



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Savings Delivery Plans:
Sport Northern Ireland

30 April 2015

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Savings Delivery Plans: Sport Northern Ireland

30 April 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Nelson McCausland (Chairperson)
Mr Leslie Cree
Mr David Hilditch
Mr William Humphrey
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Basil McCrea
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Nick Harkness	Sport Northern Ireland
Dr Shaun Ogle	Sport Northern Ireland
Mr Andrew Sloan	Sport Northern Ireland

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I welcome Andrew Sloan, the director of sports management services; Shaun Ogle, the director of performance; and Nick Harkness, director of participation. I invite you, gentlemen, to make your opening statement.

Mr Andrew Sloan (Sport Northern Ireland): Thank you very much. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to brief you on the work and interventions that Sport Northern Ireland will engage in over the next five years in the context of a reduction in public investment in sports development.

As a leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland, we will continue to deliver value-adding services such as: planned, coordinated and targeted programmes of outreach and support in communities throughout Northern Ireland; support to athletes, coaches and governing bodies to deliver improved high-performance sport outcomes; technical and management sports facility advice to the sports sector in order to improve the design and management of their facilities; and overseeing the implementation of the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, which involves the inspection of designated venues and active membership of the safety advisory group, which provides advice to district councils on the implementation of the safety certification process.

Through this briefing, we hope to provide assurance to members by giving you an overview of the following areas: our new draft corporate plan 2015-2020, which is called 'Growing and Sustaining World Class Sport'; a draft business plan for the current year; and our savings delivery plan, also for the current year. I am joined by my two colleagues, Nick Harkness, director of participation and facilities, and Dr Shaun Ogle, the director of performance.

As highlighted in the briefing paper provided to members in advance of today's meeting, Sport Northern Ireland has a new vision, which is of Northern Ireland renowned as a place where people enjoy, engage in and excel in sport. That reflects the aspirations of individuals, groups and organisations that we have consulted over the past 12 months in the development of the new corporate plan.

Sport Northern Ireland is an organisation characterised by energy, clear aspirations and integrated methods of service delivery across our functions. Our new corporate plan displays a clear intent to use our expertise and investment in order to create an effective sports development system in Northern Ireland, providing exceptional sport experiences from grass roots to the podium, and to deliver tangible sporting outcomes and social benefits for sectors of society that suffer socio-economic inequalities and disadvantage.

The plan has been produced based on projections that we will have a resource of circa £100 million over the next five years. Our services will focus on creating conditions across Northern Ireland to enable people and athletes to enjoy, engage in and excel in sport. We will continue to work with and through our partners to develop sporting communities, sporting clubs and sporting winners.

Our new business plan for 2015-16 is the first annual plan in the corporate plan cycle. It describes Sport Northern Ireland's key activities, interventions and budgets for the coming year. The plan is based on a total investment of £21.3 million — £10.1 million from the Exchequer and £11.2 million from the National Lottery. Investments will be directly aligned to our strategic objectives, priorities for action and the following policy drivers: growing and sustaining a world-class sporting system at all levels; promoting equality and good relations; tackling poverty and social exclusion; and contributing to the achievement of high-level targets identified in 'Sport Matters'. For the purpose of today's briefing, we would like to bring some of that work to life so that members can get a true sense of the nature and impact of a number of the current and planned interventions in the coming year.

As outlined in the briefing paper, many of our planned interventions and investments have been designed to deliver tangible sporting outcomes, as well as meaningful social outcomes for those sectors of society suffering socio-economic inequalities and suffering greatest need and deprivation. Sport Northern Ireland's interventions and services are designed to have different impacts, in line with the policy drivers referred to earlier. For example, the £13 million lottery investment in the Active Communities programme, which is a four-year programme, has contributed to tackling poverty and social exclusion in many communities across Northern Ireland.

Table 2 in the briefing pack has been included to provide members with details of key activities that will support the achievement of our strategic objectives. Some examples of those key activities include: key activity 2, to influence and support the development of 11 district council community plans; key activity 3, to promote and support the delivery of Northern Ireland's outdoor recreation action plan; key activity 4, to develop and launch a new community participation initiative to increase quality opportunities for targeted groups; key activity 7, to work with governing bodies to increase their ability to develop and improve quality in sports clubs; key activity 8, to develop Sport Northern Ireland's expertise to identify and nurture talent; key activity 9, to identify and prioritise sport facility requirements within Northern Ireland; key activity 13, to improve the quality of community club facilities; and key activity 14, to invest expertise to deliver improved high-performance sports outcomes.

As regards our savings delivery plan for 2015-16, it is important to note at this stage that, in the context of developing our new corporate and business plan, we have taken a number of steps to minimise the impact of the 11.2% cut on the sports sector — which equates to £1,037,000 — as far as possible, and will continue to work closely with our partners and others to identify and address existing needs in the provision of sport under the auspices of 'Sport Matters'.

Table 4 in the briefing paper has been included to provide members with details of all of the key areas impacted by the budget reductions as we pursue our new vision and strategic objectives. For example, Sport Northern Ireland staffing levels will reduce. Budget cuts in that area will result in a number of job losses during the year and will affect the type and range of services offered to the sports sector. Budget cuts in coach development support services will result in the complete cessation of the coaching legacy and practitioner development programme and a reduction in the level of delivery of two key events aimed at developing, supporting and recognising sports coaches.

Budget cuts in participation initiatives will result in a reduction in the level of support offered to Disability Sports, Outdoor Recreation, women and girls in sport and school sport. Budget cuts in

Sports Institute support services will result in a reduction in the service's capability and capacity for high-performance sport. Budget cuts in performance sport support services will result in reductions in the level of support offered to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Youth Games and the cessation of the transition funding for posts within governing bodies that have a remit for participation.

Finally, I would like to thank you for inviting us here today to update members on our plans and priorities for the development of sport over the next five years and the details relating to the savings delivery plan. We are happy to take any questions you may have.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you very much. The first question is from William Humphrey.

Mr Humphrey: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you very much for the presentation, Andrew. It is sad to hear that there will be cuts, but I suppose that that is the reality of the economic situation in which the nation finds itself. With regard to the five-year plan, austerity presents everyone with challenges and threats, but it also provides opportunities to look at a more joined-up, collaborative, coordinated approach. Can you expand on the coordinated approach that you talked about, Andrew, in relation to working with councils, the education authorities, universities and private clubs to try to ensure that the maximum amount of investment goes into sport across the estate that is Northern Ireland plc rather than that which is owned by government?

Mr Nick Harkness (Sport Northern Ireland): We were very glad to welcome your Chairman to a workshop that we had about a week ago. One of the things that we are doing is a Northern Ireland-wide facilities strategy, and we are working with district councils. It is being funded 50% by Sport Northern Ireland and 50% by the district councils. They are working at the high level at the minute, which is Northern Ireland-wide facilities, but the second part of that will be 11 district council reports. Some of the emerging work from that at the minute is about the potential in the school estate and the community sports estate. I suppose that it is not only the sports estate, although that is the subject of this, but other bits of the school estate could be opened up for better community use. Two or three of the action points in the Bain report some years ago into the school estate also recommended that, so we will be working with schools and further and higher education in the future. We are just about to announce a £17.5 million lottery facility pot, and we hope that that will be done in partnership with that type of facility. It is about district councils, Sport NI and education working more closely together. It is one estate, and no longer can we afford to have part of an estate closed up during the day and opened up at night and the other one opened during the day and closed at night. I think that there are opportunities there.

Mr Humphrey: I very much welcome that approach. There is a question that has come up from your response. Will the £17.5 million pot from the lottery be for sporting clubs right from grassroots up, or is it for elite athletes?

Mr Harkness: Our board met again on 21 April and had an opportunity to rethink its strategy, and it has come up with a three-strand approach. The three-strand approach will see around £8.75 million, because projects are not fully costed until they are identified, that would be available for facilities that have the capacity to support high-level training but would also be available for community use, likely multi-sport hubs and a small number of high-quality facilities, but they could only be sustainable if there was community use in there as well.

At a step down from that, we are looking at multi-sport facilities. The awards likely to be offered would be in the range of £100,000 to £1 million. Those would be available for clubs and community organisations that have multi-sport facilities. Below that, at the lowest level, there would be a £2 million pot available. It would start at the lowest level. We have a small grants programme that finishes at £10,000, and this would be between £10,000 and £100,000. That would be for single-sport clubs. Single-sport clubs could only apply for the smaller amount.

Mr Humphrey: I was also pleased to hear in your presentation that work continues on the Commonwealth Youth Games. I think that 2021 is when we hope to host that. In the five-year plan, have you been having discussions with councils, other government bodies, the Department and so on, in relation to Northern Ireland making a bid, establishing where we are short in facilities for the Commonwealth Games. If we can edge closer towards putting the facilities there, that would enable us to put in a bid that would be competitive and that might just be positive and would see the games coming here.

Mr Harkness: Is your question there about the Commonwealth Youth Games or the Commonwealth Games itself?

Mr Humphrey: The Commonwealth Games.

Mr Harkness: Northern Ireland would be hugely short of facilities for the Commonwealth Games.

Mr Humphrey: My point is this: are you aware of how short we are?

Mr Harkness: An official study has not been done, but, for example, I visited the games in Manchester just before they took place. I saw the pool being built there. Upstairs are the competitive pool and the diving pool, and downstairs is the warm-up, 50-metre pool that has to be in place. Right beside the athletics track, there needs to be a warm-up athletics track. For the scale of the spectator facilities required, multiple millions of pounds would be required to make Northern Ireland capable of holding a Commonwealth Games. It would be massive. We are significantly short. We have to be honest about that.

Mr Humphrey: I am sure that Mr McCrea will touch on this. We surely do not just require government money for these things to happen. Are we looking at PFI or public-private partnership (PPP) money or money from the private sector on top of what the taxpayer and ratepayer pays for?

Mr Harkness: The scale of the investment required and the sustainability of that range of facilities in a community the size of Northern Ireland would, I have to say, require a significant evaluation study. We are very short of facilities that could host such an event.

Mr Humphrey: I am sorry to hear of job losses. That is always a negative, and I see that there are implications around the issue of safety in sports grounds, although it is a small amount of money in comparison with other things. Is safety in sports grounds something that should increasingly be a responsibility for the new super-councils anyway?

Mr Harkness: The money in the savings delivery plan was coming out of stewards' training. Potentially, rather than providing stewards' training free of charge, the ground operators could contribute to that in the future, so the stewards' training could still go ahead with some partnership funding.

Mr McMullan: Thanks for your presentation. We have reduced the funding for participation for people with disabilities. Where will that affect them?

Mr Harkness: Sport Northern Ireland has had a very positive working relationship with Disability Sport over the last 15 years or more. I have to say that it does wonderful work, and it is with regret that its budget has been reduced by 10%. We work with Disability Sport in light of that unfortunate environment, and the board of Disability Sport has set its own priorities for the funding that was available. It is not that we have stripped out elements of its work that we fund; we work with it in that regrettable environment. However, since that, we have announced additional investment over and above the £147,000 of core funding that represents the 10% reduction. Our Active Clubs investment is putting two posts into Disability Sport over a four-year period, which realises an income of £390,000 over that four-year period. That will help mainstream disability provision in mainstream sports clubs, which is really where we want to be in the future. In my view, where possible, people with a disability can be full and participating members of mainstream clubs.

In addition to that, we have worked over the last four years with Special Olympics to make opportunities available. We have put £2.3 million in there. We have just been able to announce and offer an additional year's extension to that. It is multi-departmental funding of £544,000. In addition to that, we have our ongoing Active Communities programme, which supports nine posts that do specific work to make opportunities available for people with a disability, and that is in the region of £238,000 in the 2014-15 year. That has been extended.

Shaun's department, which works on performance focus, also works with Disability Sport, providing a basketball coach for four years. Those are just some of the examples, and, whilst a 10% cut is regrettable, we have had an opportunity to be able to uplift. That uplift for the Active Clubs is not exactly what the budget reduction was for, but I think we can all agree that mainstreaming opportunities for people with disability in our sports clubs is a high priority.

Mr Sloan: I should also add that we have made bids to the June monitoring round for £75,000 towards the 5 Star Disability Sport Challenge and the community events programme.

Mr Harkness: We have bids to replace that money.

Mr McMullan: My next question is about the same thing. Has the work with the 11 new councils on using their sport and school estates etc been rural-proofed? Urban and rural are two different models, because in urban areas, the school estates are within reach and there is transport in a lot of places. Rural areas are different. From my area, you have to go 14 miles one way, 16 miles another way and 18 miles north to get to the nearest school. There is a problem for one rural community.

Mr Harkness: I will refer to the presentation that went to our board meeting on the capital programme that Mr Humphrey asked about earlier. It looked at the single-strand approach that we had previously considered of investment into multi-sport, high-performance facilities, and it said that had the potential to create an urban-centric approach. The single-strand investment would be sustainable only in areas of high population, which are likely to be urban areas. Sport NI has responsibility for rural-proofing its policies, and that was one of the reasons for ensuring that the capital programme could make single-sport awards — lower-level awards, I have to say — which are more likely to be made in rural environments. That is something that we are actively considering.

Mr McMullan: If they are at the lower end, we are not putting them on the same footing as urban areas. For example, will you look at the main sports providers in rural areas, which have the only sports facilities?

Mr Harkness: The truth of the matter is that when it comes to opening up the programme for single-sport or multi-sport awards, we will not restrict the level of application by the sporting club or community association. One I know of is in Donaghmore; the Torrent Complex. It was fundamentally a Gaelic club. It now provides soccer, Pilates, drama and music. We were only one of a number of funders; we put about £1 million into it. That is now a multi-sport facility in a rural environment, but it is as much a community development facility as it is a sports facility. That is the sort of example that we would love to see coming to the fore.

Mr McMullan: We lost a percentage of our lottery money here, as did other areas, to fund the London Olympics. I think that over six or ten years or so we paid in twenty-something million out of our share of the lottery. That share never came back to us; it was never reinstated.

Mr Harkness: Certainly, all lottery funders were top-sliced to help pay for the 2012 games. The 2012 games were a catalyst for sport on these islands, so it was seen as an investment, and I have to say that, during that period, the Northern Ireland Executive invested very generously in sport. Whilst we lost some of our lottery funding, it raised our profile, and we were able to bring forward investments. To balance that, as well, our Sports Institute at Ulster University in Jordanstown received in the region of £3 million from Sport England to help it with its capital infrastructure at that time. There have been benefits going in both directions.

Mr McMullan: If that money has not come back, we are still losing it, theoretically. Take the Commonwealth Games, for example. We have no facilities here for the Commonwealth Games. The nearest facilities are in Scotland. If a case was made to the lottery for bringing that money back, it would greatly help us. That money went to the Exchequer or somewhere else. We have lost out, and we are stripping our budgets here, not directly because of that but indirectly.

Mr Sloan: There was never an intention to bring that money back to Northern Ireland. It was a top slice —

Mr Harkness: Or any other reason.

Mr Sloan: Or any other reason.

Mr McMullan: That was never said. It was never said in any paperwork or anything that came through that it was never intended not to bring that back.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I suggest that we actually write to the Department and get some clarity around the whole impact. The idea was that when they sold the facilities in London —

Mr Harkness: Yes: that is correct.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): — the profits of that would go wherever. But it is a broad principle, because it also applies to the arts. Money was top-sliced there as well. Would you be happy enough, Oliver, if we write to the Department just to get clarity around amounts and how much has come back so far, and so on?

Mr McMullan: Can we also write to the lottery, too?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Right.

Mr McMullan: They were the ones who, when the paperwork came, never mentioned any of this money being reinstated after the Olympics. We were told after the Olympics that the money was not coming back, not before.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): If you are happy enough as a Committee, we will follow up on those two points.

Mr Harkness: Chair, can I just confirm that the percentage split has been reinstated, so we are back to receiving our normal percentage. So, whilst there was a top-slice on all lottery distributors' percentages, the original percentage has now been reinstated. That percentage is no longer being taken off.

Mr McMullan: I do not think so. That is not being taken off, no, but what we had before that slice was taken out has never been reinstated.

Mr Harkness: The slice was taken out only for a temporary period. We are no longer losing a slice.

Mr McMullan: But we have lost that money.

Mr Harkness: Yes, that is correct.

Mr McMullan: We have lost that money. We got no facilities out of that money. We got only £3 million out of what we paid in, and facilities elsewhere, in England, Scotland and Wales, are far superior to what we have. We are running about, scratching about here and there, looking for money to send people to the Commonwealth Games, etc.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We will follow up on those two points, then, and get that information with regard to sport and the arts.

Mr Hilditch: Thanks for your presentation this morning. Obviously, the document 'Sport Matters' highlighted a number of priorities moving forward for a number of years. Oliver has pushed on the disability matter. There is also the like of female participation in sport. How will that be affected by the reductions? Will targets not be met now?

Mr Harkness: We continue to prioritise investments that will realise increases in participation among women and girls, people with a disability, older people and the less-well-off. Our Active Communities Network programme was lottery funded, so it is unaffected by these cuts. As Andrew said, it was over £13 million for a four-year period. It has been extended through this 12-month period with another £3 million. Our board approved the direction of travel —

Mr Hilditch: Was that a result of the Olympics?

Mr Harkness: No, no. At its most recent meeting, our board considered a direction of travel for our new revenue investments. They will have a focus on women and girls, people with a disability, older people and those who live in the top 20% of socially and economically deprived areas. This will be from March 2016. Whilst full business cases are yet to be brought to our board, that is likely to have four strands. The first is investment in multi-sport programmes and physical recreation programmes.

The second is about workforce development; to make our investments more sustainable so that we leave coaches and volunteers more capable. The third strand is investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure, such as green gyms, outdoor gyms, walking and cycling routes, etc. The fourth is an extension of our ongoing small-grants programme. The schemes that are prioritised within those will focus on those four sections of society that I have referred to, which have specific targets within the strategy for sport.

Mr Hilditch: OK. Thank you. I just want to touch upon the issue that Mr Humphrey raised about safety at sports grounds. We understand that the training of stewards is coming to an end. You mentioned sports clubs and various people. Would it also be possible to discuss that with the new councils? They are obviously responsible for community safety and planning. While people can be trained as stewards for sports events, they can also play a part in other matters in council areas and be quite helpful as far as community safety goes.

Mr Harkness: Yes. I will bring that forward.

Mr B McCrea: Do not take this wrong way, but I find what you are putting to me here a wee bit confusing. We wanted to talk about the impact of the financial reductions. Everything that I have heard so far is, "No, it is OK; we have got this sorted". It is budgets here and budgets there. Could you just tell me what the negative impact is of the 11.2% reduction?

Mr Sloan: It is articulated in table 4 in the briefing paper. Essentially, we will do slightly less. We cannot say that we will do the same if we take just over a £1 million cut in our budget. We have tried to prioritise that across all the areas that we work in, in both participation and performance. We are looking to minimise the impact of that.

Mr B McCrea: We do not need to read a paper on this, just talk to me about it: what are you having to cut that saddens you?

Dr Shaun Ogle (Sport Northern Ireland): I will talk about the performance end. We are not able to deliver some of the bespoke coaching development that we would like to our coaches here. We talk a lot about the facilities as inputs to the process. We very much need to have coaches trained up and people involved who have been there and done it. We are able to do less of that, so that is going to slow that process dramatically. Similarly, we will be providing less in the way of high-performance services into some of our sports. Earlier on, Mr Humphrey referred to the opportunities there. We have had to look at some of the efficiencies as well, so it has made us look very firmly at what we get in return for the investment that we make. We believe that, by reducing some of those areas and working in slightly different ways in other areas, we can continue to provide a fairly good service here, but there will be less of it at times and not as many people will benefit from it.

Mr B McCrea: If we take the issue of performance, one of the things that were a bit disappointing in the recent Commonwealth Games was the fact that our medal haul was concentrated in certain areas. We might have hoped for it to have been a bit more expansive. Are there any plans to address that for the next Commonwealth Games?

Dr Ogle: Most certainly. With the Commonwealth Games Council here, we have just completed a review of what happened in Glasgow and the lessons that we have learnt, and we are now looking towards the Gold Coast, which is a whole different proposition when it comes to distance, cost and other things. It is fair to say that boxing, which is the sport in which we won most of the medals, had a bit of a head start. It began its whole preparation about 10 years ago, so it was well ahead with some of the things that the other sports are beginning to introduce now. We would love to see the medal haul increase across the breadth of sports, but, in truth, because of the level of competition at the games and the sports that Northern Ireland is good at, medals are likely to come in the same sports for a while yet. Therefore, we will be looking to the likes of bowls, boxing and shooting, which are the sports that have traditionally delivered for us, to do that again. However, even to do that in such a competitive environment is extremely onerous at times.

Mr B McCrea: There were programmes to do with the Olympics — participation things, disability and suchlike — in which we won awards for something. What was that?

Mr Harkness: That was our Active Communities programme, which is the one that I spoke about — the £13 million. That has been extended for a year. We won a 2012 Inspire mark, and we also won Sports Coach UK's coaching intervention of the year award for 2012 at a ceremony in London.

Mr B McCrea: Are any of those three programmes affected by your cuts?

Mr Harkness: The Active Communities programme was funded out of our lottery funding. It has been extended, and we have just taken a policy decision on it — the one that I have just described with the four strands in it. Therefore, it will evolve. We have listened to feedback. It was mainly done through district councils. As we normally do with our programmes, we speak to our stakeholders and ask what went well and what could be improved. Through listening, we are evolving the programme.

However, one of our other programmes that got that accreditation from London 2012 was Activ8, which is an intervention in primary schools primarily. It was about young people of primary-school age taking eight steps to being physically active, and it set out various materials that they could download.

Mr B McCrea: What happened to it?

Mr Harkness: That was being funded. The material is still there, and it is still available for primary schools. We had two staff working on it full-time doing the outreach work with the schools, but, sadly, those staff will be redeployed to other things. That is one of the cuts that I am disappointed with. However, the material is still on our website, and schools can still use it. It is just that the human resource behind it is no longer there.

Mr B McCrea: We talked about women's participation. However, regarding general participation, I do not really get the sense that that is a priority. I know that it will be in the targets and suchlike, when talking about facilities and other things. Is there an opportunity to do more to encourage people to get involved in sport generally? I do not mean competitive sport or club sport. I mean active living.

Mr Harkness: Absolutely. To be honest, that is what Active Communities is about. The £13 million is for exactly that, and, through that programme, we have supported the employment of 116 full-time coaches, mainly in district councils, but, in some cases, in governing bodies. In some cases, that has been in Disability Sport NI, which is working on the ground to get people to be active. We have had over 3.5 million independent participation opportunities realised over the past four years through that programme.

Mr B McCrea: I will finish with a request. It can either be done through the Committee or go out to you separately. I did not mean to be churlish, but I will give you an example of what I would like you to address. You mentioned that there is a 10% cut to Disability Sport, and then you said to Mr Humphrey that £544,000 was brought in from somewhere else.

Mr Harkness: Yes, from our lottery funds.

Mr B McCrea: Yes, and you said that there was another £238,000 from somewhere else. Is there any way of consolidating that so that we know what the real figure is?

Mr Harkness: One of the things in our work programme this year is to set out almost what our disability sport policy is in order to show our range of interventions and the range of partners. Disability Sport NI is one very important partner that we value.

Mr B McCrea: I took that only as an example. I am simply saying to you that you are 10% down, but you then have this other money. You are talking about different timescales and money. Mr Humphrey made a very important point, which I think that we welcome, and you should certainly consider it. It was on the ability to aspire to greater things. It is disappointing, Nick, to hear your analysis that we do not have the facilities to go for the Commonwealth Games, but, if it were set out properly and by looking at funding coming from the private sector, there would be a political will to go forward and try to look at that. Even if you were just to be talking about it and saying, "This is why we want to do it", I think that that would have a knock-on effect on the performance issues as well. It might just provide more of an opportunity to explain the good work that you are doing. Mr Humphrey mentioned it, and I certainly add my weight to that. Instead of salami-slicing and being very efficient — all of which you should be doing, of course — perhaps you ought to be considering having real vision that says, "We can provide seed corn, but we need to get more finances from somewhere else".

Mr Harkness: That is a very good point. Again, our board debated it. The three strands of the capital funding will come at percentage contributions, not at 100%. Depending on whether it is a public body that is the applicant or is likely to be the owner of the facility, that will limit it to a large extent. If it is an area of high social need, it will get a higher percentage. That is the way in which this is going.

On the matter of bringing other people's money to the table, at 9.00 am yesterday, I met representatives of a community bank that is very interested in the social outcomes that sport can realise. I have to say that the bank is enthusiastic about potentially being a partner investor in some of the facilities. Our £17.5 million could turn into £20 million or £25 million. That would be through loan funding, and the beauty of that is that it makes our applicants and our sporting bodies think more like businesses and think about revenue streams and repayment requirements, instead of just asking for a 100% loan. We are looking at those alternative options.

Mr B McCrea: To finish on this point, you will find support, but you need to give us some information.

Mr Harkness: OK. That is fine.

Mr Dunne: Thanks very much, gentlemen, for coming to meet us again. On community projects, I understand that money is becoming available for capital expenditure. It is about £17 million, is that correct?

Mr Harkness: That is correct, yes.

Mr Dunne: What is the progress on that at the moment?

Mr Harkness: As I was explaining to your colleagues earlier, our board met on 21 April and agreed a three-strand approach to that programme. The first strand will be a small number of multisport facilities that are capable of supporting both community and high-performance participation. The community participation is, in all honesty, likely to be 80% of that, because that is what it will take to make the facilities viable and to keep them filled and vibrant. A second strand is a multi-facility strand that can go up to £1 million. There is £6.75 million in that fund. We are talking to a community bank about possibly partnering with us and bringing in loan funding to help spread that a bit further. The lower strand is for single-sport clubs and is for awards of between £10,000 and £100,000. That is a slight rethink on where that project was at earlier, and it is due to be launched in the near future.

Mr Dunne: When is the call likely to go out?

Mr Harkness: We will likely undertake roadshows around Northern Ireland in the next month or so to advise potential applicants of the opportunity. We can make the dates of those roadshows known to the Committee Clerk, if that would be helpful.

Mr Dunne: That would be useful, yes.

You are obviously very keen on community participation in the projects. Will the sharing of clubhouses, and so on, be one of the major criteria?

Mr Harkness: To be honest, we have learnt from projects that have been very facility-focused in the past. Organisations have told us that they want a facility. However, are we really going to get any benefit from it? Will the sporting activity that goes on increase? The focus in that strand will be on a sports development plan. In other words, we want to know what people are going to do in and around their club. What are they going to do for people with a disability, for older people, for women and for girls? How will they expand their programme? What value is Northern Ireland going to get from this investment? After that, we will ask, "What facilities do you need to make that happen? What have you got, and what is the gap?" We can then make a contribution so that that can happen. If the gap happens to be that there is not enough changing accommodation to allow women's and men's teams to play at the same facility, that is a reasonable thing to ask for. However, let us look at the outcomes and the benefits first, rather than just be told, "I want a facility." That makes sense.

Mr Dunne: I understand where you are coming from. That is grand.

There are couple of other things that I want to raise. There is building ongoing at Windsor Park to address the issues with the West Stand. You mentioned the safety of sports grounds, which is

obviously a responsibility of Sport NI. Are you satisfied that everything was done through the ongoing works to reduce the risk of failure prior to the most recent international game at Windsor Park?

Mr Harkness: First, the safety of sports grounds is not the responsibility of Sport Northern Ireland. We provide advice to the Department, to ground owners and to the three governing bodies, and the district councils issue the safety certificates, not Sport Northern Ireland. My understanding, and I am not technical in these matters, is that, prior to the match and through working closely with Belfast City Council, our advice was that an engineer's report on that stand was required. Furthermore, it is my understanding that that engineer's report was received and was positive.

Mr Dunne: Prior to the game.

Mr Harkness: Prior to the game.

Mr Dunne: I have one other point, Chairman, and it relates to the corporate plan. I am moving on to something totally different, as I have an interest in motor sport. Has motor sport been included in the extensive and far-reaching corporate plan? I am talking about motor clubs that are organised throughout Northern Ireland and, in fact, far beyond Northern Ireland. They bring together a number of people very committed to sport and with a lot of enthusiasm, who put in a lot of effort and, through the use of volunteers practically every weekend, especially during the summer, use a number of tracks for all sorts of motor sports. We have rallying and motor racing, which are totally different but have hugely enthusiastic followers. Similarly, motorbikes have a huge following in Northern Ireland. The sport has a terrific history and culture here.

Finally, you may have heard Kris Meeke being interviewed this morning. He has won a round of the World Rally Championship. The last man from the UK to win one was Colin McRae some 13 years ago, so what Kris Meeke has done is a major achievement. It is one round, and his main objective is obviously to win the World Rally Championship outright, which is a huge ask. We need to support people like him, and I know that the Republic is very keen to support young people and bring them on when they have talent like that to develop. What I want is an assurance that the motoring fraternity is included in the corporate plan.

Dr Ogle: We work very closely with the different motor sport disciplines, and it is great that Kris has had that success, because we did support him way back. The costs of rallying are enormous. Our bit was small, but it was our piece of funding. We work with the different disciplines in motor sport to support them. In fact, we have supported some of our top track and road-race motorbikers as well, so that is ongoing.

Mr Harkness: Obviously, health and safety at motorcycle road racing is a huge issue. We are working in partnership with the Irish Sports Council. Together, we are part-funding a post that has been working up a health and safety manual. I think we have about nine chapters written and agreed with the governing body. There are a few more chapters to finish, but we are supporting road racing directly by setting out new health and safety procedures that will help minimise the risks, where possible, in that sport.

Mr Dunne: Has there been any engagement with the motor clubs that meet in literally every town in the country to bring them on board?

Mr Harkness: Yes, I chaired one of our consultation events on our corporate plan, and motor sport was represented on the working group that I was on at the time, so, yes, it has had a voice and a say in ensuring that our corporate plan covers the sorts of things that it is interested in.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh . Thanks for the presentation and apologies for not being present at the beginning of it.

What will the impact of the cuts be on socially deprived communities? How will the cuts affect them?

Mr Harkness: We are trying to maximise our investment where people have fewer opportunities. I have described our new investment programme, which will have priorities. The money will come from our lottery fund, which obviously is not affected by the cuts. One of the cuts outlined in table 4 relates to participation initiatives. You will have heard that there is a 10% cut in the work that we do with people with disabilities, with women and girls and on outdoor recreation. That is undoubtedly

unfortunate. We will do our best to minimise the impact. Part of that will be done by cutting back on our own in-house costs and by making sure that, where possible, we can maximise our investment out there.

Ms McCorley: Specifically, how will you minimise the impact? What things will you do?

Mr Harkness: It is about prioritising. For example, in our capital programme, which I have just talked about, we have said that the percentages going to projects in areas of high social need will be higher. Those areas will be required to achieve less partnership funding than more affluent areas, so that is a way of prioritising our money into the areas where there is greatest need. That is just one example.

Ms McCorley: We have heard about how low female participation in sport is and the impacts, and there are now going to be further impacts. Did you take into account the fact that female participation is low already?

Dr Ogle: We did indeed. In fact, one of the projects that we run and that I have responsibility for is the boxing investment programme, which is specifically targeted at areas of high social disadvantage, which are where many of the boxing clubs are. One of the indicators that we have with that, and one of the benefits that we are seeking, is an increase in female participation. We are hoping that, with that investment, the targets that we have and the work that we are currently doing on the ground, we are going to see an increase in participation in those areas. The early indications are that that is the case, so we are really heartened by that.

Mr Harkness: We are also working with the Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum to try to promote sport for women. Earlier, I talked about the capital programme and about not taking the facility-led approach around needing a new pitch or new changing rooms. It is about a sports development plan approach. We are asking, "How are you going to increase sport for women and girls in your club? How are you going to increase sport for people with a disability, and what facilities will enable you to do that?" It is about putting sporting outcomes first. Women and girls, people with a disability and people in areas of high social need are at the top of that list, and we want to see benefits in that regard. It is only then that we will say that we are prepared to make an investment in the club. It is about prioritising the outcomes.

Ms McCorley: How many individual projects are funded under the Active Communities project?

Mr Harkness: Active Communities is a revenue investment. We anticipated the 11-council model five years ago. It seemed to be the one that was likely to happen, so we offered an investment to each of the 11 councils on an allocation basis, based on a model of seed funding, so that everybody got the same amount based on geographical area, levels of deprivation and population. The budget worked out an allocation approach based on that, so deprivation was right in at that level. We then made an investment in each of the 11 district councils. We did not have 11 at the time, but councils formed an alliance, drew up a partnership agreement and appointed a lead council to administer the award. Therefore, there were 11 awards, but, in behind each of those, was what was called a coaching and leadership implementation plan (CLIP) which asked, "How will you use the coaches whom we are prepared to fund to increase the participation of women and girls, people with disabilities, and people in areas of high social need?" To some extent, that was a negotiation process. Councils came up with some really good ideas, which we said might be improved by doing this or that. Over the past four years, that plan has been implemented by us providing those coaches' salary costs. I have to say that the district councils and others have, in addition, funded, for example, facility access, transport and other costs associated with the programme. Therefore, although the salaries have been 100% funded by us, other aspects have been funded in partnership with the councils.

Ms McCorley: Is Belfast City Council the lead council?

Mr Harkness: Yes, Belfast City Council is a recipient.

Ms McCorley: Have you any idea of how many young people have been supported under the programme?

Mr Harkness: Yes, we are currently at over 3.5 million individual participation opportunities realised.

Ms McCorley: In the North?

Mr Harkness: Yes, over the four years of Active Communities so far. That was an investment of around £13 million.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): In the briefing paper, there is mention of an Exchequer baseline figure of £10.12 million. There is also a reference to a total budget of £8.219 million. That is a difference of £1.9 million. Do they refer to different things?

Mr Sloan: They do. The baseline budget from DCAL is about £8.2 million for the current year. We also have some self-generated income.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): That is what I thought. That is grand. Thank you.

Mrs McKevitt: I am sorry that I missed your presentation; I was a little bit late this morning.

You talked about the funding opportunities that are available: will there be stakeholder events held or guidance available from Sport NI for the community?

Mr Harkness: Absolutely.

Mrs McKevitt: Will events be held in each of the 11 district council areas or in just a select few?

Mr Harkness: We will spread them geographically around Northern Ireland. I do not know whether there will be 11, as we do not have them planned just yet. As I said earlier to the Committee, I will make the Committee Clerk aware of when the roadshows are taking place so that members can get the dates and locations.

Mrs McKevitt: Mr Dunne asked earlier about capital builds. It came into my head to ask this question: if capital had already been invested by the council and perhaps the like of DARD in a community facility, and a local GAA club had given up its field to the community so that that facility could be built, would there be funding available for the like of that club to replace the field, in order to increase the participation level of girls, and so on?

Mr Harkness: We only agreed that investment strand less than a couple of weeks ago, on 21 April. We have never funded clubs to acquire land for a land bank. However, the cost of a site is an eligible cost in the creation of a project that is justified by a sports development plan and a business case. If a capital project requires the purchase of a site, and it is justified in all the other terms that I have described, the cost of acquiring that site is an eligible one. However, we would not fund the cost of a site for a club or sporting organisation to keep in reserve for future use.

Mrs McKevitt: No, but, if the club had the site available and the funding was to replace the pitch that it had given up, could it be replaced by a 3G pitch or whatever?

Mr Harkness: It comes back to the principle that I have described: a sports development-led approach. It asks, "What is your sports development plan? What will the outcomes be? What is the facility that you need in order to realise those outcomes? What have you got at the minute? What is the gap?".

It is the process that I described earlier. Rather than them taking a facility-led approach, which is to ask for an extra pitch, clubs are asked, "What you going to do with it? What are the outcomes? Why should we invest in it?". We need to start thinking in those terms. Those are business terms: if you are going to make an investment, what will you get out the other end?

Mrs McKevitt: On the 11-council bit, when you are requesting councils to take the lead in their community in delivering the programmes, it is important that each council at least has a stakeholder event to put that message out.

Mr Harkness: Absolutely. That is a fair point. We wrote to DOE when it was consulting on the community planning process on the back of the new council responsibilities and said that Sport Northern Ireland should be one of the statutory consultees. We obviously aspire for sport and physical recreation to play a part in developing well-being in the council areas. We are very enthusiastic to have a chapter in a community plan on the role that sport and physical recreation can play.

Mrs McKeivitt: I have one more question, if that is OK, Chair. The previous time that we met was in the Sport NI building, which is not that far away from here. Defibrillators were then on order. Have they arrived and has training commenced?

Mr Sloan: Yes, they have arrived.

Mr Harkness: I discovered after that meeting that, at the Sports Institute, which is in Jordanstown, there are about four defibrillators and about 12 staff trained to use them. I am speaking in broad figures there. There are multiple defibrillators there.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I want to get finished so that we can bring in Professor Gallagher for the next evidence session.

I want to move on to the issue of sport and other DCAL areas of business going into a new Department for Communities. Do you think that that will open up opportunities for synergies between social development-type facilities and programmes and sport?

Dr Ogle: The model is well established worldwide. If you consider the Olympic Games in London, aside from all the razzmatazz around the high-performing athletes, the whole basis of them was a community base for the facilities. Although you have a better facility that your better athletes can benefit from and train in and then move on to good things, that cannot stand alone. Manchester is a wonderful example, with the velodrome and Sportcity. The facilities are so well used by the communities. It is about management and planning to make sure that there is community access. Very often, people see the bright, shiny Olympic thing. Glasgow, which hosted the Commonwealth Games, is another fantastic example. If you were fortunate enough to go to the games and have a look at what is there, you would have seen how the games married the local community needs and demands with a facility that also accommodates people from those communities who want to be at the top of their sport. That is a model that we need to put in place in Northern Ireland. The beginning of the new capital programme is a really sound start.

Mr Harkness: I understand that the Department for Social Development's neighbourhood renewal funding will go to district councils. We are working with district councils on facility strategies, and they have bought into that process. Hopefully, we will end up with a more strategic investment of that funding that will have social and sporting outcomes and lead to projects that meet the priorities of relevant communities and not just to projects that are shiny or attractive at the time.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): In the past, with neighbourhood renewal, a lot of the partnerships did not really take sport into account. Some did, though.

Mr Harkness: The fact that we will now be part of that family is perhaps an opportunity to influence that.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Oliver can ask one final question.

Mr McMullan: Thanks, Chair. I will be quick.

You talked about the high social need in some rural areas. I hope that you are not using the measure of deprivation levels used at the minute — the Noble index — because that is predicated on rural versus urban. We should look at rural versus rural. It is an unfair comparison.

Mr Harkness: At the time, Oliver, I could not give you the exact data, but we took advice from the University of Ulster on how we apply it to ensure as a fair an interpretation of the deprivation indices as possible. I do not have the technical detail, but we took advice on it.

Mr McMullan: In my part of the glens area, it is totally outside those levels because of the graph that is there and how the percentages are weighted. In that sense, we need to be careful about how we weight high social need.

Mr Harkness: That is certainly something for us to take forward to ensure that we consider the rural issues.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you for your presentation and for taking questions. I appreciate all that you have given us this morning. It has been very helpful.