



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Regional Development

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy:
Sport Northern Ireland

28 May 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Regional Development

Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy: Sport Northern Ireland

28 May 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Nick Harkness	Sport Northern Ireland
Mr John News	Sport Northern Ireland

The Chairperson: I welcome Nick Harkness, director of participation and facilities, Sport Northern Ireland; and John News, participation manager, Sport Northern Ireland. Gentlemen, you are very welcome. You have 10 minutes in which to make a presentation and then leave yourself open to questions. I remind you that what you say is being recorded by Hansard.

Mr Nick Harkness (Sport Northern Ireland): Thank you. I will start by explaining to the Committee our knowledge of the evidence base for cycling. I will then hand over to John, who will explain some of the recent interventions that we have made to secure a participation cycling legacy from the Giro d'Italia Big Start. Finally, we will look at our recommendations in consideration of furthering the case for cycling in Northern Ireland.

To begin, there is a general research base for active travel. There is an extensive and growing evidence base for how walking and cycling, also referred to as active travel, contribute to improved health and well-being, the economy and the environment.

On health and well-being, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) said that increasing how much someone walks or cycles leads to health benefits, including reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and obesity, keeping musculoskeletal health and promoting mental well-being. Active travel has those impacts because regular physical activity of 150 minutes a week for adults and 60 minutes a day for children, as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer, is a key contributor in preventing obesity and type-2 diabetes. Obesity affects health in many ways; it can cause chronic disease, leading to early death.

The research findings suggest that creating an environment where people actively choose to walk and cycle as part of everyday life can have a significant impact on public health and may reduce health inequalities. In fact, walking and cycling are now seen as an essential component of a strategic

approach to increasing physical activity. For example, research published in 'The Lancet' in 2012 concluded that increasing walking and cycling in urban Wales could save the National Health Service £17 billion, in 2010 prices, over a 20-year period. I am sure that members will agree that that is potentially a significant saving when applied to Northern Ireland. You will also note the correlation between improved health and well-being and economic benefits.

There are also many direct economic benefits to the economy, whether through increasing tourism, increasing footfall in town centres or reducing staff sickness. Evidence suggests that increased footfall in town centres increases visits to small traders and spend. Decreased absenteeism, as a result of better health through increased physical activity, could contribute to a saving of £197 million a year in Northern Ireland against the cost of absenteeism. A Cairns report in 2004 concluded that congestion costs the Northern Ireland economy £250 million. A report by the Department for Transport estimated that every pound spent on well-designed measures to encourage sustainable methods of travel could bring a £10 benefit to reducing congestion costs.

Moreover, there are environmental benefits to increasing active travel. A reduction in car travel leads to reductions in air pollution, traffic congestion and road danger and noise, as well as increasing the number of people using our streets and public spaces and the opportunities for social interaction.

Specific research for cycling is also emerging. In 2011, a research report by Dr Alexander Grous, 'The British cycling economy', provided a single overview of the cycling sector and many of the associated benefits. In summary, the report concluded from an evidence base that, in 2010, 3.7 million bikes were sold; 208 million cycling journeys were made, and there were 1.3 million new cyclists, half a million of whom were frequent or regular cyclists. The investigation showed that many factors play a part in driving that growth. These are examples that we in Northern Ireland can learn from: expansion of the national cycle network; dedicated cycle lanes in urban and city areas; success in major sporting events for cycling, which promote and encourage participation, and large-scale organised cycle events.

The report highlighted the many social and economic benefits of cycling to the UK: a total contribution of £2.9 million to the UK economy; a 28% increase in the volume of cycle sales in 2010, generating £1.62 billion worth of spend in the economy; and more than £500 million generated in wages in cycling-related industries. The health benefits were estimated to save the economy £128 million as a result of reduced absenteeism.

For the second part of our presentation, John News, our participation manager, will summarise some of our interactions with key partners to secure a legacy from the Giro d'Italia.

Mr John News (Sport Northern Ireland): Thanks, Nick. I will highlight some specific points to the Committee, and if you have any questions, I can go into more detail.

Our work with the Tourist Board and other partners on the Giro d'Italia Big Start 2014 was about trying to create a legacy that reached beyond the route of the Giro itself, important though that was. Specifically, we started by working with schools and building on the success of an intervention called Activ8, which we have had for several years.

Activ8 Big Start 2014 looked at increasing awareness, providing information to schools and creating new opportunities. In that respect, we did quite a lot of work to produce a series of resources that were available to download by every school in Northern Ireland through the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and C2k websites. The resources tried to raise awareness of the Giro d'Italia and could be used in a curriculum setting to promote cross-curricular learning. They looked at aspects of the history and geography of the Giro d'Italia, the maths and literacy aspects and the cultural aspects of the Giro d'Italia coming to Ireland for the first time ever.

There was a practical dimension to what we did. We produced a number of Activ8 big bags, which included the very practical resources that schools and teachers need to deliver cycling skills after school, including cones, high-visibility bibs, whistles or stopwatches. That was a very simple and practical support for schools. We complemented that by putting in some skill cards, which were adopted from Cycling Ireland's Sprocket Rocket skills. That resource was produced in partnership with Cycling Ireland and its local organisation, Cycling Ulster.

Resources are of no use without people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to use them. So we have been working with Cycling Ireland, the local clubs in Northern Ireland and Stranmillis University College to train coaches, volunteers and cycle leaders, and we have put them through

cycling coaching foundation leadership courses. We are also working with Stranmillis University College and Cycling Ireland on a pilot project to train 35 undergraduates to take the Bike for Life and Sprocket Rocket resource back into their teaching practice next year and use it when they go into community sport settings in their future career.

Another intervention on which we are particularly pleased with the engagement that we got from schoolchildren was our design a jersey campaign. Activ8 has two mascots, Twist and Bounce, and 3,700 schoolchildren designed jerseys for the mascots, which were then worn by the mascots in all the Big Start interventions. The winning entries were also displayed in the Assembly outside the Senate Chamber as part of the art exhibition by Deepa Mann-Kler. We have been working with local artist Deepa to provide a workshop for one of the winning primary schools, Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh, in Ballymurphy, where Deepa will go in and create a piece of public art with the P7 pupils to be displayed in the school.

That work went on in the build-up to, and during, the Giro, and a key aspect for us will also be the legacy work. We are working with Sustrans, Active Belfast and other partners to look at a community cycle event on 30 to 31 August in Belfast. We are aiming to have hundreds of cyclists converging in a family fun environment to capitalise on that increased awareness and increased engagement with cycling across the community. We also plan to develop proposals with partners on a cycle amnesty scheme. When the all-party group on cycling looked at this issue recently, it identified several key issues, one of which was access to and ownership of a bike. We have started to speak to organisations such as East Belfast Mission and Cycle Recycle in Newry about recycling many of the bikes that find their way into amenity sites. We have been working with district councils across Northern Ireland. We hope to develop more proposals on that over the current financial year.

That is about on-road cycling. We worked previously with our partners Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, whom I believe you have heard from. I am very proud of the success that we have seen in the mountain bike trails over the past two years. It is a new product for Northern Ireland that has attracted not only additional spend in Northern Ireland but has retained consumer expenditure here that had previously leached out to mountain bike trails in Scotland. In the past 12 months, we have seen more than 76,000 participants on the four mountain bike trails in Castlewellan, Rostrevor, Barnett Demesne in Belfast and Davagh Forest.

Mr Harkness: Finally, notwithstanding the context of constrained financial resources, we at Sport Northern Ireland see some measures that might help to perpetuate the growth in cycling. These include ensuring that the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are given priority by planners at the early stage of all new developments, including housing and business developments, as well as traffic and transport schemes. Secondly, it includes the expansion of current cycling infrastructure, with dedicated cycling lanes, particularly in urban areas, physically separated from motorised traffic and connecting strategically with other forms of public transport, such as park-and-ride schemes. It includes initiatives designed to provide cycle training and support to primary and secondary schools, such as those that you heard about from John, across Northern Ireland and which actively promote cycling as a safe and normal activity for people of all ages. It includes increasing the number of public cycle events and measures to make the interface between cycling and motorised transport safer, such as changing attitudes and behaviours to cyclists, adjusting speed limits in city centres, car-free urban centres and the physical separation of cyclists and motorists in urban centres.

Finally, we cannot change the weather in Northern Ireland, so, if we want to increase cycling, we need to equip our places of work and education, public and private, with the facilities to support active travel. That includes places of work and places of education where there is covered and secure cycle parking, where changing facilities and lockers are provided. We collectively need to accept a more informal dress code for people in their places of work if we expect active travel to be a reasonable way to get there and get home again.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. I will take up a couple of points on the Giro d'Italia and the infrastructure for mountain biking and the fact that that issue was raised with the other folks that you mentioned. We hope, at some stage, to bring the mountain biking world cup here. If you look at the sites that are being used at present, you see that they have been provided by DARD's Forest Service, and in the case of Barnett Demesne, I think that Belfast City Council is the custodian of that particular area. Over the years, there has been a failure by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, which was previously the Environment and Heritage Service. I worked for it for two and a half, nearly three years. For instance, there were regular requests for mountain biking at both Scrabo and Redburn country parks. There has been total and absolute failure because of a mindset in the hierarchy of that organisation previously to disallow that type of activity and to forbid

even people on horses to go into the parks. Have you had any conversations with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency? If not, would you consider doing so? Given that mountain biking is a very popular sport now, it might be worthwhile if Sport Northern Ireland put some pressure on other Departments to try to get a change of mindset in these people.

Mr Harkness: I am not aware of the mindset that you refer to.

The Chairperson: I can assure you that it is very much there.

Mr Harkness: OK. The interface between different users in outdoor space is often a sensitive one. You have walkers, bikers and horse riders interfacing with each other. So, careful design of schemes and possible segregation or measures to slow down bike traffic as it approaches a pedestrian area are the sorts of measures that can alleviate some of the concerns that you have referred to.

The Chairperson: The same could be said of Forest Service areas, where different users cooperate with each other.

Mr Harkness: Absolutely. The scale of the facility often influences the potential close proximity of users of different modes of transport. I am not saying that it is not possible. I do not know enough about those specific areas. However, that could be one concern. I imagine that they are quite constrained spaces. There is no doubt that the interaction can be planned in. There are measures to, as I say, slow down traffic with very technical sections of cycling close to where pedestrians are. That makes traffic slower. However, that might not be the sort of cycling that communities want. It becomes more technical.

The Chairperson: That might be the case with Scrabo. However, Redburn is a sprawling country park. It would have been an ideal place for the two activities to take place.

Mr Harkness: We have a countryside access officer. We can certainly take that issue back.

The Chairperson: Given the increase, and our wanting to encourage an increase, in those sorts of activities, conversations need to be had and mindsets need to change on some of those issues. That is the point that I am trying to make.

Has Sport Northern Ireland been approached by the Department for Regional Development's cycling unit? If so, on what basis and what discussions have you had with it?

Mr News: I have worked with Travelwise and, more recently, the cycling unit over the past two to three years, first, on the creation of what was the active travel forum, which, I understand, is soon to be replaced by a cross-departmental cycling group —

The Chairperson: You do not seem to be aware that the group is already set up.

Mr News: Yes. Well, I got an email. The last meeting of the travel forum is scheduled for 12 June. The email refers to the fact that it is likely to be the last meeting of the active travel forum and that it will be replaced by the cross-departmental cycling group. We have been working with DRD, Travelwise and the cycling unit over a number of years now. As I say, I have been involved in the active travel forum. We have input to the creation of the active travel action plan and have fed into that regularly by providing updates on work that Sport NI has been involved with.

The Chairperson: The cycling unit has been set up only in the past number of months. Are you telling me on the record that the cycling unit has not been in touch with Sport Northern Ireland?

Mr News: No: I am saying that it has been. That is what I am saying. Through DRD, Travelwise and, now, the cycling unit, we have been contact with them, on an ongoing basis, over the past number of years.

The Chairperson: With all due respect, you cannot have been in contact with the cycling unit over the past number of years because it has only been set up in the past number of months.

Mr News: Absolutely.

The Chairperson: What conversations and participation have you had with that unit, which is supposed to be looking after cycling in the Department for Regional Development now? The Minister and the Department made a great hooray about the cycling unit being set up, and the Minister regularly refers to it. Are you telling me that there has been little discussion or that there have been no formal discussions with Sport Northern Ireland? I would find it very disappointing if the Department has not been in touch with you.

Mr News: We received an email from the cycling unit this week asking us for updates on the work that we have been doing. That is the most recent correspondence that I can recall.

The Chairperson: So, the cycling unit that was set up — I think, off the top of my head — last September, has only been in touch with you in the past week? Is that what you are telling me?

Mr News: I would need to check emails to see exactly how often we have had correspondence from the cycling unit.

The Chairperson: Perhaps you could let the Committee know that, because I think that it is important to this inquiry. The Committee Clerk will write to you about that, and you can tell us what indications and participation there has been. I take it from what you are telling me that there have been no face-to-face discussions.

Mr News: On a one-to-one basis?

The Chairperson: With the cycling unit.

Mr News: I personally have not had any one-to-one contact. As I said, a lot of our engagement with cycling over the past while has been about the Giro, as you will understand. That tended to involve collectives of people.

The Chairperson: I understand that. However, given that there is a cycling unit, which, with all due respect, you did not seem to be very aware of until I raised it with you —

Mr News: No, I am.

The Chairperson: Well, I will take it that you are aware of it, but you were talking about a number of years back and this cycling unit has only just been set up. I am not putting any blame on Sport Northern Ireland, but I am disappointed that the cycling unit in the Department for Regional Development is not having formal discussions from day one with you folk who are doing your bit for cycling, and you have done a lot. For instance, one conversation that took place after the Giro in the past couple of weeks included the indication that a velodrome might be anticipated for Northern Ireland. What conversations have been had and what are the indications of the viability of a velodrome? How viable do you think that a velodrome would be?

Mr Harkness: The truth of the matter is that the type of cycling that goes on in a velodrome is very different from the type of cycling that makes up active travel and so on. A velodrome is a particularly big investment. It is certainly the view of the Department and Sport NI that it would be the job of the cycling governing body, Cycling Ireland, to come forward with a proposal. I am aware that there are discussions with the Irish Government about sports campus Ireland and the potential for a velodrome. Cycling Ireland's website admits that two velodromes in close proximity would not be particularly viable.

The Chairperson: I would probably agree with that. I think that that is one of the areas of sport where we can very easily and freely participate together in projects. That is in a way perhaps similar to the cancer units in Altnagelvin and so on. I think that most people would be of that frame of mind.

Finally, I want to nail down the point. Sport Northern Ireland is responsible for the development of cycling as a sport. Do I take it, from what you have told me today and the evidence that you have given to this Committee, that the cycling unit of the Department for Regional Development has not yet sought a face-to-face meeting with your Department? Simple answer: yes or no?

Mr Harkness: I am not aware of that. That is something that we have undertaken to check and come back to you on through the Committee Clerk.

Mr Lynch: Thanks for the presentation. Nick, you said that one of the priorities was dedicated cycle lanes. What has been achieved? The other issue was about cycling events. We know that cycling is becoming more popular. Cycle clubs fundraise for GAA clubs and other sports clubs. There is a huge proliferation of cycle clubs. Can you see where Sport NI could become involved to assist those cycle clubs in any way?

Mr Harkness: There are a couple of things. In terms of infrastructure, we are really talking about public realm schemes. Sport Northern Ireland would not normally get involved in those. However, I sit on the Active Belfast group, which has a multi-organisational approach. Active Belfast, on behalf of Belfast Strategic Partnership, has been working on proposals for dedicated cycle routes around and into the heart of Belfast from outlying areas. There are proposals, but they would need to be taken through Roads Service in the main.

We have funded off-road cycle routes. If, for example, there were non-public realm schemes, there is the potential through our capital schemes to apply for those and seek funding.

Mr McNarry: A successful national team and individuals participating in sport helps awareness and support, particularly from spectators. How well supported financially is the Northern Ireland track cycle team that will participate in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow?

Mr Harkness: I do not have the information at the minute as to which particular athletes are going, but Sport Northern Ireland uses its lottery fund to fund a performance focus programme. The governing bodies prioritise their investments through that programme to the athletes most likely to realise a performance success from an investment. Over the past 10 years, Sport Northern Ireland has invested approximately £2 million in cycling, most of which has been in revenue funding.

Mr McNarry: You will appreciate, as I do, that every sport could make a pitch for what they are, but we are on a bounce and are looking for an extra bounce from the Giro d'Italia as well. You talked about performance successes. If we are going to participate in national sport, particularly, in this instance, in the Commonwealth Games, our performances are bound to be low if we do not have the facilities. How do we enhance the potential for performances so that we send teams that are going to participate, which is part of sport, but also perhaps be successful? Are you able to tell me what proposals and strategies are currently under discussion to secure extra funding for cycling participation at a sporting level? You are Sport NI, which is why I am asking the question. What strategy can you outline to us that you think is worthwhile pursuing for the cycling sport?

From what I have heard so far, I think that mountain biking is fascinating. I think that it is going to attract an awful lot of spectators as well. However, with all due respect, you seem to want to do things on the cheap; you seem to want to get a bit of ground and share it with a horse, a cart or somebody walking in an anorak or whatever. When it comes to actually developing something that people can see, you seem to have withdrawal symptoms. What is your strategy for sport?

Mr Harkness: The first thing I will say is that Martyn Irvine, one of our most successful track athletes

—

Mr McNarry: Indeed. He comes from a good part of the world.

Mr Harkness: Absolutely. He has been financially supported by Sport Northern Ireland considerably and, more particularly, in some of his recent successes and his post-success interviews, has given significant praise to the work of the Sports Institute Northern Ireland, which is set up and funded by Sport Northern Ireland to support some of our best athletes.

Mr McNarry: Nick, you and I have been at this business for a long time, so do not be evasive. I understand all of that. Martyn is the most obvious character. What I am saying is that here we have an inquiry into cycling and potential to develop interest in cycling in a number of categories, so what are we going to do for the next Martyn Irvines? Where are they coming from? There is the idea of a velodrome. It is a very expensive thing. It takes a long time to get it and build it. What is your strategy even for that?

Mr Harkness: There are a number of things. First of all, I referred to Martyn Irvine and the work he has done with the Sports Institute. The Sports Institute is also currently working with Cycling Ireland on a high-performance plan. High performance does not just happen. On some occasions it does, but it works better if it is well planned. There are nine pillars to a successful performance plan. The Sports Institute has been facilitating Cycling Ireland to develop that. I would be very surprised if, through our performance focus investments in future years, Cycling Ireland did not come back to seek our ongoing investments in the implementation of that plan, but it will undoubtedly be in competition with other sports. We use our lottery fund for that, which is required to be a competitive fund.

One of the other things Sport Northern Ireland is doing at the minute is developing a sports facility strategy for Northern Ireland. That will look not only at the needs of cycling but at the needs of other sports. As you quite rightly say, facilities like a velodrome are highly expensive, not only to build but to operate. What is actually required is an applicant organisation that is prepared to own, support —

Mr McNarry: OK. I understand all of that, and I think that it is all very good. Can you show me a piece of paper that demonstrates that you actually have a strategy that you are looking at and that you can set down and say, "This is how we're going to boost and attract people into cycling as a sport"?

Mr Harkness: Yes.

Mr McNarry: And you will provide that for us. That is great.

The Chairperson: You could perhaps provide that to the Committee. What is the document called?

Mr News: It is the 'Cycling Ireland High Performance Strategy'.

Mr Ó hOisín: Martyn Irvine is certainly from a good part of the world, but Wendy Houvenaghel from County Derry is maybe from a slightly better part of the world, despite her name. Of course, if you are mentioning two cyclists from this part of the world, those are probably the only two you could mention, and they are both track cyclists. Wearing another hat, I visited the Eamonn Ceannt Park velodrome in Dublin, and I have a question with the Culture, Arts and Leisure Minister about the business plan for any velodrome. Where exactly is that and have any potential sites even been identified at this point?

Mr Harkness: In Northern Ireland?

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes, in the North.

Mr Harkness: If you refer to Cycling Ireland's website, you will see that there are two potential venues for a velodrome in the Republic of Ireland: one in the National Sports Campus Ireland, and one in Dundalk in partnership with the council there and an FE college, I believe. Those are the sites currently being worked on. It appears from the information on the website that Cycling Ireland is prioritising the National Sports Campus Ireland site.

Mr Ó hOisín: There are two existing ones. There is one in Crumlin in Dublin — the Eamonn Ceannt stadium — and one in Cork, and then there is the Orangefield one here in the North. I think that some radio programme had it locked up over the Giro.

Mr Harkness: I understand that it is in poor repair.

Mr Ó hOisín: Is there nothing being identified? I heard some discussion about a site in Dungannon.

Mr Harkness: One of the things that we are doing — we are actually with the Central Procurement Directorate at the minute — is on the procurement process for a sports facility strategy for Northern Ireland, which will look at major facilities that are needed across a range of sports and also look at more local facilities at a district council level in terms of lower-level, participation-based facilities.

Mr Ó hOisín: What I am asking, really, is whether the possibility for a velodrome is still there.

Mr Harkness: That work is not done yet, but it appears that Cycling Ireland is prioritising the Dublin site.

Mr Byrne: Thanks, Chairman. Thanks to Nick and John for their presentation.

What sort of plans does Sustrans have for further development of cycle pathways and does it have the necessary funding for that? Secondly, I think that there are four mountain bike trails in Northern Ireland at the moment. What sort of costs are involved in setting one of those up, and what sort of participation is involved in the four existing trails?

Mr News: I am not aware of what plans Sustrans has for further development of the national cycle network. There is a network of waymarked ways, quieter country roads and some traffic-free routes across the whole of the UK, and there are some designated trails such as the Loughshore trail and the Kingfisher trail. I am not aware that Sustrans has plans to further extend that. That is not to say that there is not a need. As a cyclist myself, and someone whose children are interested in cycling, we are always trying to find additional routes and new roads to go down, country roads in particular. I think that when representatives from Sustrans were with the Committee, they referred to the potential to look at disused railway corridors and to follow the model of the Comber greenway. I know that you have heard from its representatives as well. There is undoubtedly potential in Northern Ireland, but we have referred a couple of times today to the cost of everything. None of those things come free of charge. A lot of the evidence suggests that, when you invest in them, they return on a multiple in the years to come, but it is a saving that you make in the future rather than a saving that you make by not spending money now.

As for our existing mountain bike trails, we have gone from having a very poor dedicated mountain bike facility stock in Northern Ireland to having one that is starting to become world class. The trails and facilities that we have are recognised and acknowledged as being world class, particularly the downhill trails at Kilbroney. That is not a trail that you will share with anybody in an anorak. If you ever get a chance to go to the top of the Cloughmore there, you will see that the views from some of the mountain bike trails are amazing. Many mountain bikers who ride those routes frequently take time to stop and take photographs. We talk about the scenery and the natural environment in Northern Ireland: Sport Matters refers to our having a world-class natural environment. It is features such as Kilbroney and the mountain bike trails there that we were talking about when Sport Matters was being prepared. We now have the four trails at Kilbroney, the cross-country trails at Castlewellsan, Davagh Forest park and Barnett Demesne. When some of the promoters from the mountain bike world cup races in Fort William have come over and visited Kilbroney, they have been blown away by the standard of trails and have said that they are world class.

There are other sites that have the potential to be similarly world class throughout Northern Ireland. If we think about not only the tourism but the participation aspects, there is potential for further mountain bike trails, particularly in the lakelands in Fermanagh and the Omagh area, tapping into places such as Gortin and going up to the north-west and places such as Binevenagh. There is undoubtedly a number of sites. We have been working with Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) over the past number of years, and it is starting to look at the potential for recreation plans for some of those hubs. Those do not exist at the minute, but there is potential in some of those sites.

The latest figures that we have for the four sites that you referred to show around 76,000 users on those trails over the past 12 months. In 'Field of Dreams', Kevin Costner said, "Build it, and they will come". Well, we have built four of those trails in partnership with the district councils, the Tourist Board and DARD, and people have come. Those trails are heavily used. If you go down to Davagh Forest any Saturday morning now, you will see groups of children and young people, and that very much ties into the overall strategy for developing cycling. Many of those users on a Saturday morning are coming through a resurgent and vibrant youth cycling scene within our clubs in Northern Ireland. Many of those young people get introduced to cycling because their first bike is a mountain bike and they cycle off road and learn skills. Those skills and competencies transfer into confidence in later years when they get a road bike and they find, as they become teenagers, that the road bike gives them freedom to travel around the country that they might not otherwise be able to have. That is very much one of the messages with cycling; that it can be an inclusive form of transport. It can be a very inclusive sport.

We have seen a lot of very good work happening in the governing body over the past couple of years to encourage more people, particularly women, to get involved and towards more inclusive cycling. Work by the likes of Handcycling Northern Ireland and clubs like Bikedock Belles is trying to dispel the image that cycling is only for MAMILs — middle-aged males in Lycra — and show that cycling is there for everybody. The cycle community event that we are working on with Sustrans for the end of the summer is very much about trying to say that it is a family activity. Yes, we want to have more club-based cyclists in their Lycra. They may go on to race and become future Martyn Irvines and Wendy

Houvenaghels. Another cyclist whom we have worked with over the past number of years is Philip Deignan, who lined up in the Giro d'Italia. Although Philip is originally from Letterkenny, his mother is from County Tyrone. Philip also came through the Sports Institute and talks about the support that he received over the past 10 years to help him to get on to Team Sky. There has been a lot of work. Mountain bike trails are part of that.

The Chairperson: I have to ask you to draw your remarks to a close. You can ask a very brief question, Ross.

Mr Hussey: I just want to follow up something that Cathal asked. He asked about velodromes in Northern Ireland. The answer was given that there were two in another jurisdiction. The question is whether we will have one in Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson: The answer was that there are ongoing discussions on the issue. I think that you were out of the room.

Mr Hussey: I found that vague, Chair. There was also reference to Orangefield. The comment was that the ground there was not up to standard. Maybe I did not hear or I am wrong. I am sorry; I missed that.

The Chairperson: What we took from the evidence was that there is ongoing discussion with Cycling Ireland, which covers the whole island, including Northern Ireland — so that unit. Am I right in saying that?

Mr Harkness: Yes.

The Chairperson: There are ongoing discussions. There are sites in the South and possibly up here. However, those discussions are at a very early stage. That is what I took from it. Is that fair?

Mr Harkness: That is fair.

Mr Hussey: Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation. There is some interesting stuff.