



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Issues around Emergency Exiting Plans,
Including their Impact on Stadium Capacity, for the
Redeveloped Casement Park Stadium: Gaelic
Athletic Association/Heron Buckingham Joint
Venture/Populous

25 June 2015

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Nelson McCausland (Chairperson)
Mr Gordon Dunne (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley
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 Tom Daly	Gaelic Athletic Association
Mr Páraic Duffy	Gaelic Athletic Association
Dr Danny Murphy	Gaelic Athletic Association
Mr Oran McCloskey	HBJV
Mr Mike Trice	Populous

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): First, before I welcome you, I apologise for the extended delay. We miscalculated the length of time that would be spent with Mr Molloy, and we apologise sincerely for that.

I welcome the officials to the meeting. I will not go through your posts and positions, because you will probably refer to those in due course. I welcome Dr Danny Murphy and Tom Daly from the GAA. Tom is the president. No, he is not. Is he? You were president, were you not? No, you were not. You are the Ulster GAA Casement Park project board chair. I had this thing in my head that you were president of the GAA at some stage.

Mr Tom Daly (Gaelic Athletic Association): — *[Inaudible.]*— suggestion. Perhaps I took a wrong —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I have elevated you, sorry.

I also welcome Páraic Duffy, who is the director general of the GAA; Oran McCloskey; and Mike Trice. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Daly: First, the Ulster GAA and the Casement Park project board welcome the opportunity to attend today to present evidence to the Committee's inquiry into the safety technical matters first raised at the Committee meeting on 30 April. We have noted the terms of reference specific to that.

We made a request to the Committee Clerk that the GAA and our professional teams will present our submissions in a collective format. We appreciate being facilitated in that. We have the following representatives. I chair the project board of the Casement Park project. I have a long past association with the Ulster Council. With me, from the GAA, is Danny Murphy, the secretary and CEO of the GAA in Ulster and a member of the project board. Páraic Duffy is the director general of the Gaelic Athletic Association and also a project board member.

Here today as well are representatives from our professional teams. Mike Trice is a director from Populous and the lead architect on the project. He is here representing the integrated consultancy team (ICT), which is the design team, if you like. Oran McCloskey is construction director for Heron Buckingham Joint Venture (HBJV), and he is here representing the integrated supply team (IST). He is the contractor with both final design and project delivery responsibilities.

Our evidence to the Committee will cover the following matters: a brief background to the Casement project; information on the impeccable health and safety record of the GAA; a description of the Achieving Excellence in Construction stage boundary process, to which we are bound in bringing our work forward; confirmation of how Ulster GAA received four separate approvals and sign-offs from government over the three-year period from April 2011 to December 2013; a description of the further protections and binding funding agreement conditions that provide future sign-offs by the safety technical group (STG) on safety at Casement Park; and technical information and presentations by Ulster GAA, the ICT and the IST on confirmation of safe design, build and operational management.

It is my intention to speak again at the final stage of our presentation of evidence, when I will further address the Committee on some project specifics on the departmental approvals track for each separate stage, which I referred to.

At this stage, Páraic Duffy, will make a few comments.

Mr Páraic Duffy (Gaelic Athletic Association): Thank you Tom. Let me say first that the GAA has an impeccable safety record. That is something that we are very proud of and will never compromise. We have developed, invested in, and managed over 2,000 physical assets in Ireland, including a large number of major provincial and county stadiums, built to the highest specifications and conforming with all the relevant health and safety legislation in two jurisdictions. We have stadiums with a capacity of over 30,000, over 40,000, over 50,000 and, in the case of Croke Park, 82,300. Last year, we staged seven events at Croke Park, and that capacity of 82,300 was filled.

The safety at every venue of all our members and supporters is absolutely paramount to the GAA. That is borne out by our long-standing and exemplary safety record. That is why I am here today to express our dismay at, and categorically reject, any assertion that our supporters would ever be put at risk at any of our games or within any of our stadia. This has never happened and never will happen. The GAA at national level and Ulster GAA work on a daily basis in a spirit of partnership with Governments North and South, the PSNI, the Garda Síochána and a wide range of emergency services, taking a proactive, positive approach to ensure that all our games are enjoyed in a safe, secure environment.

We are committed to growing and developing participation for everyone who wishes to play Gaelic games and to provide our members and supporters with excellent facilities. We remain totally committed to providing a provincial capital, Belfast, with a new GAA stadium. In the three major cities on this island, we have Croke Park in Dublin; we are currently redeveloping our stadium in Cork, which will have a capacity of 45,000, and we have Casement Park in Belfast.

I might say as well, wearing another hat as a member of the Rugby World Cup 2023 bid oversight board, that most of the stadia that would be used if the bid is successful would be GAA stadia. Of course, we know and are absolutely determined that all those stadia meet the highest possible safety requirements. They will have to do so, if the bid is to be successful.

We recognise that there are some people who are opposed to redeveloping Casement Park and upgrading the stadium. We understand that; but there are a huge number of people who strongly support this project and who want first-class facilities for the GAA in Belfast, in Antrim and further

afield. I have first-hand experience of the economic and social contribution derived from the redevelopment of Croke Park and the value of that venue to the civic and cultural life of the city. I am sure that similar benefits will accrue to Belfast if the project is successfully completed.

Finally, I want to state, as director general of the GAA, that the association has total and absolute confidence in the team that is involved here in the Province in the development of the Casement Park provincial project and in their ability to complete this project successfully. The stadium will be built, as are all GAA facilities, to the highest standards, and that includes safety. As an organisation, we would never settle for anything less.

Mr Daly: Chairman, as the terms of reference of the inquiry place a high premium on establishing whether the stadium has been designed to a safe standard, I want to introduce Mike Trice, who is the principal architect for the Casement Park project and who is a significant contributor to the development of the fifth edition of the green guide, as an expert with international experience in safe stadia design and delivery. With your permission, I hand over to Mike.

Mr Trice: Populous is a global design practice responsible for some of the world's most memorable sports and entertainment venues. Its experience of football and rugby, world cup venues, Olympic venues and major sporting events is considerable, and marks it out as world leaders in stadia design. Our portfolio includes Emirates Stadium, the home of Arsenal FC, Stadium Australia for the 2000 Olympic Games and the Olympic stadiums for London 2012 and the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014. We prevented rain from stopping play at Wimbledon centre court by designing its closing roof. We designed Wembley Stadium, Yankee Stadium in New York and the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. Currently, we are completing the conversion of the London Olympic stadium for West Ham United FC and an expansion of Etihad Stadium for Manchester City FC. Our local experience includes the expansion and refurbishment of the Point, now known as the O2 Arena in Dublin, and the Aviva Stadium on the Lansdowne Road in Dublin. Even more locally, in previous employment, I was a project architect for the Odyssey Arena in Belfast.

Populous has written a number of books on stadium design and regularly contributes to the content of a number of mandatory safety guidance documents, including the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds'. We have completed over 1,000 projects. We have built more than 18 million stadium seats, and 520 million people have visited our venues during the last 10 years alone. We design places where crowds of people come together to enjoy themselves and to share unforgettable experiences, and their safety is always our prime concern. I am absolutely certain that, had this project progressed, it would have become a landmark building for Belfast and a safe place for fans to enjoy live sport.

Once a stadium is constructed, its operator needs a safety certificate in order to host events. That is issued by the local authority. For this project, the procurement of the construction of the stadium takes advantage of the building contractors' knowledge. The process brings them onto the project relatively early. This process is known as design and build. My role is to design the stadium sufficiently to describe its layout, scale and appearance. These drawings can then be used to apply for planning consent. My role continues to be to communicate the proposals to the building contractor and allow him to provide a fixed price within which to construct the project.

Once on board, the contractor develops the design in more detail, adapting proposals to suit his proposed construction methods. It was during this phase that the judicial review (JR) suspended the project. Had the project continued, my role would have been an overseeing one to ensure that the original aspirations for the project were met by the contractor. The safety certificate would not have been issued until the building was complete and the licensing authority was satisfied that it could be operated safely.

We have been working on this project for two and half years. Throughout that time, the interaction between my team and the STG was professional and productive. In building up the proposals towards a submission for planning application, we worked together with the STG. During that time, we agreed and developed details of spectator safety within the viewing accommodation, safe stadium access and egress, and emergency evacuation.

I would like to show you some diagrams to explain some of those terms, if that is appropriate. The text is a direct quote from the green guide. I know that some people refer to the red guide and some to the green guide, but they are essentially very similar documents. That quote describes egress time — the normal time for somebody to leave the building. So, egress time is the total time of which all spectators can, in normal circumstances, leave an area of viewing accommodation. Part of this drawing is a cross section through Casement Park. It cuts through the north end, which is open, and it

shows the west stand in elevation. The pink areas are the seating accommodation, the green is the pitch, and on the west stand, the central level is restaurant space. All those areas are seated.

The egress time, which needs to be eight minutes, is the time it takes somebody who was sitting at the extremity of the seating bowl to go through the vomitory into a circulation route. That is all the eight minutes covers. As for the time it takes to go through the circulation route to get outside the building, there is no time constraint; that can take as long as it likes. The time that journey takes depends on the scale of the building and how far the exit is, whether you have got to go downstairs or whether you stay level. So, the eight minutes is nothing to do with getting out of the building; it is to do with getting to the circulation route.

Mr B McCrea: You are just a bit quiet, there. You could not just speak up a bit, could you?

Mr Trice: Sorry; do I need to go over that again?

Mr B McCrea: No, but I think it was important, it was a good point that you made; I just was not clear. The last bit, you just said that it was to get from the seat to where?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Mr McCrea has a hearing difficulty, but could you speak up for all of us?

Mr Trice: That is fine. I apologise.

Mr B McCrea: You can speak quietly so that only I can hear you and he cannot. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Trice: Eight minutes is about getting from the seating area to the circulation route. That is the end of it. The journey to get outside the building can take as long as it likes, and we are talking about normal egress here. That circulation route must not have any bottlenecks in it. Once you have joined it, you must be able to freely walk through the building and leave.

The next diagram shows that journey through the building. You have left the seating deck, you go through the vomitory, onto the concourse and, as you go along it, more and more people join you and you come out onto Andersonstown Road. The people at that end of the building are going out through the side exits to Mooreland and Owenvarragh.

Emergency exit time is a different thing. The green guide and red guide are at pains to point out that the two things must not be confused. Emergency exit time is the time that it takes to leave the seating bowl and to arrive at a place of relative safety. In this building, the concourse is designed to be in a place of relative safety. So, in eight minutes, the spectators need to get there and then they are safe. Again, it can take as long as it takes to get out of the building, but they need to be in a free-flowing system with no bottlenecks and no logjams. That is the way the building is designed. Is that clear?

Mr B McCrea: You mentioned a place of "relative" safety.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Basil, if we let them all finish their presentations, we will then come to the questions.

Mr B McCrea: It is just a technical point of clarity. The point was made about getting to free circulation, which I thought was helpful. Where does it say in the red or green guide —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, Basil, we are getting into questions. Let us hear the presentation first and then we will come back to you.

Mr Trice: The actual quote in the green guide is "reasonable safety".

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): That is fine. Go ahead, Mike.

Mr Trice: Emergency evacuation was given particular attention, with a series of advanced computer-generated simulations being undertaken. Those proved that the stadium can freely exit onto the public highway and that the crowds can freely disperse. The proposals were signed off in principle by the STG, and the planning application was submitted in June 2013. Ten weeks later, we received the

STG's report, which confirmed acceptance of the building design. The report sought detail from the GAA on how the building would be managed in the event of an emergency evacuation if there were simultaneously a major incident on the Andersonstown Road. It also sought clarity on how the uncovered North Stand would be managed from a crowd safety aspect. The contractor was selected in December 2013, and planning consent was approved in December 2013.

During April and May, engagement with the STG recommenced. The STG required the proposals to be reconsidered so as to provide a free-flowing exiting system heading away from the Andersonstown Road. That would mean that the Andersonstown Road exits would need to be duplicated elsewhere in the building so that spectators could leave the venue unhindered should there be an emergency evacuation within the venue and a simultaneous emergency event on the Andersonstown Road.

We explored options for opening additional final exit routes through east and west site boundaries. That would require the purchase and demolition of a number of residential properties. Further detailed crowd modelling would be required to demonstrate the ability of Owenvarragh Park and Mooreland Park to receive and disperse the increased crowd numbers that are intended to head in that direction. We met the STG to agree parameters for that exercise. We later learnt that the STG, having consulted the PSNI, had agreed that the residential streets would not be suitable to support that scenario. The study was therefore taken no further, and the proposal for evacuation from the stadium therefore remains as originally proposed and agreed. In the event of an emergency evacuation, spectators are able to make their way to a place of relative safety within eight minutes. From there, they are in a free-flowing exit system. If, at the same time, there is an event outside the stadium that restricts the crowd from leaving, people will remain in a place of relative safety and will be safely guided out of the building by the operator, as appropriate.

I have a couple of diagrams to describe the potential places of relative safety should there be a situation where the stadium is in complete evacuation mode at the precise time when there is an incident on Andersonstown Road. The stadium has two possible areas for people to be in a safe place while that incident is going on. The concourse is designed as a place of relative safety. It is a fire-sterile zone with the capacity to hold the entire 38,000 people on it. They can still leave the building, if the Andersonstown Road is not available, through the side exits, but their departure will be slower. That will need to be controlled by the operator of the building, but they are safe; they are away from danger and in a safe place.

Alternatively, there is the potential to stand on the pitch. Again, this is a scenario where there is an emergency evacuation going on in the building and one outside. They can stand on the pitch under clear sky. The pitch is large; it is capable of holding 58,000 people if need be. Once they are on there, the operator and controller will allow them to leave in a safe passage if that is appropriate. It might be that the event outside is not appropriate for them to leave and that they are better off staying in the building.

Through our considerable experience of delivering these types of building, we are absolutely confident that the stadium design would have delivered the GAA a safe environment for hosting games. The contractor's team has now taken that logic on board and has commenced developing the scheme with further consultation with the STG. The process was suspended by the judicial review.

I very much hope that my presentation today has helped to clarify some of the complexities surrounding the issues in question.

Mr Daly: Chairman, with the Committee's permission, Oran McCloskey, who is the construction director with HBJV, which has a design and delivery function if and when a construction notice is issued, will address you in relation to some technical matters.

Mr Oran McCloskey (HBJV): I had written "Good morning", but — *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): At least it is not "Good evening".

Mr McCloskey: It is not "Good night" yet.

I am here today representing the Heron Buckingham Joint Venture, which has been appointed as the contractor on the Casement Park project. The joint venture was formed in 2013, with the main aim of tendering for the three regional stadium projects in Northern Ireland, namely Ravenhill, Windsor Park and Casement Park. Individually, Heron Brothers and Buckingham Group Contracting have many

years of experience in delivering design-and-build projects in the sports stadia and leisure market. One of the key criteria for the joint venture and reasons for teaming Heron Brothers and Buckingham Group together was that Buckingham Group Contracting is one of the UK's leading sports stadia contractors. Bringing Heron's experience, local status and relationships to the joint venture made for a good team.

Over the past 10 years, we have, through the design and construction of new stadia and stadia expansion projects, delivered more seats in sports facilities than any other UK contractor. Our experience embraces multi-award-winning stadia and sports facilities designed and constructed in compliance with the green guides and all current legislation, including world-class stadia to BREEAM very good and four-star FIFA/UEFA, international, Premier League, Championship and rugby Super League standard; bespoke grandstands, including major stadia redevelopments and fully operational sports arenas; FA elite standard training facilities, including the latest 3G and 4G artificial pitches; Olympic- and world-standard multi-use sports halls, including the London 2012 handball arena, which eventually became the Copper Box Arena; FIA Formula One track and facilities, including the Silverstone Wing; and numerous lower league and community sports facilities.

Whilst we are, naturally, proud of our experience from the world's best new stadium, which was an award secured by the Amex in 2012, and the fact that two of our venues — the Amex and stadiummk — are being used for the 2015 Rugby World Cup, which is the world's third-largest sporting event, we are equally proud of the contribution that our projects have made in supporting socio-economic development. Literally thousands of new jobs have been created, with more than 2,000 full-time and full-time-equivalent jobs at the Amex and stadiummk alone. Tens of millions of pounds-worth of contracts have been awarded to local companies. There are multi-million pound ongoing contributions to local economies through the venues in operation. There is recruitment and training for hundreds of people, focused on apprenticeships, long-term unemployed, disabled and ethnic minorities; and there is direct financial support for club charities and community initiatives, including, but not limited to, Albion in the Community, Fulham Badgers and Salford Red Devils Foundation.

The following is a list of Buckingham Group and Heron Bros. sports and leisure projects. I will just go through the recently awarded contracts. There is a new stadium for Scunthorpe United FC; a stadium expansion for Swansea City Football Club; a new stadium for Brentford Football Club and an expansion of Craven Cottage for Fulham FC. Currently under construction we have the National Indoor Arena in Dublin; Sixfields Stadium expansion for Northampton Town; the Barwell Stand development for Northampton Saints; the Welford Road expansion, which is the east stand expansion for Leicester Tigers; and Victoria Park, which is the Warrington bowls community sports facility.

Of our completed projects, there is the Ninian Stand for Cardiff City FC, which was the host of the 2014 Europa League final; the multi-award-winning Amex Stadium for Brighton and Hove, the City of Salford's community stadium; Molineux stand redevelopment for Wolverhampton Wanderers, the UEFA category 4 FIFA international standard stadiummk for the Milton Keynes (MK) Dons; the London 2012 Olympic handball arena and the legacy conversion; the elite performance training centre and academy for Brighton and Hove; TMFC; the Prince Edward Playing Fields; a sports premiership ground at Fontwell; the Silverstone Wing for Formula One at Silverstone; the MK Dons indoor training facility; Reading FC's indoor training facility; and the original work done on the Ravenhill home of Ulster Rugby.

Those projects were generally completed as design-and-build projects, so, in each case, Buckingham Group or Heron Bros. had overall responsibility for the design and delivery of the construction, taking a design provided by a client team and then developing that into construction-issue information to enable the project to be built, all of which is a very similar process to the Casement Park project. In each of the aforementioned projects, the contracting team was required to provide a stadium fully compliant with either the green guide or red guide. Each stadium achieved a safety certificate for the full capacity with an (S) and (P) factor of 1.

One of the key factors in the successful delivery of those complex and exciting projects is the professional consultants who form part of the contractor's design team. In many of the Buckingham Group projects we have worked with AFL Architects and Tenos fire engineers, both of whom have extensive experience in stadium design. It was our past experience of working with both of those teams and their extensive experience that led HBJV to select both AFL and Tenos as our partners on Casement Park.

To provide some indication of their individual experience, I would like to give brief history of their expertise and detail some of the most prestigious projects that they have worked on. AFL Architects is

an international architectural practice with a reputation for delivering inspiring design solutions with striking aesthetics and high-quality functionality. Their experience has resulted in AFL being consulted on the updates of the green guide, along with various Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) and Football Stadium Advisory Design Council (FSADC) design documentation.

AFL's knowledge of stadia design has resulted in it being approached by UEFA to be part of its team in assessing the stadiums in the Euro 2012 Championships for safety. AFL was then involved in the redevelopment of the Porznań stadium in Poland and the FC Metalist stadium in Ukraine. Both stadiums were upgraded to current green guide standards. They have also contributed to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) cricket ground design standards as well as standards for the *[Inaudible.]* rugby stadiums. Individual members of the office at AFL have been involved in expert witness roles for major sporting projects. That shows AFL's expertise in all aspects of sports stadia design.

Some of its recent stadia projects include the Peter Mokaba Stadium for the World Cup in South Africa in 2010; Kingspan Stadium at Ravenhill, which is the recent one — they were involved in the design audits and sports architects, with Hamilton's — Ashgabat national stadium in Turkmenistan; Edgbaston international cricket ground; Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi; Thomond Park in Limerick; the Salford Reds' stadium; Manchester United's Old Trafford; Liverpool's Anfield stadium; Chelsea's Stamford Bridge; Wolverhampton Wanderers; Blackburn Rovers; Wigan; and Metalist Kharkiv's stadium in the Ukraine, which was a Euro 2012 safety audit. AFL has also been asked to use its experience in a series of peer-design reviews, of: the Dubai cricket stadium, the Dubai multipurpose stadium, the King Abdullah sports stadium in Saudi Arabia, Akwa Ibom State Stadium in Nigeria and two of the current World Cup stadia in Qatar. AFL is also responsible for the overlay of the FIFA World Cup 2018 Final stadium in Luzhniki, Russia. Those projects show that FL has a respected knowledge of sports stadia design, of any size and for any sport.

I move on to Tenos, the fire engineers. Tenos has a proven track record in stadium fire-safety design. Our fire engineering consultants advise sports stadia clients and design teams on: statutory compliance, fire prevention, fire evacuation and fire safety management. We have developed fire-safety strategy for new-build stadia and expansions of existing stadia. We have undertaken evacuation modelling and structural fire assessments; prepared fire-safety management plans; undertaken fire-risk assessments; and provided advice on fire-safety issues across a range of stadia. Our fire engineering solutions focus on safe and straightforward evacuation of stadia.

Tenos drafted the fire-safety section of the FLA design guide on concourses. Some examples of the Tenos projects include: Manchester United FC's Old Trafford stadium; two schemes for the Liverpool Football Club's new Anfield; Chelsea FC; Brighton and Hove; Llanelli Scarlets; Wolverhampton Wanderers; Oldham Athletic; Reading FC; the Olympic handball arena; Salford City Reds; Coventry FC; Leicester FC; Aston Villa FC; Ipswich Town; Hull; FC Gabala, Azerbaijan; Scunthorpe United; Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium; Dubai cricket stadium; the national indoor arena in Birmingham; and the National Indoor Arena in Dublin.

With particular reference to the Casement Park project, Heron Buckingham Joint Venture (HBJV) was awarded the contract in early 2014, following a detailed and extensive competitive tendering process. Following its appointment, HBJV undertook to appoint its own design team and began progressing our initial design in line with both the requirements of the pre-construction schedule and what we would deem as a normal design-and-build process, to enable a start on site in 2014, following what we hoped would be the successful outcome of the judicial review process. As part of that process, we reviewed, in significant detail, the design provided by the client team with particular attention to the means of escape and fire strategy. Again, it is important to stress that this review is a vital part of a normal design process within stadia construction and something that we have done in every single project we have been involved with. Our initial review did not provide us with any significant concerns, and we were confident that current design was compliant and that any amendments we would look to implement as part of a normal design development would only enhance the escape and fire strategy for the project.

In March 2014, we had developed our design sufficiently and achieved sufficient contractual sign-off to approach external parties with reference to our design. We had an initial high-level review with Belfast City Council to discuss our team's approach to the design and to review the fire strategy element that we would be addressing with our fire and egress strategies. Although a high-level strategic review was only undertaken, the initial feedback on the scheme and our approach was acceptable with the agreement that further detail obviously needed to be presented. As a team, our view was that the meeting was extremely productive and we were happy that our approach was going to be acceptable

to building control. However, it is normal at this stage that no formal sign-off is achieved, as the design is not sufficiently developed.

It is important that I define our strategy for dealing with outside stakeholders. Through our experience, we have always found it important to meet with parties with a particular interest in the design progression. Therefore, we would like to have an initial meeting with all relevant stakeholders to: allow them to meet with the key members of our design team; and give them an understanding of the design process and programme and the confidence that we will be willing to fully engage with them through the process. It will also provide them with contact details of our team, which is now responsible for the design moving forward.

It always informative for outside parties to understand the design process. That is something that we are at pains to define so that there is no confusion. Our initial approach is to define our high-level strategy and then to move on in the process, spending the ongoing weeks and months, depending on the complexity of the project, further defining and developing the design to ensure that, eventually, the information that we issue is correct. Therefore, to concentrate on the escape strategy, we need to know, for instance, the exact width of every exit. There is a significant design process in sizing every element before the actual defined widths can be accurately confirmed, so it is important that we get this message across to our other stakeholders.

In May 2014, we began detailed discussions with a client team about exiting from the stadium. Part of the discussions related to the exiting time, should all exits to the Andersonstown Road be closed off. It was our view that this was an operational issue and would be dealt with at the operational stage of the process and that a contingency plan would be in place to deal with these high-risk, low-likelihood events. However, we expressed our desire to begin to engage with the STG at the earliest opportunity, so that we could work with it on designing a — *[Inaudible.]* On 17 June, we had a meeting with the head of the STG in the Wellington Park Hotel in Belfast, following HBJV's attendance at the client meeting in the same location. The meeting was not planned, but it was viewed as a good opportunity to meet the chair of the STG. The meeting was a brief discussion about exiting from Casement Park. It was clear that the format of the meeting was not ideal for getting into the detail of the exiting strategy, and it was agreed that we would prepare our proposals and arrange another meeting.

Due to the reasons that I explained, it was not until 15 October 2014 that HBJV met the head of the STG and Sport NI representatives to discuss the exiting strategy. At this meeting, the HBJV team presented our proposals to the attendees and discussed the compliance of the scheme with the red and green guides. Following our presentation at this meeting, it was our understanding that there was a general acceptance that the scheme was in compliance with fire escape requirements, so long as the dimensions that the HBJV team referred to at this meeting were checked and confirmed. It was reassuring for our team to have confirmation from the head of the STG that the scheme, as we were presenting it, was, in his opinion, compliant.

Following on from this discussion, the SNI team moved the conversation into contingency planning and wanted to discuss the effect of losing exits on the Andersonstown Road. The major concern raised was a complete closure of the Andersonstown Road due to a bomb threat, house fire, gas leak or traffic accident. SNI's starting point was that eight-minute evacuation had to be achieved, and it implied that this was being driven by the PSNI. Again, we suggested that each of the individual scenarios needed to be reviewed, not only with the design team but with each of the blue light services, to deal adequately with any perceived risk and that any of the perceived risks were no different from risks in the existing Casement Park.

SNI suggested providing additional exit capacity. The suggestions that it made involved using the spare land in the corner of the development, buying up houses and providing access to the walkway along the side of the stadium from the Andersonstown Road end back to the Owenvarragh Park exit. It was agreed with SNI that each of its suggestions allowed for holding capacity on the concourses and the external routes: that is, after eight minutes, the bowl should be clear, but people could still be on the concourses and on the external routes making their way to an exit from the site. It did not give any indication of how long the onwards escape could last. However, it was suggested that, so long as the controlled evacuation could be achieved, this would be an acceptable approach. SNI then went on to suggest that some exiting via the Andersonstown Road — that is, not a complete closure — might be acceptable to the police if the exiting elsewhere was improved as above.

HBJV raised the eight-minute line in the sand. If people could be kept moving, why would an extension of eight minutes not be acceptable? Unlike a fire situation, there would be no visible cues

such as smoke to induce panic. HBJV pointed out that, depending on the situation, there are other stadiums where eight minutes could not be achieved in a contingency situation. SNI suggested that it would be helpful to reference them. HBJV then discussed the use of phased evacuation and access to the pitch and confirmed that both were acceptable processes in contingency planning for high-risk, low-probability events. SNI accepted that there would be situations in which both phased evacuation and access to the pitch would be acceptable within the contingency plans for the stadium. HBJV highlighted the need to look at prevention — that is, mitigating the potential for closure of the Andersonstown Road — as well as a cure — that is, providing additional capacity, which is a fundamental point: prevention rather than cure. The need or otherwise to provide additional exit capacity has to be balanced against the likelihood of such an incident arising on the limited number of occasions when the 38,000 capacity will be achieved — that is, a risk-based approach is required.

The conclusion to the meeting was that we were all keen to meet again soon and that the HBJV team would look at reviewing emergency evacuation times for the current configuration; widening the stairs to the Mooreland Park exit to match the gate capacity at the exit; opening access to the walkway on the Owenvarragh Park side of the stadium; and phased evacuation. For each case, we would also look at the residual loading on the Andersonstown Road and what that would mean in terms of the required exit availability from the north stand.

The other agreement was that HBJV would draft a report covering reasonableness of the partial/full closure of the Andersonstown Road, look at emergency evacuation times for the different scenarios, provide case studies looking at other escape times and contingency planning options, and then make recommendations.

The view taken away by the HBJV team was that at no stage was a red flag raised during these discussions, and we were prepared to proceed with our detailed design. We felt that the meeting was positive and proactive on both sides, and that there was a clear path to move forward with the overall design.

Following on from that meeting, a further report was issued by our fire engineers, Tenos, relating to the key points above. However, on 18 December, the process was stopped due to the unsuccessful outcome of the judicial review process. As a result, design works on the project stopped. It was and still is the view of HBJV that we would have achieved compliance with the relevant standards and guidance for the safe evacuation of 38,000 spectators from Casement Park.

Members of the HBJV team have significant experience of the client design team in Mott MacDonald and Populous, so there was a strong belief that the tender design would be compliant. We then reviewed that design as part of our tender process and were happy that it met the relevant standards.

As the successful contractor, HBJV then had the advantage of reviewing the design in much greater detail. Again, our team — HBJV, Tenos and AFL — was confident that the existing design was compliant with all relevant guidelines. Therefore, as we moved through a standard design process, we were confident that each point of the design that we initially inherited was fully compliant.

With the small design development changes that we proposed, it was our general perception that we were making further improvement to the compliance of that design. Sadly, however, due to the judicial review process, we never had the pleasure of re-presenting the findings and scheme to the STG. We look forward to re-engaging with the project as a whole and working with the STG to ensure that a safe, iconic and world-class stadium is delivered at the Casement Park site.

Mr Daly: Chairman, with your permission, Danny Murphy will now present, followed by me, and that will bring our presentation to a conclusion.

Dr Danny Murphy (Gaelic Athletic Association): Mr Chairman, I will deal with some of the practicalities of how we got here. The GAA is convinced that our design of the stadium is a safe one. We believe that for a number of reasons.

From the outset, our process with Mott MacDonald was to have the design taken through the RIBA to stage E, which gave us an operational design but not a build design. In other words, we had the template against which we could hold the contractor to its design, so its design had to be at least at the equivalent level. We were satisfied that all that was met by Mott MacDonald. In fact, we have correspondence from Populous confirming that the stadium was designed in compliance with the red guide and the more onerous green guide.

There are a couple of other things that I should put on the record at the earliest point. I could give you emails up until Christmas, but an email by Tim Harkin, our independent technical adviser, was sent to Jason Pritchard at Mott MacDonald. I want to read just one paragraph from it. The email is dated 3 June 2013, prior to us going to planning. The email clearly states:

"We have agreed that you are to call Paul Scott and discuss this, please ensure that you document and confirm the conversation. The safety of users of the Stadium is the number one priority of the UCGAA [Ulster Council of the GAA] and we believe we have the design team with the experience to deliver therefore please ensure that every last element of concern is addressed."

That was an instruction given by Tim Harkin as our independent technical adviser.

We also have an email that I think that all of you have, so I do not intend to read it: it is the email sent by Paul Scott to Carl Southern on 19 June. If you do not have it, I will read it into the record, but, effectively, it details his move towards accepting an (S) factor of 1 and a (P) factor of 1. That is the maximum that you can achieve.

The most important email, which I will read into the record, was sent on 23 August 2013 by Paul Scott to Carl Southern. It states:

"Hi Carl

There is a Safety Technical Group Meeting arranged for Thursday 5th September — this appears to be the earliest date that suited the majority of members following the holiday period. As you are aware meetings have taken place between SNI and other agencies on a 1 to 1 basis and there appears to be a consensus that the latest proposals address the exiting concerns."

We believe that that confirms that everything that we were doing was moving towards an acceptance that our plans were proper and correct.

There was some confusion over a plan of our site, which was referred to as coming on 10 May 2013. The one that you are working on — I picked up someone's copy with comments about the lovely colours —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We are not objecting.

Dr D Murphy: I just wanted to confirm that that plan is from April 2014. That is the date on which it was done. If anybody has the proper document, in the top right-hand corner, it gives the tabulation of the amended pages of this from the original one that was done on 10 May to the operational one, which is this one. That one was done on 7 April 2014.

Our design complies, as I said, not only with the green guide but with the red guide. We believe that the GAA has employed one of the foremost teams in stadia design in the world to take this forward. We also have great confidence in our contractor, who has vast experience in this very specialised field. We have insisted on a fully seated stadium, which is recognised as the safest type of stadium. The design has increased to the total exiting width to comply with the green guide, and it needs to be stated that the stands are covered, and the overall cover of the stadium is 80%.

The GAA's design team used state-of-the-art computer software to carry out a crowd modelling exercise to ensure that all spectators can get to a place of reasonable safety in eight minutes. The design was scrutinised throughout the design process by the STG, which signed off in principle, which was the requirement of the STG prior to our planning application. At all stage boundaries, from the outline business case to the appointment of the contractor, the safety of the design was paramount. While some contingency planning was at an early stage, not once was the GAA told to stop.

The GAA will examine all industry-recognised threats and develop contingency plans to allow for the safe evacuation of spectators. The Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) safety management guideline is a vital tool that recognises partial and phased evacuation depending on the threat. We look forward to re-engaging with the STG to develop these plans with its input. The event management plan was submitted as part of the planning process, and it was supplied to the STG. I have a letter dated 7 April 2014, sent by Populous to us, confirming that our design met the requirements of the fifth edition of the green guide with regard to a capacity of 38,000. I do not want to read it all, but we can provide you with copies.

As regards the many stakeholders and statutory authorities that were in the process, we utterly refute allegations made against us during our interaction with the STG. There is currently a separate process investigating those allegations, and the GAA will not make any further comment until those matters are concluded. The GAA also strongly refutes the wild, inaccurate and unfounded claims made in the media-created headlines that compared a stadium in development mode — it was being taken forward but had not commenced construction — with the very sad events at Hillsborough that resulted in the deaths of 96 people. That is very gravely concerning to us in that the person making the statement is the person responsible for overseeing safety at the sports grounds of all our major sports.

We are also concerned that it is now evident, through publicly released information, that representatives of Sport NI held a meeting with those involved in taking the judicial review against the Minister of the Environment on the Casement Park planning decision. The GAA was not informed of that meeting, and I remind the Committee that this project is a Programme for Government commitment with full Executive approval. I refer members of the Committee to a letter from our architects, Populous, who confirmed what I just stated.

Our architects also state that there are differences between egress time, emergency evacuation time and contingency plans. That matter is very substantially dealt with in the red guide, the green guide and the safety management document issued by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. It is this document here. I do not know whether or not you have it, but it is a hugely helpful document.

Mr B McCrea: What was that document again?

The Committee Clerk: The SGSA.

Dr D Murphy: This is it: safety management. It is issued by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority.

Mr B McCrea: I do not think we have that, do we?

Dr D Murphy: It is a very good baseline document if anyone is looking at matters in the area of emergency plans, contingency plans and event plans.

The SGSA safety management document covering contingency planning is more detailed and recognises that a contingency plan for a critical incident may look at a partial or phased evacuation. It is vital for members to note that, according to the green guide, the emergency plan is prepared and owned by the emergency services: it can be all of them or one of them. There needs to be an emergency plan, and I am satisfied that an emergency plan exists for greater Belfast and that all of those would be the owners of that. Anyone drawing up any other plan would have to fit into the emergency plan designed by the emergency services. We are mystified as to why we are continually being asked for an emergency plan when the emergency plan is actually a public body plan rather than a specific ground plan. We have to fit to it rather than design it.

It is vital that members understand that the process continued up until November 2014, with the Tenos report. The GAA looks forward to re-engaging with the STG in due course to conclude the exercise relevant to the fresh application. On that point, because of the judicial review upholding the application to strike out the article 31 planning, there are currently no planning or plans in process. Until we actually submit a new plan, we cannot engage with the STG. The resulting contingency plans will be ratified by the PSNI. We should not be under any scrutiny regarding these until the time that we have to deal with any mitigation measures. We are absolutely clear that we will commit to what we have always said: we will work to our absolute zenith to ensure that anything that we build is compliant and safe.

The Sports Grounds Safety Authority guidance makes clear the fundamental difference between egress, emergency and contingency plans. The descriptions are succinct in the relevant sections, and you cannot apply stipulations detailed in one to the other. Each of them must be in their own specific area. There may also be other contingency plans that would render all exits unavailable, which would require a unique contingency plan. In such a critical incident, the safety officer in the control room hands over authority to the senior police officer, who coordinates the emergency from within and, if necessary, from without the ground. Such contingency planning existed in the way that Casement Park operated in the past. The multi-agency response plan was developed in 2009 with many representatives of the STG. It details the stadium capacity up to 32,500 and that the stewarding plan could evacuate the ground in eight minutes. The plan is also designed to support a proportional and

graduated response to a major incident. It also recommends the use of Andersonstown leisure centre during any incident. We are at a loss to understand why, only three to four years later, the same representatives believe the ground to be capable of exiting only 18,000 despite the overall improvement in the design and the particular exit widths that had been enhanced appropriately to conform with the relevant codes. The most recent safety certificate that was issued for Casement Park was for 31,661. That is available to members if they wish to see it.

On separate matters, a confidential drawing was released to the Committee. It was alleged that the drawing dated from April 2013. I can absolutely assure you that it was from April 2014. That is in the earlier explanation that I gave.

On another separate but related matter that was raised previously in Committee, Sport NI wrote formally to me on 11 July 2014 in a letter from Dr Shaun Ogle on behalf of the chief executive officer, Antoinette McKeown. The contents were a shock to the GAA as it appeared to the GAA that Sport NI notes of the STG meeting of 11 April were in dispute regarding issues of capacity for the Casement Park project. Basically, what was happening here was that a draft minute was circulated. Charles Cooke, who works for Populous, responded by not accepting some of the material. That is also confirmed in an email from Carl Southern. This correspondence was discussed in July 2014 by our project board and, in late August, by our Ulster Council management committee, after which a letter of 8 September was sent by me to Sport NI. A follow-up to this was a meeting at our offices on 24 October, which Antoinette McKeown, the chief executive officer, and Nick Harkness attended at their request and at which significant progress was made and clarifications given. During the discussion, Antoinette McKeown stated that the correspondence of 11 July from Sport NI should not have been sent. She stated that, if she had been present at the time, the letter would not have been signed off. At the time, she was in Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games.

The Ulster Council of the GAA had no choice but to state our opposition robustly and formally and define the outcome that we arrived at in October 2014 during the Sport NI/GAA meeting. This was that we should have a round-table meeting at which the PSNI, Sport NI and the GAA should sit down and look at this matter in global terms, because there seemed to be different perspectives of the same issue. We feel that that meeting will ultimately have to be held and will move significantly to resolving many of these issues.

This letter was not directed at any individual; rather, it focused on the corporate issues that had arisen between the Ulster Council of the GAA and Sport NI, and had specifically to deal with the terms of the outline business case, which was the responsibility of Sport NI. The issue was that Sport NI, in the outline business case, gave the preferred option that we would build a stadium of 42,500. We chose the option of a lower capacity. When we were in the consultation and design stage, we brought the capacity down to 38,000. At the end of the day, the people who carried out the consultation for Sport NI was a company called FGS McClure Watters. That report was circulated, went through the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and was signed off, as far as I am concerned.

I will go through a timeline now, Chairman, and that will bring me to a conclusion. There is a significant timeline. When the decision was taken not to proceed with the multi-sports stadium, the three governing bodies asked to meet the Minister, which we did. We were asked to present a paper by the end of March 2009 indicating our preferred option. In our case, we looked at 11 venues. We chose Casement Park because it outscored all the others in the critical areas.

That was followed by an application by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to DFP under something called the "strategic outline case". This strategic outline case referred to the capacity of the GAA venue as greater than 40,000. At the end of the day, even at that stage, it was being recognised that we were in the region of 40,000.

The outline business case, as I referred to earlier, was prepared and signed off by Sport NI. That effectively ran through 2011 and was signed off by Sport NI, the three governing bodies and the Minister at the time — I will say no more. As I said, the outline business case gave us the option to go to 42,500. We then had a situation in which Sport NI set up a memorandum of understanding, which existed until June 2012. The memorandum of understanding was never formalised because it was a working document that was put in place by Sport NI. It was being processed when the novation of authority moved from Sport NI to the Department. I cannot state other dates, but, in our case, it was novated on 8 June 2012. This led to a formalisation of the memorandum of understanding, which meant that, on 17 August 2012, a formal agree-to-sign memorandum of understanding came into being. That detailed the critical control mechanisms set in place by the Department to oversee the running of this project. There was the sponsor board, which was a departmental board; the project

board, which was the governing body element; and the project steering group, which was effectively the operational group that looked at issues that arose on a day-to-day basis.

This led to an STG report that was given to us in or prior to October 2013. In December 2013, we agreed the funding agreement for the development. We had a full business case concluded by late December 2013. Just prior to Christmas 2013, we issued a letter of intent to HBJV confirming that it had become the number one company to take forward the development.

That is the operational timeline and the legal thresholds that we had to cross as we went through this process.

Mr Daly: This is the final section of our presentation. I will bring the Committee through the highly regulated process that we had to follow, set out by all the statutory bodies involved and the Department. What is significant about this part of the presentation is that it demonstrates that there were four critical stages, and we did not have the capacity or the authority to move from one stage to the next without approval for that particular stage. In deference to the Committee, I will do this as quickly as I can, but there are some important points in it.

I will lead with the governance framework and the stage boundary approvals. At the inception of the regional stadium programme, which was for all three projects, a framework was set up to govern the decision-making process for the Casement Park project. That framework was put in place, as Danny referred to, initially by Sport NI, and it was then novated to DCAL in June 2012, so we had a shift of programme delivery responsibility from the arm's-length body to the core Department. That framework represented the agreed framework for the delivery of the Windsor Park and Ravenhill projects. Each governing body had to sign up to a memorandum of understanding setting out the agreed framework for moving projects from one stage boundary to the next. That framework was based on the Achieving Excellence in Construction model, developed by the Cabinet Office in London, previously known as the Office of Government Commerce. This government framework is a model of best practice and is used to manage delivery of some of the largest construction infrastructure projects, particularly where there is a public-sector funding component.

Central to the Achieving Excellence in Construction model is the requirement for projects to undergo a series of checks and approvals at key stage boundaries during the life cycle of the project. In these terms, the Casement Park project journey, from inception to completion, was mapped out across a series of boundaries, including the outline business case (OBC) approval, already referred to; business plan approval/the issue of Sport NI development costs letter of offer; approval of the planning drawing/planning application; appointment of the contractor/issue of the DCAL funding agreement; release of the construction notice — a point that we never got to; and completion of construction and operational readiness, which would have picked up critical issues such as management plans, safety, safe evacuation and so on. The Ulster GAA could not move from one stage boundary to the next without a sign-off either by Sport NI or DCAL, as appropriate. In the case of technical approvals, sign-off by the safety technical group was required from the initial design stage onwards in relation to the stadium's potential to attract safety certification for 38,000 attendants.

We intend to highlight that Ulster GAA obtained the relevant necessary stage boundary approvals required to move the Casement Park project through each stage boundary right up to the appointment of a contractor in December 2013. It should be noted that the appointment of the contractor and the conclusion of the funding agreement had been developed to the point that was dependent on the award of planning. In other words, until we had planning permission, those things could not happen. Once that had been indicated, both those milestones were reached. Most importantly, based on the documented factual evidence available, Ulster GAA can prove that no significant issues or show-stoppers or red flags were raised by the chair of the STG at the critical stage boundaries in relation to emergency evacuation, where he had either an input or the potential to input.

First, I will deal with stage boundary approval number 1, the outline business case approval of April 2011. This is essentially the OBC, which took into consideration all relevant aspects, including whether the strategic need would be met, site considerations, general feasibility and so on. It is important to indicate that this is a government, not a GAA, report; we had to subscribe to it, but it was not ours. Ownership was with Sport NI at that stage. The outline business case was commissioned by Sport NI and prepared by consultants working on its behalf. Subsequently, the OBC was approved by DCAL and DFP in March 2011. Sport NI in a letter to Ulster GAA dated 5 April 2011 granted approval for a preferred option that would support a 40,000-capacity stadium. This independent, external report said that the GAA could have indicative approval for a preferred option that would support a 40,000-capacity stadium. I emphasise that it was not a GAA report.

Support for a preferred option of 40,000 was a critical moment and milestone for the Casement Park project. Agreement to the preferred option at OBC stage of a 40,000 capacity set the shape and direction of the Casement project. It represented confirmation that a scheme of this scale will work; it also confirmed the agreed budget for the project. This was the first major opportunity for consultees to raise formally any issues with emergency evacuation, or indeed any other issue, in the risk section of the business case. Equally important, under the Achieving Excellence in Construction framework, approval of the OBC represented the trigger or the release valve for spend and design fees on the Casement project. No further ministerial approvals are required after approval of the OBC in relation to spend on design fees. That is a stage that required ministerial approval based on an external independent report.

In his statement to the inquiry dated 30 April, the chair of the STG said that he was a consultee on the preparation of the outline business case. We think that that has some significance. The risk section of the outline business case identified 12 risks that might impact on the Casement project, yet emergency evacuation does not appear at all in the risk section of the business case, which, I repeat, was done by an independent provider. In fact, there are no risks identified at all in relation to safety certification, implying that risks of a safety nature could be mitigated comfortably — probably based on the experience of having a licensed stadium for nearly 32,000 for many years — and do not have the ability to threaten delivery of the Casement project.

In addition, there are no monetary allowances made in the outline business case for adjustments to optimism bias as a result of design risk arising from emergency evacuation. Again, we believe that that suggests that risks around emergency evacuation were simply not on the radar. Ulster GAA believes that emergency exiting was not a showstopper and never had been, and that those involved in the preparation and approval of the OBC accepted that at the time.

I will now move on to stage boundary approval number 2, which is the approval of the Ulster GAA business plan and the issue of the Sport NI development costs letter of offer in February 2012, which was another significant milestone. After approval of Ulster GAA's business plan on 16 December 2011, Sport NI issued its development costs letter of offer on 8 February 2012. That development costs letter of offer is fully within the ownership of Sport NI. That is significant, as it was the agency dealing with the matter at that time. It was based on the OBC approval and represents the trigger for Ulster GAA to move to the next stage and to spend up to £4 million on design fees.

The precise wording of the development costs letter of offer offers an award to Ulster GAA to fund:

"project development costs relating to the potential construction of a 40,000 capacity all-seater stadium at Casement Park, granting £4.4 million towards eligible costs including design fees from approved consultants".

Legal opinion has confirmed to us that there were no conditions of award whatsoever in the Sport NI development costs letter relating to emergency exiting. Ownership of the development costs letter of offer rested clearly with Sport NI. That boundary approval stage provided the safety compliance unit in Sport NI with a second major opportunity not only to raise emergency exiting issues but to condition the known issues or risks, which would be common at times, in the Sport NI £4.4 million letter of offer. It did not happen.

Perhaps a defining question for the inquiry is this: why did Sport NI issue a letter of offer for £4.4 million in February 2012 with absolutely no funding conditions related to emergency exiting if its head of safety compliance believed that there were serious issues with emergency exiting at that time? That is a big question for Sport NI to answer. Ulster GAA firmly believes that emergency exiting was not a showstopper and never had been. That explains why emergency exiting did not appear in the conditions of the Sport NI development costs letter of offer.

The next stage, boundary approval stage number 3, was approval of the planning drawings/planning application in June 2013. Prior to boundary approval stage number 3, the STG had been set up in summer 2012 to comment on the design drawings for each stadium. As the chair of the STG described in his statement to the inquiry on 30 April, the purpose of the STG role in planning was for the design drawings to be agreed prior to the submission of the planning application so that the potential for an (S) factor 1 and a (P) factor 1 could be assessed. No further design changes were to be made without the approval of DCAL once the planning drawings had been signed off. That was a line in the sand. Once the planning drawings had been signed off, our people could not be involved in taking forward design changes. Ulster GAA was informed of that approach and was absolutely

content that that approach protected Ulster GAA and all the stakeholders, including the statutory agencies, in relation to the need to secure safety certification for a full-capacity stadium. Ulster GAA held the planning drawings and planning submission until we got that STG approval.

On 19 June 2013, the chair of the STG approved the planning drawings via email sent to the DCAL programme architect. I think that you have that in your papers, and we have a further copy if necessary. He confirmed that the STG considered there to be the potential for an (S) factor 1 and a (P) factor 1 for Casement Park stadium. I think that that was already presented by the current DCAL programme director. Once DCAL had confirmed to Ulster GAA that the STG was content with the planning drawings, Ulster GAA submitted the planning application later that same day, 19 June 2013.

Mott MacDonald and Danny referred to that, which showed the meticulous attention that we were paying to this matter. Mott MacDonald was instructed in writing by Ulster GAA to seek sign-off in principle for the chair of the STG on 3 June prior to submission of the planning application. We would not have crossed that line in the sand without having that from our consultants. The follow-up to that was a call from Mott MacDonald to the STG chair. Mott MacDonald has noted its record of that call, which is a paper that will be made available to the Committee.

At that stage, the maximum capacity for Casement had been reduced from 40,000 to 38,000, which would impact positively on emergency evacuation arrangements. That came after the Ulster Council and the project board considered the outcome of the public consultations. We made significant concessions, including reducing capacity and changing the use of some materials.

The GAA continued to liaise with the chair of the STG during the final internal design, which was not relevant to the planning application. That process was to develop a table of exit widths to insert into the invitation for tender documents so that the successful IST or contractor would be bound by those widths or greater. On 23 August, the chair of the STG corresponded with the DCAL stadium architect, stating:

"As you are aware, meetings have taken place between SNI and other agencies on a one-to-one basis and there appears to be a consensus that the latest proposals address the exiting concerns."

The other agencies referred to are the blue-light agencies, and our technical team is very certain about that.

That is a critical piece of documentation, which has also been proffered to the Committee.

It is, therefore, apparent to Ulster GAA that all the necessary approvals were achieved at stage boundary 3 before the planning application was submitted. No red-flag issue arose.

The next, and final, stage that I will speak about is stage boundary approval 4, which is the approval for the appointment of the contractor in December 2013. Planning approval for the Casement project was notified to Ulster GAA on 19 December 2013. Planning approval was based on the planning drawings signed off by the chair of the STG on 19 June 2013. Together with a number of other governance checks, the receipt of planning approval allowed DCAL to issue the funding agreement to Ulster GAA in December 2013. That, in turn, allowed Ulster GAA to appoint a contractor, also that month.

To ensure that, in principle, sign-offs continued to be secured from the STG in relation to the potential for safe emergency evacuation of a full-capacity stadium, the DCAL funding agreement — and this is about statutory checks and balances, and the pressures that, as a project motor, we are put under, and the bar is set very high on these things — imposes conditions on Ulster GAA, requiring further sign-offs from the STG.

If you take this from the point where we are at to where we might have got had we been allowed to proceed with the issuing of a construction notice, we would have gone through further stages. No further stage boundary approvals have been sought since December 2013 due to the subsequent judicial review, which was taken against the Minister of the Environment with a view to overturning his planning approval for the Casement Park project.

Ulster GAA is fully satisfied that, in reaching stage 4 — boundary number 4 — in December 2013, it fully complied with all legal agreements and the processes that were required to deliver the project at that point, including the requirement to deliver a stadium that had the potential to achieve the safe emergency evacuation of the full capacity of 38,000.

After December 2013, progress and further work in relation to closing out the safety management arrangements for the Casement Park project have been hampered and constrained by the fact that the live planning approval was being challenged by judicial review. Nonetheless, contact continued, but momentum clearly changed. At this point, under the CPD-approved procurement strategy, the contractor was now responsible for closing out the final design of the stadium. Whilst discussions continued with the contractor during 2014, detailed refinement of the technical design and stadium management plans could not be progressed in an environment in which we are in litigation — not us, the Minister of the Environment, but we are a notice party — and where the courts may have viewed any tweaking of exiting arrangements as a distortion of the live planning approval. In effect, the good work that had been achieved on safety management through collaboration between our teams and the STG — it was a working arrangement — had to be stalled or slowed down during much of that year due to the judicial review. As I said, there was continuing contact, but the JR severely impacted momentum.

I want look at what the future stages would have been had we got to them. They build in further protections for everybody, including ourselves as project promoters but also for the state agencies and the Department in protecting public expenditure. The funding agreement, and any C3 contract with the contractor, provided a contractual mechanism that ensures further sign-off and input by the STG on safety management arrangements, including emergency evacuations. That was a continuing story or process, but unfortunately it was stalled. DCAL has the funding agreement with Ulster GAA that provides for two further sign-offs on project design and safety management arrangements by the STG beyond the four that we had already gone through. First, a condition precedent requires sign-off on design documents before the contractor can access any grant funding at the start of construction and, secondly, there is a further sign-off on safety arrangements before construction is completed. Those are two very important checks and balances.

Those funding agreement constraints are mirrored in the NEC3 contract between the Ulster GAA and HBJV, the appointed contractor, and require the contractor to deliver a stadium that can achieve a full capacity, which is compliant with the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, and which is future-proofed by meeting the standards that are set out in the green guide. Those sign-offs have been put in place to ensure that the final designs and management plans that were delivered would have the potential of ensuring certification of the maximum safe capacity of the Casement Park stadium. In addition — as you will come to understand, it is a very onerous condition — under the funding agreement, Ulster GAA is required to ensure that an appropriate safety certificate is in place in relation to the Casement Park project at all times during the 25 years from the date of completion of the stadium funding agreement period and that the Ulster GAA does not commit an offence under the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 or any other relevant legislation that applies from time to time. Those are significant legal impositions on the Ulster Council to which it has signed up in the context of what is quite an onerous funding agreement.

Therefore, rather than DCAL, Ulster GAA or anybody else ignoring safety, it is firmly embedded in the legal agreements that cover the use of the stadium, not just prior to or during construction but for a period of at least 25 years from the date of completion of the stadium.

In summary, the four key stage boundary approvals received by Ulster GAA up to December 2013 collectively represented the preferred option, shape and design for the new Casement stadium at that time. At no time during those four critical sign-off stages did the chair of the STG or the STG raise any showstoppers or red flags with regard to ensuring the safe evacuation of Casement Park. That position was endorsed by the contributions of ICT and IST in their statements to you earlier.

In the near future, the GAA — it is matter for the Ulster Council, not the project board — will announce its programme for a fresh planning application for Antrim and Ulster's new stadium at Casement Park. At that time, the GAA will also outline its plans for local engagement, and it is its intention to work constructively and proactively with all relevant stakeholders. The Ulster Council of the GAA is conducting its own assessment of every stage of the application process and, in particular, of the issues raised by the court decisions and the public comments made so far. As it did previously, Ulster GAA will again follow the lawful planning and safety process and address issues that are relevant to public safety when it is in possession of all the material facts and consultation responses, including this inquiry's response.

Separately, we wish to place on record that we are cooperating with an independent project assessment review (PAR), which has been commissioned to cover all the regional stadium-building programme by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Already, and as recently as the past

week or so, key GAA personnel have been interviewed by the independent and experienced panel as part of that review.

When the review process has been completed, we would dearly love to get the space to advance the project for the redevelopment of Casement Park so that we can get back on track and bring marquee GAA championship games with all their fervour, colour and excitement back to Belfast city, which has not seen them for such a long time. At the end of the day, for us in the GAA, that is what the Casement Park project is all about. Thank you very much, Chairman and members, for your patience.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you for your presentation. It has been very helpful, in that you have gone about the task of setting down on record your understanding of the situation very methodologically. At times, it has almost been like wrestling with jelly. You cannot figure out what is going on, and there have been contradictory statements and so on, so it has been helpful to get it in that methodical way.

I want to ask a couple of questions. First, you referred to various letters, emails and various other things. Could you please leave all those documents that were referred to so that they can be copied and placed amongst all the paperwork that we have or are about to get? It would be helpful if those could be left with us.

I have two questions, and I have a list of members who want to ask questions. We do not have the final outline business case report, but we have two pages out of a draft report. That is all that we have so far, but I understand that we will get the final report in due course. It was drawn up by FGS McClure Watters. I should really ask the question of others, but you could maybe help us and can probably tell us the answer. That report was based on a model, and there was no actual design at that stage. Is that correct?

Dr D Murphy: That is absolutely correct. What happened was that FGS McClure Watters did an in-depth evaluation of the three sports and of what it called their "strategic needs". Effectively, it looked at attendances at games over the previous 10-year period. From that, they came up with a number of options. I have to be clear: we did not see the IFA or Ulster Rugby parts, but we did see ours. If theirs were as long as ours, you are looking at a document of 600 pages plus.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I can believe that.

Dr D Murphy: In our case, it gave us 25 options to choose from and recommended option 3G, which gave us the potential to go for a 42,500 all-seater stadium. The option that we chose was option 4G, which was a lesser capacity.

In the overall context, we did not have any designs or anything. My point is that Sport NI was in control of the programme; it commissioned the outline business case and listed the chair of the STG as a consultee. As far as we are concerned, when we were given the clearance and once we chose to go with a particular capacity, the outline business case supported us in what we were doing.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): In that draft report, there was a reference to the:

"Sport NI Assessment of Casement Park (November 2009)",

which is the current Casement Park as it has been over the years. They were flagging up then that:

"All the entrances and majority of exiting is at Andersonstown road end and such."

It then details the:

"Required Works to meet spectator expectation and comfort"

and the:

"Impact of Safety at Sports Grounds Legislation".

If all the entrances and exiting, or the bulk of it — it says "majority" — are at the Andersonstown Road end, it says that it might result in a

"Reduction in capacity due to safety factor."

Can you recall that? Was that in the final report?

Dr D Murphy: I am not sure that it was in the final outline business case report, but you are right about the document. That was an assessment that was carried out in relation to the introduction of the safety at sports grounds legislation in 2009. There was an interim figure of 32,500, and after the reassessment the figure is now about 31,667 or something. The bottom line of it is that the exiting met what was required from us at the time.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I have two more questions, and then I will bring Dominic in. There was a BBC report on 6 February 2014, in which Gareth Gordon said:

"It is understood the organisation now believes it will have to offer to buy some homes next to the Casement Park development ... I understand the organisation is now actively considering offering to buy a small number of houses closest to the stadium."

I am sure we will all concede that the BBC is not possessed of the gift of infallibility but, nevertheless, that was its report. In that context, I think you mentioned that it was around February, March or April 2014 — it is in the red, white and blue diagram — that the issue was being looked at. One had three houses and one had five houses. Can you go over that issue again? You are right; when you see the larger one you can read it at the top there. There was a version dated 22 April 2014, which was the three-property one. Prior to that, there had been a five-property one, and there had been earlier iterations or versions of this and the appropriate amendments. That was drawn up by Populous. Can you talk us through that?

Mr Trice: As I explained in my summary of the process, we were asked by the STG to look at a scenario where there was an emergency evacuation in the stadium at the same time as an event on Andersonstown Road rendering those exits unusable. We were asked whether it would be possible to create other exits to compensate for that scenario. We looked at the potential to purchase properties to create that but, as I say, we took that further to see whether the roads could accommodate the crowds leaving at that flow. The STG and the PSNI concluded that the roads could not handle that capacity of people leaving in those directions, so the study was not carried on any further.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): OK. There was an issue of creating a circulation area around it. The area is not unique, but it is unusual in that the ground is not landlocked but on three sides it has housing backing onto it. There was an idea of creating a circulation area around it by coming to some agreement with householders to purchase parts of gardens. Was that looked into at one stage?

Mr Trice: Not by us.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Not by you.

Dr D Murphy: May I just make two points on that, Chairperson? First, the stadium was moved south-east, towards the motorway, which was to create a larger external approach to the entrances and exiting of the stadium. Secondly, because of the fact that we went from 40,000 originally to 38,000, that allowed the design to create the internal circulation that was going to provide a place of relative safety. What I do not want to say here today is that any of these things that you have said are absolutely correct, but they were not matters that we were at a decision-making point. We were looking at a range —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): At options.

Dr D Murphy: — of options.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes, I appreciate that. The judicial review looked at planning. During it the judge said:

"It is ... true ... that the police have already drawn attention to difficulties that might arise in safely evacuating a new Casement Park filled to capacity."

Were you aware of the issues that the police were raising?

Dr D Murphy: You are getting into historical stuff. Effectively, what we are talking about here is the potential for a bomb, for instance, to be placed on the Andersonstown Road and a 200-metre exclusion zone put in. Were that to be applied to most sports grounds, and not just Casement, it would have significant implications for exiting. Closing 200 metres of the Andersonstown Road would have implications for exiting Casement Park, and it would become a serious matter were we to have emergencies inside and outside the stadium. So it was important for us to deal with the relative place of safety within the stadium. That is why we are working in that direction.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): OK, thank you.

Dr Murphy: I will finalise my answer by making one further statement. Ultimately it will be the responsibility of HBJV to come up with a plan that the STG signs off and that meets the future requirements of the safety advisory group that Belfast City Council will form as a multi-agency team.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thanks indeed, Danny. I cannot remember which of you waved around a copy of a book by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. It looked thinner than the red and green guides. Is it easier to read?

Dr D Murphy: It is probably a refinement, in that the red guide and the green guide set out the legal framework and everything. The document by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority sets out its guidelines and is much simpler and more straightforward.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Almost like an executive summary.

Dr D Murphy: It is almost a summary of the red guide.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Maybe we can get copies, rather than reading the 500 pages or whatever it is in the guide. I know that Dan did a summary for us, but even so.

Mr D Bradley: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for the comprehensive and detailed presentations. They were very informative and, as the Chair said, the logical way in which they were presented was very useful. Tom, you took us through the four stages that were boundary-defined. The first centred on the outline business plan. You said that there was a risk section in that business plan, in which no safety issues related to exiting were highlighted. Is that right?

Mr Daly: Yes, that is right. I will get that reference for you.

Mr D Bradley: And of course you said that that outline business case was signed off by the then Minister.

Mr Daly: Yes, the outline business case was commissioned by Sport NI at that time, and it clearly would have gone through the Department. I understand that that was a ministerial sign-off at that stage. When the ministerial sign-off was achieved, subsequent sign-offs would have gone into the executive rather than government system — in other words, at permanent secretary level or whatever. That is my clear understanding.

Just on your reference to risk, I said that, at this stage 1, no monetary allowance remained in the outline business case for adjustments to optimism bias as a result of design risk arising from emergency evacuation. The suggested risks around emergency evacuation were not on the radar. More particularly, there was a risk section in the outline business case that identified 12 risks that might impact on the Casement project. However, emergency evacuation did not appear at all in the risk section of that business case. Furthermore, no risks were identified at that stage in relation to safety certification. Clearly, if those kind of issues had happened at that time, it would have been a significant matter for the GAA to consider in terms of the value. It is an extensive 12-acre site. Nonetheless, it would have been at that point in time that the matter was considered. It did not arise.

Mr D Bradley: You said that the outline business case was signed off by the then Minister, who is the Committee Chair —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, can I just clarify: were we not told that it was signed off by Edgar Jardine?

Mr D Bradley: Yes, we were told that by you.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes, because I got that out of a document. We will clarify that.

Mr D Bradley: I think that we need to. It is a very important point, because if it is the case that it was signed off by you, you would be in a very precarious position in chairing an inquiry into it.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): First of all —

Mr D Bradley: It would be totally bizarre, in fact.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): No, it would not be bizarre.

Mr D Bradley: I think that it would.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, I am chairing the meeting, not you.

Mr D Bradley: Yes, I am responding.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Let me just speak, then, without interruption. We are referring to an outline business case. The outline business case did not have a design; it simply looked at the issue in a general way. The member should understand the nature of an outline business case. An outline business case is very much about convincing the economists and so on that the thing stacks up financially. It is a very high-level thing. I would not have had a role in going through that or looking at that; that was signed off by the deputy secretary, Edgar Jardine. That was just coming up to the end of the Assembly term, and the key thing was to make sure that a financial package was there for all three sports, because there had not been an agreement and I think that we were somewhat drifting at that stage. That was what I achieved at that time.

We will get that clarified, but we will leave that issue. Did you have another question?

Mr D Bradley: Yes, I have. The point that I was making was that, if it is the case that if it was signed off by you, then it would have serious implications for this inquiry.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, can you ask another question, please?

Mr D Bradley: I can; I have a number of them.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): If you could move on to it.

Mr D Bradley: I am about to do that, yes. You interrupted me and delayed me. We will move on.

You mentioned earlier on in your presentation the comments made by Paul Scott to this Committee in respect of the fact that Casement is a Hillsborough waiting to happen. What are your views on that statement? You touched on them slightly earlier on.

Dr D Murphy: I thought that I used fairly strong terms, and, if you want, I will repeat them. I believe very clearly that there is no justification for those comments. What I said was that they were wildly inaccurate, unfounded and hysterical. I do not think that I can be any more forceful in what I am saying. I really do not think that a theoretical debate on the exiting capacity of a stadium that is in the planning stage or in the design stage can be in any way compared to a terrible disaster that occurred as a result of an operational decision made on the day and which is currently the subject of a major inquest, which will have its own findings. The bottom line is that linking that to our plans was, in my opinion, not very helpful. Given that the person who made those comments is responsible for overseeing the application of the safety at sports grounds legislation in Northern Ireland, it was not very helpful to anyone who runs a stadium.

Mr D Bradley: In listening to the detail of what you said about the process and the various checks and balances that are there — Tom outlined very clearly at the end that there is a legal agreement that embeds safety over a period of 25 years and so on — could Casement ever be a Hillsborough waiting to happen?

Dr D Murphy: If HBJV honours its contract, which it is our responsibility to hold it to, then the answer to that would be no.

The second thing that you are referring to is a requirement of the funding agreement for Casement Park: a document called a terms precedent. Those are requirements that we must meet at a specific stage before we go to actual construction. Therefore, the terms precedent is quite a significant legal document that, to all intents and purposes, has been agreed between us and the Department. Undertakings are placed on the GAA at different stages, and Tom has covered the two where the STG will have to come back into the process. We are absolutely committed, as I have tried to make clear, that the stadium will be built to meet all the requirements that make our stadiums safe. Therefore, if we do that, "a Hillsborough waiting to happen" would be a most irresponsible statement.

Mr D Bradley: You mentioned that you had a meeting with Sport NI about a letter that was sent out. During the course of events, did Sport NI ever raise the issue of emergency evacuation at the sponsor board in your presence?

Dr D Murphy: No, it never raised that with me in any way, shape or form. Now that it has been raised, I would welcome the opportunity, with the permission of the Chairman, to read into the record two pieces of correspondence that are directly relevant. The letter of 11 July 2014 states:

"A matter has arisen in recent weeks that is of concern to Sport NI" —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Do we have that?

Dr D Murphy: Do you? If you have it, there is no point in me reading it, Mr Chairman. I am simply referring to the letter that was sent to me by Shaun Ogle.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It was sent to you by Shaun Ogle.

Dr D Murphy: Yes. If you have that, you should have my letter of response of 8 September.

Mr B McCrea: It is page 174 and 175 of Paul Scott's submission.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you.

Dr D Murphy: There is then my letter of response to Antoinette McKeown on 8 September. If you give me space, Mr Chairman, I will read the relevant section that is causing some of the issues with Sport NI. I said:

"I would answer the queries posed by your correspondence as follows:-

- The GAA have at all times stated that their strategic objective was to build a Stadium greater than 40,000 capacity in the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) and the Outline Business Case (OBC).*
- The Outline Business Case was compiled at the behest of SportNI and Mr Scott was a consultee."*

The issue at the centre of all this was minutes of a meeting that took place on or about 11 April 2014. The issue was comments attributed to Charles Cooke, who took part in that meeting. There was clearly a disagreement over those. It was looking for us to give different versions of what Charles Cooke had been briefed. I said:

"In correspondence issued to SportNI by us, we confirmed our intention to build a stadium of 40,000 all seated capacity with 80% cover. The figure of 38,000 was arrived at during the preparatory planning stage and all parties were made aware of the GAA accepting the reduced

capacity. At no stage did anyone indicate that the figures of 40k, 42k or indeed higher figures were unachievable.

As you can see comments made by Mr Cooke are based on the OBC and other documents. We are gravely concerned at the correspondence received as it appears that SportNI are querying the basis of the OBC which was procured by them on behalf of the three sports."

If you have that letter, there is no point in me reading any more, but that is the specific and relevant answer to your question.

Mr Daly: Just to be complete on this, I think that the member raised a question in relation to whether, in our experience, the matter of emergency evacuation and contingency planning had been raised at sponsor board level. The sponsor board —

Mr D Bradley: Specifically by Sport NI.

Mr Daly: No, it was not. I cannot be certain about this, but I was a member of the sponsor board originally. Subsequently, I attended it. I did not attend all the meetings, but I saw all the documentation. Clearly, if an issue like that had been raised, I would have taken very careful note of it. That did not happen. Sport NI was generally also in attendance at the sponsor board, in fairness. I know that members have the minutes of the sponsor board meetings. I want to be clear about this. The only issue to my recollection was long after the planning application had been submitted and so on, around the time that we were waiting for the decision on that in December 2013. The form of the sponsor board is that the chief executives of the three major sports bodies — the Ulster branch of the IRFU, the IFA and the Ulster council of the GAA — will have been in attendance in one capacity or another. Well, they will have been there only as attendees because, generally speaking, they were carrying executive responsibility for the projects. An issue was raised by the rugby CEO in relation to concerns that he had relating to the inconsistency of physical and safety management factors and best practice. This was a concern for the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union. The IFA and GAA people who were there who were familiar with this — that was the CEOs, Patrick Nelson and Danny, as far as I remember — raised similar concerns. It did not go any further than that other than that there was an indication that there would be a discussion between senior people in DCAL and Sport NI in relation to the matter being one of inconsistency.

One of the great benefits to us of attending the sponsor board was that, because of the sequencing of the projects, the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union had got out of the traps earlier with the Ravenhill project and had been through a very difficult and elongated planning process that raised a lot of issues in terms of the other two projects meeting the timelines that were stipulated in the Programme for Government and so on. They were the kinds of exchanges and benefits that we got from being involved in that forum. It rarely got into operational matters. It was very high-level, and, if there were issues that the permanent secretary or the deputy permanent secretary as SRO for the programme had concerns with, they were put in front of the members representing the three sports to bring it back and to bring it then through their individual project boards or operational groups or whatever, depending on the nature of the matter.

Mr D Bradley: In your recollection, emergency evacuation was not an issue at any of those meetings.

Mr Daly: It was certainly not an issue that was raised by Sport NI.

Mr D Bradley: Dr Murphy, you referred earlier to the safety certificate for, let us call it, the old Casement Park. That was the last one that was issued, and I think that you said that the capacity was somewhere in the region of 31,661. Subsequently, as part of the new plan and new design for the new Casement Park, the exiting areas were doubled in width, yet Mr Scott told us that only 18,000 people could be evacuated safely under those conditions. How can it happen, if you have wider exits and the numbers are not increased to that great an extent, that someone comes back and says that only half of the previous number can be evacuated? It does not add up.

Dr D Murphy: I will deal with the generality of it, and maybe Mike will deal with the specifics of it, if you do not mind. I think that this leads to some of the misunderstanding about where we are. I have had a working relationship with Paul Scott for almost 20 years. In my understanding — although I am not sure that this is what came out in the public domain — Paul Scott was referring to the fact that, if you remove over 70% of your exiting, you do not need to be a genius to work out that that is significantly impacting on your exiting capacity. It is in the context of a major event happening outside the stadium

on the Andersonstown Road. In that event, the emergency plan that would be triggered is effectively, as I said earlier, the greater Belfast emergency plan. If that is triggered, there is an implication within the contingency plan for the ground and how we would evacuate.

Every time we play a game or run an event at the stadium that is above a threshold of 5,000, we have a full event plan done. We have a meeting of the Belfast safety advisory group, and all these matters are agreed between us, the blue lights and all the relevant parties. I am making the point that you could, depending on how many exits you are using, go anywhere from 38,000 to 1,000, depending on how many metres you have available to exit through. That is why you get into a serious complication if you just make a wild statement that we can only exit a certain amount. In an ideal situation, the exiting capacity for Casement Park — I stand to be corrected — would allow people to exit in just over seven minutes. The bulk of the crowd would be exited in just over five minutes, but, if certain circumstances exist, that could be constrained, and the constraints are done in the context of what may be occurring on the Andersonstown Road. I hope that that answers your question. Mike, will you deal with the technical side of it?

Mr Trice: I have illustrated the existing stadium's exit regime in one diagram and the proposed stadium's exit regime in another. They are nearly identical. The site constraints deliver this type of diagram because of the availability of exit routes. You will see that the new proposals propose a lot more exits. The existing stadium has survived 50 years without a safety incident, and, if you apply the logic of needing to get everybody out not using these exits in the existing building, it would take some 45 minutes. The proposals really build on the existing scenario. It operates perfectly well now.

This issue of a full evacuation happening concurrently with a major incident outside is unprecedented in my experience when you are working out the physical nature of a building. It may have to be dealt with as a contingency plan, but you would not redesign the physical nature of the building to accommodate that scenario, because you could then apply another scenario and another scenario. You cannot keep designing these out; they have to be dealt with. As we have developed this site, our view has been that, if Andersonstown Road really is a potential hotspot for an incident, it needs to be closed or controlled for major events. For the main part, the events that are held in this ground are low-capacity and they can exit this way if there is a simultaneous event. For the larger ones, the services should look at controlling Andersonstown Road and secure it as a safe place if there really is a risk of an incident happening at the same time as an evacuation. As I said, the existing building and the one that is proposed are very similar in how they relate to the site.

Dr D Murphy: Just for the clarification that the member asked for, the current exiting capacity at Casement Park is 45.1 metres. In the new stadium, it will be 65.4 metres. The required rate is defined in the red guide, green guide and blue guide at a rate flow of 1.1 metre per 1,000 people.

Mr D Bradley: The question that I am asking is this: is there any basis to Mr Scott's statement that the new Casement could safely evacuate only 18,000 people?

Dr D Murphy: The answer to that is no because, at the end of the day, it would only be in a specific set of circumstances. If you mean within the design, the answer is no.

Mr D Bradley: Even if the stadium were to be filled to capacity?

Dr D Murphy: The stadium is designed to allow exit within the stipulated time of eight minutes. In the best-case scenario, I think that we can achieve a figure of 7.4 minutes or something. That is the achievable rate.

Mr D Bradley: That is quite clear. Thank you all.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I suggest that we take a five-minute comfort break.

The Committee suspended at 4.20 pm and resumed at 4.29 pm.

On resuming —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I will bring in Cathal in a moment. Did I pick you up right, Mike? In certain circumstances, you would close off the Andersonstown Road.

Mr Trice: What I said was that if it is believed that there is likely to be an incident out there that would cause a problem, then by closing off the Andersonstown Road you could monitor and control it. It may well be worth considering closing it for exiting at the end of a game anyway, as is common practice.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Have the practicalities of that been put to the police?

Mr Trice: It has certainly been a constant theme in our presentations of the scheme that the Andersonstown Road could and should be closed in some situations.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Have the police commented on the practicality of that?

Mr Trice: I do not know. Comments from the police have always come via the STG. They commented in particular on the side roads, and they commented that it would be expensive to close roads and divert traffic. So, they are aware of it and have views on it.

Dr D Murphy: I will elaborate on that. In several meetings that I have attended with them over the years regarding major events at Casement, not specifically with the current design of the stadium in mind, the matter of when it would be necessary to stop Andersonstown Road traffic for exiting from the ground has been discussed. People and cars do not make good companions.

Mr Ó hOisín: Thanks to the panel for the comprehensive and detailed presentation, which has certainly addressed some of the concerns that were brought before this inquiry in recent weeks. Mike, I want to continue with the emergency-situation scenarios. We are looking at two very distinct scenarios, as you outlined very clearly. I raised the issue about using the pitch, which is allowed at Windsor Park, but not at Casement Park. You were saying that 58,000 could be held on the ground at Casement should there be an evacuation. Notwithstanding that, the grounds, the concourse or the unfortunately named vomitories can hold 38,000, which would be the capacity of the ground. They are defined as places of comparative safety.

Mr Trice: Yes, reasonable safety, relative safety, comparative safety. They all allude to the same thing.

Mr Ó hOisín: That was useful; that was the first time we had heard that. The concourses were not taken being into account.

Dr D Murphy: For the benefit of members, I will say that the reason we can go to 58,000 is simply the size of the ground. The ground will be circa 145 metres, with a run-off of 5 metres at each end. So, it is 155 metres in length, by roughly 95 metres in width. If you multiply those figures, they give the area in square metres, and the density is four per square metre.

Mr Ó hOisín: That is about twice the size of some premierships grounds across the water in real terms.

Mr Trice: Yes, it is.

Mr Ó hOisín: I have made that point a few times. The concourse itself negates that anyway, because it is a place of relative safety.

Mr Trice: There are two options depending on the scenario.

Dr D Murphy: Allow me to explain, because I think that it needs to be put on the record. The reason the concourse may not always be usable is that in the event of a fire in the stand it would be necessary to evacuate on to the pitch, if the Andersonstown Road were closed.

Mr Ó hOisín: I appreciate that. The two scenarios are evacuation inside the ground and evacuation outside the ground, which is police-led. Obviously, that would take into consideration the closure of the Andersonstown Road in the case of big games. Twice that number is evacuated from Croke Park on to Clonliffe Road and Jones Road many times over the course of a year. I have been in those crowds, and I have never felt at any point that there was a safety issue in getting away. Indeed, the Croke Park crowd gets out amazingly quickly when you look at the extent of the stadium.

One other thing: 65.4 metres is the egress out on to the Andersonstown Road —

Dr D Murphy: That is the exiting capacity or the exiting width available. Mike, you might like to deal with that. You have the design.

Mr Trice: It is the total width of all the exits added together.

Mr Ó hOisín: Did some of the individual exits double in size as well?

Mr Trice: Yes, you can compare the existing ground with the proposed ground. The route on to Mooreland Park is 5.5 metres wide, and the proposal is to make it 10.1 metres wide. The route on to Owenvarragh Park increases from 5.4 metres to 7.5 metres. Then the ones on Andersonstown Road increase significantly.

Mr Ó hOisín: Tom, you outlined fairly well there the timeline, the milestones, what was achieved and what was passed over. You talked about the four key stages, which had been signed off, and we will get more detail, I am sure, about what the Minister at the time knew or did not know at the outline business case stage. Then there is the Sport NI development costs letter of offer; an offer of £4.4 million on the design fee. There were no concerns at that point. It was authorising £4.4 million to be spent with no concerns. None of that was ever brought to the sponsor board. The planning and drawing stage was signed off by the chair of the STG. Is the fourth one the Ulster GAA business plan? What was the fourth key stage?

Dr D Murphy: The fourth one was, I think, our sign off on the business case.

Mr Daly: It is approval of the appointment of the contractor.

Mr Ó hOisín: OK. Sorry, I missed that.

Mr Daly: The notification of the award of planning stimulated two things in our capacity to move forward: one was to appoint a contractor, which obviously had been managed through a public procurement process — a convoluted process — over several previous months; the second thing was the signing of the funding agreement, because, until the detail of the tender information was available, clearly the component — that of the funding that had to be reserved or allocated for the construction of the stadium — was not known until that process was over. So, that was a prerequisite to having a completed draft funding agreement. The trigger was when planning came. Obviously, we had a lot of work done on the documentary side of all of that, and we were then able to move forward. That was stage four.

The next thing that would have happened had the JR not intervened was that we would have moved towards a construction notice, and that would have involved HBJV at a very serious level of activity in engagement with the STG, completing and finessing the design and all of that.

Mr Ó hOisín: So, theoretically, we would have been at the bricks and mortar stage had there not been a JR.

Mr Daly: The HBJV was ready to move into the site, and, two days prior to it being in a position to move in and start, with us having met the legal requirements around the issue of the construction notice, the JR was lodged. That meant that we were then into — well, it was the Department of the Environment, but it was our project — the litigation process.

Mr Ó hOisín: That is what we were told.

Dr D Murphy: The member raised a question and, for clarity, the signing off of the funding agreement was a prerequisite to any further development beyond a certain point. To show you the sad person I am, I was flying from Heathrow to Toronto, and I spent my time reading the draft funding agreement and making the necessary adjustments that had to be made. At least when we came back, we got it signed off.

Mr Ó hOisín: I am sure that it shortened the flight.

Dr D Murphy: I can tell you one thing: it was better than some of the boring rubbish that they were showing on the screen. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Ó hOisín: To get back to the serious stuff, I think that we have to delve into the role of Sport NI in all of this. Obviously, it has already presented to us, but stuff has been raised today that I have not heard before; stuff around the signing off of the approvals.

Danny, you also said that, during the JR, Sport NI met with the residents. Do you know the purpose of that meeting?

Dr D Murphy: I have no idea.

Mr Ó hOisín: Do you know who was involved?

Dr D Murphy: We do, but, at this stage, we would not want to say because, at the end of the day, we are simply making the point that, within the arm's-length body of the Department and carrying out a function within the overall structure, we feel that it may well have exceeded its authority, given that the matter was in the process of a determination of the Minister of the Environment and that, at the end of the day, it appears that it was acting counter to the Northern Ireland Executive.

Mr Ó hOisín: It is an arm's-length body, and it is answerable to this Committee. I presume that there were minutes of that meeting.

Dr D Murphy: I do not know if there is or not. However, in recent times, we have had meetings with representatives of Sport NI. At one of those meetings, it was confirmed that a meeting had taken place.

Mr Ó hOisín: I mentioned Croke Park earlier. I have been in most of the stadia around the country: Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Nowlan Park, Semple Stadium and all the rest of them. There were some issues, of course, during the building of Croke Park. Were any lessons learned at that time that could then have been applied to this one?

Mr Duffy: There were some issues. Our original plans were for a stadium with a capacity of 90,000. We worked through the process. This predated my time as director general. It was originally anticipated that we would build a stadium of 90,000, but, in fact, it was finished with a capacity of 82,300. That is what the stadium has been for the last 10 years, and it has operated very successfully.

Mr Ó hOisín: I have been at Kingspan on a number of occasions. I was very kindly shown around. They toured around various sites and stadia elsewhere to find best practice. Are there stadia that are very similar to Casement in Britain or anywhere else that could be —

Mr Daly: In advance of us getting into the design stage, the chair of the STG very helpfully organised a short precedent visit to a number of stadia in Britain, including the MK Dons stadium, the Emirates, Brighton and Hove Albion's stadium. Were you involved in the construction of that?

Mr McCloskey: Both Brighton and MK Dons were our projects.

Mr Daly: That is only coincidental.

Dr D Murphy: We also went to the Etihad of Man City.

Mr Daly: That was very useful. Some of those had been modernised, and some had been newly built. We were particularly impressed by the MK Dons. We were highly impressed with the itinerary that the chairman of the STG put together for us. It was a very good learning exercise for us. Apart altogether from design issues, we got to meet the stadium operators. There are clearly big issues as one moves from construction completion to franchises, commissioning, training of staff, employment of new staff and all of that in preparation for turnkey operation. We saw seven or eight different places. It was a very packed two days, but it was very valuable.

Mr Ó hOisín: I know that all within the GAA — I am a member — would like to see this progressed as swiftly and painlessly as possible from this point on having learned from it. Last weekend, I was involved in Féile na nGael. It would have been great to have had that, particularly the finals, in the provincial stadium. That would have given it some sort of added kudos. I know that, with the World Cup coming up, Ulster Rugby is very keen to get top-grade games in order to be successful in its bid. I wish you luck on it. In order to deliver this, the GAA needs there to be a level playing field across the board. I hope that we see the reconstructed Casement in the short to medium term and as quickly as possible.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): A point was made about a meeting with Sport NI and whether there was a minute of the meeting. First of all, my assumption is that, if there was a meeting, there would have been a note of the meeting. Presumably, minutes would not have been circulated afterwards. Secondly, it would not be the first meeting of which, it has emerged here, no minutes were kept.

Mr Ó hOisín: Chair, it is an arm's-length body.

Dr D Murphy: Mr Chairman, could I respond to that point?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes, sure.

Dr D Murphy: I think that you have raised a critical issue. We believe that the definition of what is a note, what is a minute and what is an internal memo needs to be looked at. We have had scenarios put to us in recent times where a note was circulated of a meeting that was held over a cup of coffee in a hotel. It was classified as an informal meeting, but it was never set up as such. It was simply an invitation to go for a cup of coffee. We then found that a communication with an attachment was in circulation. If you want to have good working relationships, the first thing that you need to have is a clear understanding of where the parameters of what is on the record and what is not on the record are established.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): There are issues about protocols and so on. That is not unique to this. There is a general issue, which occurs in various circles, as to what is a note, what is a minute, when do minutes become minutes and all the rest of it. That is a point noted anyway.

Mr Dunne: Thanks for your presentation today, gentlemen. I have a number of questions. Mike, I understand that you were involved in bringing the drawings up to operational design. Is that correct?

Mr Trice: Physical design. We design the drawings. We describe the physical nature of the building but not the operation.

Mr Dunne: Maybe we need clarification on who brings them up to operational design. Operational design was mentioned here today. Who brings the drawings up to that standard?

Mr McCloskey: We do.

Mr Dunne: The builder does.

Mr McCloskey: The contractor.

Mr Dunne: Sorry, the contractor. That is the more trendy name.

Mr McCloskey: It is a technical note.

Mr Dunne: I go back to the point about full planning permission. It needs to be emphasised that you had full planning permission for it. From my understanding, to get full planning permission, you need to have fairly good detail in the drawings. The contractor then is responsible for the operational design. Who designed the scheme up to the planning permission stage?

Mr Trice: Populous designed the —

Mr Dunne: You did?

Mr Trice: Yes.

Mr Dunne: Right. Was it compliant with the necessary standards?

Mr Trice: In terms of safety?

Mr Dunne: Yes; safety, quality and general design.

Mr Trice: Yes. The planning application considers the physical scale of the building. We need to design that application to describe what it looks like, how big it is and the scale and massing arrangements. In doing so, we need to make sure that the physical nature of the building works within the guidance of the green guide, so that we understand how the exiting works.

Mr Dunne: So the building would have been compliant with the red/green guide.

Mr Trice: Yes.

Mr Dunne: It would have been compliant at that stage.

Mr Trice: With the physical side of the green guide. It has two aspects. It has an (S) factor and a (P) factor. The (S) factor deals with the way that the building is managed and operated. The (P) factor is the physical nature of the building.

Mr Dunne: So, you just put the (P) factor at that stage.

Mr Trice: Yes.

Mr Dunne: Is there not an argument to bring both factors along together?

Mr McCloskey: No. It is never done. We have delivered many stadiums, and that just does not happen because the building does not yet exist. You have to go and test lots of different things in the operation of the building. That is just not how this process works.

Mr Dunne: There has been mention of an integrated project team. Is there not an argument that the STG should have been part of that team and central to it rather than being an annex to it and brought along as and when required, as seems to us to have been the case? The STG has not been central to it. My understanding of project management is that all the aspects in relation to quality, design and the paramountcy of safety could be looked at first and foremost because they all align to the requirements. At the end of the day, you are building something to the requirements of the customer or the client. The STG should have been central to it right from the very start, because safety and emergency planning is all part of it.

The point has to be made that, to ensure compliance of the building when it is completed by the contractor, the design must be right. The design has to comply with the standards, and the standards that have been highlighted here relate to health and safety and emergency planning. I cannot get away from that point, and I find it difficult to understand. Everyone is trying to avoid it, but it is unavoidable. You cannot meet the requirements of all those aspects without bringing them in initially, when you set out on your project. Is that true, or is that false?

Dr D Murphy: I will deal with that, Mr Chairman. The Member raises several very valid points. Firstly, my understanding, and this is all I can give you, is that the STG was an operational body established within the overall framework of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. While it is located and operates under the auspices of Sport NI, it was part of feeding into the process of the Department. In anything we had a hand in setting up, the STG was there and we engaged with it fully.

You can argue about what its role should have been and where it should have been, but it is important to make the differential. We had an integrated consultancy team, which was Mott MacDonald, and the other parts of that grouping, known as the ICT. The Heron Buckingham group was set up as the integrated supply team. Their responsibility was to build and, effectively, design the stadium in line with what had been put through planning but not necessarily all of that. They had to come up with a

working design that could be built and would be operationally viable within the Safety of Sports Grounds Order.

At the end of it all, the STG is an integral part of five of the six stages that we have to go through. We have engagement with them; they are ultimately not involved with us. The person from the GAA who sits on the STG is not part of our project board or part of our IST or ICT. He is the safety officer for Casement Park. At the end of the day, they look at the safety issues in the general theory of what is being asked of them, and all the necessary blue lights — fire, police and ambulance — are involved.

As far as we are concerned, we got a sign-off from the STG because the people agreed at that point that our plans met the requirements. The issues that have subsequently risen their head are on specific issues that could lead to a major incident on the Andersonstown Road. Everything else, I think, is 100%.

Mr Dunne: We have been told that the drawings that went for full planning permission were not signed off by the STG.

Dr D Murphy: We have an email that would say the opposite; that it was signed off by the STG.

Mr Dunne: We were clearly told that they had not been signed off because they did not get sight of them. That is what we were told: they did not get sight of the drawings. Would you not admit that there is a real risk that a project could be developed with major public money — £60 million plus — and may not be compliant with the regulations, those being the green and red books?

Dr D Murphy: On two points I do not agree: first, the suggestion that the sign-off is not compliant. The answer is on the record from Mike Trice, a senior architect for Populous who is part of our ICT. They are absolutely clear that our design met the higher standards of the green guide and the standards of the red guide. The plans that we submitted were absolutely in compliance.

The second thing is that it would be wrong to believe that this stadium is funded from the public purse. There is a significant investment of GAA money in this stadium as well. The total investment is almost £77.5 million.

Mr Dunne: There is significant public money in it, though.

Dr D Murphy: I accept that. I am not disputing that, but I do think that it would be wrong to believe that that is the only money that is involved.

Mr Dunne: It is important that we get it right. Mr Murphy, you mentioned that there were no plans in progress. Is that true at the moment?

Dr D Murphy: Yes. The plan that we had through the Department of the Environment planning system failed when the judicial review against the Minister's decision proceeded. Therefore, we have not submitted any new plans to the process. We are in the early stages of determining how we will take this project forward.

Mr Dunne: Is it true to say, then, that there are no plans in progress?

Dr D Murphy: There are no plans in progress at the minute — no operational plans in process.

Mr Dunne: The Minister put out a statement yesterday to reassure all her followers, stating:

"I am aware that the GAA is preparing to submit a fresh planning application which will naturally be compliant with statutory safety requirements and which is capable of achieving the necessary capacity to meet their strategic requirement. Prior to this there will be a consultation exercise and ... I hope that the GAA will shortly be in a position to provide details on the exact nature of this consultation".

Would that not imply that there are plans in progress?

Mr Daly: Chairman, if you like, I will take that. It might be useful to refresh what I said in relation to the future in my statement. In the near future, the GAA will announce its programme for a fresh planning application for Antrim and Ulster's new stadium at Casement Park. At that time, we will also outline our plans for local engagement —

Mr Dunne: Sorry, can you speak up, please?

Mr Daly: — and it is our intention to work constructively and proactively with all relevant stakeholders.

The space that we have been in since the court case, as an organisation that was promoting a major project, is that we had to take cognisance of a significant judgement. The JR was taken on 10 grounds. It failed on six and a half and succeeded on three and a half. The senior counsel advice that we have had in relation to the outcome of that case indicates that there is a contribution in new case law as a result of what was a 16-day hearing in the High Court. The GAA has taken time to take its own counsel in relation to how it moves forward.

What actually happened is that, at the provincial convention of the GAA in Ulster in February, at which all counties were represented, a unanimous decision was made that the Ulster Council would continue to work to attempt to achieve the project, and there was an absolute, full endorsement for maintaining a focus on redeveloping Casement Park to bring Ulster semi-finals and finals to it, which is what this is all about — Ulster's big games coming to Belfast. That decision was made at central council level, where there is an investment commitment of £15 million, from what is a voluntary organisation with demands all over the country and all over the world. It is a very significant investment. The central council, through the leadership of the current president, Aogán Ó Fearghail, and Páraic, has reaffirmed its commitment to that investment.

We have been putting time into considering the implications of the court decision and how we can best move forward with a view to achieving the project. In due course, the GAA, when it has fully considered all of those matters, will make an announcement in that regard in terms of process. We have been meticulous, and bear in mind that we did get full planning permission for our previous project. It was not because of anything that we had done or failed to do that the planning was overturned. It was a finding against the process of the planners, with the Minister of the Environment accountable. That is the reality of the situation. It is our intention to organise ourselves to go forward with a new planning application, which the GAA has decided to do. It has asked the project board to assist it with that. It is our intention to do that in a careful way, and we will make our announcements when we are in a position to do that.

Mr Dunne: I take it that you will go through a consultation process.

Mr Daly: Absolutely. It will involve a statutorily required 12-week consultation process. We undertook that the last time. In fact, we were consulting for a lot longer than that. We are committed to following all of the processes.

Mr Dunne: That will obviously involve the local residents.

Mr Daly: Yes, of course.

Mr Dunne: I understand that there are two residents' groups, is that right?

Mr Daly: I think that there might be three.

Mr Dunne: Are there at least three? Yes. So there will be full consultation with the local residents.

Mr Daly: Absolutely, and, indeed, the wider public in the west Belfast and greater Belfast area. The last time around, one of the things that we did, which was not a requirement of us, was produce a scale model. We had it on public display in Belfast City Hall. Obviously, people have varying levels of interest, but everybody, irrespective of whether they are interested in Gaelic games or the GAA, saw, or had the opportunity to see, what is happening by way of a really big infrastructural development in the city.

Mr Dunne: You would accept, though, that there were major issues. The judge described the decision-making process as fundamentally flawed. He identified failures in the environmental impact

assessment and found that the impact of bigger crowds on the surrounding roads had not been properly examined.

Is that an issue that you will have to address?

Mr Daly: That finding was not against the GAA. If you have the judgement before you — I do not — you will see that the judge exonerated the GAA from fault in relation to any of those processes. The finding was against the statutory processes, not against anything that our organisation had done. We followed the processes, which were extremely onerous — the standard, quality and depth of reports required across a myriad of things. People do not always understand that the environmental impact statements and so on that are required are very deep and wide-ranging. That is why the design development stage is such an expensive stage: the bar is set very high. We know that, going back into this again, we will have the same challenges or maybe more. However, in order to make happen what people want to happen, which is a major GAA venue bringing the big games back to Belfast, that is a process that we are committed to.

Mr Dunne: I appreciate that you will go out to consultation, which is very important. I have just recently realised what the impact of a 38,000 capacity stadium will be. I understand that the Odyssey has a capacity of roughly 10,000. Those of us who live in north Down see the impact of that on the dual carriageway, the Sydenham bypass. There are tailbacks of traffic in both directions when there is an event. Having listened to people, I know that there are great concerns about the impact of 38,000 people moving to one venue or focal point. The impact of that, in relation to how the crowds are managed and the safety issues —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Gordon, I think —

Mr Dunne: I am sorry. I understand, Chairman, but I think that it is all relates —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You have made the point, Gordon, and I think that it was well put.

Mr Dunne: All I am saying is that it is vital that these issues are looked at. The impact and scale of this project are immense. It is the biggest venue project in Northern Ireland. I will finish by saying that it needs to be dealt with in a most sensitive manner. The local environment and the people who live there are vital.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I have to ask you to finish, Gordon.

Mr Dunne: I must say that I am disappointed that I have not heard a word from any one of you about the residents or the local environment.

Mrs McKeivitt: That is not part of the inquiry, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I will chair the meeting.

Dr D Murphy: It is not a matter that we were aware that we had to deal with. I want to put two matters on the record as a result of that query. One is about why the capacity should be 38,000. In the assessment, we, the Ulster Council, played four games at Croke Park. Attendance at those games ran between 47,000 and 67,000, so we need a capacity in the region of 40,000. All those events would be all-ticket and are very highly managed. We play matches in Ulster. Even up until recent times, games were played at Clones, and we have had to accommodate crowds in the region of 34,000 and 35,000, so crowd management is not a major issue for us, and, with the cooperation of the police in the North, or an Garda Síochána in the South, satisfactory event plans are put in place.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirleach. Thanks very much. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur gcur i láthair. I want to follow up on the consultation. I am a local resident, and I, too, have concerns about the consultation and what form it will take. I have been approached by people who live further up the road than I do and regard themselves as local residents. People living in a wide circumference of the venue regard themselves as local residents. How do you intend to access those people? I will tell you why I ask: I was speaking to somebody who raised a concern about the model being in the Westwood Centre, which is where I viewed it, but they did not know that it was there. It

was advertised in the 'Andersonstown News', but that does not reach everybody. Do you have plans for how you might reach more people?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I will just come in here again: we are deviating into a whole range of things here. I pulled Gordon up about that, and, in fairness, I think that I need to do the same again because how the GAA or the contractors engage with people is not within the remit. We are looking at the issue of emergency exiting plans, and that is the key issue.

Ms McCorley: With respect, a Chathaoirligh, we have strayed far beyond emergency exiting in the course of the inquiry.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We have, and I have endeavoured to pull —

Ms McCorley: This is an important point for me —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I am sure that you will have ample opportunity to raise it with the GAA. You have made your point, but I would prefer that we move on. I have tried to pull people back into line as far as possible.

Ms McCorley: I object to that because I am the MLA for the area, and I think that I have a right to ask these questions.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You will have ample opportunity —

Ms McCorley: You let the previous member —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, just a moment. I pulled the previous member up because he made a point. You have made a point about whether you can see something in whatever shopping centre, where the plans are exhibited and all the rest. I am sure that folks from the GAA will be happy to communicate with you about how they communicate with the local community. That is a bigger issue, but it is not one for us today.

Mr Daly: Chairman, if it is helpful, we understand the question, we respect the point, and we will do everything in our power to consult as widely as possible.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): OK. That is good. Thank you.

Ms McCorley: I would just like to —

Mr Daly: We take the point that there is a wider community that we have to reach out to, and we are committed to doing that.

Ms McCorley: I would just like to make the point that I have been prevented from asking questions again: this Committee has prevented me asking questions that I feel are relevant. However, that is where it is. There is huge public interest —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You could follow the same route as you followed the previous time.

Ms McCorley: I have more questions.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes. Go ahead.

Ms McCorley: What are the security aspects of the traffic management plan, and how will that work?

Dr D Murphy: We cannot comment on the traffic management plan at this stage because it will form part of the wider consultation. There is a series of different requirements before we go back to planning, and traffic management and the traffic impact assessment will have to be carried out and will have to be conducive to what we are attempting.

The reason why that is a good question is that we have not got there yet. We are not yet consulting on a set of working design drawings for what we will propose. When we get there, we will go through a process of evaluation of the impact that this will have on the area. As we said earlier, all of this will involve a wide range of stakeholders across the whole of Belfast, not just west Belfast.

Ms McCorley: OK. I have one final question: Mike, this horseshoe design has been described as unique. Have you come across that design before? You gave an extensive list of stadia that you had been involved in.

Mr Trice: The horseshoe aspect relates to the roof, which covers three stands. I cannot, off the top of my head, think of one with three covered stands, but there are plenty with two, where the side stands are covered and the ends are not. In this situation, one end is covered and one is not. I could be wrong, but I cannot think of another one. There are plenty of similar precedents.

Mr B McCrea: That was a very impressive, if long, presentation. There was a lot of information, but it is nice to see somebody who has gathered all the information. We may have to come back and ask questions because we cannot take it all in from an oral presentation, but there are a couple of points that I would like to start with. Danny, you mentioned a letter that you received from Shaun Ogle on behalf of Antoinette McKeown. What was your response to receiving that letter?

Dr D Murphy: When I got that letter, my response was to find out what was giving cause to the issues in the correspondence. It transpired that it related to, I think, a meeting of the STG that had been held on or about 11 April 2014. When the draft minute was circulated, Charles Cooke penned some differences from what was in the minute. It appeared, then, that we were being asked to verify whether what Charles Cooke had said at the meeting was or was not correct. We were very clear that Charles Cooke represented correctly the GAA position. That is stated in my correspondence in response on 8 September. We were seriously concerned to find that we were arguing over matters that were contained in the outline business case, which had been signed off over two years previously and had been the base for the project moving on. We seemed to be going back to the start again.

Mr B McCrea: The letter of 11 July asks you to do only two things:

*"*Advise if the GAA made the above statement to Charles Cooke or to Populous.*

**Advise that if the statement was made by the GAA, on what information was it based."*

The statement quoted is:

"suitable for a 40,000 seat stadium, larger than the current proposed capacity of 38,000".

It does not seem to be that onerous. Why were you so concerned about it?

Dr D Murphy: The paragraph above those two bullet points sets out the version of events that Charles Cooke had stated. The purpose of the letter was to have us confirm that what Charles Cooke said was consistent with the GAA.

Mr B McCrea: Did you not reply saying that it was?

Dr D Murphy: No, I wrote back and stated our position, which, I felt, was what was necessary. It was not my decision; it was discussed, as we said earlier, at a meeting of our project board in late July. It was discussed further at a meeting of our management committee in late August. Out of that, I was directed to write to Sport NI to set forth exactly what our position was.

Mr B McCrea: I would like to check that bit: was it discussed at the GAA Ulster Council's project board?

Dr D Murphy: Yes.

Mr B McCrea: Part of the terms of reference of that board requires it to consider and agree which risks are referred to the DCAL programme team and the DCAL sponsor board. Would that project board have done that?

Dr D Murphy: The project board considered the correspondence that we received from Shaun Ogle. It was referred to the Ulster Council because it was deemed that it referred to matters that were specific not to the project board but to the GAA sign-off of the outline business case. Out of all that emerged the structures and the memorandum of understanding (MOU) in August of the year after we signed off on the outline business case. As far as we were concerned, it was going back to matters that had been dealt with at the stage of the outline business case.

Mr B McCrea: I get confused about the different project boards, levels and whatever. The project board is really the top of the tree. The DCAL sponsor board is more of an information-sharing board. It was your project board and your project, so you would be making the decisions. Is that correct?

Dr D Murphy: Yes, but it was our council that signed the outline business case.

Mr B McCrea: I am talking only about the DCAL structures. I have no problem with the information that you put forward, and I will develop that, but there is a question about other people and what they knew. Mr Molloy was in front of us earlier and said, I think, that he was in attendance. Was he in attendance at that meeting?

Mr Daly: I will try to help, because I chair the project board. Our project structures are reflected in two constructs. The project board's membership includes three former presidents of the Ulster Council; the county secretary from Antrim, because of Antrim's central interest in the project; another member of the Ulster Council management, Páraic Duffy, representing the GAA at national level; and so on. I am quite happy to name names, but I do not think that that is necessary if you have a copy of the MOU. They are the project board members who would have responsibility for governance decisions in relation to the project. However, the decision-making of the project board works within the framework of the overall Ulster Council structures. That is a delegate system representative of all nine counties, with a management committee that meets every month. If there was a significant issue, we would elevate it from the project board. When, for example, we were advised that we were a notice party to the court case being taken against the Minister of the Environment, that was elevated to the Ulster Council's management committee, which runs the council on a day-to-day basis, as, clearly, there could have been financial implications such as legal fees and all that sort of thing.

Mr B McCrea: Yes, I understand what you do internally.

Mr Daly: I will try to be helpful. When we meet in project board format, it is a group of GAA people who are meeting, and I chair that. There is a defined possible attendance list of others, including senior employed GAA staff who spend a lot of time working on the project and an independent technical adviser who is taken on to support us on technical issues in the project. There is also provision for the attendance of the programme director from DCAL and for a senior person from the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) as well as people from the statutory agencies, who have attendance rights but are not part of the corporate decision-making process from a governance point of view. They are there to advise and report back to their respective statutory organisations and, at times, to bring to us their knowledge base of the wider stadia programme and how things might have been handled at Ravenhill, Windsor Park or wherever.

Mr B McCrea: Tom, can I just make it clear that I am not challenging the GAA on this? I understand what you are doing.

Mr Daly: In the normal course of events at a project board meeting that I chair, I would expect, generally speaking, to see the DCAL programme director there, a programme manager from DCAL —

Mr B McCrea: Were they at the meeting that Danny referred to?

Dr D Murphy: I could not tell you straight off, but what Tom has outlined would be relatively the norm. Project board meetings are normally well attended by our board and by the attendees on behalf of other bodies.

Mr B McCrea: You would normally take minutes and so on.

Dr D Murphy: We would have minutes, yes.

Mr B McCrea: You might consider whether you could share that particular minute with us.

Dr D Murphy: We would have to have a look at that. The point I am making, for the purpose of clarity, is that there was nothing contained in the letter from Shaun Ogle that would have brought in any issues regarding the exiting capacity. There was nothing there that directly related to the stadium. The letter was about whether a statement issued by Charles Cooke was correct.

Mr B McCrea: OK. We talked about the difficulties with notes, memoirs, minutes and so on. The GAA is a very competent professional body, and your terms of reference state that you will take minutes and keep a record of attendance. If you consider that it would be helpful, I give you the opportunity —

Mr Daly: We will certainly look at that. We will consider it with a view to being helpful. I emphasise the point that Danny is making: no matter of substance relating to anything like emergency evacuations was the portent of that letter.

Mr B McCrea: I am interested in this because of the line of communication. I also have to say that for all sorts of, perhaps, understandable reasons — I am not having a go — this chain of events may have led to issues further down the line. Dr Murphy replies:

"We are gravely concerned at the correspondence".

Dr Murphy continues:

"We are further concerned that there appears to be a significant rethink by personnel within Sport NI".

Then, although you said earlier that there was no mention in the letter of emergency exiting issues, it comes up in your response. You state:

"With regard to the emergency exiting issues, we believe that Sport NI are not conducive to resolution of the exiting capacities and believe that entirely unrealistic approaches are being taken in regard to such capacities when set against other grounds covered by the safety at sports grounds legislation".

That is fairly concerning, is it not?

Dr D Murphy: It definitely is, but what we were doing there was reflecting matters that were reported back to us from people who had attended that meeting with the STG and elsewhere: for example, the availability of the use of the pitch; the closing off of the Andersonstown Road; or, at one stage, a 400-metre exclusion zone, all of which were being talked about.

Mr B McCrea: I will not go on too much about it. I do not know whether I have to make a declaration of interest, but I have been to Clones to see Donegal v Down, which caused a certain amount of conflict for me.

Mr Daly: I cannot remember whether we won that one. *[Laughter.]*

Dr D Murphy: The odds probably are that you did.

Mr B McCrea: I think that it is a great success. You get great crowds. I have been to the new stadium in Newry as well. That was a declaration of interest, by the way.

I will move on to the response to your letter. Eventually, Antoinette McKeown responded with a very detailed letter about Armagh and various other issues. Eventually, it got to the stage —

Dr D Murphy: Sorry to stop you there, Mr McCrea. The letter of 26 November is, I presume, the one that you are referring to, and I want to point out that I also wrote to that on 5 December, but I do not see anyone with a copy of that. I simply said that we did not agree with the content.

Mr B McCrea: This is the letter of 26 November. There is quite a lot of information that Antoinette McKeown appears to want to write about, such as the changing of the position of the STG emergency evacuation arrangements. She says that you have been talking about this for some time. She says:

"It was clear that there were differing interpretations of the guidance".

This is her letter, and I know that you will say that you did not agree, but she states:

"we agreed that it might be helpful to have an independent review of the ability of the current design to accommodate appropriate emergency exiting."

About the people whom they suggest, she states:

"I am happy to confirm that Sport NI has now secured the services of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA)".

If I am not mistaken, that is the authority that you mentioned.

Dr D Murphy: Absolutely.

Mr B McCrea: First, I do not think that you agreed with that. Secondly, you did not think it was necessary.

Dr D Murphy: No. At the meeting that we held with Antoinette McKeown, what was agreed was that it would be a requirement at some stage for us, Sport NI and the PSNI to sit round a table and look at the necessary issues. There was also an agreement that an independent assessment might be worth doing. The issue that we had was that we may not have agreed simply because of the interaction that had taken place between Sport NI, the STG and the sports grounds body, which I have great regard for.

Mr B McCrea: It says to me that, whatever the issues were before, Sport NI was trying to resolve them. You said in your earlier deposition that maybe the initial letter should not have been written in a particular way, but it seems as though people were trying to resolve matters.

Dr D Murphy: So were we. We made it very clear in our presentation that we wanted to get back to re-engagement with the STG and so on. The problem was that the letter was sent to challenge the statement of Charles Cooke at the meeting in April. The basis under which that was written was challenging the capacity issue that had been established in the outline business case. We could not allow that to go unchallenged.

Mr B McCrea: That is where things led. I do not need to go into this, but can you confirm that, eventually, the chief executive of Sport NI had a meeting with the president of the Ulster branch of the GAA?

Dr D Murphy: I will not confirm that there was a meeting. That was the point that I made to the Chairman earlier. There was a cup of coffee in the Europa Hotel. In my opinion, a note on that has been circulated, but it was never agreed and never confirmed by the president of the Ulster Council. Furthermore, we do not believe that a note of that should ever have been released. This was a cup of coffee between two individuals. There was no prior agenda. There was no consultation on the note prior to its being issued. I just do not think that that is the way in which to do business.

Mr B McCrea: OK. I must move on to Populous and the letter that it has written. I must say that your presentation was quite interesting. You introduced some issues that I had not come across before. One of the most important things was the notion of a "relative place of safety". I am not sure where that appears in the red guide. Can you point me to where that phrase is?

Mr Trice: It may be in the green guide. There are three terms that are generally used; "relative", "comparative" and —

Mr B McCrea: One of the things I would like to know is why it says in the red or green guide that you should not use the pitch when calculating emergency exit times. Why do they exclude the pitch if it is a viable option?

Mr Trice: You do not use the pitch as a normal exit. It is to discourage design from not having vomitories that do not go back into an exit system. Our stadium complies fully with that. We do not use the pitch at all in the exit system. We are saying that the pitch may be available in a contingency situation.

Mr McCloskey: Do you want the note from the red guide?

Mr B McCrea: Will you read out 9.9 for me?

Mr McCloskey: Yes. What you seem to be missing is the second part. It states that:

"The emergency evacuation time is a calculation which, together with the rate of passage, is used to determine the capacity of the emergency exit system from the viewing accommodation to a place of safety in the event of an emergency."

Then, it says:

"For the definition of a place of safety see Section 15.16."

Mr B McCrea: It is helpful to come back to that. We had sight of the letter from Populous on 7 April. It states that:

"The constraints of the site dictate that it is not feasible to provide a zone 4 or 5 within the site as defined in the green guide".

What does that mean? Is that relative?

Mr Trice: Zone 5 is outside the grounds, so you are outside in a place of full safety. It is the public highway, effectively, at Casement Park. Our zone 4 is the circulation zone within the stadium, so that is a place of relative safety, as I explained earlier.

Mr B McCrea: You are stating here on 7 April that it is not feasible to put in a zone 4.

Mr Trice: Not outside the stadium, so we combined zones 3 and 4 in one space. Our zone 3, a circulation zone in the stadium, is a place of relative safety because it has been designed to be fire sterile.

Mr B McCrea: I am interested, and I am actually supportive of the concept, but I need some help on this. Maybe I could just put it to you, because it looks quite explicit. Some people have asked why Mr Scott would say certain things. One of the things that it says in black and white is that:

"As stated in Section 9.9, the use of the pitch or area of activity for emergency evacuation should not form part of the capacity calculation."

Mr Trice: That is absolutely right.

Mr B McCrea: It is pretty firm. I think that an exercise was also done by your fire consultants. I think that they said that if the Andersonstown Road exit was not available, 29 minutes was the egress time.

Mr McCloskey: Yes. If you took away all the exits on the Andersonstown Road, there would be 29 minutes.

Mr B McCrea: It would be a reasonable thing to say. Could I just put the point to you, Mike, that here is not the same as perhaps other parts of Europe: there are people who take pleasure in disrupting our normal life. You could get all sorts of bomb scares. It is not just a flight of fancy.

Mr Trice: I agree.

Mr B McCrea: The red guide — I cannot even see it in the green guide — does not talk about a place of relative safety. It talks only about a place of safety, which is not the —

Mr Trice: The red guide refers to places of comparative safety. That is the term that is used.

Mr B McCrea: Where is that?

Mr Trice: If you refer to the zonal diagram, you will see that it refers to a pitch as a place of comparative safety.

Mr B McCrea: Yes, zone 1 on the pitch. I will not go on about this, but it mentions places of comparative safety. Just explain to me why you could not use it as a normal place of safety. What would be the problem with putting people on the pitch? A lot of people will say, "That seems pretty sensible. It is a really big pitch". Why would you not just include it as a place of safety?

Mr Trice: You are in a very safe place as you have sky above you, but the guidance describes it as a place of relative safety or comparative safety. The point about the place of pure safety is that you are away from the ground. You are outside. When you are on the pitch, you are still bounded by the stand and so you are still in the ground. A place of safety is beyond the ground.

Mr B McCrea: I think that it is that you get a massing of people and people stand for eight minutes. I am told that the issue is more about crushing and things rather than — I am getting a shake of the head from Oran.

Mr Trice: Do not forget that we are talking about the scenario where there is an incident in the ground and an incident outside the ground. It is perfectly reasonable for people to avoid those situations and stand on the pitch under clear sky where there is plenty of space. The ground management would then allow them to leave in an appropriate fashion at an appropriate time.

Mr B McCrea: Let me finish, because we cannot do it now. I am interested in your proposals about how we might deal with it. This is the first time that it has really been explained, and I think that you need to look and see if you can get internal circulation. Cathal said that it was the first time that he had heard about it as well. If we are able to use internal concourses as places of relative safety, and if people agree that that is the safe and right thing to do, I think that we should do that. For the record, I have absolutely no doubt that the GAA has, at all times, looked after the safety of the people who watch the sport, but there needs to be a certain amount of reassurance on this.

Mr Trice: There is nothing new about the idea of using concourses as a place of relative safety. It is entirely usual.

Mr B McCrea: It may be, but I could not see it. In all the other depositions that we have had from people, nobody has yet mentioned it.

Mr Trice: I do not understand why they would not have done. Because of the way modern stadiums have evolved, the concourse is an area where you enjoy food and welfare facilities. That space, as it has evolved, has become a useful route in fire-evacuation scenarios. We design them so that they can be shut down if there is a fire.

Mr B McCrea: I think that the unique aspect that you referred to — correct me if I am wrong — is that we were installing a new stadium where 70% of the people viewing the match would, under normal circumstances, leave from one exit, zero would leave from the other end and a bit would come out either side. So, there is quite an onus if you would normally build a new stadium with surround and 360-degree access. That is part of the design consideration.

Mr Trice: Yes, I designed the concourse. It is capable of holding the whole ground. That is a consideration in that scenario.

Mr B McCrea: I will leave it by saying that I think that you should engage with the STG and Paul Scott and find a way of working this out together so that we all have a bit of confidence about the way forward.

Dr D Murphy: I just want to give a quick response to Mr McCrea's comments. We still have a good working relationship with Mr Scott. At the last meeting of our health and safety body, which involves the safety officers of all our counties, Paul attended to deal with the specific area of the new thing of the small stands across grounds all over. They are known as regulated stands in the legislation. So, as far as we are concerned, we have no issue in working with Paul Scott.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Before I bring in the next person, I want to clarify something. There was a reference to the Europa Hotel. Is that the same meeting as the one at the Wellington Park Hotel or a different one?

Dr D Murphy: No, that was a different meeting. The reference to the meeting with the president of the Ulster Council was, I believe, a meeting that took place at the Europa Hotel.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We have not seen anything about that then.

Dr D Murphy: I do not know where it has come from, but that is the meeting in question. It is a matter of grave concern to us.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We have a note of a meeting in the Wellington Park Hotel, although some people have an issue with the status of the meeting. We have not seen anything about a meeting at the Europa Hotel, I can assure you.

Mrs McKevitt: Thank you very much. I am very impressed by your presentation. It has certainly brought new things to the table. Back in April, when we heard a presentation by Paul Scott, there was not one member of this Committee who was not horrified by the allegations that were made. It was very worrying to everybody, as health and safety is a priority for us all. I am a bit confused. Paul Scott in his presentation led us to believe that the eight-minute rule in the red book or the green book could not be met, and that there was not a health and safety officer in the country — or in the world — who would put their name to it and sign off the 38,000 capacity. What is your view? I may not have used his very words, but that was the —

Mr Trice: I dispute that statement. As I explained earlier, the eight-minute exit time is from your seat to a place of relative safety, and that is what we designed for. Then from there, you move into a free-flowing exit system out of the building. The eight minutes are about getting from your seat to the circulation zone, and the building complies with that requirement perfectly.

Mrs McKevitt: He said in his presentation that it would not be met and that the field could not be used from the viewing decks. He indicated that the eight minutes referred to exiting, but you have indicated that exiting is not included. Where is the mistruth?

Mr Trice: I am not sure what Paul said; but, as I explained, the emergency exit time is about getting from your seat to the circulation zone. That works in our design; it is not a problem. I do not know what he said about that. It is certainly not about getting everybody out of the building; it is about getting people into the circulation zone in eight minutes. In our design, by the way, most people are in the circulation zone within five minutes.

Mrs McKevitt: You have actually increased the circulation zone in the concourse. You reduced capacity from just over 40,000, by 2,000. It was widened, so that 38,000 spectators can fit into that zone. Is that right? Bear with me, Chairman, because there were a few things I wanted to raise, and a lot of information has been given.

In your portfolio, and in yours as well, Oran, you have listed numerous stadia. Obviously, we have the experience and expertise in front of the Committee today, and that is very much welcomed. The emergency evacuation plan has been asked for repeatedly and mentioned repeatedly in every presentation. Today, for the first time, the Committee has heard that the emergency evacuation plan is the responsibility of the blue light services and that the police usually led it. Based on your experience and expertise in delivering on other stadia, and from working with safety groups, has that always been the case?

Mr McCloskey: In every single stadium that I have done and my team has done, that is what has happened. It has been dealt with in the last quarter of the build.

Mrs McKevitt: Why then has it changed for Casement Park? You have been asked for it constantly, and it has taken until now — you have only got the chance to have your say today, obviously. Why would that be the case?

Mr McCloskey: I cannot answer that. All I can tell you is that the safety technical group is there to ensure that the plans and the design of the stadium are compliant with the legal requirements. At that stage, the design moves to the safety advisory group, which is a body set up under the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 by the relevant local authority, in this case, Belfast City Council. It would ultimately have to issue a licence. HBJV will have to get sign-off for one under the (P) factor and one under the (S) factor to meet the terms of the contract. It is its responsibility to meet that. Once the stadium is in operation, the safety advisory group assesses every event and makes the necessary adjustments. The figures could not go up, but they could go down if there was mismanagement. The management of the stadium becomes our responsibility, and if we lose capacity, we lose it because of the (S) factor, not the (P) factor.

Mrs McKevitt: Maybe it does not matter whether it is for a concert or when there is a large crowd attending, normal practice is that a road might be closed for maybe half an hour or an hour before and after the game. I am sure that that is part of the transport plan of those who are organising it etc. Has the Andersonstown Road ever been closed in the past at the start or the end of a GAA game? I ask that because, in the promotional video that we saw — I would nearly say that it was in 2011 or 2012, when I was first joined the Assembly, it was that long ago — when the stadium was being evacuated, there was nobody on the road, so we assumed that the road was closed to traffic. Is that part of the transport plan?

Dr D Murphy: We cannot discuss the transport plan for the design that will emerge because it is not there at the minute. You asked whether the Andersonstown Road has ever been closed before. Apart from emergency use, the answer to that is yes. On one occasion, we did have an emergency where the fire service and ambulance had to come up the Andersonstown Road and drive substantially into the crowd, but it was managed. It was handled, and the police effectively closed a section of the Andersonstown Road from the top of what we call Kennedy Way almost up as far as the turn at Suffolk.

Mrs McKevitt: That is something that could be looked at again, if —

Dr D Murphy: Again, it is all done as part of a management understanding. Everybody knows what we need to do.

Mrs McKevitt: There is something else, which I probably forgot. I will let you carry on, Chair. Thanks very much for your presentation. It has been very helpful, and I do think that there has been a lot of confusion around the information that was given to us by Sport NI. I suggest maybe an inquiry of some kind into Sport NI or asking it to come back here to explain itself based on some the information that we have received today.

Mr B McCrea: Sport NI might be right, of course.

Mrs McKevitt: It might be. That is why we need to get clarification.

Mr B McCrea: It is not that you get one set of information and the other information all goes out the window.

Mrs McKevitt: It did happen that, when Paul Scott came here, we started an inquiry over it. It has to be fair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry. Just a moment. To both sides of the room, let me say this quite clearly. I listened carefully to what you said, Mrs McKevitt. The comments should not necessarily have come from the other side, but they were appropriate.

Mr Humphrey: I do agree with Mrs McKeivitt, because I do think that we need to bring Mr Scott as a witness to the Committee. During the inquiry, he has not been here yet.

Thank you very much for your presentation and for the considerable amount of time that it took all your organisations to put it together. It was indeed very professional. Given the presentation from Populous, Heron and the GAA and the professionalism that was exemplified, why is it that we are where we are?

Dr D Murphy: We are where we are as I see it probably because of three situations. The first is the success of the judicial review, which set aside the planning. The second is that, as a result of us having to reassess how we moved forward after the circumstances of the judicial review, we have been taken down the road of reassessing several issues. The third, I maintain, is the evidence that emerged at the end of April casting doubt over the safety of Casement Park. We hold that that has not been part of the process and that sign-off at the appropriate stages by the STG was obtained and that we followed through the necessary planning and obtained the necessary planning. In the comments of the judge, he did not hold against Casement on the scale or operation of the actual plans of the stadium. What he did hold was against the assessments made by the Planning Service and the advice that that procured for others.

Mr Humphrey: I have to agree with the assertion you made earlier, Dr Murphy, in relation to minutes, notes and — indeed, as they were described to this Committee fairly early on by the deputy permanent secretary — "action points" from meetings. I do not regard it as being good enough that meetings are held and that there are no minutes, no matter who is at the meeting, because this is a very serious situation and, because of the haphazard way in which things have happened, that, in my view, is why this inquiry has had to happen.

Mr Daly: Chair, may I just make one comment? The processes outlined in my part of the presentation were clearly very structured in terms of the stages. The gatekeeper was either SNI or DCAL; there had to be sign-off, and so on. The significant consideration here is this: what would have happened had the judicial review not been successful? The contractor would have been on site in April and, provided we met the conditions, the precedent, and got through the next stages and jumped the next fences after the four that we had already been over, in which the STG had a major and significant role, we would have been working towards the delivery of the stadium, as we had planned, for the middle of next year.

It may be helpful, from the point of view of reassurance, to remind people what they are. Hopefully, we will get back to stage four, and do not have to go right back to the beginning, and clearly the OBC does not change and the development cost letter can be varied. The funding agreement obligates us to the sign-offs and the project design and safety management arrangements by the STG and gives a central role to the STG for the next two stages, and a condition precedent exists that requires sign-off on the design documents before the contractor can access any grant funding at the start of construction.

The next stage in the project, had there not been the intervention of the legal proceedings, would have been that we would have gone into the issuing of a construction notice, which people in construction will understand. That, then, would have set the ball rolling for the new phase involving HBJV finessing the design and taking on the responsibility of the negotiations and discussion around getting to the point where it could give us compliance certification to allow us to get into the licensing arrangements for the safety certificate or whatever. The second thing is that a further sign-off on safety arrangements is required before construction is completed. So, going in and coming out of the construction phase, there are two more big challenges or hurdles for us that provide reassurance on safety issues. I hope that that is helpful. A feature of the memorandum of understanding and a feature of the governance arrangements that have been put in place by the departmental system across all of the Departments in order to safeguard the public expenditure side of this means that there are very onerous checks and balances, and we spend a lot of our time trying to comply with them.

Mr Humphrey: During your evidence, if I heard you correctly, you said that you were not aware of red flags. In terms of the STG, the programme board, the sponsor board and, indeed, your chairmanship of the project board, was the Gaelic Athletic Association aware of the document that we referred to earlier today — the document that was handed by Mr Paul Scott to Mr Carl Southern on 16 October 2013, which was around the Casement Park stadium development? It is a report from the safety technical group. It is part of the bundle that —

Dr D Murphy: What we call the STG report?

Mr Humphrey: Yes. Have you got that?

Dr D Murphy: Yes, we have a copy of the STG report.

Mr Humphrey: I am going to ask you what I asked Mr Molloy when he was here earlier. When it comes to emergency exiting — and it talks about there being panic or crushing — did you not constitute that as a red flag? Did the GAA not see that as a red flag?

Dr D Murphy: Basically, what we had was the document that had been submitted, with the notations of Mott MacDonald. There was a dispute between the STG and Mott McDonald over the application of section 6.5 of the green guide.

Mr Humphrey: Yes, but I assume that representatives from your organisation attend meetings of the STG for Casement Park and the other bodies that are there to oversee the project going forward. That document would have been passed on, and you have accepted that you got it. If you look at it, it very clearly refers to panic and crushing. It then goes on to state:

"It is ... important that crowd management procedures are in place and that suitable ... safe exit routes are identified to facilitate the process.

Consideration should be given to the provision of an additional emergency exit route to the south east corner to increase the ... exiting capacity of the venue. The emergency exiting arrangements have the potential to impact on the 'S-factor' and ... the 'P-factor' ...

The Emergency Exiting Strategy should be developed as soon as practicable and submitted to the STG for comment."

I see those as red flags, I have to say.

Mr Daly: I would deal with that in this way: those issues were part of the active discussions that took place between our consultants and the STG; that was an ongoing process. For example, in the case of the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union, we are told that work continued until the week before the first game at Ravenhill. You are really getting into the whole area of, let us call it, the soft side — the management, event management, the work that has to be done with the blue-light services and so on. Clearly, differing views were expressed in the context of those discussions between the STG and our consultants, but that was a process that was going to get real life when the construction notice was issued and the contractor — who has responsibility for finessing the design side of things and moving us towards a position in which the GAA as an operator could apply for a licence — could start work. That was going to take a considerable further period. From that point of view, this was an operational issue that would be going to require further and serious attention.

The safeguard of the broader system was in the two things that I referred to earlier. Before we could make payment to the contractor, we would have to give satisfaction in relation to progress on those issues, and, likewise, before we signed off on completion of the building.

I think that we are getting back into an area where there has been confusion between the concept of safe design, and where the whole soft-side operations come in, with the human resources piece, the interaction with the blue-light services, the provision of the event management plan and so on. In fact, we had to submit an event management plan as a condition of our planning application.

Mr Humphrey: Are you effectively saying that the GAA's position was that you sided with the professional advice that you got from Mott McDonald and did not accept the advice from the STG?

Mr Daly: We also had the sign-off of the STG — we have evidence of that in our documentation in three different ways — before our planning application went in. We also had subsequent ongoing contact between then and the award of planning permission at the end of December. That is milestone and referenced by us.

Mr Humphrey: Mr Murphy referred to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. Mr McCrea raised that in his questioning, and I know that Basil asked whether you had asked for a review or whatever. Mr Murphy, will you expand on the answer that you gave to Mr McCrea? I got the impression that, because the SGSA had had a meeting with Sport NI, you did not want to pursue its advice. Why was that?

Dr D Murphy: The premier reasons for that were twofold. First, at the meeting of October 2014 with the representatives of Sport NI, Antoinette McKeown and Nick Harkness, we had agreed that the best way to take those matters forward was to have a round-table meeting with the PSNI, Sport NI and us. Secondly, we believe that the STG had consulted with that body, so we think that its independence — I am not casting any doubts on its capacity or ability, but it may have sacrificed its independence in its engagement with the STG.

Mr Humphrey: So, you believe that, because it met the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, its independence was comprised. Could that been read as it seeking guidance if that were needed or a surety that its position was right?

Dr D Murphy: We have no difficulty with the STG meeting the SGSA. Our issue was that it was being advanced by Sport NI as an independent body and we had not agreed to any specific body. We did not rule out anyone, but we had not been consulted on or agreed that the independent body would be the SGSA.

Mr Humphrey: Did Antoinette McKeown recommend that the GAA seek its advice?

Dr D Murphy: No.

Mr Humphrey: What was the difficulty that you raised earlier, or the problem that the GAA has, with Sport NI meeting the residents?

Mr Daly: That was alluded to in Danny's presentation. It was not alluded to in the sense of us commenting negatively and saying that it should not have happened. If I can get that —

Dr D Murphy: I dealt with that in my presentation. While you are looking it up, I would say that the bottom line was that we were simply making the point that Sport NI is an arm's-length body of DCAL and it did not have a function in the planning process. Given that there was a judicial review in process, we are not satisfied that Sport NI should have had someone from within their operation involved in such an exercise.

Mr Humphrey: There was a judicial review. Did that not involve the Department of the Environment and the Environment Minister?

Dr D Murphy: It did, yes.

Mr Daly: The GAA was a notice party.

Dr D Murphy: We were a notice party in that.

Mr Humphrey: My point is this: what has that got to do with Sport NI, which is an arm's-length body of DCAL?

Dr D Murphy: The bottom line is that the people within Sport NI actually met the people who were proceeding with the judicial review.

Mr Humphrey: I genuinely did not know that that meeting happened until you raised it. That is the truth of the matter.

Dr D Murphy: We were made aware of it, but it was confirmed at a meeting between us and others within Sport NI. We still meet people from Sport NI on an ongoing basis.

Mr Humphrey: One of the residents' groups — again, I was not aware that there were three — wrote to all the political parties that are represented around this table to ask for a meeting. My party met that

residents' group. If a residents' group asked to meet an arm's-length body of a Department, why should it not meet it?

Mr Daly: Through the Chair, our intent in referencing this was as follows: we were unaware, as a notice party to a high-profile High Court case, which has ultimately meant that the commencement of our project has been delayed, that that meeting had taken place. We just thought that it was unusual that a statutory body that was involved all along in the process of supporting the development of the three stadia, in the context of the overall programme being an objective in the Programme for Government, had conducted that meeting and had not informed us or the controlling Department that it has taken place. It is a simple observation; nothing more than that. We are absolutely not questioning the right of anybody to meet anyone, and we take the same approach as everybody else to requests for meetings. We will meet anyone at any time in a positive frame of mind if they are looking —

Mr Humphrey: I assure you, Mr Daly, that, given the experiences that the Committee has had with DCAL, we know that communication, whether internally between officials or to arm's-length bodies, leaves a lot to be desired. Mr Dunne mentioned the statement that the Minister made yesterday, and you, in reply, talked about "fresh planning" for the new Casement Park. What capacity will you factor in, recommend or put forward in that fresh planning?

Mr Daly: Danny may want to comment on this, but, in due course, when the GAA has made its own decisions and taken its own counsel about what it wants to do in order to achieve a provincial stadium, we will enter into the public forum in relation to what our plans and objectives are. At this point, we are not in a position to do that. We hope to get to that point pretty quickly, and we will absolutely and fully engage in the normal consultation processes that go on.

The GAA wants to make it clear that the decision to come to Belfast with this stadium proposal was made on a number of grounds. We clearly evidenced earlier the fact that a feasibility study was done and we were asked to respond to DCAL after the MLK project was taken down. The GAA had signed an intention to commit to that project. We are part and parcel of what would have been a multi-sports stadium, so we have been in negotiations for a very long time with the broader system here in relation to meeting our strategic requirement for a major sports stadium, as were the rugby and soccer bodies.

We want to emphasise that this is about a strategic stadium. It has to meet the requirement to cater for Ulster semi-finals and Ulster finals. Originally, going back to 2002, at national level, the GAA indicated that each of the Provinces should have a stadium with a capacity of somewhere between 45,000 and 60,000, was it —

Mr Humphrey: Sorry, I do not mean to interrupt but what is the normal attendance at an Ulster GAA final?

Dr D Murphy: The average attendance would be in the region of around 34,000 or 35,000.

Mr Daly: In other words, they are complete sell-outs. That is why, initially, the association at national level would have liked us to have gone for a capacity of around 40,000. We came back down to 38,000. Based on the demand for those games, they will be sell-outs if we can build a stadium with that sort of capacity.

Mr Duffy: I would like to add just one brief comment on the capacity figures. Our experience has been that, when you develop a new stadium, as we did with Croke Park, it increases the demand of people who want to come. While the Ulster final is always sold out with 34,000 tickets, if more tickets were available, more would come. Our experience — this has been our experience for 10 years with the new Croke Park — is that more and more people come to the stadium if it is a better stadium.

Dr D Murphy: I just want to make that point that our capacity has been constrained for almost 20 years. All the finals are ticketed and, once we hit our threshold, that is it. The biggest attendance that we have had has been somewhere over 67,000. We played that game at Croke Park.

Mr Daly: For three consecutive years, we had to take the finals out of Ulster, and that is clearly something that we do not want to do.

Mr Humphrey: Because of a lack of capacity?

Mr Daly: Yes, exactly.

Mr Humphrey: Finally, I think it was you, Mr Murphy, who made reference to the email from Paul Scott on 19 June 2013, as did Mr Molloy earlier. What is the GAA's view on that email?

Dr D Murphy: We believe that Paul Scott was setting out general parameters around which a (P) factor of 1 and an (S) factor of 1 would be attained. That was added to by a further email that he sent in August — I think that it was 13 August — which effectively confirmed to us that the document was, to all intents and purposes, being signed off.

Mr Humphrey: When I read it, and I made this point to Mr Molloy earlier, I do not see the surety or certainty that perhaps you or he saw in it. He talks about "potential" and "subject to any revisions" and that:

"The Management Plan in particular should detail and contain suitable Emergency Exiting arrangements."

Is he not talking there about issues like the challenges of the site and emergency exiting and so on — not just exiting but "emergency exiting"?

Dr Murphy: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: So, is he not basically saying that you can move on, subject to those things being addressed and dealt with?

Dr Murphy: Basically, we have an email sent to Carl Southern by Paul Scott on 23 August. I do not know whether you have that, Mr Humphrey.

Mr Humphrey: No.

Dr Murphy: I will read it to you.

"There is a Safety Technical Group Meeting arranged for Thursday 5th September - this appears to be the earliest date that suited the majority of members following the holiday period. As you are aware meetings have taken place between SNI and other agencies on a 1 to 1 basis and there appears to be a consensus that the latest proposals addressed the exiting concerns."

Mr Humphrey: In my question, I asked about "emergency exiting". He is talking about "exiting".

Mr Daly: Chairman, let me add something. It might take me a minute or two to demonstrate to the Committee the fastidious and meticulous nature of the instructions that were given from the Ulster Council to its design team in relation to this matter. On 3 June, Tim Harkin, who is our independent technical adviser, mailed Jason Pritchard of Populous, is that right?

Dr Murphy: No, Mott MacDonald.

Mr Daly: Sorry, apologies to Jason, who is actually here in the Public Gallery, in case he needs to be called on. This is the content of that mail, which demonstrates the checks and balances which we ourselves as a team were imposing in this process. It states:

"Further to our telephone call, we confirm the following:"

I will skip through it:

"- The design team is to achieve full STG sign off on the tender scheme as soon as possible to allow the project to be released in confidence to the bidders.

- The Ulster Council GAA must have full confidence that the ICT have designed a stadium that has safe access and egress strategies for all capacity scenarios.

- Whilst the STG group is asking for further information, this is a result of their concerns based on the evidence put to them. The design team must provide the requested information to satisfy the STG group."

So we were telling them to call the consultants and get the information to them. There is reference to "crowd modelling" and the rationale given to the STG as to why it should not be concerned with the interpretation of the crowd modelling in relation to one particular part of the ground.

It continues:

"- Accurate spectator exiting numbers are to be provided to Paul Scott regarding the number of people escaping from various exits. At the moment he is working on the basis that 9,000 people escape from both the East and West Stands"

— and so on. It goes on to say that:

"We have agreed that you are to call Paul Scott and discuss this, please ensure that you document and confirm the conversation. The safety of the users of the Stadium is the number one priority of the UCGAA and we believe we have the design team with the experience to deliver therefore please ensure that every last element of concern is addressed."

That was our instruction to Mott MacDonald, and on the —

Mr Humphrey: And when was that?

Mr Daly: It was on 3 June. Mott MacDonald provided us with a record of a conversation on 4 June: a call from Jason Pritchard to Paul Scott that dealt with a few things. The critical point here is that:

"Paul Scott approved the scheme in principle during the teleconference on 5/6/13 although needs to discuss/agree with the rest of his team."

So the loop was closed by the consultants, based on the request that we had made to them. That documentation, the memo of 19 June and the August one, are available to the Committee.

Dr Murphy: I think that there are two points, if you do not mind, Mr Humphrey, that I need to give you an answer to. That relates to the sentence about a suitable management plan for the venue being developed. It is our intention that a suitable management plan will be developed as part of the work of HBJV, who are the people who will have to resolve all these matters and give us a stadium that is compliant. That is what they are required to do. On the second part, you are quite correct, the management plan will have to detail and contain suitable emergency exiting arrangements. We have absolutely no difficulty with that, because, for us to meet the (S) factor of 1, we will have to demonstrate our capacity to manage the circumstances that arise.

Mr Humphrey: I appreciate the replies. The only concern is that your email was dated 3 June. Is that right?

Mr Daly: Yes, that was an instruction from our independent technical adviser in Mott MacDonald. There is a note, including an upgraded drawing, that was provided by Mott MacDonald directly to the STG in order to allay concerns.

There is a post-meeting note that states:

"During a teleconference with the STG, GAA, MM and Populous on 5/6/13, the ITG agreed to revise the north west final exit door layout, locating doors in the corner" —

These are operational things —

"and utilise exit capacity ... This allays the STG's perceived risk about occupants becoming 'trapped' in corners."

There was a specific query that was raised and dealt with as a result of the instruction from our people.

Mr Humphrey: I appreciate both your replies. The only point that I want to make in conclusion, Chairman, is that I referred earlier to a minute from the board of Sport NI, in which Mr Scott gave a report about concerns around Casement Park. If I am right, that was on 23 June. It obviously was an outstanding issue

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We are going to take a two-minute break, not a five-minute comfort break, to get a cup of coffee and bring it back in. You can have a biscuit as well. We will be straight back in.

The Committee suspended at 6.12 pm and resumed at 6.20 pm.

On resuming —

Dr D Murphy: Chairperson, when I was dealing with the email of 19 June, you asked about the management. Within the terms of contingency management, which is part of the event management and that in turn is part of the emergency event management, I should have read into the record paragraph 2.15I of the red guide, which states:

"Arrangements for partially and fully evacuating the ground and arrangements if there is a hazard outside the ground and people need to stay in".

It is not always the case that everybody has to be got out; it may well be that they are safer inside the stadium.

Mr Humphrey: That may well be the case, and thanks for that clarification, but I think the point that Mr Scott was attempting to make was that there are potential circumstances or variables. That is the only thing I would say.

Dr D Murphy: Yes. The point that I am making is that we would deal with that in contingency planning.

Mr McMullan: How important would you rate the PSNI's role in the emergency exiting plans? I know that it is a consultee, but how would you rate its input?

Dr D Murphy: I see the police as having the pivotal role in the safety advisory group. I know that Belfast City Council has the lawful authority to issue the licence and whatever. However, if an emergency occurs inside or outside the ground and the event management is not capable of dealing with it, it will then be handed over to the PSNI, which will have to enact the necessary — I am trying to think of the right term — emergency event plan that would be triggered. That is effectively what it is. At that stage, our personnel, staff and stewards would work under the direction of the police, and we would place ourselves at their disposal. If you asked me who the most important part of the team in the control room is, I would say that, at a normal event, it is the event management team under our safety officer or event controller. In an emergency situation, it will be the senior police officer present.

Mr McMullan: OK, thank you for that. I am sorry; I should have thanked each and every one of you for your presentations today. They have been fascinating. From 2013 onwards until today, did anybody ever raise safety issues with anybody from the STG?

Dr D Murphy: Maybe Mike will come in on this, but in general terms the answer is yes. Safety matters of a wide and varied nature were discussed at various stages of our work with the STG. However, from when we got the sign-off in August until some time in 2014 we were not aware that there was a rethink on or a revisit of some of the elements. As far as we are concerned, we got the clearance from the STG that our planning met the requirements at that stage. I can understand the qualifications, because as part of the next level of our development, which is the move to the build, the STG will come back in and will have to prove that all the necessary requirements will be met, including event planning, emergency planning and contingency planning. All that will have to fit into what I call the greater Belfast emergency plan.

Mr McMullan: So, at no stage from 2013 onwards did the chair of the STG raise any red-flag issues?

Dr D Murphy: We had no red flags come to us.

Mr McMullan: I want to ask about the OBC. When an OBC is put together for a preferred option, does it go forward or is it put on the table with a set of drawings? Can you do an OBC without a set of drawings?

Dr D Murphy: The answer to that is yes. It was done on the basis that a group was established independently of Sport NI, the Department and the governing bodies. It carried out an evaluation of the initial papers that the three sports produced. It went through the range of options and decided what was feasible and what was not, what was reasonable and what was unreasonable, and what was economic and what was uneconomic. It came out with a number of options. In regard to the GAA, I can only say that the range of options was quite substantial. I think that there were 26 or 27, but I could be corrected on that.

Mr McMullan: In this case, when the OBC was put forward, did it include a set of drawings?

Dr D Murphy: No, the OBC was drawn on the basis of what was available to put on the site.

The chairman has just advised me that it also had to meet the strategic need of the sport. That was one of the requirements.

Mr McMullan: Thanks. It was stated that the Minister put out a statement yesterday to her followers. For the record, the Minister put out a statement yesterday to the general public.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): That is fine.

Just out of interest, are there drawings with the final business case?

Dr D Murphy: No, the final business case was what I would call an economic document.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes.

Dr D Murphy: It did not have plans attached to it. The plans were a separate and unrelated issue. There are three documents that all culminate together: the funding agreement, the final business case and the agreement of terms precedent. All those are legal documents.

Mr Ó hOisín: Does every OBC not have to include drawings?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Apparently not. It is more of an economic document.

Dr D Murphy: Certainly, there were no drawings, to my knowledge.

Mr Ó hOisín: It is an outline business case.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes, it is an outline.

Mr Ó hOisín: I would like to check that.

Dr D Murphy: We had special advisers advising us in the process. Our work was not included in the OBC, because we were an independent body.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Mike, do you have something to say?

Mr Trice: Sorry to cut across. I believe that there were drawings.

Mr Ó hOisín: In this case?

Mr Trice: I believe so. It is my recollection that there were very sketchy outlines.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Were they detailed plans? What were they?

Mr Ó hOisín: You signed off on them, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I will correct that, as a point of information. It was signed off by Edgar Jardine, who was the deputy secretary. For the record, since it has been raised, the memorandum of understanding of August 2012, which, in many ways, is the key document, does not refer to the outline business case; it refers to the final business case. I think that is important. That would have been signed off by probably Rosalie Flanagan, because she signed off the —

Mr Ó hOisín: We have established that there were drawings, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): But, for the record, that final business case would have been in Rosalie Flanagan's time as permanent secretary.

Dr D Murphy: I would say that you are right. The transfer of the role of Sport NI to DCAL that took place in June 2012 was signed off by Rosalie Flanagan. Anything after June 2012 would have been Rosalie.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): She signed the memorandum of understanding as well with you.

Dr D Murphy: That is absolutely right.

Mr Daly: Just for completeness of information, when the OBC process was going on, the GAA used the services of Gilroy McMahon, which designed Croke Park, to provide some concept drawings. That was about assessing whether the footprint would take a stadium of x capacity. That would have been used in some of our discussions at ministerial and departmental level and so on at a very early stage. They were very preliminary drawings. Some of those images were made public.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I think that we are going to get some of those documents in due course.

Mr Hilditch: I do not want to revisit old ground, but the flag has gone up on a number of occasions over the last two years on problems that could have been emerging. I know personally some of the guys who represent the GAA on the STG. I have high regard for them, and I am sure that the messages were being brought back, but you probably missed a trick with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority in getting it to rubber-stamp your way forward. However, we will park that. Mr McCrea and Mr Humphrey made work of that.

Mike, I know that you are in a hurry, so I will let you get away. I want to highlight the uniqueness of the site. Could you run me through the scenario again if a suspect package has been left on the Andersonstown Road at the front of the stadium, the Andersonstown Road is closed, a situation is emerging and you have to put a plan into action? If you have got people to a point of relative safety, what happens after that? Do those people have to stay there for a particular time? How long do they stay there? With people coming out the two exits at Owenarragh and Mooreland, there are potentially 38,000 people landlocked there. What happens in that situation? Where does the responsibility stop and start, and what should be reflected in the design element?

Mr Trice: The design does not cope with that scenario. That scenario has to be dealt with by the operator and the emergency services.

Dr D Murphy: Those circumstances would have to be dealt with, as I said, in the contingency plans. The first thing is to take people to a place of safety. If that happens to be in the concourse of the stadium, at that stage the ground management, probably in conjunction with the police, will have to agree how best to take people into public safety. That will have to be done through the existing capacity. I think that the time for that will be greater than eight minutes, but they will be in a place of safety within eight minutes. It will take longer than eight minutes to use the exits that are available, other than the ones in the proximity of the Andersonstown Road.

Mr Hilditch: Is there not something incorporated into some of the regulations about potential human reaction to certain situations and how they may start to behave in certain ways after a very short period? I am just trying to develop the uniqueness of the site, Mike. You sort of indicated that it is very —

Mr McCloskey: Can I answer your point? Our experts, Tenos, did some work on that, because the concern was raised at our meeting with Paul Scott. To be able to deal with a situation like that, you need to get all the people who are involved around the table. Our view at that time was that, if there was a suspect package on the Andersonstown Road — say, a bomb — one of the safest places for people to be would be in this structure.

Mr Hilditch: Or worse, there may be a gas leak that would mean that people maybe had to be pushed further away.

Mr McCloskey: That is why the stadium has a very high-quality PA system. The way of managing it is to get your stewards and safety officer or the police commander who is in charge of the situation to give constant updates to the crowd to explain the situation, try to calm it, look at phased evacuation and get people away from the immediate danger. If it was on the Andersonstown Road, you would evacuate that stand first.

Mr Hilditch: That works for a short period of time, but there is a recognised time, whereby human behaviour —

Mr McCloskey: No. You are talking about the eight minutes, which has been developed for the context of fire and smoke. That is about panicking. As Mike said, you cannot design for all those situations because, if it was all closed, you would have to keep people in and evacuate them to whatever exits are available.

Mr Hilditch: Oran, I am highlighting the uniqueness of the site and the lack of ability to get people out of those areas. If it was broken through into Stockmans Lane or the other streets, it would make it much simpler and much more effective and workable.

Mr McCloskey: We did some modelling on it and found that, if you closed all the exits on the north stand or 70% of the exits, you would be looking at 29 minutes. The next process with the STG was to look at that to see how it was. You have to understand that it is high risk and absolutely low probability. In that situation, you would be looking at blue-light services to —

Mr Hilditch: But you cannot say that it is not going to happen.

Mr McCloskey: Of course you cannot. You cannot say that anything is not going to happen.

Mr Hilditch: Exactly. I know that you want to get away, but do you consider that the design proposals forwarded to the safety technical group provide for a sufficient number of exits in suitable locations, Mike, as stated in the green guide and red guide?

Mr Trice: Yes. They are suitable because they are located where they can freely flow, which is down the sides. You can get out of them. It is an entirely suitable location.

Mr Hilditch: No problem. Thank you.

Finally, was any of that delegation present at the meeting in the Wellington Park Hotel on 17 June?

Dr D Murphy: I was in the Wellington Park Hotel on 17 June, but I was not at the meeting in question. If you check, you will find that there were other people at that meeting, but I was involved in a further meeting that was held after the end of a project board meeting. I had to remain at that meeting, which meant that the other meeting, which was of the safety technical group, did not have me at it. That is the only person who could have been there.

Mr Daly: Chairman, I may have been in the Wellington Park Hotel on that date, but I was not at that particular meeting, as I understand it.

Mr McCloskey: I was at the meeting, I believe.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I am going to make two points. We have given everybody a good chance, and in fairness to Mike, we will call it a day after that.

I will make my two points very quickly. The safety officer from the GAA was on the STG, but he was not on the other boards. I think that is right. What was the reason for that, and was that a good idea, on reflection?

Dr D Murphy: The point, Chairman, is this: we had no say in the matter. The STG's make-up was set by others. The only person who was invited to join it was the safety officer for Casement Park. Because of that, he was not a member of our project board. His county secretary is a member of the project board.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Did he report back on the STG?

Dr D Murphy: He did not report to us. That was something that, if I was doing it, I would have done differently.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): This is the final question, you will be glad to hear. Leave was given for the judicial review on 22 May 2014. You said, I think, if I get this right, that two days before work was due to start, the judicial review kicked in. I do not know how that worked, whether the judicial review started on 22 May, whether that was the day it was given or how it worked, but within a few days of that date, obviously, work was about to start. At that point, when you were about to start construction, did you believe that you had a design that enabled safe access? The reason I am asking this is that we keep hearing from other people who have been here who said, "Oh no, this was ongoing. There was a huge amount of work still to do. Nothing would have started until all this work had been done." There is a conflict between that and your point that you were going to start within a few days.

Mr Daly: Chairman, I might be able to help with some of this. If I am correct, there was a window of 90 days, I think, from the formal granting of the planning permit within which a judicial review could be taken. I think I am correct in saying that the papers were filed seeking the judicial review two days before the expiry of that notice. That is what the two days relate to. That then meant that, clearly, we could not issue the construction notice. That is the point; I do not know whether that is helpful. From the point of view of the viability or otherwise of our plans, just bear in mind what was then going to happen when the construction notice was issued. Because of the process that we had to follow, the ICT's plans were novated to the IST, which had to finesse and develop them further and deliver the project. So, there was further work on pre-construction. You might comment further on that, Oran.

Mr McCloskey: It is very simple. Our team, which we believe is one of the best teams in the UK to deliver these projects, was absolutely satisfied that the Populous Mott MacDonald design was fully compliant. The work we then did to check it and make minor alterations to it improved it. So yes, we were absolutely confident that the design was fully compliant.

There is other detailed design work that goes on through a design-and-build project for over a year and a half, and everything gets tweaked — sizes of columns change, which affects escape routes. So, there is continual iteration in the process. We knew what the overall strategy, the overall exit width, the method of exiting and the staircase width and all that had to be, and we knew that we would be compliant.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thanks very much indeed. I appreciate your forbearance. Hopefully, Mike will be able to make his plane in time. Thank you indeed for presentation and your answers to the questions.

Mr Daly: Thank you, Chairman.