



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Programme for Government:  
Mr P Robinson (First Minister) and  
Mr M McGuinness (deputy First Minister)

25 June 2014

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)  
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Leslie Cree  
Mrs Brenda Hale  
Mr Alex Maskey  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr George Robinson

**Witnesses:**

Mr P Robinson	First Minister
Mr M McGuinness	deputy First Minister
Mr Bell	Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Ms J McCann	Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

**The Chairperson:** We welcome today the First Minister, the deputy First Minister and the two junior Ministers. You are all very welcome. We have set aside five minutes each for the principals, if you would like to make some opening remarks.

**Mr P Robinson (The First Minister):** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, for the welcome and the invitation to brief the Committee. As members will be aware, Martin and I are committed to driving progress on the Programme for Government (PFG) as co-chairs of the programme board. We view that role as providing a challenge and support function by examining areas in which difficulties have already arisen and identifying issues affecting delivery, and then directing efforts and, where necessary, resources to drive progress. In that capacity, we are regularly briefed on progress against commitments across all Departments at a strategic level, most recently on 19 June.

When we introduced the Programme for Government to the Assembly, we acknowledged that the success of this Executive will be judged on their capacity to deliver for local people. Two years later, we are proud to stand by our record of delivery in that period. A suite of activities with the level of complexity and ambition of the Programme for Government cannot be summarised by one or two

numbers. That said, progress to date has been excellent, with performance meeting or exceeding targeted levels for 78% of PFG commitments. We appreciate that the Committee does not want a sugar-coated report focusing on areas where performance is very strong. I reassure members that we are equally clear that a focus on continuous improvement in performance is absolutely essential.

With that in mind, I would like to highlight some key areas in the programme where we are making a real difference to the lives of people here. We identified five big commitments in the PFG. The first was to contribute to rising levels of employment by supporting the promotion of over 25,000 new jobs. You will be pleased to note that 23,783 jobs have been achieved to March 2014 against a target for that period of time of 19,500. We also committed to increasing visitor numbers to 4.2 million and tourist revenue to £676 million by December 2014. In 2013, those figures had reached 4.1 million visitors and £723 million in revenue; we have reached and exceeded our revenue target one year early.

One of the most important commitments was to reform and modernise the delivery of health and social care. That is hugely important, given the value we place on health and well-being and the level of expenditure on health and social care: approximately £5 billion per annum. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has established 17 integrated care partnerships, which are now engaged in reviewing care pathways for the four initial priority areas. The available substantiated figures for excess bed days show that the PFG target in that area was being met in 2012-13 and that the target level of 10% reduction is achieved for the desired 2013-14 time frame.

In addition to the big commitments, we have made significant progress on a range of other commitments with an economic focus. For example, in terms of the economy, air passenger duty (APD) rates for long-haul flights from Northern Ireland were reduced to zero from 1 January 2013. Funding for 467 additional science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) student places in further education has been put in place, and 99.8% of children whose parents engaged with the process to the end obtained a funded preschool place in each of the last two years. That is a hugely important development in promoting child development, and it contributed to economic development by enabling parents to participate in the economy.

In this Programme for Government, we made a very clear commitment to focus on social as well as economic objectives, notably through the Delivering Social Change framework and an associated package of £28 million of signature programmes. Twenty new nurture units are now in place and are playing a key role in improving the lives and educational attainment of our most vulnerable children. Some 135 children are currently attending the units. By way of a suite of parenting support programmes, up to 1,200 new and existing families are receiving additional high-quality parenting support. Targets for the provision of new social and affordable homes have been exceeded, with 1,300 social and 1,200 affordable homes in 2013-14. An investment of £4.4 million has been made in programmes to tackle obesity, potentially impacting on the future health and well-being of people across Northern Ireland.

Through the Programme for Government, we have acted decisively to protect and enhance the environment. Specific achievements include a levy on single-use carrier bags being introduced. Work on the extension and increase of the levy in 2015, in accordance with the wishes of the Assembly, is already in hand. A statutory marine management scheme for Rathlin Island has been produced. Phase 1 of the upgrade to the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry line was completed in March 2013, ahead of the April 2013 timetable. An investment of £390 million has been made in sustainable transport in the Programme for Government period to March 2014. The commitment to meet our PFG target of a £500 million investment is on track for delivery. Water quality and wastewater standards set out in the programme have been met.

One of the most challenging issues we face is the promotion of a strong and united community. We are a single community, and, despite the challenges of our history, it is crucial that we work together to achieve that end. The Together: Building a United Community strategy, which was published on 23 May, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving good relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. It commits to delivering a range of measures to build good relations and help to create the conditions to progress further towards a prosperous, peaceful and safe society. The strategy marks a significant milestone in the Executive's work and represents a robust, strategic framework for action against a number of priorities and actions.

Members know what the key elements are: we want to create a society free from hate and intolerance. We want to encourage and facilitate joint service provision and the greater sharing of resources, and we will bring down the barriers that artificially divide our society. The strategy

envisages a united community based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation; one that is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced, and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together free from prejudice, hate and intolerance. This will be a challenging enterprise, but one that we are determined to see being brought to fruition. It will benefit society now and will lead to a better future for our young people. Through the strategy, we remain committed to addressing the complex issues arising from our past that still confront us as a society. This is our best chance of leaving a legacy of good relations for future generations. We acknowledge and value the wealth of experience and expertise that has been built up over the years and now resides in community leaders, organisations and agencies. The strategy will provide the framework for that good practice to be developed and built on over the coming years.

Before I hand over to Martin, it is important to acknowledge that a small number of commitments are affected by issues that could potentially result in a delay to delivery. Where delivery has fallen below target, we will continue to encourage progress and to focus on strong remedial and supportive action. You will appreciate that some of the issues are not within our control. One such issue is export figures. The 2012-13 figures were disappointing as a result of the downturn in demand from traditional export markets in the Republic and Canada. While good progress has been made, it does not, at this stage, appear sufficient to recover the ground lost in 2012-13. We have continued our work to develop and grow export markets and to promote inward investment from emerging countries such as Brazil and China. That has begun to see its rewards in good export growth in 2013-14.

Clearly, there are also a small number of commitments where we are working to achieve political consensus and where delivery against the original envisaged timescale will not be possible to achieve. As Martin and I have stated to the Committee previously, we both remain committed to resolving these issues wherever we can. On that note, I hand over to Martin.

**Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister):** I, too, thank the Committee for the opportunity to update members on the progress being made on the Programme for Government. Officials have attended the Committee in recent weeks to present detailed information on the work being progressed in support of the delivery of our commitments. It is useful to have this session also so that the Committee can be fully versed on the strategic considerations that bear on that activity.

As Peter indicated, there has been encouraging progress to date, but we are focused on achieving even more. I will highlight a few areas of the Programme for Government that illustrate the delivery focus that has characterised the implementation of the period to date. First, I will focus on our big five commitments. We committed to achieving £1 billion of investment in the economy, including £375 million as a result of foreign direct investment, £400 million from indigenous businesses supported by Invest NI, and £225 million as a result of the jobs fund. I am delighted to report that some £1.5 billion had been achieved by March 2014, which exceeded our target by 50% one year early. That increased investment will benefit everyone: people, families and neighbourhoods.

We also gave a commitment to support young people into employment by providing skills and training. Our target for delivery was 89,000 by March 2014, and by January 2014 we had achieved a very impressive 109,000.

We have also put in place a range of measures to raise education standards, including some measures targeted at our most disadvantaged pupils. Members, you will be aware that 225 graduate teachers have been appointed to improve levels of literacy and numeracy under Delivering Social Change. While the impact of this particular programme may not be evident immediately, it is pleasing to see that there are already increased numbers of pupils leaving school with five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\* to C, including GCSEs in English and Maths.

We are also maintaining a focus on achieving improved education outcomes. By March 2014, 217 qualifications had been delivered to upskill the working-age population, including further education, higher education and essential skills qualifications. Again, that exceeded our Programme for Government commitment one year early.

The commitments in the Programme for Government are there to enable everyone to grow and develop to their full potential. We have promoted and encouraged, through the Delivering Social Change framework, effective, cross-departmental collaboration to drive through important initiatives that can achieve real and long-lasting social benefits for those in our society who need them most.

The six Delivering Social Change signature programmes seek to focus on early interventions to tackle the root causes of issues before they have time to develop into more significant problems. Implementation of the six programmes is progressing well, and we are already starting to see positive outcomes through their practical delivery. For example, as I mentioned earlier, 225 additional teachers are in place in primary and post-primary schools, supporting children and young people who are struggling with English and Maths at critical stages in their education.

Over 900 family members have already received support through an intervention to support young people who are not in education, employment or training. Up to 6,000 families are expected to benefit from the continued support provided to 16 existing family support hubs and the establishment of 10 new hubs. These hubs allow a local network of statutory, voluntary and community organisations to work together to signpost families with specific needs to appropriate services. Finally, 11 additional social enterprise incubation hubs are being established, offering a range of business advice and practical support to social enterprise entrepreneurs.

A key element of Delivering Social Change is the £80 million social investment fund. You will be pleased to hear that we continue to make steady progress and that we expect all the expenditure to be committed by the end of this financial year.

The first phase of the Bright Start childcare strategy was launched by Ministers on 25 September 2013. The framework sets out a general direction of travel for the childcare strategy, while the 15 key first actions are an initial response to the childcare priorities that were identified during consultation and research. All 15 key first actions are being taken forward. Most recently, actions 1, 2 and 5, which will be delivered through the Bright Start school-age childcare grant scheme, was launched by junior Ministers Bell and McCann on 27 March 2014. The grant scheme will assist childcare settings, serving disadvantaged and rural communities, and settings that are based on the schools estate. The first round of applications to the grant scheme are being assessed, and it is envisaged that the first awards will be made in the autumn.

Eighteen thousand households have benefited from the warm homes scheme, helping to reduce bills for some of the most vulnerable households, and commitments to ensure that there is no increase in water charges and student fees have been delivered. In addition, £8 million has been invested in programmes to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation, and significant work is under way to relocate the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's central offices to a number of rural locations. Work is progressing to relocate the fisheries division to south Down, the Forest Service to County Fermanagh by June 2015 and the Rivers Agency to Loughry Campus by March 2016. The remainder of departmental headquarters will relocate to Ballykelly, where it is planned to have 400 workstations available by 2017, with a further 200 workstations available by 2020.

Peter mentioned our desire to build a united community, and there is no doubt that that represents a huge challenge for all of us. The 'Together: Building a United Community' document represents the most ambitious good relations strategy ever produced here. It is also our best chance of leaving a legacy of good relations to future generations, and we must grasp this opportunity.

Design groups to draw-up detailed proposals to implement the strategy's seven headline commitments have made significant progress already. These groups are working to ensure that the plans and proposals developed are robust and will deliver the outcomes identified in the strategy. That includes detailed engagement with stakeholders who have experience of working in these areas and who will use the programmes or services when they are operational.

Going beyond the strategy and the associated actions, there is a range of important commitments in the Programme for Government that can promote social cohesion. Building on the success of the 2012 Irish Open, further announcements relating to the return of that competition and potentially the first major golf championship to take place here since 1951 demonstrate international confidence in our ability to host international-standard golf events. Events such as that promote confidence among the whole community that things really are changing.

In order to continue to deliver change, we will need to keep the pressure on to achieve public sector reforms. The recent elections to shadow councils are therefore a historic milestone that will support ever more effective and responsive public service delivery. The transfer of investment functions to local government in 2015 will provide an opportunity for locally elected representatives to deliver transformative change for their communities.

I hope you agree that the developments that we have outlined represent, collectively, a huge level of progress. Very often, those achievements are not acknowledged, as there is mostly a focus on what is not working. As Peter said, we will maintain our focus on delivering our Programme for Government commitments, such as investment in childcare, tackling health problems, tackling rural poverty and isolation and protecting families against increases in student fees and water charges. We are delivering benefits for people. However, we also have persistent levels of poverty and disadvantage that we must continue to address.

The progress achieved to date provides a strong basis for further delivery of the Programme for Government over the remainder of the period. We are committed to continuing our work to ensure progress and to playing a strong leadership role in responding positively to any challenges that might affect progress.

As Peter indicated, we, as First and deputy First Ministers, lead on a number of commitments that are cross-cutting and complex in character and require agreement and coordination across the parties of the Executive. Although we have achieved much agreement, we have to address the significant outstanding issues, such as Maze/Long Kesh, age discrimination in goods, facilities and services and making sure that our ethnic minority communities feel safe and welcome, which we continue to work on.

The Programme for Government is a statement of intent of delivery from the Executive. For various reasons, whether it is a lack of political agreement or because of economic and financial pressures, we have not delivered on all of our commitments, and we have to hold our hands up and acknowledge that. Whatever our political differences, and there are many, all of us are in politics to make things better and to improve the lives of all of our people. So, we look forward to discussing all of this with you. Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you both very much. That reflects the very broad range of issues that fall under the Department's responsibility. I would like to begin with the racial equality strategy, but before I ask a question I have an observation on the lead-in, which is to do with the relationship between the Department and the Committee. I emphasise and stress that every member of this Committee is absolutely committed to a scrutiny role that includes advising and assisting the Department in achieving its Programme for Government commitments. On that basis, I acknowledge the work of the four of you and that of the head of the Civil Service to address the issues of cancelled briefings and late papers. There was a huge and very noticeable improvement, but there has been a bit of a slide in the last number of weeks. I hope that we will start the new term after recess in the same place that we were a few weeks ago, with things operating as they should do.

The most recent breach of protocol was the Committee not being given advanced sight of the racial equality strategy. I understand that it was a difficult document to get together, and now I come to my question. Apart from the immigration piece, what is significantly different between the new strategy you have just published for consultation and the old one that was abandoned seven years ago?

**Mr P Robinson:** The first thing that we should note is that the strategy is out for consultation and therefore it may well reflect any of the advice that we receive during the consultation period before it is finally published. Of course, we will be very interested to have the Committee's views on that. I do apologise if the normal protocols were not kept. I know that we were under fairly consistent public pressure to have it released. We even took our own officials slightly by surprise, because they did not have the web page set up properly to deal with that when it was published. It may well have been the lesser of two evils to get it out and take the punishment from you rather than from the press and public, but I do apologise for that. I was not aware that that had not happened.

**The Chairperson:** Observation, rather than punishment.

**Mr P Robinson:** In terms of the content, we obviously look for people's reaction to it. I have a somewhat sceptical view of strategies if they are not backed up by actions anyway and I think the more important element will be what actions arise from the strategy that will make a real difference. We are already putting a significant amount of money into issues relating to racial equality. The commitment is there from OFMDFM and I believe that it is shared by the Committee and the Assembly as a whole. We look forward to getting the public reaction to it. I am always reluctant when asked to comment too much on strategies that are out for consultation, because I do not want to put any parameters on what people may respond with or any limits on how we might react to that. So, if the

Chair or the Committee have more innovative ways of dealing with some of the issues, we look forward to hearing from them and reacting to them.

**The Chairperson:** I am aware of one researcher who has taken the two documents — the old one and the new consultation document — and has noted an awful lot of cutting and pasting from the old document.

**Mr P Robinson:** I think what you are saying is consistency.

**The Chairperson:** You can certainly call it consistency, but the question that it gave rise to for that gentleman was why, if there was so much cutting and pasting, it took so long.

**Mr M McGuinness:** With respect, it is well and good people having an analysis of the previous document and the present document, but what is really important is what comes out the other side of the consultation. This is a real opportunity — and there is plenty of time to do it — for the community as a whole to engage in what is a vital piece of work. We know that from the events of recent months. Quite clearly, we have a problem in our society that needs to be addressed. I think that now, with the publication of the document, the opportunity that it presents for citizens and key stakeholders to respond is clearly there. You would expect that what has gone out for consultation at the moment will evolve and change as that consultation continues and what will come out the other side will, in all probability, be somewhat different from the previous document and the present one.

**The Chairperson:** You mentioned recent events, deputy First Minister. I think you, like others around the table, have probably been lobbied by the Islamic Centre with regard to a new cultural centre. As I understand it, they are saying that, if it is appropriate — if OFMDFM supports other ethnic or minority groups financially or with resource — they would simply like proportionate help from OFMDFM for the new cultural centre, which would include a mosque. Is that going to happen?

**Mr M McGuinness:** Peter and I are both on the public record as saying that we will support the efforts being made by the Islamic Centre. I know that they have been at pains in recent days and weeks to stress that they are looking for a community centre with a mosque, as opposed to a mosque on its own. So, yes, absolutely, we will look very favourably on their efforts and are prepared to commit financial support to them.

**Mr P Robinson:** It might be worth adding to that that we already give support to the Islamic Centre in terms of some of the community involvement that it has. About two years ago, they came to see me to look for support — obviously not financial support — for the construction of their community facility, which I readily gave them. Martin and I have again endorsed their project, and we will give encouragement to it. I do not think that money is a big issue for them; they have a number of partners round the world that assist them. However, they look for government endorsement of the work that they do and government support for the revenue elements that relate to community involvement.

**The Chairperson:** We move to the historical institutional abuse inquiry. We understand that, in recent days, Sir Anthony has been given a one-year extension, which would suggest that the report will not be with you until 2017. Given that significant delay, which we understand, are you giving active consideration to asking Sir Anthony to produce an interim report?

**Mr P Robinson:** No, he advises against that. When a learned judge gives you advice, very well argued advice, both for getting an extension and continuing uninterrupted with his focus on getting his final report, it is sensible to take it, particularly as you have set him up very much in an independent capacity. Obviously, we have handed over the responsibility to him. If he feels that there is value in any interim report or findings, he, of course, is free to produce that, and we would not interfere in any way with that. However, it would be difficult for us to instruct him and, at the same time, suggest that this is an independent report for which he is entirely responsible.

**The Chairperson:** I just think that, on a point of fact, when the judge advised us not to press for the start date to be the foundation of the state and to stick with the foundation of the National Health Service, we did not take his advice and pressed for the broader extension.

First Minister, what do you say to people who are obviously not getting any younger and are desperate to hear the conclusions of this inquiry?

**Mr P Robinson:** Quite simply that we have an independent judicial inquiry. I can assure you that the former High Court Judge Hart is not sitting on his hands on this issue. He is actively involved, and he has been acting in the most responsible fashion. I believe that there is a massive amount of confidence in him, and I do not believe that people think that he is somehow prolonging the process. They will get a much more thorough outcome if they allow him to do it according to the schedule that he has devised. I recognise that it does delay the process. If it could have been done within the time frame originally envisaged, that would have been great, but it cannot be done within the time frame originally envisaged without it being to the detriment of the outcome.

**Mr M McGuinness:** We met Justice Hart last week to discuss the extension to the inquiry time frame. He obviously came reluctantly to the conclusion that an extension to the inquiry was important and was needed to meet the purposes that the Assembly plainly intended. He made a very persuasive and compelling case for a 12-month extension to the time frame. We are very lucky to have him as head of the inquiry. He is very sympathetic to the people who come before him, and he recognises the importance of trying to avoid, as much as possible, an adversarial approach that has been so roundly criticised in other inquiries elsewhere.

We do not underestimate the complexities of dealing with the whole issue of institutional abuse, and we are very sensitive to the needs of victims. We took the decision to establish the historical institutional abuse inquiry because we met, at first hand, people who were victims, and they made a very persuasive case that the institutional abuse inquiry should be set up. I want to pay tribute to all of them. It is heartbreaking to hear them as they come out from giving their testimonies — which, for many people, is news — of how they were treated in some of these institutions.

We need to be very conscious that we are dealing with a very learned judge and someone who is very determined to expedite the situation. Obviously, I do not speak for him, but I think that his concern probably centres on his regarding the prospect of the challenge to bring forward an interim report as an interruption that would delay the final report that he must and is very determined to bring forward as quickly as possible.

**Mr P Robinson:** Mr Chairman, it might be worth saying, in direct response to your last question about what we say to those who, like ourselves, are not getting any younger and will be awaiting an outcome, that the other side of that coin is what we say to victims who would not get a chance to put their case if there was not an extension or if the extension were interrupted by having to do a report.

**The Chairperson:** I think that everybody around the table understands why the extension was sought. It is a numbers game. However, on the point of those who would not have had the opportunity to have the comfort of that inquiry, what about those who were abused but not in institutions? In other words, what about the abused who fall outwith the terms of reference? We are conscious of them, and we understand from a briefing last week that some of those people have come forward to this inquiry. Are they going to have to wait until post 2017 before you even consider what can be done for them beyond going to the police or the social services?

**Mr M McGuinness:** That clearly represents a further issue to be considered by the Executive. Given what has emerged from the Tuam babies incident, this is big stuff, as we all appreciate. In the period since the Tuam babies story took off — it was in the public domain for some time, but it took off as a really big story just a couple of weeks ago — quite a number of people who have been in similar situations and predicaments have already come forward to meet us. All of this is going to have to be very, very carefully considered.

**The Chairperson:** But what is the timescale for that?

**Mr P Robinson:** Can we be clear that it is not a case of us sitting waiting for everything else to happen before we look at these issues? We agreed that these matters should be scoped out, and officials were tasked to do so. I understand that there are already joint protocol investigations into them involving health and the PSNI. We will obviously take our decision when we get the advice from officials. However, we are not sitting back waiting for anything else to happen in the existing inquiry. They are being scoped out. I assume that you are talking about clerical abuse outside of homes — the Magdalene laundries and those kind of issues.

**The Chairperson:** The scoping is certainly news to me. Would it be possible for the Committee to get a briefing and an update on the scoping exercise, perhaps in the autumn?



**Mr M McGuinness:** Absolutely, yes.

**The Chairperson:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

**Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentation, Ministers. May I ask junior Minister McCann to outline what the next steps are following the recent consultations on the children and young people's strategy and the child poverty issue?

**Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** When we set out to put out the Delivering Social Change consultation document, we wanted to engage with as many people as possible who are involved in that sector, particularly parents of young children. We are studying the responses to that consultation. Some challenges have been thrown up by the fact that that document concentrated specifically on children and young people who are in poverty or whose families are in poverty. A number of concerns that came back were that it is a dilution of the 10-year strategy that is already in place and will be in place until 2016. We are looking at all that. We wanted to reassure people that we are not diluting the 10-year strategy. We might have to look at decoupling those and having a specific strategy around child poverty separate from the 10-year strategy and beyond. We will work together to do that. Those are the challenges that it threw up for us. We are still in consultation. Really, what we are doing is trying to engage with the children and young people's strategic partnerships and all the other groups that are helping to inform any policy that we are going to take forward.

**Ms McGahan:** Thank you for that. The Chair already touched on a question that I was going to ask about the growing concerns around the mother and baby homes, particularly the recent example in Galway. I emphasise the point that the Executive needs to look at addressing the Magdalene laundries issues, which currently falls outside the scope of the current inquiry.

**Ms J McCann:** Very quickly, anybody who was under 18 and was in any institution is covered by the inquiry, but you are quite right to point out that people who were over 18 in Magdalene laundries-type institutions are not covered. That is one of the options that the First Minister and deputy First Minister mentioned earlier. We are looking at other institutions that are not necessarily covered. When the level of the Tuam babies story was being exposed, we asked officials to scope out how many homes there were. I think that something like nine or 11 have been identified so far, but that is a work in progress. We are very conscious of the people who are getting on in years. As was mentioned earlier, we met some of them earlier this week. All of that has been taken into consideration when we are looking at a way forward on that.

**Mr M McGuinness:** I think that it is also important to stress that, thus far, even though more work has to be done, there is not anything to suggest that there is anything that is even remotely approaching the scale of what happened in Tuam. As always, something could jump up to bite us, and I think that it is very important that the scoping exercise that Peter spoke about is carried out by officials and by the police.

**Ms McGahan:** Finally, Martin, can you give assurances regarding the delivery of the A5 project?

**Mr M McGuinness:** The A5 project is an old chestnut, and our Executive are absolutely committed to the construction of the new road. Obviously, it has been beset by difficulties, and, in the first instance, the difficulties centre on the economic downturn, which had a dramatic effect on the contribution to be made by the Irish Government. It was effectively to be a joint project, so that was a major setback for us. Of course, as a result of the judicial review, we had a ruling directly to do with the European habitats directive, which has effectively meant that a whole new process has to be undertaken, first, to satisfy the courts and, then, to go through the legal niceties that have to be dealt with in the context of facing into this project being effectively restored.

The Executive are committed to the project. We regard it as a vital road, not just to Dublin but to Belfast, particularly for people from County Tyrone, including Strabane, Omagh and the Ballygawley area. I think that our hope now is that, through the Department for Regional Development, which is involved in looking at this and which has responsibility for delivering it, we will see a resolution to this problem. It is unfortunate and very disappointing for all of us, particularly those of us who live in the west, that the project has been hit by circumstances that are outside our control. The important thing now is to try to get it back on track again, and I believe that every effort is being made.

**Mrs Hale:** First Minister, you have already welcomed the increase in jobs. In relation to the economic PFG target, to what do you attribute the success so far, notwithstanding the challenging economic climate that we are still in?

**Mr P Robinson:** There are probably a number of factors. It is very clear that the deputy First Minister and I are very much pushing in the same direction. If you have that enthusiasm to achieve a target, that helps, and I think that our investment visits play an important role in that. I have to say that DETI and, indeed, Invest Northern Ireland, have done exceedingly well in this instance. Having gone, for many decades, to meetings that involved Invest Northern Ireland and the Department, I think that we have a level of effectiveness now that we did not have before. I think that we are also helped by the peace and stability that we have at the present time. The reputational damage that we have had in the past has made it very difficult for us to encourage people to come to Northern Ireland. In some ways, we were probably helped, though it seems ironic, by the downturn. The downturn worldwide caused many major companies to start looking at their cost on the balance sheet, and Northern Ireland became very attractive in that context. We know of jobs that were shifted from London and Paris to Northern Ireland because we had the skills, and it was at a lower cost than it was in London or Paris.

On top of that, it is worth pointing out that, from a Northern Ireland point of view, we are receiving more income and direct investment than anywhere else outside of London, and it is of a very high standard. Invest Northern Ireland has significantly increased its targets. I think that it is about 50% better than last year. So, it has been a good news story, though, perhaps, it would be a good news story if it was more reported than it is at present.

**The Chairperson:** Can I ask something very briefly on the back of that? What are the percentages for London and Northern Ireland in respect of total FDI?

**Mr P Robinson:** I would need to get Invest NI's statement. It is based on the size of population and area.

**The Chairperson:** London could have 90%, and we could have 5% and still be second, or it could be 50% and 45%.

**Mr P Robinson:** The real comparator is what is happening in Scotland, Wales and elsewhere in England.

**Mrs Hale:** You just talked about media perception. Given that we have heard this afternoon that 78% of our PFG commitments have been met, why is the media perception that the Executive are not delivering?

**Mr P Robinson:** I do not want to go on a media-bashing exercise, but it tends to determine a narrative, and whatever the facts are around it, they are fed into that narrative. There is a narrative out there that the Assembly and Executive do not deliver, in spite of the fact that we have some really good news stories to tell.

The fact is that there are bad news stories as well. There are areas where we are not achieving what we want to achieve. If you give the media a choice of a bad news story and a good news story, I know what will be on the front page. From that point of view, it is not unusual for the media to disproportionately cover bad news. I suppose, in many ways, in the kind of system that we have, there are so many oppositions that there are a lot of people putting a negative slant on anything that happens in Northern Ireland, and it starts to become a vicious circle.

I think that there is one further factor, and, to use Martin's analogy of having to put our hands up, I do not think that the Executive are particularly good at getting their own messages out. That is something that we have to address. You can blame the media when it has two stories to choose from, and it chooses the bad news, but if we are not putting the good news stories out or not putting them out in a way that is attractive to the media, that blame has to fall on us.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Quite clearly, the 78% is a huge improvement on the last delivery for the Programme for Government, but that does not mean that we can rest on our laurels. The fact is that there are areas where we need to find agreement so that we can improve that figure. Those challenges are clearly out there. People make judgements as to whether or not the process is working

and, a lot of times, by what they see happening on the streets. That is why all of us are agreed that finding a way forward on things like parades, the past and the whole issue of flags, symbols and identity is critical. You are judged more on the failure to get an agreement on that than you are on the successes in the 78%.

That represents a real challenge for all of us, and I think that it is a challenge that we have to rise to. Yesterday, we met, and we agreed that we are going to go into a period of intensive discussions to try to find a way forward. People should not be under any illusions about how difficult that is going to be. We have to approach all of these things in a positive and constructive spirit, recognising that any failure to get agreement will allow people to continue to judge in the negative as opposed to the positive.

**Mrs Hale:** We need to focus on the fact that we have already achieved 78% of our targets. Thank you.

**Mr Lyttle:** Hello, Ministers; thank you for your presentation. I wholeheartedly agree with the Committee and with your contribution that the public will judge the Executive on delivery. I also agree with you that it is important that we communicate key achievements. That 78% is something to emphasise. Some of the employment figures that have been achieved are also positives. In the Department, some of the key actions around family support, early years education intervention and childcare are positive key achievements. However, there are also key issues that see significant delays, and some issues look more like inputs than outputs. The First Minister's comment that strategy is not backed up by action is concerning.

Let me look at the key goal of the Programme for Government, which is building a shared community. I will ask you a couple of questions on the Together: Building a United Communities strategy, particularly around monitoring and resourcing. Recently, you published new good relations indicators, which, I understand, will be used as a basis on which to monitor outputs of the Together: Building a United Communities strategy. Why are you proposing to remove any integrated education indicator? Would you consider reintroducing, as the consultation responses suggest, an indicator that would consider the percentage of young people in integrated education and the percentage of young people who have been unable to gain a place in integrated schools due to limited capacity?

**Mr P Robinson:** Before I bring Martin in on that, I will deal with a general issue in relation to the 78%. We have learned a lesson. This is the second Programme for Government that we have brought forward. If you look at the Programme for Government, you will see a number of issues over which we do not have any control. If you take them out, the 78% gets a lot larger in reality. For instance, the Northern Ireland Programme for Government has something about greenhouse gases. If I switch off everything in my house and do virtually nothing, it will not impact on those figures. Maybe the Programme for Government target should be more about our inputs than our outputs, or outcomes, for that matter.

Look at suicides and accidents. You can have an input into those issues. That input might have some overall impact on the issue, but the number of people committing suicide is not going to be affected that much by something that the Executive do or do not do. Let me put it this way: the Executive do not have direct control over it. We have a number of targets, but I think that we will have to be a bit more careful when we are providing a new Programme for Government that what we have down as a goal, target or objective is something that we have the capacity to deliver. That has not been the case in either of the last two Programmes for Government. I take your point that you can have inputs, or even outputs, which are different from outcomes. It is the outcomes, rather than the outputs, of those things that we have control over that are the important feature.

**Mr Lyttle:** Agreed.

**Mr P Robinson:** I will let Martin deal with the good relations indicators.

**Mr M McGuinness:** The good relations indicators were developed by statisticians in NISRA. We did not have a role in removing indicators. It is important to stress that, given the thrust forward on the need to accelerate shared education, the fact that the Department has received 16 expressions of interest under the shared education campuses programme and is working towards announcing the successful projects before the summer break, suggests that this is an issue that is being taken very seriously indeed.

The whole approach to all this is to ensure that, in the context of recognising the need to bring together as much as we possibly can, not just through shared education but the very ambitious project to have 10,000 young people in an integrated work situation, it can be clearly seen that there is a very ambitious programme before us. We are all going to be very keen to see what the expressions of interest are, because, quite clearly, these projects will not be just for this period, they will be beacons of hope for the future that we can further generate more and more interest in shared education.

The First Minister and I are both on the record on countless occasions over the period we have been in the office together, which is now almost six years, as saying clearly that if we were starting with a blank sheet, we would be absolutely in favour of a fully integrated education system. However, we are dealing with the legacies of the past in education, and it is very important to bring stakeholders with us. Where there is an appetite — there clearly is an appetite — for the shared education project, I see that as something that can be built on and will move us forward in a very decisive way towards recognising that it is much better to have, as much as we can, our children educated together.

**Mr P Robinson:** It is an important factor, and we should trumpet it from the rooftops. I remember when we brought out the proposals for the shared education campuses and suggested that we would have 10, even people very close to us were saying, "Where on Earth are you going to get 10 applications for that kind of project?". Here we are with 16 plus Lisanelly, which is 17 altogether, having to choose the 10 that we will prioritise. That shows the appetite for shared education in the community. If we have a ladder of shared education, I very much put fully integrated education at the top of that ladder, and that is obviously what I would like to achieve. As Martin has indicated, we have to deal with things the way they are at present. I consider the shared education proposals to be a very significant step, though not the final step in that journey.

**Mr Lyttle:** I appreciate both responses, and I accept what you have said, First Minister, but I want to focus in on the question and ask why the indicator was removed.

**Mr P Robinson:** Martin answered that by saying that we did not remove it: the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) was responsible for providing the indicators to us.

**Mr Lyttle:** Surely you resource the Northern Ireland life and times survey with the questions that you want to use in order to monitor outcomes in relation to it, so surely you have the authority to request that that indicator is inserted if you so choose.

**Mr P Robinson:** The Department of Finance and Personnel is responsible for it. Again, I am always very reluctant to set aside professional advice as to how questions should be asked in order to get the overall picture that we are trying to get. To some extent, integrated education is now, if you like, bracketed with shared education in terms of what it means to our society. I am sure it is possible for us to get the answers that you are looking for without them being in a life and times survey.

**Mr Lyttle:** It is not just me; there were a number of responses to the OFMDFM good relations indicators consultation, and specific constructive suggestions were put forward that could be used.

**Mr P Robinson:** We will take what you are saying as a constructive suggestion as well. Along with Martin, I will speak to Simon Hamilton, who has direct responsibility for NISRA. However, we have responsibility for Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) and how we evaluate that.

**Mr Lyttle:** You were discussing the move to shared education as well. One of the specific proposals in T:BUC for early years is a buddying system. The Department made significant investment in a contested spaces programme, which funded an organisation called Community Relations in Schools to carry out a buddying system, one of which was with Holy Cross Nursery in north Belfast and Edenderry Nursery in west Belfast on the Shankill Road. I and a few other MLAs had the pleasure of meeting some of the people involved in the project yesterday.

I must admit that on announcement of the T:BUC strategy I was somewhat inquisitive about the capacity of a buddy system to have a fundamental impact, but I have spoken to people involved in the project, and it is bringing young children together in a meaningful way. Interestingly, it is intergenerational in that it is bringing parents together. It is bringing men together from north Belfast and west Belfast, who admit themselves that it takes quite a bit of courage and leadership for them to take the step to be involved in that type of scheme, both getting involved with their young children's education directly at the school and meeting people from starkly different backgrounds.

My understanding is that, in terms of resourcing, the contested spaces programme came to a close in previous months — I think it was March — and this programme, which is a direct aim of T:BUC, seems to be in some danger now, given gaps in Peace III funding etc. Is it going to be possible to fill those gaps to ensure that projects that are indirectly achieving some of the aims of T:BUC are sustained and not lost, given the vital contribution that they are making?

**Mr P Robinson:** I will let Jennifer answer on the buddy programme, and, indeed, if you want more details, officials are working the programme up at the present time and will be happy to meet the Committee on it. In terms of the financial issues, we are making bids against June monitoring which we hope will be met. Also, the economic pact that we have with HMG envisages £50 million coming our way for T:BUC-style programmes and projects. The economic forecast from the Finance Minister about the amount of funds that we have for the remainder of this year does not make easy reading, but I think we have said to the Committee in the past that our two big priorities had been around the economy on the one hand and the reconciliation issue on the other, so it is an important part of our programme that we will want to push when we come to June monitoring.

**Ms J McCann:** In terms of the buddy system, I totally agree with you. It is actually an expansion and development of projects that were already there. It is called buddying, but the type of project is there. You are quite right that it actually brings families together, and not just the children from nursery stage and primary school stage. It is intergenerational. Some of the older children buddy up with the younger children. In our opinion, it is complementing the early intervention programmes that are already in place within local communities, but it is also complementing the like of the family and schools together (FAST) programme, for instance, which happens in schools and brings parents.

You mentioned fathers in particular, because they are a particular target for the like of the FAST programme in terms of the fathers working with their children and all of that. What we are trying to do with the buddying system is to bring those families together, but not just for a short space of time. We are also trying to build that sort of support mechanism around the family. I have experience of some of the buddying programmes before they were called that. It was already operational in nursery and primary schools, cross-community. It has worked very well and is one of the good models of best practice that we are building on at the moment and trying to expand on.

**The Chairperson:** Chris, we will try to come back if we can, but Stephen Moutray is next.

**Mr Moutray:** I, like others, welcome the very positive message you bring today, not least in relation to the economy and the many targets that have already been exceeded. I also welcome what has been said in relation to numeracy and literacy projects so far. What has been learnt from the roll-out, and is it likely that Departments will mainstream if they continue to prove to be positive?

**Mr P Robinson:** The evaluation of the programmes will probably be carried out further down the line when it will be of greater value, but the initial reaction has been very positive. The literacy and numeracy one — I am not sure whether this is PC or not; I do not want to get myself into trouble — kills two birds with the one stone. It has an impact directly in terms of the educational attainment of young children, including those who were starting to fall behind. At the same time, it helped us in terms of getting a lot of young teachers who had not found employment into the classroom. On both aspects, it has been successful. The mid-term testing suggests that the children who have gone through the programme have a much better outcome than was the case before the project with other children. That is a good teacher-level indicator of how the programme is coming forward. Obviously we will look at the range of evaluation mechanisms we have in place to make a more detailed study of it.

One of the key things we have learned is that it is critical to work collaboratively with other Departments. We found that out at a very early stage. If you try from the centre to run a programme against the grain of a Department, it becomes very difficult. We have been successful in getting Departments to run with the projects we have centrally brought forward. Indeed, look at the like of the United Youth programme: you have a Minister who saw what happened in the first pilot we developed and is now looking at bringing some of his initiatives within the Department under the same ambit as the United Youth project. As I indicated earlier, that project put, I think, 50 people through the pilot. It is now looking at a second, larger pilot involving 500 children. The Minister for Employment and Learning has indicated that he feels that he can ramp that up further. All the soundings have been very positive in relation to the programme.

**Mr M McGuinness:** It is very important that we continue to monitor the situation. The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are taking a big focus and are paying a lot of attention to the success or otherwise of the employment of the 225 new teachers. It is already quite clear that it is making a difference. There is no reason to believe that it will not go from strength to strength. I have been in some of the schools that have employed some of the teachers, and I have spoken to the teachers directly. They are in no doubt whatsoever that it is making a huge impact on the increased levels of qualifications for the kids they are teaching.

**Mr Maskey:** Thank you for the presentation so far. It is important to acknowledge the good things that have been done over the last number of years, even though, as you said, it is often difficult to hear that in the broader world out there. You both acknowledged that there are things that are still outstanding and need to be addressed. One of the things I had a concern about — you raised it earlier, Chair — was to do with the people, particularly those who are getting older, who have taken part in the HIA (historical and institutional abuse inquiry). As you know, they have expressed concerns, and you have addressed that. I just wanted to echo those concerns: an extension makes it more difficult for the people who have given evidence or made statements and so on. They are concerned about time, which they maybe do not have an awful lot of. I echo that concern, because you addressed it earlier; thank you for that.

I have two questions about outstanding commitments. One is simple and straightforward: MLK (Maze/Long Kesh). That is an outstanding Programme for Government commitment. We have addressed it here in Committee. In fact, we have taken it off our list, because it goes nowhere. I would like some clear understanding of where that is sitting. In terms of GFS (goods, facilities and services), we recently took evidence from a number of organisations. All the organisations that presented to the Committee on the GFS — the Equality Commission, the Commissioner for Older People, the Children's Commissioner and a range of others — have lobbied heavily for children to be included in the GFS legislation. It is putting pressure on some of the older people who we have been dealing with, such as the Pensioners Parliament, who are getting worried and lobbying. There is nearly a divide-and-conquer thing going on; I am not saying that anybody is doing that, but that is what is happening. We are being lobbied by people who are saying, "Well, OK, but if children aren't included, what about us?" That is not a fair position to put anybody in. From our point of view, we would like to see the GFS legislation being inclusive in bringing young people in as well. We do not see any logic as to why that would not be the case. I want to see what the formal response is to that.

**Mr P Robinson:** The first issue you raised was about the HIA. I am pretty sure that Martin and I have done hundreds, probably thousands, of meetings in the past six years. In the case of probably 90% or maybe more, if you asked me to give you a full report on what happened at the meeting, I could not tell you without going back and referencing it. The one meeting I do remember is the one where we met victims of institutional abuse; I will not forget that meeting. It had a profound effect on anybody who was in the room and heard the stories of not only how people had to go through those difficult years when they were in an institution and faced the kind of abuse that they did, but how it had affected their lives thereafter. It was no difficult task to convince Martin or me that we needed to do something to give these people an opportunity to have their story told and to have someone make an assessment of how far it had penetrated into the institutions, and what reparations, if any, there should be. We set alongside that elements of care that we could provide to individuals immediately. I regret that there is going to be a delay, but it is important that every person who has gone through that experience in their life has the opportunity to tell their story. It is better that we delay to hear everybody than simply bring out a report without having the full story.

I will let Jonny answer the questions about the goods and services.

**Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** I have just one addendum to what the First Minister said for people who are outside the scope of the inquiry, just so that it is crystal clear. Anybody who has been the victim of child abuse, at whatever age, can bring that to the police. There is an immediate system in place, completely separate from the historical institutional abuse inquiry, which is a joint protocol system between the police and social services to investigate that. I would encourage people to do that, because we know about the high levels of recidivism of child abusers. It is highly likely, on an evidence base, that those who have abused have gone on to abuse other children. It not just about justice for themselves but about protecting other children. There are child protection procedures and plans in place with the police and social services. Let me make it absolutely clear to anybody out there who has suffered child abuse that they can make that report to the police and it will be investigated jointly by the police and social services to look at the

criminal proceedings against what they have suffered, but also to look at protecting other children. That goes on and is available to everyone.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services, and we have tasked our officials to work on that. We gave a commitment to the Pensioners Parliament that we would bring forward legislation in that regard, and we are currently working on the scope of that. Subsequent to that, some agencies have contacted us — some of which Mr Maskey mentioned — about including children in that, and that is currently being scoped out. We are seeking to achieve the elimination of age discrimination, and work is under way to do that. I have just come from a meeting with the age sector this morning, and we can still do that within the time frame of this mandate.

**Mr P Robinson:** Alec threw in an aside about the Maze. I am not going to go into it in great detail, so you can settle yourself.

**Mr Maskey:** I was not going to say anything.

**Mr P Robinson:** Can I put this to you? We have actually met the Programme for Government commitment, but we have not met the milestones. This is one of the difficulties. The 78% is where we have met the commitment and the milestones. There are some occasions when we meet some of the milestones but not the commitment, and sometimes we meet the commitment but not all the milestones. So, when we are giving you a final report, we probably need to expand on the areas where we have not reached beyond the 78% or whatever it turns out to be.

**The Chairperson:** The bottom line, if you do not mind, Alex, is that milestone 5 appears to dictate whether any of the other milestones are completed.

**Mr P Robinson:** If you look at the actual commitment that was made, it relates to:

*"Develop Maze/Long Kesh as a regeneration site of regional significance."*

You could argue that the existence of Balmoral Park and the involvement of the RUAS does that, but it does not meet the milestones that are set out beyond that.

**The Chairperson:** If you look at the risk register, you will see that every risk has a probability of five, and every risk has an impact of five, which is terminal. It is as bad as it gets.

**Mr P Robinson:** That is probably one reason why we are not doing any more risk registers, because that takes us into an FOI question. If we cannot internally diagnose ourselves without it being a matter for public commentary, it undermines what we are trying to do in the Department. The risk register is something that is provided by officials. It is not something that the deputy First Minister and I prepare or analyse, because there are a number of areas where I think, although they are not in the 78%, we have made very significant progress on some of the milestones, but we have not reached the commitment, and vice versa.

**Mr Maskey:** Thank you for that. It was not an aside; it was a specific question on the MLK site and the goods and facilities. I know that the junior Minister made the point that it can be delivered within the legislative time frame left in this mandate, but what can be delivered? I am looking for an answer that says that we will have anti-discrimination legislation that will not discriminate against the biggest proportion of the population under 18 years of age.

**Mr Bell:** Just to answer that specifically, the age sector asked us, in connection with the elderly and older people, to bring forward legislation on goods, facilities and services. We asked at the beginning of this mandate, "Do we have time to do it, to consult on it and to bring forward a quality piece of legislation for the older people's sector?" The response was that we could do it, and we committed ourselves to doing that. Subsequent to that, some people have come forward and said to us, "We now want under-18s included", and we are scoping out currently what can be done in connection with that, as well as a concurrent piece of work, which is to make sure that the goods, facilities and services discrimination against the elderly can go ahead and can be legislated within the time frame. We will look at the scope of the under-18s.

Just to give you one example that was raised of some of the complexities when you move towards under-18s, some of our secondary schools have counsellors in the secondary school sector. Our primary schools do not. There are questions then if you move towards under-18s — there are some ridiculous things happening for our elderly people. One person sat in my office this morning, and his travel insurance has increased from £300 to £2,100. He does not have any condition. His GP signed him off as being fit to fly and to take part in the holiday, but, because of his age, he took on an extra £1,800, which more than took an additional holiday to him. That is what we intended to eradicate and drive out.

When some people come in and say, "Now we want you to look at under-18s", potentially you are into the situation where a primary school can say, "There is no school counsellor here, but there is for the secondary sector. Therefore, if you bring this legislation through, you have to provide one for here". These are extremely complex pieces of work.

We can do what we committed to doing. Our officials are working on it, and we still have the time frame to do it. Concurrently with that, we are looking to see what scope there is to include for under-18s, but it is a more complex piece of work.

**The Chairperson:** The deputy First Minister and junior Minister McCann have indicated — I am not sure on which area.

**Ms J McCann:** I will follow up on what Jonathan said. Your point is well made, and other people have made the point about our taking forward legislation dealing with discrimination and then starting to discriminate against a particular sector. Those are the points that we have listened to in the consultation. Robin Allen, a barrister, was commissioned by NICCY and the Equality Commission. His work indicated that there were ways in which the legislation could be written to allay people's fears: the same fears that Jonathan outlined, about parental responsibility and other issues with making a difference between certain ages. Work has already been done on that. The time frame is still within our reach. The way forward is still to be discussed, but all of those points, particularly ensuring that we do not discriminate against a particular age group in the legislation, are being considered. All of that is in the mix. Robin Allen's informed opinion has been taken forward and, hopefully, will be part of the debate and discussion.

**Mr M McGuinness:** I will deal with Maze/Long Kesh. Of course, there is no political agreement on the way forward, and not just between the First Minister and me. The Chair of this Committee, in his capacity as the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, played a major role in ensuring that the milestone of the construction of the peace-building and conflict resolution centre on the site would not be met. When talking about the milestones, I have always worked on the basis that the initial move on to the Maze/Long Kesh site would be the move by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society from the King's Hall. That has been an absolutely enormous success, given the numbers that turned up last year and this year. I take great pride in that. It was a very important move because we had all hoped that it would pave the way for the warming up of the site. The Maze/Long Kesh site was seen by many people as a cold place and one that, maybe, was not capable of being regenerated.

Our understanding was that that move alone would not represent the beginning of the project; the peace-building and conflict resolution centre was also to be part of the initial move. That did not happen. I do not accept, but I understand that people in the DUP, the Ulster Unionist Party and other unionist associations — parties that were previously in favour of the project — were turned against it. That presents a major problem. I still have not given up. I think that there is work to be done. I want the site to be developed in the interests of our people, providing thousands and thousands of new jobs. At the same time, we need to find a solution to the problem. We will not find it at this Committee meeting today, but, certainly, we will continue to work at it in the hope that we can find a way forward.

**The Chairperson:** I appreciate that.

**Mr G Robinson:** I commend the team, and the Executive, for their excellent work. Many large sporting events have been brought to the area. There is nothing but positivity. We hear that 78% of the targets have been met, but the media still portray us as a backward country. It is absolutely ridiculous. Thank you. You are doing a very, very good job.

I have three or four questions. The first one is very parochial — in fact, they are all parochial.  
*[Laughter.]*



**Mr Bell:** All politics are local, George.

**Mr G Robinson:** Can you give me an update on the Shackleton Barracks site? I appreciate that the DARD headquarters are to move on to it in, maybe, the next couple of years or so. We are talking about a 760-acre site, approximately. What plans are there for the rest of the site? Have there been expressions of interest? If so, when will they come on stream? Those might be hard questions, but I have asked them anyway.

**Mr P Robinson:** The Department asked for expressions of interest. When Martin and I intervened previously to stop the site being sold, only a couple of people were interested. On this occasion, there are 39 expressions of interest. They range from people who principally want it for farming purposes, which means that it would add only one or two people to the employment register in the area, right through to those who, according to their prospectus, would bring hundreds or even thousands of jobs. The money being offered varies from very little to renting to shared outcomes with OFMDFM right through to seven-figure amounts. There is a wide range of possibilities. Even as I look at the intention of some who have submitted an expression of interest, I can see how several could be put together, because one would not do violence to the other. As you said, it is a very large site with about one million square feet of buildings. It has massive potential for the north-west as a whole.

We have the expressions of interest and are being provided with a paper looking at the options. DARD is not the only Government body with an interest in some part of the site; I think that Northern Ireland Water has an interest in part of it, and there are private sector interests. It is being moved forward. The deputy First Minister and I are to have a meeting shortly with officials to look at which of the options they should pursue. It has very significant potential for the area.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Peter and I visited the site when a lot of people were expressing scepticism about what it could be utilised for. When the announcement was made that DARD would relocate there, there was still a lot of scepticism about whether any enterprise, other than DARD headquarters, would open on the site. It is quite clear from the expressions of interest that it is one of the most exciting prospects under our tutelage. If developed properly, along the lines that Peter spoke about, it will provide thousands of new jobs for people in Derry, Limavady, Ballykelly, Coleraine and the whole of the north-west. We intend to be very sensible about how we approach all of this to ensure that we get the best result. It is an absolutely massive and fantastic site bursting with potential. We intend to develop it to its full potential.

**Mr G Robinson:** There is massive anticipation in the area as well. People keep asking me when it will open up. Thank you both for your answers.

With your indulgence, Chair, I have two or three further questions. A few days ago, I asked the Justice Minister a question about Magilligan prison. We were led to believe that there would be an upgrade, but his response was a bit negative. What exactly is happening to the prison? Will there be a newbuild, or is that out of the question at the moment?

**Mr P Robinson:** You did the right thing by asking the Justice Minister. He is the one who has the detail and responsibility, and he has not shared that with the Executive thus far. If there are financial implications, no doubt he will do that when we get round to budgetary issues, but he has not yet discussed it with us.

**Mr G Robinson:** I know that the Dungiven bypass and the A26 are issues for Roads Service, but when will they come on stream?

**Mr P Robinson:** We do not have a paper from the Finance Minister or the Regional Development Minister on the road programme. Over the next number of years, we will have difficulty with our revenue budget. There will be a bit more room, hopefully, for manoeuvre on the capital budget. A question was asked earlier about the A5. The money that was to have been used on the A5 has been used for other purposes. Therefore, if the Executive are to keep their commitment on the A5, that will mean funding going into the A5 when it becomes available. It is part of the overall jigsaw. I suspect that it would be very difficult for the Minister for Regional Development or the Minister of Finance to give you a precise answer to that question now.

**Mr G Robinson:** One of the reasons for mentioning the Dungiven bypass is the massive health risk for people living there. Obviously, the deputy First Minister realises that himself.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Absolutely. I think that there has been huge disappointment down the years. Many of the grounds cited centre on the health of people in the village, and that must not be underestimated. The Minister for Regional Development, in working out his priorities in the time ahead, has to consider that a bypass in Dungiven is long overdue. Every morning, you and I travel through Dungiven on our way to Belfast, and, on occasions, it is absolutely appalling. It is especially bad on a Friday afternoon, when traffic clogs up the whole village. You can imagine the fumes going into the atmosphere. I hope that the Regional Development Minister recognises that it has to be a huge priority.

**Mr G Robinson:** It is the same with the Frosses Road. So many accidents have happened on it. I appreciate that that should be coming on stream shortly as well, but, in my opinion, it needs to be pushed.

**Mr M McGuinness:** We all know that the construction of roads entails huge sums of money — absolutely massive sums of money. Like all other Ministers, I have no doubt that the Minister for Regional Development will prioritise projects. I certainly think that, from a local perspective, and from your perspective, it is absolutely appropriate to argue for those developments. However, it will be dictated by the funds available from the Executive. It is not that people do not believe that those in Dungiven are not entitled to a bypass; we would all love to deliver the bypass tomorrow morning, as we would like to deliver the A5 tomorrow morning. However, the case of the A5 is complicated by the outcome of the judicial review. I hope that the Minister will recognise that the people of Dungiven are entitled, at long last, to a bypass around their village.

**Mr Cree:** Good afternoon. I realise that time is a bit tight. I see that the Delivering Social Change fund has £118 million in it at the moment, and, of that, £92 million is available during the current CSR. Can you give the Committee some flavour of how that is likely to be spent and the nature of the expenditure?

**Mr P Robinson:** We have committed to £26 million of investment from the strategic investment fund (SIF). Approvals were given to various schemes when we identified that £26 million, and we expect that final letters of approval, which give the go-ahead and set out the terms and conditions of expenditure, will go out relatively soon. We have talked already about a number of the Delivering Social Change programmes today, and I am sure that we could provide you with a breakdown. As you know, the initial allocation for SIF was £80 million, and the business cases are being considered. When they flow through, that will be £80 million. How quickly the economists get through the £80 million, I am not quite sure. I think that there is something like £12 million on childcare, which brings it to £92 million. We have already identified £26 million for Delivering Social Change. Where does that take me — £38 million? That is probably it: that is the division of the £100-odd million.

**Mr Cree:** Will the timescale in the Programme for Government be met?

**Mr M McGuinness:** The 16 SIF projects are now at final-letter-of-offer stage, with letters due to go out in the next couple of weeks. We expect that all 56 projects will be at that stage by the end of the year, subject, of course, to the relevant approvals and funding being in place. So the £80 million for the social investment fund remains ring-fenced. The fact that this will move very quickly now is a very encouraging story.

**Mr P Robinson:** We perhaps need to make the point that the £112 million needs to be topped up. We have been seeking additional funding.

**Mr Cree:** That was my next question for you.

**Mr P Robinson:** I have answered it.

**Mr Bell:** Before they call, I will answer. *[Laughter.]*

**Mr Cree:** I understand that, under the European regional development fund, there was a bid pending for capacity building for Delivering Social Change. Has that happened?

**Mr P Robinson:** I expect that that is one of the bids under the June monitoring round. The first paper has gone to the Executive. My experience of monitoring rounds is that several iterations are required before we have a final document.

**Mr Cree:** If you do not get the money, how will that affect the programme?

**Mr P Robinson:** Like with any other project, if the money is not there, that slows the project down. I can tell you that Martin and I put a very high priority on the Delivering Social Change projects, particularly those that touch on community cohesion and reconciliation. From that point of view, I imagine that a fair bit of weight will be applied when it comes to the monitoring round.

**The Chairperson:** I will finish with what will, hopefully, be a couple of quick-fire questions. When will the mid-term review of the Programme for Government —

**Mr P Robinson:** Fingers on buzzers — is that it?

**The Chairperson:** More or less, yes. Robinson, First Minister, when will the mid-term review be conducted?

**Mr P Robinson:** The mid-term review of?

**The Chairperson:** Of the Programme for Government.

**Mr P Robinson:** We have already been carrying out the mid-term review. We had meetings last week or the week before.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Last week.

**The Chairperson:** So the review is ongoing.

**Mr Bell:** Yes, it is under way.

**The Chairperson:** What are the implications for the Programme for Government and the budgetary process of this mandate running for an extra year?

**Mr P Robinson:** A draft is being prepared of a revised Programme for Government that will include some new commitments and a revision of some of the existing ones.

**Mr M McGuinness:** There is a bit of tweaking required because of that.

**The Chairperson:** Tweaking.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Not tweeting; tweaking.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, I just wanted to clarify. Will you consult on that, and, if so, with whom?

**Mr M McGuinness:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** How broadly?

**Mr P Robinson:** It will certainly include the Committee.

**The Chairperson:** The deputy First Minister said that without moving his lips.

**Mr P Robinson:** The one thing that we do not want to do is go out to public consultation because, by the time that that would be over, half the period of the extension would be over. So, while no decision has been taken on it, it is fairly likely that it will be more of an in-house consultation.

**The Chairperson:** Finally, what can you tell us about June monitoring? How serious is the financial situation?

**Mr M McGuinness:** It is in brokerage at the moment. That is all that we can tell you.

**Mr P Robinson:** We can tell you that the expenditure requirements are greater than the money available.

**Mr M McGuinness:** They always are, as you well know.

**The Chairperson:** On this occasion, is it serious?

**Mr M McGuinness:** On this occasion, there is a bit of wheeling and dealing to be done, as is always the case in monitoring rounds. Hopefully, we will get a satisfactory outcome.

**The Chairperson:** We shall leave it there. To all four of you, thank you very much indeed.

**Mr M McGuinness:** Thank you.

**Mr P Robinson:** Thanks very much.

**The Chairperson:** We appreciate your engagement. Enjoy your summer.

**Mr M McGuinness:** That is ambitious.