



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Environment

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Informal
Clause-by-clause Scrutiny

4 December 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for the Environment

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill: Informal Clause-by-clause Scrutiny

4 December 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Anna Lo (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Ian Milne
Mrs Sandra Overend
Mr Peter Weir

Witnesses:

Mr Iain Greenway	Department of the Environment
Ms Nicola McEvoy	Department of the Environment
Mr John McMullan	Department of the Environment

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Iain, John and Nicola, you are very welcome. Apologies again for keeping you here last week and not calling you in. However, I think that you understand that we had the permanent secretary in last time and were talking about the Budget. The officials will provide a short overview of the clauses of the Bill relating to graduated driver licensing (GDL). We will then move to consider the remaining clauses in the Bill. For each clause, I will refer briefly to the issues raised.

Mr Iain Greenway (Department of the Environment): Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make a few remarks as you begin your informal clause-by-clause scrutiny of part 3 of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, which covers learner and new drivers. I am aware that a number of Committee members and witnesses from whom you have taken oral evidence during the Committee Stage have raised concerns about certain aspects of this part of the Bill as introduced. Minister Durkan stated in the Second Stage debate that he is open to suggestions that will improve the Bill. We welcome the opportunity to engage with the Committee as part of this process.

However, we cannot ignore the stark reality on our roads. The Committee raised some road safety issues with the Minister earlier. New drivers are overrepresented in fatal and serious collisions. Over the period 2008-2013, R drivers, who account for fewer than 1% of licence holders, were responsible for 7% of fatalities and serious injuries. Inexperience in real life driving situations is a key contributor to this situation. Age is another factor. The brain's functions do not fully mature until around age 24. A 17- to 24-year-old male driver is four times more likely to be killed, and six times more likely to kill, than the statistically average driver. The 10% of licence holders, male and female, aged 17 to 24

were responsible for 40% of the casualties on our roads between 2008 and 2012. That group of drivers was responsible for more than 30 deaths a year.

It is in light of these stark facts that the Department has considered interventions to make new drivers safer, both for their own sakes and for the sakes of all of us as road users. For instance, we are working with the insurance industry to review options for new and young drivers and are working with approved driving instructors to develop a road safety education package that they can use. Mr Burns referred to that in his oral evidence to the Committee. We have also made regulatory interventions including changes to the driving test so that it addresses additional elements of the goals for driver education.

However, the scale of the problem, which I laid out in the statistics, has led the Department to consider legislative interventions. These are presented in part 3 of the Bill and can perhaps be labelled as GDL, a process that recognises that it takes time and experience to gain skills to drive safely in a wide range of situations, in different weather conditions and in different traffic situations. Driving is a complex skill, one for which, because it is so widespread, we perhaps underestimate the complexity. The complexity arises from our interactions with our vehicle and its interactions with the road, together with the actions of multiple other road users and external factors such as the weather.

We have provided the Committee with an overview of GDL in the papers for this meeting. GDL considers the process of learning to drive as a continuum broken into three stages: training and practice; a formal test, and post-test gaining of skills and experience. The last stage, of course, continues throughout a driver's career. The proposals in the Bill were carefully considered in light of experiences in other countries and the feedback from stakeholders and the public when we engaged with them. The experience from many other countries is that GDL reduces collisions involving new drivers by between 20% and 40%. This is the consistent finding in many jurisdictions.

However, we are very conscious of the impact that some elements of GDL could have on individuals and communities. We have, therefore, attempted to balance the very significant positive impacts it can have on road casualties with the potential impacts on those who would have restrictions placed on them. In essence, how do we balance the rights to drive and the benefits that come with driving with ensuring that all drivers are properly prepared for the very serious responsibilities that come with driving?

New drivers, of course, will be particularly affected if the proposals in the Bill are taken forward. However, the scale of road casualties caused by new drivers means that we must consider the wider views of society, all within the framework of evidence from here and elsewhere. This led the Department to propose the package of measures in the Bill. It is important to see them as a package of measures, which includes the lower drink drive limit for learner and new drivers. The balancing processes included omitting nighttime curfews from the proposed legislation and shaping a passenger restriction that focuses on multiple teenage passengers not related to the driver being carried by young new drivers for a very limited period.

In summary, there is no right or wrong answer to how GDL should be constructed. Different jurisdictions have taken different approaches. The evidence is that the effectiveness of a particular implementation of GDL is influenced by the number of components included and their stringency. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety GDL rating scale, which was included in the paper that we provided to the Committee, is an attempt to quantify this. The Committee will see from that annex to the briefing paper that our GDL proposals are somewhere in the middle in terms of the scoring on that GDL system.

I hope that these remarks have provided some context to assist the Committee's scrutiny of the individual clauses in the Bill.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Thank you, Iain. That was a very useful overview of this part of the Bill. Members, we will move to consider the clauses of the Bill that we have to look at. For each clause, I will refer briefly to the issues that have been raised. Is this part 2 or part 3?

Mr Greenway: Part 3.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Clause 16 reduces the minimum age for obtaining a provisional licence from 17 to 16 and a half. Iain, will you comment on the issues raised in the clause-by-clause tables?

Mr Greenway: I am going to ask Nicola to comment, but it is important to see clauses 16 and 17 together in terms of their impact on ages.

Ms Nicola McEvoy (Department of the Environment): The views in the written submissions were mixed. There was support noted from the PSNI and the Association of British Insurers, but concerns were raised regarding the rationale around the proposed change, the impact on insurance costs, whether the reduced age would have a negative impact on road safety and whether we would be out of step with Britain.

In response to some of those issues, as Iain said, it is important to consider the mandatory period alongside the reduction in age, because, effectively that raises the full licensing age to 17 and a half. The delay that that brings about, which is a delay of six months, actually has a benefit in itself just because of maturity and the positive impact on collision risk. To give an example, in Sweden, they brought in an age reduction and the amount of driving practice went from 47 hours to 118 hours. That is really what this clause is about. It is trying to incentivise and encourage people to take up this practice before they actually get to taking their practical test.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): At what age are they able to get their provisional driving licence in Sweden? Is it 16?

Ms McEvoy: In Sweden, it starts at 16. Some states in America start as young as 14.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I would not trust anybody to drive at 14.

Mr Weir: And they get a gun at 12 probably. *[Laughter.]*

Ms McEvoy: With regard to some of the concerns around insurance, we have engaged with the insurance industry, and it believes that there will be minimal impact on insurance costs. While a person is a learner, they are considered to be safer because they have a supervising driver. So, we do not see that as being an issue in terms of rising cost. Learner drivers are very much under-represented among those who are killed or seriously injured. They account for only 3% of KSIs yet they hold almost one tenth of the number of licences. R drivers are very much over-represented.

In terms of being out of sync with Britain, learners drivers from here would still be able to drive in Britain on a provisional licence, so that would not change. They could also take a test in Britain if they wanted to do so but would have to be resident for 185 days or six months within the past 12 months.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We are talking about the period of a year. There is just no guarantee that young people will not go and take their test and start practising until the last six months before they can sit the test.

Ms McEvoy: Clause 18 — and I am jumping into three clauses rather than one — introduces a programme of training. It is through that programme that we would try to structure how the training is done and how somebody goes through that training process. There would be recommendations in that process that it would be staged throughout the year to try to take advantage of different weather conditions, nighttime driving and trying to provide experience on different types of roads. Although we have not tried to prescribe that it all must take place throughout the year, that is what we would intend people to do.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): So, they have to do something throughout those 12 months to satisfy the log book requirement.

Ms McEvoy: The details of the programme of training will be decided through the regulations. We will have to consult on that but the intention is to encourage people to use the year to get as much practice as they can and to stage it throughout the year rather than trying to cram it in towards the end of the period.

Mr Boylan: It is difficult to ask a question across three clauses. The age of 16 and a half is grand. I want to clarify the issue of novice drivers. We are talking about sixteen and a half years, but some people do not get a licence until a certain age. Is there any scope or flexibility other than some party bringing an amendment? Have we thought about the more mature person going for their test? Is there any flexibility for that?

Mr John McMullan (Department of the Environment): The Bill has the power to have exemptions from the 12 months. We can use those if we want to vary ages, for example. A set of exemption regulations will come in subsequent to the Bill becoming law.

Mr Boylan: That is grand because I understand that people are concerned about the age issue. Some countries start at the age of 14. The argument in some of the presentation was about the ability in some rural areas. It should be about driver ability.

Mr J McMullan: I mention the age exemption as an example. They are wide and for whatever circumstances.

Mr Greenway: If we are making law that says a certain thing, it is important that we do not then in secondary legislation bring in exemptions that, for instance, exempt 90% of those who would otherwise be within the scope of that law. There has to be balance. We have to consider specific need and not just the case that if you produce a particular piece of paper you get an exemption. We need to have balance.

Mr Boylan: That is why I am teasing the issue out now. We need to be clear. We then move to the other two clauses. The Chair alluded to someone possibly taking all their driving lessons in the last couple of months. You said that the next clause deals with a programme of training in terms of the checks, balances and enforcement of all that. They are only guidelines, obviously. Are people instructed that they have to follow those programmes or is it in statute? How do we ensure that is done?

Ms McEvoy: The programme of training has to be evidenced by a logbook, which has to be signed off by a supervising driver or an approved driving instructor. We will have checks in that to make sure that information has not been falsified. That will be developed. The penalties around the falsification of the logbook are so strong that they should deter the majority of people from trying to falsify any information, but we will also have checks in place to try to pick up any who would.

Mr Greenway: Another model in GDL would be to say that you have to have x number of lessons or x hours of lessons with an approved driving instructor. That model is in place in Ireland. In other jurisdictions, we saw a good deal of overlap between the period in the logbook and the number of lessons. We felt that the economic impact for many could be higher with the lessons, so we went for the mandatory learning period and logbook. That, of course, does not mean that people should not consider taking lessons on certain things, but we did not propose in the Bill x hours of mandatory lessons. You will know that, in Ireland, there are 12 mandatory lessons, each on a different component of the syllabus. There is a strong recommendation of three hours' private practice for each lesson so that you get to 48 hours as a guide, but 12 mandatory lessons must be signed off within a six-month period. There is a different nuance.

Mr Boylan: OK. I have not gone into the exact detail of it, but driving at night is certainly an issue. There is no doubt about that. Certain driving techniques are also important. The issue of the cost has been raised with us if we were to set a number of lessons. Has there been any work with insurance companies to try to encourage them? Some insurance companies are using technology when taking on young people. Is there an opportunity to sponsor a driver or support lessons in some way?

Mr Greenway: We have had a number of discussions with the Association of British Insurers, which is the body representing most insurers, and insurers as a group. Three or four insurers count for quite a large percentage of the Northern Ireland private car motor insurance market. They pointed out that, if we bring in GDL along the lines that we have proposed, or doing it more strongly with a night-time curfew, they expect that to reduce insurance premiums by around 15% because there is a reduced risk of a crash and, therefore, there is a reduced insurance premium.

Minister Attwood was very clear that he would hold them to those reductions. I mentioned in my opening statement that we have talked about other work with insurers, such as nudge tactics. We have looked at telematics and have completed a review of them. That review shows, from the limited data we were able to access from insurers because of data protection and technical data issues, that there is no clear evidence yet that telematics makes for safer drivers. It seems to make them safer for a short period, but then familiarity comes back in. We are also looking at how insurers may be able to encourage people or at least alert them to different opportunities.

The difficulty is that, if you have all the insurers in a room together, they cannot have that sort of discussion with you; you need to see them individually because there are commercial considerations. Also, once they start agreeing something as a body, the competition people start looking over their shoulders around operating cartels and so on, so you have to have individual discussions. We intend to move into those in the early part of next year.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. They may say that they need a number of years of statistics before they would drop the price.

Mr Greenway: No. We have been very clear with them that they have produced evidence and that we have produced evidence from many other jurisdictions. The figures are very similar, so, if we reduce the risk on day one by bringing in the new provisions, the drivers subject to the provisions need to see a reduction in premiums from day one, not from five years after that, when the local statistics will be available. The evidence is sufficiently clear-cut from many different jurisdictions that risk is reduced. Premium needs to be reduced when risk is reduced, not when they have evidence of that later.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. So, we will see an immediate drop in premiums for young people.

Mr Greenway: That is the Department's firm statement to the insurance industry for the people on the new scheme. When we introduce this, there will be people on the old scheme who will need time to finish off. They will not see it; it will be the people on the new scheme.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I am sure that that will be of benefit to a lot of young people and their parents, who mostly pay for them.

What is the starting age in the Republic of Ireland for learner drivers to be allowed on the road?

Ms McEvoy: The provisional age is 17, and they then have a six-month mandatory period where they have to hold their learner permit before they are allowed to take their test. That, effectively, raises them to 17 and a half.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): So, is there going to be a discrepancy between the two jurisdictions? Say, a learner driver, who lives with their mum and dad in the border area, drives into the Republic.

Mr Greenway: There is already a difference, but I would not call it a discrepancy. Driver licensing is a devolved matter, and, obviously, Ireland has its own jurisdiction. It can determine in the provisions —

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Yes, but would it be illegal if a person drives across the border with just a provisional licence at the age of 16 and a half?

Mr Eastwood: You hardly notice the border any more. That is the problem.

Mr I McCrea: Well, it is still there.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): They may not even know.

Mr Eastwood: It is getting more and more like that.

Mr Greenway: There will be clear communication —

Mr I McCrea: Cars normally just stop. Something happens. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Greenway: There will be clear communication on those elements. Nicola mentioned the many Northern Irish resident students in Britain. You need to communicate very clearly to them. She also mentioned the residency requirement to take a test in Britain. Similarly, that residency requirement applies here in reverse, and ditto in all jurisdictions.

Interestingly, I think that only five countries in the EU allow people to get a full driving licence before 18. We are discrepant from the norm in the EU already.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I know that. In Australia and others, it is 18.

Ms McEvoy: At the moment, people with a Northern Ireland provisional licence are not allowed to drive in the South; they have to apply for an Irish learner permit.

Mr Eastwood: What are the statutory limitations on that?

Mr Greenway: A learner permit is distinct to the jurisdiction in which it is granted. Notwithstanding the philosophical points about how many jurisdictions there are on this island, we need to apply the laws as —

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Let's not go there. Are you saying that they can apply for another licence? I am lost. If a 16-and-a-half-year-old with a provisional licence drives across the border unknowingly and they are stopped by the police —

Ms McEvoy: They would not legally be allowed to drive with the provisional licence that they have received here.

Mr Greenway: Nor are they at the moment. That would not change.

Ms McEvoy: That is the situation at the moment.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. So, they have to be very careful that they do not stray across the border.

Mr Eastwood: That is news to me and probably most of Derry. *[Laughter.]*

Mr A Maginness: I have what is probably a very silly question about the average length of time to acquire a licence. It is probably meaningless because an average is probably not the best way of looking at it, but, making the best stab at it, what —

Ms McEvoy: We estimate the average to be between seven and nine months, but there is a lot of variation around that. Sometimes, it can be as quickly as a few weeks. Some people take years.

Mr A Maginness: So, in fact, it is not a huge increase in the time a person would spend preparing to —

Mr Greenway: The average person. Mrs Overend talked in a previous Committee hearing about learning to drive very quickly. Some people take much less time. However, some people hold a learner driver licence for whatever reason for many years never with the intention of taking a test.

Mr A Maginness: Why do you come out at a year? Why do you say 12 months?

Ms McEvoy: The year was to allow all the seasons to happen, so that people can get experience in summer and winter and of the different lighting conditions. Sometimes, the most dangerous time is dusk or dawn. It is about trying to take advantage of all those different conditions throughout the year.

Going back to the age issue, those aged between 17 and 17 and a half who hold an R licence, meaning that they were able to get their test before six months, represent only 4% of the population of that age.

Mr A Maginness: Of that cohort?

Ms McEvoy: Yes.

Mr Greenway: So, 96% of 17 to 17-and-a-half-year-olds do not have a full driving licence.

Mr I McCrea: You could, however, do it in the winter, because you pretty much have all four seasons in the winter. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Weir: Or, indeed, during the summer. *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): That is due to climate change, which is another issue.

Mr A Maginness: That is only in mid-Ulster. It is a peculiar sort of place. *[Laughter.]*

Mrs Overend: That is only a regional variation.

Mr I McCrea: You start off in the fog in the morning, and you get a few miles down the road and then need the sunglasses on.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK, members, we need to move on.

Mr A Maginness: I have just one other question. What about the cost of all this? I think that driving lessons are quite expensive. Has any consideration been given to that?

Ms McEvoy: That has mainly been considered through the fact that we put in the legislation that the training can be delivered through a supervising driver or an ADI. That was to try to minimise the cost so that people could have that mix.

Mr Greenway: The conditions for a supervising driver are as they are now; they are aged —

Ms McEvoy: Twenty-one with three years' driving experience.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): In many ways, it is about the practice. Learning how to do it mechanically is very straightforward.

Mr Weir: Iain, you are right in that we are trying to get a bit of balance, but I am not quite confident. I know the issue about GDL, and around the world, it has tended to be a cocktail of measures.

I am still slightly worried about the age issue. While it has been welcomed in some areas, there is also fairly strong resistance from the likes of driving instructors. I appreciate that people are not coming with entirely clean hands on these things.

You mentioned the experience in Sweden. I suppose you can always pick a jurisdiction that is culturally different, and we have sometimes seen the attitude to alcohol in different countries. A lot can depend on the cultural attitude in a country.

I am a little concerned about what we are hearing about age. This may make our focus a bit more international, but we have heard from the Republic of Ireland and across the water that the standard age has been 17. If anything, that tends to be lower than the European norm. I think that you said that only five countries in Europe go below the age of 18.

Some evidence seems to suggest that the overall international trend is going the opposite way. If anything, from the point of view of road safety, countries are increasing age. Does the fact that we already have one of the lowest ages — at 17 — in these islands suggest that we are swimming against the tide and that there is a danger that, if we reduce it to 16 and a half, we will swim even more furiously against the tide? I am just not quite sure.

There seems to be almost a quid pro quo with the end-of-the-year element, and the two seem to be interlinked. Where are international trends going?

Ms McEvoy: The international trend is to raise the full licence age. That is really what the combination of clauses 16 and 17 will do. We are heading from 17 to 17 and a half, which will bring us closer to the full licensing age of everyone else internationally. The trend across the majority of Europe is to have a provisional licensing age of 17, so, yes, we are going below that. However, it aims to let people take advantage of that time so that by the time they get to 17 and a half, they have had a year's experience.

Mr Weir: Except the only complication in that is that, apart from anything else you said, if the evidence is that there is a very small percentage of even 17 year olds getting a licence, to what extent is that going to be a benefit if you are talking about a relatively small number of people?

Ms McEvoy: A relatively small number of people are going ahead and taking their test, but that is not to say that they are not gaining experience at that time.

Mr Weir: I am not entirely convinced. I have greater sympathy for the issues that are raised in clause 18 about a range of activities that people have to do. A wee bit of flexibility is built into those. While I understand the economic argument, it strikes me that anybody who is getting a car, particularly at a young age, will find that the cost of learning is somewhat dwarfed by the amount of money that is involved in buying the car, running and servicing it, buying insurance and whatever else. I think that it is right that we put in place a fairly good regime of activities that people have to do before they get to driving.

I am a bit more concerned about clause 17. Sandra made the point very well the other week, and Alban asked about the average. The thing about that is that driving is very much a skill. People can be trained a good bit to do it, but a lot of it is quite intuitive. The speed with which people pick up skills can vary greatly. Somebody could very much be a natural and be a really good driver within two or three months, but there are others who have been trying for 10 or 20 years and have got no closer to passing their test. An arbitrary time frame for holding a licence seems to be, at best, a fairly blunt instrument.

Ms McEvoy: It is about trying to strike the balance. What other way could you do it? Focusing purely on the practical skills and ability is, in essence, what we do at the moment. When somebody goes for their driving test, we look at their ability on that day, and they are either passed or failed. However, the carry-through of that is that we are not in a good place with our fatalities and everything else, in which new drivers are very much overrepresented. So, at the moment, we are basing it on ability, and it is not working. This is about looking at what is going to make the difference. We feel, and the evidence shows, that the difference is in having that practice and gaining experience before you are out on the road alone.

Mr Weir: That is undoubtedly the case, which is why I think that some of the stuff in clause 18 seems quite sensible. You mentioned exemptions in relation to the 12 months. Leaving aside that people's different abilities are fairly arbitrary to an extent, in that it is not going to make a great deal of difference one way or another, some drivers, whether young or older, can have a lot of good reasons why they want to do a lot of intense work.

I am aware of people who have never really got around to driving, but then, suddenly, the first kid is on the way, that is the big incentive, and one or other of the couple has to learn to drive over the next number of months. That can force people to do it. They may be able to wait six months, but waiting 12 months will either be a little much or they will appear in the Guinness book of records.

If you have an older couple, as has been mentioned, and the partner who does the driving dies, leaving the other person almost isolated, it would strike me as quite an artificial thing to say to that person, "Well, actually, you are going to have to wait a minimum of 12 months before you can get your licence." I see a lot more common sense in saying, "Here is a list of things that have to be done in a range of conditions." Part of the problem is that we do not have enough variations of those conditions.

Exemptions were mentioned. I can see immediately that one of the complications is that, if you have exemptions that are based on age in any way, those will not stand up to any legal scrutiny. Where would you see the limited exemptions if that were to come in through clause 17?

Mr Greenway: We would look at other jurisdictions, of course, but one instance is serving military personnel who are home for a certain period between tours of duty and who then go away for extended periods. That is one area that is generally picked up in exemption. I was trying to think of a better example, but that is what I came up with in my — *[Laughter.]*

Mr Weir: Iain, do not be gaining in some parts and losing in others with that one.

Mr Boylan: That is a very bad example.

Mr Greenway: We are very aware of the timescale of a pregnancy. We are very aware of the older driver not just where a partner dies but, for instance, where they become incapacitated and unable to drive. As I mentioned, we are attempting to find a way to balance that without exempting 90% of people. Whatever the Assembly decides in legislation should be the norm in law, and we should vary from that only for a minority. That is what we are struggling with. We are struggling with six months, 12 months, younger drivers only, all drivers, lessons —

Mr Weir: I appreciate that there is an arbitrary quality to any time frame, but, if you are looking to balance this out, is there an argument that a more sensible approach that might come close to achieving the same balance may be to keep the initial age at 17 but have a six-month period?

Mr Greenway: Notwithstanding the particular meteorology of mid-Ulster, the strongest argument against that is that you could start in mid-March and take your test in mid-September. That is one point, but I mentioned the other things that we are doing in regulatory ways. For instance, we have already revised the driving test so that there is a longer period of independent driving. You may be aware that, in Britain, an even longer period of independent driving is out for consultation. The manoeuvres now are not, "Turn and reverse around this corner." They are, "Find me a corner in the next five minutes that it is safe to reverse around and show me that skill." So, it is not just about doing what you are told; it is about understanding traffic conditions and doing it in an appropriate way, not on to a main road when there is an HGV or a bus parked or whatever it may be.

With these goals for driver education, we are trying to move to greater testing of all that. It is not just the base levels of the mechanics of it and knowing that you can move the pedals. It is that you are understanding and reading the road. So, a number of strands are coming together. One thing that we do know is that people who sail through their test first time are certainly not the safest drivers on the other side of it. I do not know whether that gives anybody in the room comfort or discomfort. However, making the test harder in the current form would not deal with the casualties the other side, but adapting the test to requiring you to show the skills that you need to have developed and putting that together with a logbook and so on is what we are about. The GDL is one of element of that but not the only element.

Mr A Maginness: Peter said that you could not introduce an age. Is that the case legally?

Mr Greenway: It is not correct. There would need to be proportionality around it. Indeed, the passenger restriction is age related, and we need to be able to show the evidence of age as a factor.

Mr A Maginness: If you took age 25 as the point where you could apply for your licence, and you could do it at any time after that age, that would seem to me to be all right. Could you introduce something like that? Is that possible?

Mr McMullan: When we were drafting the Bill, and before even putting it to our drafters, we sought legal advice. Age is mentioned quite a bit throughout the GDL for passenger restrictions as well. We were concerned that there might be age discrimination issues there. However, the advice was that there are no age discrimination issues and that that arises more in employment law than on driving licences. So, we were content that we could mix and match with age.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): So, is it possible to say that it is only provisional drivers under 25 who have to go through one year? Is that your point, Alban?

Mr A Maginness: Yes. I am not suggesting that age, by the way. I am just using age 25 as an illustration.

Mr Greenway: We do not believe that that would be impossible. Any law is subject to challenge, of course, and there are judicial processes for that. However, the legal advice is that, ultimately, the Assembly could make such a provision if it were minded to do so.

Ms McEvoy: At the moment, people under 25 account for 75% of R licence holders. They catch the vast majority of them.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): You have the evidence base to say that that is why you put this limitation in the clause. Colum has been so, so patient.

Mr Eastwood: Not that patient, Chair. *[Laughter.]* I think that we are looking at this back to front. I completely agree that we need the logbook and to include all the different types of driving conditions, driving on motorways and so on. It would be a bit difficult for people in Derry to find a motorway, but I have made that point before. It should not be about the number of lessons, because there is cost and all that to consider. It should be about hitting all those criteria and doing all the different things that you have to do. Once you agree with that, I do not see the point in a time limit at all. You are trying to backdate it by putting in all these exemptions, which will mean that a lot of people will be exempted, when all you are trying to do is to get people to go through all the different points in the logbook. I do not understand the point of specifying a year, six months, three months or, indeed, any number of months.

Ms McEvoy: When you ask someone to follow a programme of training in, for example, night driving or whatever, you will find that some people will say, "Right, I have driven once at night, so now I will move on". It is about trying to structure it in such a way, whether that is over six months, a year, or a longer period, that encourages people to take specific lessons on that area, and you will then supplement that with practice. That is where the benefit is gained. I think that, if you do not have some kind of a period for that, people will tend not to do it.

Mr Eastwood: If the logbook is so weak that you can practice once and then move on, people will cram it all in at the end. I think that that is what is going to happen in practice. You should make the logbooks longer and make sure that people cover the different criteria on a number of occasions. Otherwise, you are going to end up exempting people who are 25, people who are over 65, someone who is pregnant or somebody whose partner has died. As a piece of legislation, it is all back to front, when you could just strengthen the logbook and make sure that people do all the things that you want them to do. That is the real purpose of the legislation. I would advise you to forget about the time limit, because I think that it is pointless.

Ms McEvoy: Do you think that we should come up with allocating a certain number of hours to each of the areas that need to be covered so that you had to work in hours rather than for a period? Would you consider something like that?

Mr Eastwood: I think it makes more sense. You are going to end up having to exempt so many different people. When it comes to picking the length of time that people have to have their licence, you will just have plucked a number out of the air.

Ms McEvoy: Certainly, other jurisdictions take that approach. The one thing that they have found is that when you specify a number of hours, people work to that as a target. For example, you can say, "You should have 12 hours on this", and they might then say, "Once I have reached my 12 hours, I'm not doing any more". Really, we are trying to express a minimum, rather than a target. We are trying to get the balance.

Mr Eastwood: I understand that. I think they will do that anyway. There is work that you can do with driving instructors to make sure that people are ready for their test. Most driving instructors will not put anybody through their test unless they are ready for it anyway. I really do not quite get the point of having an arbitrary length of time.

Mr Greenway: The bulk of learner drivers use an ADI. I think the figure that we have been using is 99%, which is a very large majority. Those ADIs will either do a mock test or form a view as they go along on whether somebody is ready for the test. Ultimately, the client, such as the learner driver or their parents can insist on booking a test and the ADI cannot override them, but the process works. I know that when the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) and the young farmers were here they suggested this process. That already exists in the case of 99% of learner drivers, and the pass rate for the test is not much more than 50%. There is an optimism bias in there, and we need to continue to work away at that.

Mr Eastwood: They would largely be conservative, because the more lessons there are, the more money is spent. Most driving instructors are very sensible about that and would not put people through a test unless they were ready. I think that the period is pointless. You end up trying to find all these exemptions when you could just strengthen the logbook element, which would deal with all the issues that you are trying to address.

Mr Boylan: I agree with what you are saying, but you still have to get the driving conditions to do it right. There is no point in trying to learn —

Mr Eastwood: That will end up taking longer anyway. You know what you are looking for, you are going to get it, but you might have to wait a while.

Mr Greenway: I think the challenge for the Committee and for the Department in this Part of the Bill, although less so in the Part on drink-driving, is how to conclude the Committee Stage with consensus either through departmental or Committee amendments to be tabled at Consideration Stage. We have seen this morning that all these clauses start to interact. A debate in the Assembly on an amendment to clauses 16 or 18 would be very difficult to manage. We are having a good discussion about the clauses, so it is incumbent on the Department, and, I suggest, on the Committee, to somehow build these points. There is a different nuance to Colum's comments than to Cathal's. Somehow we have to come to an evidence-based view at the end of this, because I fear that trying to do it in the Assembly at further stages risks the coherence that we have been trying to build this morning.

Mr Boylan: I do not think that you need to join the military to get an exemption. We will not put that down as an exemption.

Mr Greenway: Which military?

Mrs Cameron: Most of my questions have been asked. My first point is about the GDL. You have statistics about young people travelling together in cars. Do you have any statistics on road traffic accidents involving people in other age groups, particularly older age groups? What contribution do they make to road accidents?

Ms McEvoy: I looked at the 65-plus category before I came up here. The proportion of licence holders corresponds exactly to the number of KSIs. I cannot remember the figure, but I think they hold about 20% of licences and account for 20% of collisions. It was proportionate. No age group was overrepresented in the way that the 17-to-24 age group is.

Mr Greenway: There is a point about older drivers, and we did some research on older road users two or three years ago. The recommendations from the people who did the research were mainly on the use of nudge techniques. You find that older drivers self-regulate. As they get older, they feel less confident, so they drive less. They put a curfew on themselves without legislation needing to do it, and they avoid the rush hour or whatever. We are kicking off a fitness-to-drive review that will look at all drivers, but particularly at the older age category. In the context of the social inclusion work, we are very conscious of the social exclusion of elderly people, perhaps even more so than for younger people, who are often living at home with their families. The exclusion that is involved in driving is less stark than it perhaps is for someone living in the countryside as a non-farming rural dweller. That connects to an earlier point.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): You have been listening.

Mr Greenway: If they are widowed or unable to drive, there will be real issues. We want to look at nudging, if we possibly can.

Mrs Cameron: There are issues with the behaviour on the roads of drivers of all ages, but particularly old drivers. I remember my grandfather well, who lived until he was almost 97 and drove until he was about 93. He was quite deaf and pretty blind. I remember him painting the posts in the fence on his driveway to enable him to reverse into his driveway without knocking the fence down. Do you have to go to your GP when you reach 70? I have concerns that GPs are maybe sending people back on to the roads who should not be driving. I do not know how my grandfather drove for so long.

Mr Greenway: The research we did suggests that 70 is about the right age at which to intervene with shorter licences and medical evidence. That came out of the research. The last time I looked there were eight people aged 100 or older in Northern Ireland with driving licences, so your grandfather was not right at the top of the scale. Seventy was coming out as the age at which the faculties were — we are back to the average again — diminishing such that a shorter licence term and so on was appropriate.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Having said that, I think that taking away older people's licences bars them from social inclusion. They are then stuck at home.

Mrs Cameron: I am not at all suggesting, Chair, that you take away old people's licences. If the system is in place, it should work the way that it is supposed to.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Members, are you content to move on? We have more or less talked about clause 17, which is the requirement for a person to hold a provisional licence for one year. Will we move on to clause 18? That is on the logbook-approved programmes of training. You are proposing a technical amendment to clause 18 due to the Immigration Act 2014. Will you elaborate on that?

Mr Greenway: I call on my learned friend.

Mr J McMullan: This is a small technical amendment that changes only a number sequence in the Bill; it does not change content or policy. It has come about because the Immigration Act in Westminster inserted article 13A into our 1981 Order. The Bill, at clause 18, was inserting the same number of clause, so our 13A will become clause 13B. It is only a number change.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): No issues were raised on clause 19. Members, are you happy to move on?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Clause 20 removes the current 45 mph speed limit on new and learner drivers, and it imposes restrictions on newly qualified drivers. A few issues were raised in the responses. Will you explain those to us, please?

Ms McEvoy: The PSNI was broadly supportive of the passenger restrictions, in spite of some concerns raised about enforceability. There is general support, as you mentioned, for the removal of the 45 mph speed limit, which facilitates learners to train on motorways. That seemed to be generally supported as well. The concerns regarding passenger restrictions were mainly around the impact, particularly in rural areas, on access to employment, education and social and sporting events. In response, the Bill has tried to balance the passenger restriction by making it for only the first six months post-test. It is interesting to note a figure I pulled in preparation for coming here: of the passengers aged 14 to 20 who end up being killed — that is very much where this provision targets — 17- to 24-year-olds account for 83% of those fatalities. I was shocked by that figure. We have quoted a lot of figures, such as being two or three times as likely, according to the number of passengers. When you see that 83% are caused by 17- to 24-year-old drivers, that supports why we have targeted the passenger restriction very much at that age category and those passengers. If you look at passengers outside that age group who end up being a fatality in a collision, you see that 17- to 24-year-olds are responsible for only 36%. So, risk increases where younger drivers carry young passengers.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): And it is for only six months.

Ms McEvoy: Yes.

Mr Greenway: It may be worth rehearsing the detail of the clause. It is sometimes difficult to see it in an amendment Bill. The clause proposes — I am looking at Nicola and John to keep me right — that, if you are a new driver aged 17 to 24, there are passenger restrictions for the first six months. Those passenger restrictions do not apply if there is a supervising driver in the car, because that would make you worse off than when you were a learner. If you have a 21-year-old with three years' driving experience in the front seat, you can carry whatever the passenger complement is. If there is no supervising driver, the restriction is on the number of 14- to 20-year-olds you can carry. You can carry as many as you like outwith those age bands — Nicola quoted the teenage figures. In that age band, aside from people outside that age band, you can carry one person without any restriction. You can carry family members — that is defined in the Bill around brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister or child of the family — without restriction. Beyond that, you cannot carry more than the one person.

There are a number of stages and subclauses with the clause. We looked at no passenger outside those categories. The Bill says that you can have one, as well as all those other exemptions.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Yes, but I am sure that the fact that there are so many variations makes it very difficult for the police to enforce or monitor that. The PSNI said that it would find it difficult to ascertain, for example, the ages of passengers and whether they are relatives.

Mr Greenway: The police certainly highlighted that. We have worked closely with the police on this, and the Minister has met senior police officers about this clause. Their comments were in line with what the PSNI said to you in Committee Stage. They are supportive. They recognise that there are enforcement challenges.

It is also important that we do not see the police as the only line of enforcement of such a provision, were it to be introduced. The first line is the young people themselves. Most people do not set out to break the law. The second is their parents or adults, who will often have a financial interest in the vehicle, a financial interest in the safety of their children — *[Laughter.]* Sorry, a financial interest as well but an interest in the safety of their children. They will also often have a financial interest in the insurance policy on that vehicle, which could well be invalidated if the law was not being obeyed. So, there a number of stages before you get to purely the thin blue line.

Mr Boylan: I was concerned when I came across this clause because, again, rural people are totally reliant on their cars because of a lack of transport. The insurance is a big element. More importantly, getting out all the messages you have delivered to us will be a big undertaking, to be honest with you. We definitely have a big bit of training to do to get all those messages out.

Mr Greenway: Yes.

Mr Eastwood: Surely that will happen, though, if you go for your test now or start learning in this new system. The instructor will go through that. Young people who have just passed their test will know about those restrictions probably better than most because they will have gone through the process.

Mr Greenway: Also, at that point of passing your test, you get a new licence sent to you by DVA, so there is an automatic interaction and opportunity for further information to flow in a targeted way when the provisional licence is handed in and the full licence issued. It is complex, I agree, and it is complex because we have tried to find this balance.

Mr Boylan: But there are a number of areas where you can deal with it through the lessons and, just as importantly, through the insurance.

Mr Greenway: Yes.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): As I said, communication is so important to tell people what criteria they need to adhere to. In a way, it perhaps helps a young person, because they can refuse requests for giving lifts. They can say, "This is illegal. I can take only one person", rather than packing the car with four other young people. I know that my son used to do that when he was 17 and would pick up friends after school to go to places.

Members, if there are no more questions on this clause, we will move to clause 21, which allows new drivers the opportunity to complete an approved course as an alternative to having their licence revoked. All comments received supported this clause. Members, do you need more information on this? If you are content, we will move to clause 22, which is entitled, "Extension of requirements as regards protective headgear". There were some comments received about this clause. Will you explain those, please?

Mr J McMullan: We have now moved to Part 4 of the Bill, which has just clause 22 and will require quad users on public roads to wear helmets. It gives the Department power to make regulations for that. The action on this will be in regulations subsequent to the Bill.

The rationale behind it was the increase in the use of quads in recent years and, with that, the increase in fatalities and serious injuries. Between 2006 and 2013, there were four fatalities and 39 serious injuries. The police were able to look at three of those fatalities. In them, no one was wearing a helmet and the post-mortems all showed that the cause of death was due to head injury. That is not

to say that a helmet would have saved anyone's life, but the point is that it might have, and that is what we are trying to get at.

All respondents were supportive of the clause. The one issue that was raised was about why we are not taking the same power for tricycles — three-wheeled motorbikes — and the reason for that is that we already have that power. We have not exercised it because there is no evidence coming through in the same way as the evidence shows that quads are a problem area. Anecdotally, it might be that the tricycle riders align closely to the motorcycle riders and adopt the same gear, helmets etc. It is an important point because we are going to regulate for quads. With the four-wheel vehicles, we require users to wear helmets, as we do with the two-wheel ones. So, the three-wheel vehicle should not be exempt unless it is intrinsically safer than the other two. It is a useful point that we will look at when we are bringing forward the regulations on the quads. So, the regulations that come forward could cover quads and tricycles.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Yes, it would unify the approach.

Mr J McMullan: Yes, it would be a consistent approach.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I am sure that it is not as safe as a four-wheel quad given that it has three wheels. It does not make sense logically.

Mr J McMullan: It is outside the Bill in that we always had that power, but it is a useful point and it will require us to look at it again and maybe take a consistent approach.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): If there are no questions on that, members, we will move on.

New clause 22A introduces a further amendment to the 1995 Order. The Department proposes to insert the new clause to comply with the Examiner's recommendation that certain regulation-making powers should be subject to draft affirmative resolution. The proposed clause would then read as follows:

"22A In Article 110 of the Order of 1995 (general provision as to orders and regulations) in paragraph (4) (regulations), for 'be subject to affirmative resolution' substitute 'not be made unless a draft has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly'."

Do you want to elaborate on that?

Mr J McMullan: It is a drafting convention, and it was raised by the Examiner. His view is that we should be bringing forward the regulations by way of draft affirmative resolution to the Assembly rather than by affirmative, which means that the regulations are made and then laid. We are quite content to proceed with that. We mentioned it in the last session as well because there was a similar amendment at clause 3. What is not mentioned in the template is that there is knock-on amendment in clause 23. So, there are three knock-on amendments to comply with the Examiner's view on that. It is a drafting convention.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): That will be put before the whole House, is that right?

Mr J McMullan: Yes.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Do members have any queries or need more information? If not, we will move to clause 23, which is on supplementary, incidental and consequential provisions. No issues were raised on that clause. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We will move to clause 24, which is on transitional and saving provisions. No issues were raised on that clause. Are members content with it?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Clause 25 is on repeals. No issues were raised on that. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Clause 26 is on commencement. No issues were raised on that. What is the commencement date?

Mr Greenway: There will be a range of commencement days. As we mentioned in the last session, if Royal Assent were received in the spring or early summer, we would envisage the drink-drive provisions potentially being applied and commenced in the latter part of 2015. On the GDL elements, considerable work has been mentioned this morning on the syllabus and the log book, and quite significant secondary statutory rules will need to be made. Then, if we did proceed with a 12-month minimum learning period or whatever that period might be, we need to commence the learner provisions at a certain point and then need testing and post-test provisions because they have a time lag in them. We are talking about 2017 for the learner provisions. If we have a 12-month minimum learning period, that would be 2018 for the testing and post-test provisions. If there were any exemptions to the 12 months, we would need the testing provisions in at the same time as the learner provisions. The main point is that there is considerable extra work to do on those statutory rules, whereas the drink-driving statutory rules are very limited to some type approvals of testing equipment and so on.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. Are Members with content with the commencement clause?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): The last one is the short title. No issues were raised about that.

We have now gone through the informal clause-by-clause scrutiny. The Committee needs to highlight in this meeting any areas of the Bill where members are not content so that we can work on them with the Department and draft amendments if necessary. Colum was quite clear about thinking that the one-year ban is arbitrary. Peter also mentioned that. Members, do you want the Department to consider that?

Mr I McCrea: I agree with Peter's point: 16 and a half is probably too young. That is my opinion, anyway.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Me, too.

Mr I McCrea: It should be 17, and a period of six months. You have to get the weather. I take Colum's point: no instructor is going to put you through if he does not feel that you are ready. It should be 17, with a minimum of six months.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I would quite like to see the provisional licence staying at 17, but, to keep it in line with other countries, you do not get your full licence until 18.

Mr Greenway: There are practical difficulties with 18, in terms of people going away to university and so on. That is a change point in people's lives; many stop living at home because they travel some distance to university. You are getting into that zone if you go to 18. We will certainly look at all those ideas, but that is one point I add to the 18 piece.

Mr A Maginness: If the age is 16 and a half, and you do the test after a year, that makes you 17 and a half. That seems to be just about the right age. It meets the point that Ian made in terms of maturity and so forth. In a sense, all these things are arbitrary. We are just stabbing at trying to get the right balance, but it is not bad when you look at it. Nicola said that, on average, you are talking about people — did you say between —

Ms McEvoy: Sorry, the percentage who hold the R licence?

Mr A Maginness: Yes, the period of time was between seven and nine months.

Mrs Cameron: That seven to nine months is an average. Some people spend years learning, which could take it way up. Perhaps you could break it down into areas. I imagine that that learning period would be a lot shorter in rural areas.

Mr Greenway: We could certainly talk to DVA about how we could break some of that down. We have an average of seven to nine months, so we have data. I am not sure whether we could do it by postcode, in effect, on top of that. I am not sure whether the system could cope with that sophistication. John is advising me that, if the Committee wishes to go to 17 and six months instead of 16 and a half and 12 months, the drafting edits to the amendments would be quite small, so that need not be a concern in terms of legislative counsel. We can certainly see what we can get. I cannot promise anything; we need to look at what the system can provide on the sort of thing that Mrs Cameron is suggesting.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): I know that you have said that there is no evidence to say that 16-and-a-half-year-olds are worse drivers than they are at 17, but instinct is telling me that it should not be lowered to any earlier than 17.

Mr Greenway: It was very much a balance. It was one that Minister Attwood took because it was back then that the drafting was being completed and there was a sense that you needed 12 months for the reasons that we and Alban have mentioned. To put that in at 17 to 18, particularly where there are people going away from home to work or study, and to bring it to 16 and a half to 17 and a half, it goes back to that word "balance".

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): The majority of people do not go to university until they are 18. You are 16ish when you do your GCSEs and 18ish when you finish your A levels.

Mr Weir: At this stage, it makes sense at least to say that it is probably 16, notwithstanding whatever options are produced and potential amendments or changes there are. I cannot remember whether there was particular controversy over the other ones, but you might basically be looking at clauses 16 and 17 as the areas that we will look to potentially amend and maybe, at least, get some guidance. That is not to say that it is an absolutely fixed position and that we have to decide in the next five minutes as to precisely where that should be. I think that those are the areas where there is a level of discomfort.

Mr Greenway: We would need to engage with the Minister because obviously he has a key nexus in the decision-making process as well.

Mr Eastwood: Chair, I think that the 16 and a half was put in originally because of the view around the 12 months. Is that correct?

Mr Greenway: Yes.

Mr Eastwood: Maybe you should have a look at the 12-month issue. That might solve your problem. You might be able to do it starting at 17 if that is what people think.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): If we lower it to 16 and a half, we would be out of sync with the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Greenway: We know that Ireland has changed. We know that we are considering changing. Britain, at this stage, is looking at changes to the test and so on. In the future, of course, it could change. A future British Government could decide to change. The Irish Government could decide to change. In a sense, we need to have a view to other jurisdictions, but we need to do what is right for here as well.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK.

Mr Boylan: I agree with 16 and a half. We are content with that.

Mrs Cameron: Chair, when are we expecting the results of the consultation with young people?

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): We are expecting it next week.

Mrs Cameron: That is vital. We need to see that.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Good point.

Mr Greenway: The Department shared its concerns with the Committee Clerk about that survey in that it is taking the views of one stakeholder. You could argue that parents are just as important a stakeholder. The Department would be concerned if the Committee took the views of one particular sector and was overly swayed by that. I accept that it is an important group in this, but you have not engaged with parents, for instance, or greater society. I just make that point.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Iain, there was a public consultation.

Mr Greenway: Yes there was and, in drafting the proposals, there was consultation and focus groups with young people.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. Members, are there any other issues that you really want the Department to look at? Are you happy with all the clauses so far?

Mr Greenway: So, there is the one area around 16 and a half or 17 and a half with six months, 12 months or no months. From recollection, there was nothing —

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Peter mentioned exemptions.

Mr Eastwood: Sorry, the no-months option comes with a very strong logbook.

Mr Greenway: Yes. It is removal of the mandatory statutory period. In the discussions on drink driving two weeks ago, I was not aware of the Committee raising any particular areas.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): No. I think that members were very supportive of those clauses.

Mr A Maginness: I raised the point of the penalty for a professional driver on their second conviction.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): It is three years.

Mr A Maginness: It seems to me that, on the face of it, three years is excessive and disproportionate. Three years' suspension for a professional driver is a huge punishment.

Mrs Cameron: It is a deterrent.

Mr J McMullan: That is the law at the minute. The Bill is not changing that.

Mr A Maginness: But not in relation to the lower limit. In a sense, the lower limit is not an impairment per se of one's driving.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): It is.

Mr A Maginness: I would contest that. What I am saying is that it certainly runs contrary to the concept that we want to get abroad, which is that you should not drink and drive, particularly if you are a professional driver, but I can see instances where, in fact, a professional driver — a lorry driver, for example — could be at some form of entertainment the night before and off the next day, but his boss at the haulage firm rings him up and says, "Somebody has not turned up for work. I need you", and he has to go. He is over the limit on the lower limit. I think that it is disproportionate to the offence. That is my feeling, anyway. I think that we have to be proportionate and send out a very strong message, but I think that three years is a very excessive period.

Mr Weir: I do not agree with Alban on this one. I think that, when you are talking about professional drivers, it is a little bit like the situation you have with other types of offences that could be regarded almost as a breach of trust. There is maybe an extra onus on that. Obviously, it could be considered when we come to clause-by-clause scrutiny.

Mr A Maginness: Anyway, I have raised my point. Certainly, there should be a suspension.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): But not for three years.

Mr A Maginness: It is too much.

Mr Greenway: We will note that and feed back to the Minister members' views on that point.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): OK. Thank you very much, everyone. We will conclude. When are you coming back for formal clause-by-clause scrutiny?

Mr Greenway: We would be happy to work with the Committee Clerk to confirm whether that would be in one bite or two, as we have done the informal scrutiny and so on. We believe that the Bill will save lives, so our preference is to get on and get a version of it to become an Act. Sooner rather than later would suit the Department.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Sure. We will try to arrange to see you again as soon as possible.

Mr Greenway: Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Ms Lo): Thank you.