr Scott: I have recently had discussions with some academics from those institutions. They described to me some of the current difficulties as they see them, notwithstanding the efforts that they make. There definitely appears to be a need, and the feasibility study seeks to address how best to meet that need.

Mr D Bradley: Can you send us a paper on exactly what you are about because it does not seem to be that clear?

Mr Scott: I am sorry, Chairperson, I thought that I had explained that. I would be happy to forward details to the Committee.

Mr D Bradley: You are calling it an Irish-language academy, which is specifically to address pronunciation?

Mr Scott: I am sorry; I said that that was just one of a range of things. I talked about the standardisation of language. That is one of the aspects that I am aware of.

Mr D Bradley: Standardisation of the language is done on an all-island basis.

Mr Scott: Yes. A new official written standard has just been agreed in the Dáil. One of the concerns, which I discussed with academics, was around the way in which Irish is spoken in the North. People are using English phonetics when they should be using Irish phonetics, so they are different.

That is just one aspect. I am not saying that that is the whole basis of it, but it is standardisation in that sense. There is a dictionary and a written standard, but, as I understand it, it is about how the language is to be spoken. The people who are teaching it are perpetuating the use of English phonetics and continuing to teach it in that way.

Mr D Bradley: So, we are all speaking it wrong, and you are going to teach us.

Mr Swann: I thought that for a long time. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Scott: I did not say that. That is what academics have told me. I will forward the correspondence on what the feasibility study in detail seeks to address.

The Chairperson: Where did those concerns around phonetics, and so on, originate, Arthur?

Mr Scott: They came from the Irish-speaking community.

The Chairperson: Was that from the consultation document?

Mr Scott: Well, as you know, the consultation closed on 27 November. There were discussions during the consultation. I was not involved in those, but representations were made to the Department during the consultation period. We are just beginning to examine the detail of the consultation, so I do not have that at this point.

The Chairperson: It seems a very swift action on the basis of a consultation that took place over only the past few weeks. You are pursuing something quite quickly.

Mr Scott: Well, yes, it is a swift action, but, in a sense, we are doing a feasibility study, and I am happy to share the detail of that with the Committee to give it a fuller understanding. I did not come here today fully briefed; I have only a broad outline. It is just one of the things that I am involved in. I am happy to provide fuller detail, which will set out better and more carefully to the Committee what it is about.

The Chairperson: Our experience of all Departments is that they do not usually work so quickly, but we will look forward to receiving your paper.

Mr Swann: I wanted to ask about the £100,000 to the mountain rescue and Parkrun.

Ms D Brown: I will ask Colin to deal with that.

Mr Watson: I am sorry; what was the question?

Ms D Brown: It is about the mountain rescue and Parkrun.

Mr Swann: It is not mentioned anywhere that I can see, apart from in the capital moves table.

Mr Watson: Oh, right. The Parkrun programme is already in place in some council areas. It is a free, 5km, or three-mile, timed walk, jog or run, which is open to everyone. It is an opportunity to get people to use the local parks. We want to extend it beyond the councils that already have it. There are already three Parkrun programmes in Belfast; in the Waterworks, Victoria Park and Falls Park.

Mr Swann: Is this money that councils can bid for?

Mr Watson: We have not yet worked out how that will be done. We do it through Sport NI, which already funds the Parkrun programme. This is just an attempt to extend it into other council areas. Sport NI will work out the details of that with the councils.

Mr Swann: What is the timeline, then?

Mr Watson: It will be in this financial year. We have to do it this financial year.

Mr Swann: This financial year ends in April.

Mr Watson: Yes.

Ms D Brown: It ends in March.

Mr Swann: So, we have three months for Sport NI to put out the consultation to councils and get the money spent?

Mr Watson: Well, it is a case of identifying which councils want to take it forward, after which we can see how quickly we can get things up and running. It does not involve major amounts of money, but it is a useful way of getting people out into the local parks to make use of them for healthy exercise.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cathaoirleach. My first point is about Líofo, which links into the further discussion about the acadamh. I am aware that well over 3,000 people have signed up to Líofo. Would that be right? I am not sure about what other methods could be used to communicate with them. However, there are clearly many people, from all walks of life and all communities, who are interested in learning Irish. It seems to me that a website would be the easiest way to convey information and communicate so that people know where to go to link in. I do not know whether other methods of communicating with that growing number of Irish-language enthusiasts have been considered, but I just feel that a website is a good way to do it.

I do not believe that Acadamh Gaeilge has arisen out of the consultation. This idea has been around in the Irish language community for a long time. I have been in discussions with people who have suggested that this would be a good idea. One of the main reasons is that there are so many people — I do not know how many but there are scores and scores — who do so many different adult language courses that go on throughout the North all the time. There is no standardisation of how all of those are taught, unlike in schools where there is a curriculum. It is about bringing some cohesion, co-ordination and standardisation to that learning experience so that people who go to night classes to learn Irish are able to avail themselves of the correct standard of excellence and be taught the Irish language in the way that it should be taught. The Acadamh Gaeilge is certainly one way of fulfilling that function. The acadamh would serve other functions, but I see that as a main one.

Mr Scott: To clarify, I said that it emerged during the consultation. You are right to say that it did not come out of the consultation. People who are interested in it mentioned it again when they were replying, so that was perhaps sparked by the consultation.

Yes; there are a range of standardisation issues. I recall that when Líofo was being set up, it was very difficult to establish just where Irish-language classes were being provided. Some are known about, but others are not because they are done at community level. It is about standards but also the materials that are available to support the people who deliver those classes. I have been approached by people who are actively involved and people outside the curriculum who teach Irish, and they say that there is no support. In some instances, there is demand that is not being met or is being met on a voluntary basis.

We are now beginning to get into the detail of what would be in any study. As I say, I am happy to send detailed correspondence to the Committee to outline in full what they want the feasibility study to address.

The Chairperson: The website will cost £60,000 and 3,000 have signed up to Líofo. That equates to around £2,000 per person, which does not really look like value for money.

Mr Scott: I do not have the breakdown of the business case with me today. However, as I outlined earlier, it is about the development of materials. It goes up to 2015, so those materials would have to

be updated. It is an investment. There will be a distance-learning download. I assume that that will have to be of a particular standard and written in a particular way to achieve its purpose. It could include downloadable audio materials. The business case will set out the detail.

The Chairperson: Mick, in response to Mr Swann, you talked about the purchase of off-site storage for National Museums Northern Ireland. From our discussions about archaeological archives, and so on, we are aware that storage space is limited. Is there room for expansion on that site?

Mr Cory: I am not in a position to say, because I am not familiar with the site's specifics. However, I can certainly find out for you.

The Chairperson: OK. It is really about future-proofing such an investment for the museum.

Mr Cory: Yes, absolutely.

The Chairperson: Is there any interest in the Balmoral site currently?

Ms D Brown: There has been some interest but we have no agreed — *[Inaudible.]* If and when — *[Inaudible.]* — we will make sure that — *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Ó hOisín: I am curious about the museum's purchase of the gold torc and the 'Northern Rhythm' painting. Presumably the gold torc aspect tied in with the Brighter hoard and the Brighter torc — *[Inaudible.]*

The Chairperson: Mr Ó hOisín, will you speak up?

Mr Ó hOisín: Sorry. An attempt was made to bring back the Brighter torc from the National Museum on temporary loan. I just wonder whether the gold torc is a replacement for that.

Mr Cory: This torc is one of 10 found in Ireland. The coroner has said that it is national treasure. It is being evaluated at the moment. As a national treasure, it will be offered for purchase to the National Museums in the first instance. It is one of only 10 of that nature found on the island. I am not familiar with the other torc, but I understand that it is a unique item. If the opportunity arises for us to retain it in the Ulster Museum, it would be good to do that.

Mr Ó hOisín: To go back, if the £60,000 being spent is divided between 3,000 people, that equates to £200 per person not £2,000 per person; not to question your maths.

The Chairperson: That was my Committee Clerk's maths.

Moving on, is the £50,000 for CoderDojo a bid or an allocation?

Ms D Brown: That is us using the easements that we have to redistribute money to manage the new projects that we have come up with. It is not a bid; it is us reallocating the money.

The Chairperson: Thank you.