



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: Briefing by the
Safety Technical Group

9 July 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 William Humphrey
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Basil McCrea
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Jeremy Cowen	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Chief Inspector Anthony McNally	Police Service of Northern Ireland
Mr Paul Scott	Safety Technical Group
Ms Laura Strong	Sport NI

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We appreciate the folks coming this morning; we welcome you here. The four people whom we have along this morning are Mr Paul Scott, chairperson of the safety technical group (STG); Ms Laura Strong, the technical officer in the safety compliance group (SCG) in Sport NI; Anthony McNally, a chief inspector in the PSNI; and Jeremy Cowen, deputy emergency planning officer in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). Members, declarations of interest are being carried forward. If any of the witnesses have any relevant financial or other interests, they should declare them in relation to today's business.

It was agreed previously that Mr Scott's evidence provided on 30 April would be included in the inquiry's papers. Therefore, that evidence is not being presented again today. I invite the officials to make an opening statement. We have a copy of that in front of us. I will say to members that, if we are aiming to finish for 1.30 pm, that gives us three hours and 10 minutes. We will see how long the presentation takes, and members should bear that in mind when asking questions so that we give everyone a fair opportunity. We will return to all these things in the autumn, but I want to give people an opportunity today.

Thank you, Mr Scott.

Mr Paul Scott (Safety Technical Group): Thank you. On behalf of this delegation from the safety technical group, I thank you for the invitation to address the Committee. As with my previous appearance before the Committee, the invitation was received less than a week prior to the meeting, and, unfortunately, the representative of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) had a prior engagement and could not attend on this occasion. A representative of the Police Service of Northern Ireland is involved in operational planning matters for the forthcoming weekend and is also unavailable to attend. I am, however, accompanied on this occasion by Chief Inspector Anthony McNally of the PSNI, who has been involved with the Casement project for some time and attended the last meeting of the STG in November 2014. I am also accompanied by Jeremy Cowen, from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, a member of the STGs for the three stadia, and by Laura Strong, the technical officer of the safety compliance unit at Sport NI, who is also a member of the three STGs. We are aware that the Committee has been provided with evidence from a number of witnesses in recent weeks. Unfortunately, we have only recently had access to the transcripts of the meeting that the Committee held on 25 June, when members heard evidence from Noel Molloy, the GAA and representatives of the Casement Park design team. We only yesterday had access to the transcript of the Committee's 2 July meeting, when members heard evidence from Belfast City Council, Ciarán McGurk and Carl Southern. With your permission, Chairman, I and each of the delegation will make an opening statement, and we will endeavour to answer any questions that you and the members may ask.

We are aware of the content of some of the presentations and the responses to questions put to witnesses who have appeared before the Committee in recent weeks, albeit that there has been limited time to provide a comprehensive review of those presentations. The STG, however, focuses on responding to design proposals, referencing these against recognised guidance and industry best practice, and advising DCAL accordingly. We seek to remind members of the content of the red and green guides and related documentation and the reason for our concerns regarding the present design proposals. We will also endeavour to correct some of the assertions made by some witnesses with regard to what the STG has and has not agreed to and to refute alleged inconsistencies in the approach of the various STGs in relation to the proposals for Casement Park, Windsor Park, now the national football stadium, and Ravenhill, now the Kingspan stadium.

We have also noted some of the comments that were made about the STG and me as its chair. However, we do not intend to respond to those comments, as the STG's objective is to consider the design proposals with reference to spectator safety at events hosted at the venue and to advise DCAL accordingly. Today, therefore, we intend to focus on safety-related issues with reference to recognised guidance. We previously stated that we have had limited time to prepare for this meeting and would therefore welcome the opportunity to provide a more detailed and comprehensive response, either in writing or at a future meeting of this Committee.

With your permission, Chairman, I will open the presentations. Members may remember me from my previous appearance before the Committee on 30 April. My role with Sport NI and the safety technical group for Casement Park is as per my previous appearance. Information relating to stadia safety is contained in the fifth edition of the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds', known as the green guide, and the 'Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds', which is known as the red guide. The author and custodian of the green guide is the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, which is a public body that reports to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in Great Britain. The red guide is based on the fourth edition of the green guide and was drafted by a working group chaired by Sport NI and issued on behalf of DCAL and Sport Northern Ireland. Much of the content of these documents is broadly similar, and DCAL has advised that, when reviewing the design proposals for the stadia, where differences in the content of the respective guides exist, the higher standard should be adopted.

As I advised the Committee in April, it is possible to deviate from the contents of the green or red guides. However, as stated in section 1.7 of the green guide and the introduction, part G, of the red guide:

"an equal or greater degree of safety"

must be provided. I will again outline the steps in assessing the safe capacity of a stadium as contained in section 2.3 of the green guide and section 1.3 of the red guide. There are four elements in the initial assessment: an assessment of the entrancing capacity; an assessment of the holding or viewing capacity; an assessment of the exiting capacity; and an assessment of the emergency exiting capacity. The final or safe capacity will be the lowest of the above. This emphasises the importance of the emergency evacuation capacity.

The calculation of each of these elements is based on the contents of the guidance documents that I referred to before. Further reductions to the safe capacity may be imposed if there are problems with the (S) factor that relates to safety management issues and/or the (P) factor that relates to physical issues related to the condition and layout of the venue. Reductions may also be imposed if observations at fixtures played at the stadium, or any stadium, indicate that the entrancing arrangements, the holding arrangements, the exiting arrangements or the emergency evacuation arrangements do not work in practice.

The STG was advised that, following revisions, the design capacity for Casement Park was to be 38,000. In calculating entrancing capacity, guidance advises that it is based on the one-hour period prior to the commencement of a fixture and that a maximum of 660 persons can access a venue via a turnstile in that hour. A venue with a capacity of 38,000 would, therefore, require a minimum of 58 turnstiles. Many larger GAA fixtures, unlike other sporting fixtures, are preceded by a warm-up fixture that results in significant numbers of spectators being inside the venue more than one hour prior to the commencement of the main fixture. Recognising that, and following discussions with the GAA and its design team, the STG was content for the entrancing period to be extended by 25% where a warm-up fixture preceded the main fixture. The proposals of the design team to provide 48 turnstiles were, therefore, accepted by the STG, provided that a warm-up fixture preceded the main fixture. That would enable more frontage on the Andersonstown Road to be available for exit gates.

That demonstrates that the STG will consider deviations to the guidance and will accept the deviations where it considers that an equal or greater degree of safety is achieved. That is not an example of an inconsistent approach to safety, as other witnesses have stated to the Committee. Staging a warm-up match was not a condition imposed by the STG but an option available to the GAA that it and its design team elected to pursue. The GAA and its design team could still have opted to provide 58 or more turnstiles for the stadium, which had a proposed capacity of 38,000, and not stage a warm-up fixture.

I move now to calculating the viewing capacity. Although other factors, such as the dimensions of the concourses and gangways, should be considered, the holding capacity, or viewing capacity, of a stadium is largely based on the number of seats available and/or the number of spectators that can be accommodated in standing terraces that comply with recognised guidance. Discussions with the GAA indicated that it wanted a stadium with approximately 40,000 seats, although a revised figure of 38,000 was later adopted. Following initial discussions with the GAA and its design team, it was considered that the proposals indicated that a holding or viewing capacity could be accommodated as per the design proposals. The STG, however, did have concerns regarding the provision of approximately 8,000 uncovered seats to the north end of the proposed venue. We refer members to section 12.8 of the green guide and section 11.6 of the red guide, both of which state:

"it is recommended that all seated accommodation be covered".

We stated our concern that, during periods of rain, there would be the potential for spectators in that area to stand or to seek shelter in covered parts of the venue. Standing spectators are considered to occupy a greater linear dimension than seated spectators and, thus, when occupying a full row of seats, have to stand at an angle, with a tripping hazard — the seats from the row in front — in front of them and the potential for a progressive collapse, or they may spread out into the radial gangways which form part of the exiting route and the emergency evacuation route.

For a number of years, persistent standing has been a problem at some parts of some stadia in Great Britain, with the issue being addressed at several venues by terms and conditions in a safety certificate as issued by the local authority. Those terms and conditions require the venue operators to reduce the number of seats that can be sold in each row of the parts of the ground where persistent standing regularly occurs.

The issue was discussed with the IFA and its design team in respect of a part of its venue where persistent standing regularly occurs. Its design proposals included increasing the seat spacing from 500 millimetres to 550 millimetres centres in that area of the national football stadium. The GAA and its design team declined to adopt that option. It will therefore be important that the issues of persistent standing and crowd migration are properly managed in the north end of the proposed Casement Park: otherwise there would be the potential for reduction in the (P) factor or the (S) factor and thus a reduction in the safe capacity for that area of the venue. The STG considers that recognised guidance should be followed as to endeavour to design out this potential problem.

Witnesses have advised the Committee that the STG has been inconsistent in addressing the issue of uncovered spectator accommodation, referring to the uncovered standing terraces at the Kingspan Stadium. Although, as I have already noted, the green and red guides state that it is recommended that all accommodation be covered, similar advice is contained in both documents regarding standing viewing decks. However, the standing terraces are designed for standing; seated viewing decks are not designed for this purpose and thus present a risk to spectators should persistent standing occur and thus the potential for a reduction in the safe capacity of the uncovered area of the seating. This demonstrates a pragmatic approach to the issues at the respective venues rather than an inconsistent approach to spectator safety as alleged.

Witnesses have also advised the Committee that I, as the chair of the STG, had stated that standing accommodation would not be permitted at Casement Park. This is not the case. I was asked on more than one occasion by GAA officials whether I regarded seated accommodation to be safer than standing accommodation. I advised that, in my opinion, although standing accommodation was permitted and that indeed the green guide and red guide contained specific chapters regarding the arrangements that should be in place at standing viewing decks, I considered that seated accommodation was easier to manage. This is in line with section 13.1 of the green guide and section 12.1 of the red guide, both of which state:

"Standing accommodation is recognised as presenting a special safety problem at sports grounds ... wherever possible the provision of safe seated accommodation for all spectators is recommended."

The GAA agreed with my opinion and advised that it considered that fewer stewards were needed to manage seated spectator accommodation than for standing spectator accommodation. It further noted that increasingly more spectators, particularly families, were seeking seated accommodation at GAA fixtures.

With regard to calculating the exiting capacity, section 10.1(a) of the green guide and section 9.1 of the red guide state that management should ensure:

"there are sufficient numbers of exits in suitable locations".

Diagram 6.1 on page 57 of the green guide and page 53 of the red guide also advise that outer circulation zones to sports grounds should be provided. It should be noted that approximately 72% of the exiting from the proposed Casement Park is located to the Andersonstown Road end of the venue. It was therefore very important that appropriate consideration was given as to how the exiting process would be undertaken. This resulted in several meetings involving members of the STG, members of the design team and members of the GAA. Following a number of proposal revisions, some crowd modelling exercises and some flow calculations for each of the various legs of each of the exiting routes, agreement was reached on the exiting proposals. I communicated this to DCAL on behalf of the STG by email. I will refer to these emails later.

With regard to calculating the emergency exiting capacity, section 10 of the green guide and section 9.9 of the red guide state:

"there is a difference between egress times and emergency evacuation times."

Section 10.9 of the green guide and section 9.9 of the red guide also state:

"The maximum emergency evacuation time for sports grounds varies between two and half minutes and eight minutes."

The differential relates to the fire risk and the STG accepts that the proposed design of Casement Park presents a low fire risk, thus the maximum time of eight minutes should be adopted. This was the case at the national football stadium and the Kingspan Stadium.

As I advised the Committee in April, experts believe that, during the exiting of a large event, if people are not in a free-flowing situation in an eight-minute period, they become agitated and panic sets in. Despite many reviews of guidance documentation, experts still regard the figure of eight minutes to be appropriate for the safe emergency egress of a sports ground.

Section 10.9 of the green guide and section 9.9 of the red guide state:

"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 or reasonable safety, in the event of an emergency".

The green guide defines a place of safety as:

"A place within a building or structure where, for a limited period of time, people will have some protection from the effects of fire and smoke. This place, usually a corridor or stairway, will normally have a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance and allow people to continue their escape to a place of safety."

The red guide defines a place of comparative safety as:

"A place where people can be safe from the effects of fire for 30 minutes or more, thus allowing extra time for them to move directly to a place of safety."

The green guide defines a place of safety as:

"A place, away from the building, in which people are at no immediate danger from the effects of fire."

Whereas the red guide defines a place of safety as:

"A place where a person is no longer in danger from fire or other emergencies."

As stated above, the exiting distribution appears to make the venue unique, with neither the STG nor the design team being able to identify any other stadium of similar exiting design. In addition, the venue is serviced by only one arterial road and there are no outer circulation zones to the proposed stadium. It is therefore very important that there be robust emergency evacuation arrangements.

In contrast with the other two venues, the STG has been unable to see how emergency exiting could be achieved safely and in compliance with recognised guidance. The group has therefore consistently requested the emergency exiting strategy for the proposed venue since spring 2013. To date, however, that information has not been provided. The STG and others have continued to raise concerns with DCAL regarding those matters.

It is noted that one of the witnesses indicated to the Committee that an emergency exiting strategy has been developed. The STG has not been provided with that document. It should be forwarded to DCAL, which, in turn, can forward it to the STG for consideration.

A witness also advised the Committee that the STG was inconsistent in its approach to the use of the pitch as a place of relative safety. The witness advised that, some years ago, the IFA provided temporary seating to the front of the railway stand and to the front of the south stand at Windsor Park and was permitted to use the pitch as a place of reasonable safety. That is not the case. The matter was addressed using terms and conditions contained in the general safety certificate for the venue, as issued by Belfast City Council under the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The terms and conditions reflected the contents of the red guide, which was the applicable document at that time. The relevant part of the document is section 9.12, which states:

"In certain cases, forward evacuation onto the pitch or area of activity may form part of the emergency evacuation route, provided that it leads directly to an exit which itself leads to a place of safety."

A dedicated exit route from the pitch to a place of reasonable safety was provided. The STG did not have any involvement with the matter, as it was not part of the regional stadia programme but preceded it. However, it can be seen that Belfast City Council acted in accordance with the content of the red guide.

The relevant guidance for the proposed stadium at Casement Park is contained in section 10.9 of the green guide. It states:

"For new construction: while in practice spectators may evacuate onto the pitch or area of activity in an emergency, this should not form part of the calculation of the emergency evacuation time for newly constructed grounds or sections of grounds."

Witnesses also stated that the STG had approved the design proposals for Casement Park and produced emails that they alleged supported their assertion. As stated above, there was ongoing work involving members of the STG, members of the design team and representatives of the GAA in spring and summer of 2013 regarding the exiting proposals. Following a number meetings and telephone conversations, agreement was reached as to how exiting could be achieved. The emails produced, dated 19 June 2013 and 23 August 2013, were part of correspondence relating to exiting and not to emergency evacuation. Hopefully, copies of those emails, and other emails from that time, have been distributed amongst members. They most certainly could not and should not be considered as a sign-off for the design proposals by the STG.

It is worth noting that I, and other members of the STG, have attended a number of meetings with DCAL officials and there have been documents exchanged. However, prior to the CAL Committee's investigation, never once did the Department or any other party advise that they considered that the STG had signed off the design proposals; that is, until some weeks ago at this inquiry. We are concerned that such an interpretation was reached.

Witnesses have advised the Committee that there were ongoing discussions regarding the design proposals. The STG has not received any information, including drawings, since autumn 2013. A witness also advised the Committee that agreement was reached on the design proposals at a meeting on 17 June 2014. I now ask my colleague Laura Strong to provide further information on this issue.

Ms Laura Strong (Sport NI): Good morning everyone. I have been employed as a technical officer in the safety compliance unit for Sport Northern Ireland since November 2008. I have a BSc (Hons) in environmental health. I have obtained the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) certificate in general health and safety and the NEBOSH national diploma in occupational safety and health. I am a chartered environmental health practitioner and a member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health regional management board for Northern Ireland. I am a member of the safety technical groups for Casement Park, Windsor Park — now the national football stadium — and Ravenhill — now the Kingspan Stadium.

On 17 June 2014, I attended a meeting of the Casement Park steering group with my colleague Paul Scott at the Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast. The steering group is chaired by the GAA and includes representatives of DCAL. We had been invited to attend similar meetings, where we would remain outside until we were invited in to discuss technical matters. The June meeting was also attended by the design and build team. At the outset of this meeting, we were asked by the design and build team what figure we would be using for the emergency evacuation time for Casement Park. When we advised that the eight-minute evacuation time to a place of safety or relative safety would be used in line with the contents of the red guide and the green guide, we were subjected to a barrage of abuse. The design and build team went on to say that they had worked on the construction of 17 venues in Great Britain with emergency evacuation times greater than eight minutes. When asked whether some of those venues could be identified, no examples were provided, but we were subjected to ridicule and abuse. We felt patronised and considered that efforts were being made to humiliate us. The meeting continued in an abusive manner and there was most certainly no agreement reached regarding the emergency evacuation arrangements.

We contacted an inspector from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority on 17 June, on leaving the meeting, to enquire whether there are stadia in England and Wales that have an emergency evacuation time in excess of eight minutes. We were advised that the authority was unaware of any venues with such arrangements but that it would make enquiries. Some weeks later, following an investigation, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority contacted us to confirm that, following extensive enquiries, all stadia in England and Wales that have been designated under the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 have an eight-minute emergency evacuation time.

Following the meeting on 17 June, two members of the GAA who had been in attendance apologised for the behaviour directed towards Paul and me.

A further meeting was held involving members of the design and build team and members of the safety compliance unit of Sport Northern Ireland on 15 October 2014, when we were advised that the emergency evacuation time for the proposed venue could be up to 29 minutes. However, it was

proposed that this could be mitigated by the use of the pitch as a place of relative safety. That contravenes the contents of the green guide and the red guide as previously stated by my colleague. A phased evacuation was also suggested by the design and build team. Again, that is not in keeping with the contents of the green guide or the red guide, where it is recommended that spectators should be in a place of safety or relative safety within an eight-minute period. Again there was absolutely no consensus at this meeting and most certainly no sign-off on the proposals for Casement Park. It should also be noted that both those meetings occurred after emails, which were referred to, dated 19 June 2013 and 23 August 2013. Witnesses claimed that those emails represented sign-off by the STG.

We asked the design and build team at the meeting whether we could share those proposals with other members of the safety technical group. However, we were told that they had been instructed by DCAL that they were to meet each organisation represented on the STG separately and were not to leave any documentation with us. That instruction was confirmed by Ciarán McGurk, a DCAL official, on 12 November 2014. It is important that information is provided to the STG in accordance with the agreed process.

I will now hand over to my colleague Jeremy Cowen of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Mr Jeremy Cowen (Northern Ireland Ambulance Service): Good morning, Chair and members. My name is Jeremy Cowen, and I would like to introduce myself to you as a member of the STG for Casement Park. I have also been a member of the STGs for Ravenhill/Kingspan and Windsor Park/national football stadium. My job title is assistant emergency planning officer, a post I have held for eight years. I have been employed by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service since 1998 and have graduated through the ranks to my current position, having started as an operational ambulance person.

My role involves various aspects of emergency planning, including at entertainment events and events held at sports grounds. My presentation today will consider some of the aspects that have relevance to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service; namely, medical provisions, exiting, emergency evacuation, human factors and issues when responding to an emergency at the proposed new Casement Park.

Where medical provisions on site are concerned, we are satisfied that the proposals contain a suitable first aid facility for spectators and staff, including players. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has in the past been consulted by the safety manager at Casement Park, and there is nothing to suggest that that will not be the case in the new Casement Park.

My colleague on the STG Paul Scott has previously informed the Committee that, after consideration, the STG was content that the exiting arrangements for normal circumstances were adequate. With permission, I do not intend to go over that again, but I will simply confirm that the emails that Paul referred to are a true reflection of the views of the STG. In other words, we were satisfied that the exiting arrangements would be achievable under normal circumstances.

However, there are issues remaining with the emergency evacuation arrangements for the proposed new stadium. I confirm that, as part of the STG, concern remains regarding the emergency evacuation arrangements at the stadium, as described to the Committee. We in the STG cannot see how emergency evacuation could be achieved in safety and in compliance with the recognised guidance, namely the green guide. We have been asking for information on the emergency evacuation arrangements since spring 2013, but we have yet to receive any proposals for our consideration.

In contrast to evidence provided to the Committee in recent weeks, it is important to understand that the responsibility for writing the emergency evacuation plan for the stadium rests with the ground operator and not with the emergency services. Whilst the emergency services will certainly take care of people once they have reached a place of safety, the responsibility to physically get them there rests with the ground operator. I refer members to section 10.11 of the green guide, which states:

"management should prepare contingency plans. These plans should provide for the evacuation of all people in the event of an emergency from all areas of the ground to a place of safety."

Clearly, it is best practice that the ground operator's plans dovetail with those of the emergency services. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and our partner emergency service responders remain open to assist to ensure that the transition is smooth, but that is only possible where there are

suitable emergency evacuation arrangements. Furthermore, section 3.17 of the green guide refers to external influences on the stadium contingency arrangements. It states:

"Contingency plans should lay down a structured and graduated response with clear guidelines on the measures to be adopted in particular circumstances, bearing in mind both internal and external factors specific to the individual sports ground."

On human factors, conversations have taken place about various individuals and their involvement in the respective projects. However, I want to take a few moments to consider who, certainly for me and the other members of the STG, are the most important people to consider in this story: the spectators. Paul has described in detail that the main issue in emergency evacuation is crushing, and I do not intend to duplicate that part of the presentation. However, what I do want to do is explain to the Committee exactly what injuries due to crushing mean, although I will not go into graphic detail. Suffice it to say that, when I was an operational paramedic, I attended emergency 999 calls that were due to crush injuries having been sustained. Although I will not go into gratuitous detail, it is important that the Committee understand that the consequences of a crush injury can be devastating to the individual and to their families — lifelong and devastating.

I turn now to issues when responding to the proposed stadium. The unique nature of the stadium, in its design and the absence of outer circulation zones, plus the fact that it is serviced by only one arterial road, means that responding emergency services will potentially have difficulty in accessing the general area, let alone the stadium itself. This is before any additional complications arise, such as issues on the Andersonstown Road, which will inevitably impact further on the emergency evacuation and on our response to it. Again, attention is drawn to section 3.17 of the green guide, which I highlighted to the Committee earlier:

"Contingency plans should lay down a structured and graduated response with clear guidelines on the measures to be adopted in particular circumstances, bearing in mind both internal and external factors specific to the individual sports ground."

I will now hand over to my fellow member of the STG Chief Inspector Anthony McNally from the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Chief Inspector Anthony McNally (Police Service of Northern Ireland): Thank you, Jeremy. Chairperson and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to attend today to provide evidence to your inquiry. I am the local policing chief inspector with geographical responsibility for the west Belfast area. I have been carrying out this role since February 2014. As Casement Park is situated in my geographical area of responsibility, I have overseen PSNI involvement in the safety technical group since taking up my post. Indeed, I attended its most recent meeting in November 2014.

I wish to make three key points today. The first is on the PSNI position on the redevelopment of Casement Park. The PSNI remains fully supportive of the redevelopment of Casement Park and, like all members of the STG, wishes to see a stadium built that will bring trade and employment to the area and which will provide an excellent spectating arena for GAA matches in a safe environment for those attending.

The second point is on PSNI input into the safety technical group. The PSNI remains supportive of the use of the safety technical group as a mechanism by which to support the Casement redevelopment. The main benefit of the safety technical group is the collective expertise that the group brings together. We remain of the view that working in partnership is the best means by which the PSNI can support and play a part in future discussions surrounding the proposed stadium.

The third point is on PSNI concerns. The PSNI went on record in October 2013 outlining the concerns that we had about the redevelopment but, most notably, about the emergency evacuation arrangements. These concerns came from our involvement in the STG. Paul Scott has outlined the group's view that, based on the stadium's plans presented to the group to date, the planned capacity of 38,000 and the positioning of the exits as is — namely with 72% exiting directly onto the Andersonstown Road — we cannot see how all persons in the stadium could reach a place of safety, or reasonable safety, within the eight-minute time frame if the Andersonstown Road exits were unavailable for any reason.

It is accepted that the likelihood of a full closure of the Andersonstown Road is low, but it is not unforeseeable. As my colleagues said, that is why the PSNI has asked, through the safety technical group but also during separate conversations with the GAA, for information surrounding the emergency evacuation arrangements for the stadium in order to find a resolution. Again, as stated by my STG colleagues, as per the green guide, it is the responsibility of the ground operator to produce an emergency evacuation plan for the stadium; it is not the role of the emergency services to do so. To reiterate my opening remarks, the PSNI remains committed to working with all interested parties, particularly in resolving the emergency evacuation arrangements. I return you to my colleague Mr Paul Scott for closing remarks.

Mr Scott: As previously stated, the STG supports the development of a stadium at Casement Park. However, it is important that it is a safe stadium. The STG looks forward to viewing any proposals that are forwarded to it regarding emergency exiting or evacuation arrangements and will provide comment to DCAL accordingly. As stated earlier, we have been advised that proposals have been drafted. These should be forwarded.

I met with Ciarán McGurk on Saturday at the Tall Ships festival. He referred me to the last part of his presentation to the CAL Committee on 2 July. Unfortunately, I have not had the chance to read it in any detail. I advised him that I had not had access to the presentation. He advised me that, prior to his leaving DCAL some months ago, funding had been made available to the Department to purchase properties and land in the immediate area of Casement Park. That may assist with the proposals for the emergency evacuation of the venue.

As I said, we look forward to proposals being provided by the venue operators. We will reference them against recognised guidance and provide comment to DCAL accordingly. Thank you for your time.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you for your presentations this morning, which were very thorough and informative. They raise a number of questions because they contain information that contradicts things that we were told by some other witnesses.

I have a number of members' names down to ask questions. If anyone has not put their name down but wants to ask questions, please let me know. The first member is William Humphrey.

Mr Humphrey: Good morning and thank you very much for your attendance today. Thank you very much for bringing some certainty and facts to the situation, rather than interpretation, which is what we have had for some weeks on these issues. I also thank the STG for providing documentation. Other witnesses have not been so forthcoming in doing so.

Mr Scott, I proposed that you be brought back here today because of the document that you submitted detailing the text message. Can you give us some background on that please?

Mr Scott: Yes. Carl Southern worked with me at Sport NI before taking up a position in DCAL as the architect to the stadium projects. We had been reasonably friendly. However, from the spring of 2013, when we were seeking information on the proposals for Casement Park, some assertions were made by DCAL and by Carl Southern. Some of the meetings were robust and there were differences of opinion about the technical requirements and the provision of information.

When Carl resigned to take up a position in England, he had a little gathering. He phoned me up and said, "Look, we know things have been difficult, but would you go?" I went along for half an hour and, when I was leaving, he called me over and apologised. He said, "Look, I am so sorry for everything that has happened", and he said that DCAL had placed certain requirements on him. He indicated his concerns about the Casement project and later confirmed them to me in a text. I had been asked by Mr Hall, the Committee Clerk, to submit any documentation not contained in the bundle. I sent a package over but, when I reread the bundle, the detail of the text was not in it. It was referred to in my presentation, so I sent it.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I should have said at the start that, to get everyone in, each member has 12 minutes or thereabouts for questioning. We have dealt with the issue of the text message. We will move on.

Mr Humphrey: I ask, then, if I have only 12 minutes, that people be as brief as possible in their answers because I have a number of questions.

Mr Scott, it has been claimed that you agreed to a 38,000- or 40,000-seater stadium and that you have, therefore, been inconsistent in your position.

Mr Scott: That is not the case. The bundle shows, as I stated at my last appearance here, that I was brought into meetings on the outline business case preparation back in 2009. I advised that, yes, the site was big enough for a 40,000-seater stadium but that there would be problems with exiting and emergency evacuation. At the time, I also advised of the likelihood that many properties in the area would have to be demolished to facilitate emergency evacuation in particular. I joked — it was not a joke, but I made people aware of the famous case at Anfield, when Liverpool FC wanted to extend a stand through a terrace of houses, and two elderly ladies would not move out no matter how much money they were offered. The project was held up for a considerable time to enable that process to be worked out. As I said, one of the consultants involved in drafting the case can clearly remember that and is willing to provide documentation. On pages 50 and 51 of the outline business case, there is reference to my comments. They were not written as I would have liked them to be written — they were a little clumsy, perhaps — but they gave the tenor, which was that the matter had been raised and discussed.

Mr Humphrey: Given that, as your colleagues said, 72% of exiting and egress is on to the Andersonstown Road, do the maths stack up for emergency exiting from a 38,000- to 40,000-seater stadium?

Mr Scott: No. Indeed, even the design team have said that, if there was a problem on the Andersonstown Road resulting in it becoming unavailable — this comes from Charles Cooke of Populous, a colleague of Mike Trice, who was here some weeks ago — the capacity for the stadium would be 13,776. The design and build team said in their discussions with us that, if there was a problem on the Andersonstown Road, the evacuation time would be 29 minutes — well over the eight minutes.

Mr Humphrey: The GAA asserted that it feels that it has been treated differently from the Irish Football Association and Ulster Rugby. Do you agree?

Mr Scott: Absolutely not. With all the other venues, we could always see how this could be achieved. We did raise concerns about Windsor Park/national football stadium and advise that one exit on to the Boucher Road, which was, I believe, 3.6 metres wide at that time, should be extended to 8.5 metres. In fact, it will now be 14.5 metres wide. With the other stadia, we could always see how, if there was a problem in any part of the ground, this could be achieved. They are, of course, smaller stadiums with much smaller capacities, but all have been treated exactly the same.

Mr Humphrey: Exception was taken to your attendance, along with your colleagues Nick Harkness and Edel Cosgrove, at a residents' meeting, because of the judicial review pending at that time. Do you think that it was appropriate for you to go to that meeting?

Mr Scott: Absolutely, and, indeed, it is part of Sport NI's role. Look at the explanatory memorandum to the legislation, or, indeed, the business case setting up the safety compliance unit, and you will find that we have to provide advice to any stakeholder group. There was talk of the meeting being secret; it was not. It was held at a meeting room in Sport NI — no shutters were drawn, the room was booked and it was clear who would be attending. We did not discuss particular stadia. People wanted to discuss the content of the red and green guides, and we went through them. We purposely said that we were not discussing any stadium, although, if you get the minutes, you will see that the meeting strayed into the Emirates Stadium very briefly, and that was stopped very quickly. No stadium in Northern Ireland was discussed.

Mr Humphrey: Mr Cowen, may I ask you about the emergency exiting plan? The Committee has been told that it is the responsibility of the blue light brigade. I listened to your evidence and to Mr McNally's reference. I know that you have already done so, but can you confirm to the Committee that it is not your responsibility, or that of the police, fire or ambulance services, and that it is, in fact, that of the ground operators?

Mr Cowen: I am happy to confirm that. As I said, we will certainly take care of any spectator, official, player or anybody in and around the stadium once they are in that place of safety, but, as I said, the responsibility to get to spectators rests with the ground operators.

Mr Humphrey: Can I ask the safety technical group and whoever is most appropriately placed to answer whether the safety technical group ever come under pressure from an organisation or individual to have the emergency exiting report changed?

Mr Scott: We were advised, I think twice, that the design team/GAA and DCAL had access to high-ranking police officers and that they would be able to get the police report changed.

Mr Humphrey: Who advised you of that?

Mr Scott: Ryan Feeney advised us, and also Carl Southern. It was a case of saying, "If we get the police to change their views, the other emergency services will follow suit. You guys are going to be left on your own and you will look very foolish."

Mr Humphrey: Laura, can I ask you —

Chief Inspector McNally: Can I add to that, please, if I may, Chair? I have been involved with conversations with the GAA, since last summer until now, when it came in to speak to senior police in relation to Casement. I can certainly say that there was never any effort to put pressure on the police to change the report through any of those conversations. There were meetings to clarify the purpose or understanding of the police role, but there was certainly no pressure for the police to change their report.

Mr Humphrey: Laura, you made reference to the meeting at the Wellington Park Hotel on 17 June 2014. You said that you and Mr Scott suffered "a barrage of abuse". Can you expand on that?

Ms Strong: Certainly. We attended that meeting, as we had attended other meetings of the steering group in the past. They had often been quite robust conversations. We, obviously, had a difference of opinion on various things, but this meeting took on a whole other context that the others had not.

Paul and I work in health and safety. We are used to getting a bit of abuse; health and safety people are not very popular. We are aware of that and we can cope with that. We are used to being able to argue our point and to justify our reasoning. On that occasion, I felt that we were being belittled and that there was an attitude of, "You don't have a clue about this; this is how they do it in England. The design and build team are coming over from England to speak at this meeting, to ask us questions about emergency evacuation and other areas around the safety at the ground, and the views that we had". I had certainly not experienced a meeting like that before in my career. I have been at some difficult meetings, and I honestly felt that that was over and above anything that we should have had to deal with in our role. It was really about trying to ridicule us. People were openly laughing at us. It was not professional at all, in my opinion. I left feeling quite shaken, in all honesty, and Paul and I were both quite taken aback by the stance that had been taken.

When we left, we immediately contacted inspectors in the Sports Ground Safety Authority to say, "Please give us some advice. They are referring to these other grounds. Could you give us advice?". We did that because we were made to feel patronised and belittled, and as if we had made mistakes and people were laughing us. You begin to think, "Oh my goodness. Have we completely missed the point?". We knew that we had not, but you come away, reassess the situation and relook at things. We did that. We spoke to other experts in the field, and we were happy that we had made the right decision.

Mr Humphrey: Finally, Paul, you made reference at the end of your presentation to a conversation you had at the Tall Ships, I think, on Saturday, with Mr McGurk, about the purchase of properties and land in the immediate area of Casement Park.

Mr Scott: He made reference to money being put in place. I have not had the opportunity to read his testimony.

Mr Humphrey: Did you ever attend a meeting with Populous or the GAA at which the purchase/demolition of houses and gardens was discussed?

Mr Scott: There was a meeting in April 2014 with Populous by conference call, and a representative of the GAA was present when we were showing drawings. There were also meetings with Carl Southern and Ciarán McGurk earlier in the year.

Mr Humphrey: Earlier in 2014?

Mr Scott: Yes, earlier in 2014. When the purchase of properties was discussed, it was accepted that — sorry, it was not accepted, but they were looking at the purchase of properties to improve the emergency exiting —

Mr Humphrey: Were you ever at meetings with senior DCAL officials or the Minister where that issue was discussed?

Mr Scott: Only DCAL officials.

Mr Humphrey: Only DCAL officials?

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: Who were they?

Mr Scott: Ciarán McGurk and Carl Southern. One of the meetings was attended by me and Nick Harkness, and another was attended by me, Nick Harkness and our chief executive.

Mr Humphrey: Do I have any more time, Chairperson?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You have two minutes.

Mr Humphrey: Laura, there have been suggestions made in the public domain recently that Sport NI is very much a male-dominated organisation. In your experience, is that the case?

Mr McMullan: I am sorry, Chairperson; we are talking about emergency exiting. This is nothing to do with the inquiry. I take exception to that.

Mr Humphrey: I am happy to talk to her privately about that, Chairperson.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): OK.

Mr Humphrey: When she was here last week, Valerie Brown said that there was a problem with crowd modelling. Has that information been forthcoming?

Mr Scott: No. We have had no information since the autumn of 2013. Of course, we would be very glad to assess any proposals made against the recognised guidance. As I said, we are supportive of a stadium at Casement Park. We want to see this happen, but we need the information. We cannot sign off emergency evacuation without any information.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Before I bring in the next person, I want to ask a question of Laura or Paul. The meeting of 17 June 2014 at the Wellington Park Hotel had a different character from other meetings. Were there additional people there who —

Mr Scott: The design and build team from Buckingham was there.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Who was there representing it?

Mr Scott: Oran McCloskey and at least one other gentleman.

Ms Strong: We were not introduced.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Do we know — I am asking officials here — whether we will receive minutes of the Casement Park steering group?

The Assistant Committee Clerk: That is the first time that I have ever heard of the Casement steering group.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Right; OK.

Ms Strong: We have requested minutes of those meetings on numerous occasions. In fact, I emailed Stephen McGeehan of the GAA way back in October to say that we had not received any of those minutes, and we have yet to be in possession of them.

Mr Scott: There was also a very significant meeting on 17 October 2013, maybe, that one of Mr McNally's colleagues attended along with us and representatives of Belfast City Council. Again, we were promised minutes of the meeting — I am sorry, it was on 16 October — and we received an email to say that minutes would be forthcoming. Despite many phone calls, however, the Department declined to provide minutes of the meeting. We have our own meeting notes, but we could not get anything from the Department.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Was that group chaired by the GAA or by the Department?

Mr Scott: It was chaired by the GAA, we were told, although, in practice, Mr Southern from the Department appeared to chair the meeting.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We will ask about minutes, because it should be in the packs that we receive.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. Thanks very much all of you for your presentations. My first question is for Paul. Was the possibility of a major event and the closure of the Andersonstown Road raised at the OBC stage?

Mr Scott: Not to my recollection. I was brought into some of the meetings and parts of some of the meetings. What we were saying is that generally — remember that at this point in time, there was no detailed design — it could be seen that the proposed stadium was in a very residential area with only one arterial road serving it. Thus, if there was a problem on that road, we had to get people out by other ways. There were two relatively small exits: one was 11 metres wide and one was 10 metres wide, give or take. That would only allow so many people out in an eight-minute period. That is why, at that time, I raised concerns regarding exiting and emergency evacuation.

Ms McCorley: The possibility of a major incident on the Andersonstown Road — it was not specifically mentioned that it would require closure of the Andersonstown Road —

Mr Scott: By implication it would, because we are saying that if there is a problem at one end of the ground — at that time it was very conceptual, but it could be seen that the majority of spectators, under normal circumstances, would have to go on to the Newtownards Road —

Ms McCorley: Andersonstown Road?

Mr Scott: Sorry, what did I say?

Ms McCorley: Newtownards Road.

Mr Scott: Oh dear; sorry.

Ms McCorley: That would require some doing.

Mr Scott: That would certainly be some diversion.

Ms McCorley: You are saying it was conceptual. The shape of things has not changed. The Andersonstown Road has always been there, the shape of the stadium was a horseshoe and it was in a residential area. That did not change —

Mr Scott: It was not a horseshoe at that point. It had covered seating on all four sides —

Ms McCorley: The residential area was there in 2011, so —

Mr Scott: That is right — and in 2009. That is why we said that we needed to look at increasing exiting to other parts of the proposed stadium.

Ms McCorley: Yes, but this idea of some major incident happening that would close the Andersonstown Road, it would mean that all the exiting — was that issue not raised?

Mr Scott: It was. We said that, if the Andersonstown Road was not available, we had to get people out some other way. That would involve either the Owenvarragh side, the Mooreland side or, somehow, the rear, which also goes on to Owenvarragh. That is why we were saying that it was likely to result in the demolition of several houses.

Ms McCorley: Was that included way back at the OBC stage?

Mr Scott: In that we said that exiting and emergency evacuation would have to be considered. Even getting the exiting right involved quite a complex process. I spent many meetings with DCAL, the design team and the GAA, talking about how we could get the exiting to go OK. We thought there was a good chance of the exiting being OK, but we just could not see how the emergency exiting would be, should there be an incident on the Andersonstown Road. We did not say whether it would be a fire or what else it would be, but we knew that, if there was a problem, we did not know how we would get people out of the proposed stadium.

Ms McCorley: It was not raised as something that would need to stop the process, because you could not see that it was possible?

Mr Scott: I was only in for part of the meetings. I gave my views and then I was excused. I did not actually see the —

Ms McCorley: You did not see the outline business case? You were not part of that?

Mr Scott: No. At Sport NI, we have people who look at business cases. I am on the technical side of things. I went and gave a technical view, which was, "The site is big enough, but can we get the people away, either under normal circumstances or in the event of an incident, through any of the exits, but particularly the Andersonstown Road, because of the predominance of exiting at that part of the proposed venue?".

Ms McCorley: So you did not actually have any role in the sign-off of the OBC?

Mr Scott: None. I did not see the OBC until a number of months ago.

Ms McCorley: You first saw it a couple of months ago?

Mr Scott: That is right. I had to get one of my colleagues who works in the unit that deals with business cases. That is when I first saw it. Whenever I looked at the wording, it was a bit like Les Dawson: all the notes are there, but not necessarily in the right order. It is not how I would have written it, but it makes reference to it. Indeed, I believe you have it in your pack.

Ms McCorley: Let me just talk you through the bits. There is the whole issue about houses being demolished and having to be bought to facilitate emergency exiting. Some residents said recently that they had just become aware of that and were shocked to see that there were plans to demolish their houses. I can imagine that it would be a shock to somebody reading that. You were aware at the time of the OBC that houses would have to be bought. That is what you said to us on 9 April.

Mr Scott: That is right. I believed that to be the case. If somebody can show me how they can emergency-evacuate 38,000 without that — we have been given proposals, and no one on the safety technical group can see how that has been done. We have talked to other people and shown them conceptual drawings. Of course, we would not show them the confidential drawings, but we gave

them a schematic. No one can show us. That is why we have kept on asking, "Please show us how it has been done." Because we cannot see it, that does not mean that it is not there.

At the meetings in February or April 2014 with departmental officials, they were more or less in acceptance that houses would have to go. They asked us to keep that quiet until after planning approval had been granted. There would also have been issues with keeping the roads free from traffic.

Ms McCorley: That was not included in the OBC, so it was not included in the budget at the time..

Mr Scott: I do not get involved in the economics of it.

Ms McCorley: Did you tell Nick Harkness, who would have been there at that time, that houses would have to be purchased?

Mr Scott: I cannot recall whether Nick was part of the process. It was 2009, but, certainly, subsequently —

Ms McCorley: OK, but it went for budget approval in March 2011, so would he have been there then?

Mr Scott: I did not join the process again until autumn 2012, when the initial drawings were being produced by Populous. I can recall that I was given drawings on a Friday and asked to comment on them by Monday. I came back on the Monday and spoke to Carl Southern, saying that I could not see how the exiting/emergency evacuation worked. He invited me to his office at Causeway Exchange, where he made a conference call with Charles Cooke of Populous. At that point, Charles was advising that we were going to use the cul-de-sac. I cannot remember the name of it, but it is to the south-east corner of Casement. They were also looking at other options to get people away from the stadium.

Ms McCorley: In the 30 April statement, there was also a reference to table 4.3. There were issues raised in that. That was at the time of the outline business case. It was the difficulty with —

Mr Scott: That was reflective of what I had told the consultants.

Ms McCorley: You might have heard Mike Trice confirming that the exits were increased by 50% and that that increased the circulation/milling rate at the Andersonstown Road end of the stadium.

Mr Scott: Sorry, could you repeat that?

Ms McCorley: Mike Trice confirmed that exits were increased by 50%.

Mr Scott: Yes, there was certainly an increase. You may recall from my presentation that we said to the GAA, "Look, we acknowledge that, before larger games, there will be a warm-up game or a minors' game and, therefore, we could allow for a relaxation, if you like, because we know that there will be many people in before the one hour prior to the main game". That enabled some exits to be taken away, and that allowed more exiting on to the Andersonstown Road. That facilitates exiting. However, if there was a problem on the Andersonstown Road, we would still be trying to get people — potentially 38,000 — through two exits, which, as Populous itself says — Mike Trice's colleague — are suitable for 13,776. I think that is a little bit conservative because I believe that people in protected concourses going to those exits should also be included, and that might take us up to about 17,000 or 18,000.

Ms McCorley: I suppose that there is a question about the probability of an event where you would have no access to the Andersonstown Road.

Mr Scott: Very low.

Ms McCorley: How would you rate that? We are talking about 72% of the capacity audience not being able to exit from a route that they would be expected to.

Mr Scott: It would be very low, but as I described, there are other issues and, as Jeremy has described, there are other issues about getting the emergency services to the venue, etc. This venue is serviced by only one arterial road. I cannot think of any other venue, serviced by one arterial road, without the outer circulation zones etc. Therefore, we must have a very robust exiting and emergency evacuation arrangement in place. What are the chances? They are very low.

Ms Strong: It is foreseeable.

Mr Scott: Very foreseeable.

Ms Strong: It could happen.

Ms McCorley: How do you define that? What would that mean? What would be required for every Andersonstown Road exit to be unavailable?

Mr Scott: It could be a road traffic fatality in that Andersonstown Road area, a gas leak, a fire in one of the premises opposite, a device or a suspected device: anything of that nature. It is a very low possibility.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Let us finish on that answer and move on to the next member.

Ms McCorley: I have one more question that I want to ask Mr Scott, and I have a question for Mr McNally as well. We heard the credentials of Mike Trice. He has done a lot of work and he has a long reputation in stadium building. He said that the eight-minute requirement is to get to a place of relative safety and his view is that getting from the seating area into a circulation area put people into a place of relative safety. That would be in the context of this very low chance, however foreseeable.

Mr Scott: Absolutely. Basically, you are in a place of relative safety if you are on a concourse that does not narrow, is fire protected and you can move at 82 persons per metre per minute. That approximates to four persons in a square metre. I have measured the concourses, and you are talking about 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 people. The concourses could be extended; revised designs could extend them, and we would welcome the opportunity to see Mike Trice's proposals. That is what we are here for. We certainly will look at them. We want the stadium to work.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you.

Ms McCorley: Sorry, please, I just need to follow up this question?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): There will maybe be an opportunity at the end. We have to give everybody a fair chance.

Mr Dunne: I would like to thank those who have come before us today for the clear, precise evidence they have given. It is most welcome, and we appreciate that it is not easy to come before politicians and be grilled in a public forum. We certainly appreciate your openness and willingness to do it.

Paul, I keep going on about the plans. You have probably noticed that from the previous questioning sessions we have had with various organisations. The plans were submitted to the DOE Planning Service in June 2013. I understand that that is the date?

Mr Scott: I understand that from Mr Molloy, I am told.

Mr Dunne: You were involved in the steering group. As chairman of the steering group, did you get an opportunity to review the plans and comment on the various safety concerns?

Mr Scott: No. There was an email from Carl Southern. First of all, there was a letter from the then permanent secretary, Rosalie Flanagan, saying that plans would not go forward for approval unless there was STG sign-off, nor would the contract move to the design and build team. There was then an email from Carl, about the 19th, or maybe the 16 June, which said: we really want to go forward for planning on 19 June and can we have sign-off? We said that we cannot. At that point, we were just about coming to a conclusion on the exiting. I wrote back to him and telephoned him and said that we had no information whatsoever on emergency evacuation. We cannot provide sign-off unless we can

actually see the proposals. As per my presentation, there are four elements: entrancing, viewing, exiting and emergency evacuation. The lowest of those becomes the safe capacity. We had three out of the four elements, but it all falls down if we do not have four out of four.

Mr Dunne: So, you did not sign off the plans.

Mr Scott: No.

Mr Dunne: The STG did not sign off.

Mr Scott: No. We have not signed off plans even as yet because we cannot get information on emergency evacuation.

Mr Dunne: What assurance do you have that those drawings were compliant with the red and green guides?

Mr Scott: It depends what you mean. If those plans went through as per the last set of drawings, and there were capacities, let us say, of up to 16,000 or 17,000, then they would be compliant for that size of an audience but not for 38,000. Belfast City Council will ultimately issue the safety certificate. Following DCAL and Sport NI guidance, that is the sort of figure you would be looking at. Obviously, more detailed calculations would have to be carried out, but that is what you are looking at. You are building a 38,000-seater stadium with a potential safe capacity of 16,000, 18,000 or something of that order.

Mr Dunne: OK. The drawings brought forward were done by the design team, which included Mr Mike Trice. Is that correct?

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mr Dunne: Is he an expert in safety?

Mr Scott: Mike Trice has been involved with the design of a lot of very good stadiums; yes. We would welcome the opportunity to look at his proposals. He certainly has a lot of experience.

Mr Dunne: You are satisfied that he is competent in relation to —

Mr Scott: Mike Trice is the design architect for the GAA. The GAA is his client, and DCAL is his client. Mike has designed a lot of good stadia, but we need to see his proposal. He may pull a rabbit out of the hat and show us that we have missed something. However, until we can see the drawings, we cannot sign off.

Mr Dunne: Do you feel that the STG was fully recognised as part of the design team for this project, or were you brought in as and when required?

Mr Scott: The process was that the design team gave the drawing proposals to DCAL. DCAL forwarded those to us. We circulated the drawings to the other members and arranged a meeting. We then gave DCAL our comments and those went back to the design team, which made amendments. It went back and forth; so, at that point, yes, we were. However, the fact that they went ahead to planning, and design and build, means that they just ignored us.

Mr Dunne: They ignored you?

Mr Scott: Exactly. They have gone ahead and done that.

I believe that the people at DCAL — Rory Miskelly, Noel Molloy, Carl Southern — have all come and given evidence that they know little or nothing about the guidance. The people who know about the guidance are Laura and me and the other members of the STG. We were providing the technical input; yet they went ahead to planning, and design and build, without any sign-off from us, particularly with regard to emergency evacuation.

Mr Dunne: OK. I have a few other issues, Chair.

You talk about the emergency evacuation in relation to a capacity of 38,000.

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mr Dunne: What is the maximum capacity that the existing stadium could take?

Mr Scott: When it was still in operation, it was just over 31,000. However, that was an existing stadium, and, therefore, the parts of the red guide relating to existing stadia were used. I believe that, last week or two weeks ago, Valerie Brown gave a very thorough presentation as to how it was arrived at. It used to be that a flow rate of 109 persons per metre per minute was acceptable. Following observations and in keeping with the British Standard BS EN 13200-1:2003, that has been reduced to 82 persons per metre per minute. So, right away, that is a decrease of in excess of 20%. Secondly, the old stadium was largely open. There was a relatively small stand to one side, but there was a large circulation concourse where people could get to. That is how that was arrived at. Also, in the good old days, the pitch came more into play as a place of relative safety.

Mr Dunne: I was going to come to that.

Mr Scott: That is not the case now. This is a new build, and we have been told to reference it against the red guide or the green guide, whichever has the higher standard, to future-proof the stadium.

Mr Dunne: What is the issue, then, with the external circulation space with the new build?

Mr Scott: There is not one.

Mr Dunne: It disappears.

Mr Scott: There was not one anyway. If you look at all the new stadia — St Mary's, Wembley, the Etihad — you see that they have large circulation spaces outside, which means that you can have 360-degree exiting. I cannot think of a stadium constructed in recent years without 360-degree exiting. It means that, if there is a problem in any part of the ground, people have other options.

Mr Dunne: We are losing the circulation zones.

Mr Scott: No, we are not; they were never there.

Mr Dunne: In the new build, you are really building out an existing site —

Mr Scott: It is the same footprint.

Mr Dunne: You are losing the circulation zones. Is that not right?

Mr Scott: No, there were never circulation zones to the old stadium. We cannot have external zones, and that is why we get the exiting and emergency exiting right.

Mr Dunne: What about the footprint?

Mr Scott: The footprint is about the same.

Mr Dunne: Of the new build?

Mr Scott: The footprint of the new build is about the same. We are moving slightly back off the Andersonstown Road towards the M1, but it is substantively the same footprint.

Mr Dunne: You mentioned the pitch. Some people are joking that the M1 would maybe be the circulation area. I think that this is very important, but can the pitch be used during an emergency evacuation of the stadium?

Mr Scott: The new guidance and, indeed, the red guide is very, very clear for new builds. It is not interpretation or a debate or a Dutch auction. It says:

"For new construction: while in practice spectators may evacuate onto the pitch or area of activity in an emergency, this should not form part of the calculation of the emergency evacuation time for newly constructed grounds or sections of grounds."

Therefore, whenever you are doing your calculations on the emergency exiting capacity, you have to ignore everyone on the pitch after an eight-minute period. That is because eight minutes is when people start to panic, etc. They will then try to go out through exits that are already at or above capacity. That is where our problems start. There has been talk that a GAA pitch is twice the size of a soccer pitch. That is correct, but it is not the key issue. The key issue is the exit dimension, not the area of play.

Mr Dunne: So, it is not to be used?

Mr Scott: No.

Mr Dunne: It is not to be used; you are clear on that?

Mr Scott: Absolutely clear on that.

Mr Dunne: Finally, Chair —

Mr Scott: Sorry, we can provide you with the reference.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You have one minute, Gordon.

Mr Dunne: We have had loads of evidence from those on the sponsor board right up to those who report to the Minister, and we have struggled to get evidence from anyone that the issues you are raising were reported up. Is that a real risk?

Mr Scott: I was given my contact. I am on the technical side, if you like.

Mr Dunne: Why was this information not carried up?

Mr Scott: First of all, as I was on the technical side, my identified point of contact was Carl Southern, later Ciarán McGurk and then later Rory Miskelly. They got any information that we had, as well as our views. You are quite right; there was also the sponsor board. Prior to the first sponsor board meeting that our chief executive attended, which was in December 2013, we gave her advice. She spoke to Noel Molloy outside the meeting. Never once again was I asked for a report or an update, other than when she was on leave and other directors were going. My understanding was that the directors were told that they were there to listen and to listen only.

Mr Dunne: Thanks very much.

Mr Ó hOisín: Mr Scott, the last time that you were here, you were uncertain about your position with the STG.

Mr Scott: Yes. That seems to have been clarified, in that the new permanent secretary has advised me that the STG will function as was. Indeed, he came to meet the STG — would it have been two weeks ago, perhaps? We convened a special meeting for him to come to listen to us and to hear our views. A few inquiries are going on. One is being conducted by the Cabinet Office into the technical matters. I believe that the results of that will be available in the next couple of weeks. There is an ongoing one into bullying and harassment. In the interim, the safety technical group functions as it was prior to the intervention by DCAL on 29 April.

Mr Ó hOisín: And you are the chair?

Mr Scott: I am the chair.

Mr Ó hOisín: You were the acting secretary, in that you were taking notes.

Mr Scott: We now have a member of the administrative support who takes notes; yes.

Mr Ó hOisín: And you were the technical adviser?

Mr Scott: We all are; we all bring technical expertise.

Mr Ó hOisín: There are no terms of reference or agreed minutes. Is that good governance?

Mr Scott: First of all, let us go back to the terms of reference. I was asked by Noel Molloy what my views were on how I would go about setting up a safety technical group. I said that I would go away and think about it. I came back the next day and told him, "This is the membership, and this how I believe it should function". He said, "Yes. We agree with all that, except I would like there to be an observer from DCAL." I advised that that would not be a problem. He said that he would get terms of reference to us, because we were acting for DCAL. We phoned a couple of times to see where they were, but in the interim, drawings were coming in to us and the design team was wanting answers, so we had to carry on. Whereas it would have been better if there had been terms of reference, we continued as had been agreed orally with Mr Molloy. After a period, DCAL officials decided that they did not want to go. They said that they were too busy. They did not attend and said that they would want only reports, which we did. Of late, DCAL officials have now said again that they will attend. Indeed, Andrew Dadley attended the last meeting, and very welcome they are to attend.

Mr Ó hOisín: OK. You also said at the meeting on 30 April — this was very much picked up on by the media — that the potential for a Hillsborough-type scenario would exist within any —

Mr Scott: I saw bits and pieces in the media —

Mr Ó hOisín: You were quite clear about it here, and it has been picked up by a number of —

Mr Scott: Could you read the piece out to me, because I have struggled to find —

Mr Ó hOisín: I do not actually have it here, but there is a reference to Hillsborough. That situation has been contested —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, could I just suggest that if you want to take some time after you have asked your questions to look up the references —

Mr Ó hOisín: Chair, we are all being limited to the same time, so I want to make the most of mine.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes, but if you are asking a question about what he has said, it is important that he knows what he is supposed to have said.

Mr Ó hOisín: I am just saying that Andrew Sloan from Sport NI, Valerie Brown from Belfast City Council, the GAA delegation, Mike Trice, Oran McCloskey from HBJV, and Ciarán McGurk from DCAL have all contested that and said that it could not actually happen in any circumstances. They also said that there was a traffic light procedure to go through in the various stages of approval and that at one point we had got to boundary stage 4, but because of the judicial review we are probably back at boundary stage 2. All those had to be signed off before it would get to any situation, and that simply could not have happened.

Mr Scott: It will not happen if guidance is followed during the certification process. That would mean that you would have a stadium with a capacity of about 38,000 and a safe capacity of, let us say, 16,000 to 18,000. It cannot happen in that case, but in this case here, we have a 38,000 stadium at less than half occupied. If, however, that stadium were to be occupied, there would be difficulties. The first time that I mentioned Hillsborough, which will be in my pack, I advised members of the safety technical group — this is at a time when we could not get information from DCAL on emergency evacuation — that we needed to be mindful of the situation surrounding the Hillsborough inquiry, whereby if the verdicts were overturned and we now get unlawful killing, that would have severe

implications for Sheffield City Council officers and members, present and retired, police officers, present and retired, and other officials, present and retired.

Mr Ó hOisín: That may well be. It was just an unfortunate reference in this circumstance.

Mr Scott: If there is a line that you feel has been overstated, please tell me.

Mr Ó hOisín: Going back to the planning issues; the design and build team said that they had worked on 17 venues and listed them, all of which were major venues across Britain and Ireland.

Mr Scott: That is right.

Mr Ó hOisín: They also listed a similar example to Casement, which you seem to have difficulty finding. Surely, the Aviva Stadium in Dublin can evacuate 27,000 people onto one singular route. That was one of the stadia that the design and build team said they had worked on. In that stadium, 27,000 people can evacuate onto Merrion Road at the one time. Surely you have looked at that.

Mr Scott: We have not, actually, because we have been involved with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. For the next meeting, I will look at Aviva arrangements.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Is there a different guide in the Republic?

Mr Scott: There is the blue guide in Dublin, but it is largely based on the fourth edition.

Mr Ó hOisín: Kingspan went to a number of stadia across the board, even across Europe, to look at best practice.

Mr Scott: I took the GAA to look at several stadia. The Aviva can evacuate at one side, one end and, from memory, part of another side. I would need to refresh my knowledge, but it is certainly more than —

Mr Ó hOisín: As far as I know, it can evacuate 27,000 people onto one arterial route.

Mr Scott: I would imagine it can. The other thing is that it does not sit tight up to houses.

Mr Ó hOisín: OK. Who said that the potential purchase of houses was to be kept quiet until after the planning process?

Mr Scott: Ciarán McGurk and Carl Southern.

Mr Ó hOisín: Ciarán McGurk and Carl Southern.

Mr Scott: That is right. It was at a meeting attended by Nick Harkness and me.

Mr Ó hOisín: Not Ryan Feeney and Carl Southern?

Mr Scott: No, Ryan Feeney was not at that meeting.

Mr Ó hOisín: We have only your word for what was said at the Tall Ships.

Mr Scott: Exactly. As I said at the outset, we have had very limited time, and the minutes from the meeting of 4 July only appeared on the web yesterday.

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes. How did things change from 2009, when it was possible to get 32,000 people out?

Mr Scott: There is different guidance. The flow rate of 109 people per metre per minute was thought to be achievable for large stadiums. Time has shown that it is not achievable. The British standards and the European standards changed; so, we are now in line with BS EN 13200-1:2012 at 92 persons per metre per minute.

Mr Ó hOisín: You talked about radial gangways. Mike Trice talked about concourses, and it was his contention, and you have not shot this down just yet, that zones 1, 2 and 3 — and I think he referred to zone 3 — could adequately accommodate 38,000 people.

Mr Scott: Zone 1 is the pitch, which cannot be used, as we have heard. Zone 2 is the viewing decks, which we have to get off within eight minutes. Therefore, we are left with zone 3. Mike Trice has designed many fine stadia, and I am more than happy to look at the proposals. We have been asking for them for two years.

Mr Ó hOisín: I take that on board. Zone 1 may not be able to be used in an exiting plan, but it can be used as a place of reasonable safety —

Mr Scott: It cannot be involved in the calculations of the capacity.

Mr Ó hOisín: I take that on board.

Mr McNally, is there consensus among your people in terms of responsibilities and planning? You have not covered the entire period of this: it was yourself and Steve McQueen. Is that right?

Chief Inspector McNally: That is correct.

Mr Ó hOisín: Have you agreed in terms of that as regards your approach to the STG, emergency exiting and —

Chief Inspector McNally: Have we agreed what, sorry?

Mr Ó hOisín: Have you agreed your approach to a circumstance on the Andersonstown Road?

Chief Inspector McNally: Yes, our concerns were put forward from the initial period, albeit we had some conversations about whether one or all of those exits were available or not available. The point that we have made, repeatedly, is that we would like the plans to be put forward to the STG as a collective, as opposed to individual police officers being asked for their view.

Mr Ó hOisín: Did Assistant Chief Constable Harris have an input into that?

Chief Inspector McNally: No. Assistant Chief Constable Kerr had a meeting with the GAA —

Mr Ó hOisín: Sorry, Kerr.

Chief Inspector McNally: — last June, I believe. That meeting was not specifically about emergency evacuation. It was about the PSNI's position, at that point, on where we were with regard to our input into the STG. Emergency evacuation was covered. It was clear at that stage, and it has been the case, that we have always believed the strength to be in the collective, and that any future plans should be put to the STG as opposed to individual conversations with any one organisation.

Mr Ó hOisín: Finally, Chair, the crowd modelling issue that the design team and the GAA came forward with is not the one, which I think you referred to, Mr Scott, that required the purchase of additional property.

Mr Scott: It was for exiting, not emergency evacuation.

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes, but there were four revisions to that.

Mr Scott: There were several revisions because, initially, it showed that when people exited under normal circumstances, 50% would go towards the city and 50% would go towards the country. We were then shown the transport strategy, which showed that the vast majority of people would go towards the city. So, it was redone for, I think, 75% and 25%; 90% and 10%; and for even 100% going the other way. That referred to exiting, all of the exits being available and the road being absolutely sterile, with no traffic movement and no cars parked on the road etc.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you. Mr Ó hOisín's time is up.

Mr McMullan: You continually refer to the emergency plan.

Mr Scott: The emergency evacuation arrangements.

Mr McMullan: Yes. Who, in the red guide, has the responsibility for the emergency plan?

Mr Scott: For the emergency evacuation arrangements, the venue operators and their agents are responsible.

Mr McMullan: Can you give me an example?

Mr Scott: For Windsor Park, or the national football stadium, it will be the Irish Football Association and its team. For Ravenhill, it will be the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union and its team.

Mr McMullan: It would not be anything to do with the multi-agency team.

Mr Scott: There will be an emergency plan for the west Belfast area and, indeed, for the Belfast area, but that is to do with whether there is a problem at the docks with a gas tanker or an aircraft is crashing at the City Airport.

Mr McMullan: Would an emergency plan drawn up and headed by the council not have anything to do with the Andersonstown Road?

Mr Scott: There will be arrangements, but the arrangements for getting out of the stadium will be for the stadium operators.

Mr McMullan: The emergency multi-agency team would have been headed up by the council, the PSNI and the blue light —

Mr Scott: There would be an emergency plan, but we are talking about the emergency evacuation arrangements for the stadium. We have to get people out of the stadium within eight minutes, or at least to a place of relative safety.

Mr McMullan: So that would come into the multi-agency —

Mr Scott: That should dovetail. Once the venue operators have done this, that will dovetail into the fire, police and ambulance services.

Mr McMullan: We need to separate that out because we cannot be staying in the docks all the time, with aeroplanes crashing and whatnot.

Ms Strong: They are two separate issues.

Mr McMullan: That has not been made very clear today.

Ms Strong: Emergency evacuation on the ground is completely different from an emergency plan.

Mr McMullan: It needs to be made very clear today that there are two separate plans. I do not think that it has been made clear.

Mr Scott: Let us make it clear now: we need emergency evacuation arrangements. There will be an emergency plan for the various parts of Belfast, no matter what the misfortune might be, and the two should dovetail into each other.

Mr McMullan: Did you request that from the PSNI?

Mr Scott: No, we cannot. We have not got to that stage because we need the emergency evacuation arrangements for Casement Park.

Mr McMullan: So you have not got to that stage.

Mr Scott: That is right.

Mr McMullan: Populous, the architects, are internationally known.

Mr Scott: They are.

Mr McMullan: Mike Trice is the architect. How do you rate Mike Trice?

Mr Scott: Mike Trice has been involved in the design —

Mr McMullan: How do you rate him as an architect, with his background?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It is very difficult for somebody to speculate on these professionals.

Mr Scott: All I can say is that the stadia designed by Mike Trice are fine stadia, but the ones that he has mentioned all have 360-degree exiting, all have outer zones, and are all served by more than one arterial road. Nobody has seen a stadium like this. That is why it is so important to get the exiting and the emergency evacuation right. We want to work with the design team, because —

Mr McMullan: It is stated on record that the Casement Park project complies with both the red and green guides.

Mr Scott: For what capacity?

Mr McMullan: For normal exiting.

Mr Scott: For 38,000 or for 18,000?

Mr McMullan: For normal exiting and emergency exiting.

Mr Scott: For what capacity?

Mr McMullan: Do you believe that to be correct?

Mr Scott: For an attendance of circa 16,000 or 18,000, that would be possible, but when we go to 38,000, no. However, until we see the emergency-evacuation proposals — we are more than happy to look at them, assess them and reference them, as we have done with entrancing, capacity, etc. We will work with the design team. However, we cannot see — and we need to see — the emergency-evacuation proposals.

Mr McMullan: Then you do not agree with Populous that it is possible to apply a phased evacuation of spectators based on a proportion —

Mr Scott: Do not worry about me. The guidance does not. The guidance states very clearly that everybody must be in a place of safety or of relative safety within eight minutes.

Mr McMullan: But I am asking you.

Mr Scott: Well, that is what I am saying: we follow the guidance.

Ms Strong: We reference everything that we do to the guidance; that is our important point of reference.

Mr McMullan: Do you believe that all the stadiums were treated the same?

Mr Scott: Absolutely.

Mr McMullan: So there was never any variation at all?

Mr Scott: Where we were asked for a variation, we referenced that, because the guide does say — as I said at the outset of my presentation — that you can deviate from the guide, provided that you can demonstrate an equal or greater degree of safety. Just as we said, with Casement Park we allowed the number of turnstiles to drop from circa 58 to circa 48, because the playing of a minor game would provide an equal or greater degree of safety. That is the yardstick that we use: an equal or greater degree of safety.

Mr McMullan: Right. I am not sure that I am quite clear on your role on the STG.

Mr Scott: I am the chair.

Mr McMullan: The chair and the secretary.

Mr Scott: I take notes, as does my colleague, but a member of our administrative support staff also takes notes.

Mr McMullan: What would you be expected to know? Would you be expected to know everything that goes on from the OBC to planning?

Mr Scott: I gave evidence to the OBC, as I said earlier. I dropped out of the process altogether for a couple of years; then, once the drawings started to come through, I came aboard, and we convened the STGs. When the drawings come to us, we assess them against the relevant documentation, advise DCAL, and it goes back and forth.

Mr McMullan: It goes to planning then.

Mr Scott: No. Rosalie Flanagan, the then permanent secretary, said that the projects would not go through to planning until there was sign-off from us. We were later told that neither would the design and build contractors be appointed until there was sign-off. With Casement Park, they went forward to both without sign-off.

Mr McMullan: Were any red-flag issues raised? I use the term "red-flag issues". Some say "showstoppers"; I call them "red-flag issues".

Mr Scott: There were, because we told the people whom we were told to speak to in DCAL. Carl Southern was our designated point of contact; everything went through him, latterly Ciarán McGurk and then Rory Miskelly. That all goes through on the technical side.

Mr McMullan: Were there red flags issued then?

Mr Scott: We said in all the documentation that we could not sign it off until we see the emergency-evacuation arrangements.

Mr McMullan: And it was not signed off?

Mr Scott: No.

Mr McMullan: You did not sign it off?

Mr Scott: No. Absolutely not.

Mr McMullan: And that was a red flag?

Mr Scott: It should have been treated as a red flag.

Mr McMullan: No, I did not ask you whether it should have been. Was it raised as a red flag? Not "should have been"; was it?

Mr Scott: It was in that we sent communications to DCAL and told them.

Mr McMullan: What?

Mr Scott: We told them that we could not sign it off, because we did not have the emergency evacuation area.

Mr McMullan: Is that in the pack?

Mr Scott: Sorry?

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Yes. Can I just say that I think that there are questions there that really need to be put to DCAL rather than Paul Scott?

Mr McMullan: This is the chair of the STG. I am just asking this gentleman, because I am not too sure about the roles in the whole thing. Forgive me for that. You say that the reference to not signing off on it is in the pack.

Mr Scott: That is right. It said that the drawings would not go forward to planning. That is what the permanent secretary told us. We did not sign them off. We never did. We kept asking, "Please show us the emergency evacuation proposals." Hopefully Mr Trice has advised the Committee that he has developed these. We are more than happy to look at them

Mr McMullan: Do you agree that this is all part of the process? We are still in the planning process. We have a long way to go yet.

Mr Scott: Plans were sought without our sign-off. Planning permission was given and then retracted following the judicial review. Rory Miskelly then told this Committee some months ago that there would be no waste of public money because the drawings were going in as was. Is this an ongoing process? We, as the safety technical group, last received drawings in autumn 2013. We have been asking for them since, and there is limited communication. We had individual meetings with Sport Northern Ireland and Buckingham, but we were told that we were not to share any information with the rest of the safety technical group. As Anthony McNally has said, the strength is the group as a whole so that the Fire Service, the Police Service, the Ambulance Service, Belfast City Council and us can all come and look at this and assess the plans collectively. Some things that we may be comfortable with may present problems for Jeremy or Chief Inspector McNally.

Mr McMullan: Right, OK. Can I ask you a couple of very quick ones now? You said that you had a meeting in a hotel in Belfast that became very — what was your wording?

Ms Strong: A "barrage of abuse" is the term that I used.

Mr McMullan: You said that you were pretty thick-skinned and could take abuse. What type of abuse was it that meant you came out shaken? You said that you were shaken when you came out.

Ms Strong: I was very taken aback, to be honest. It is not the kind of treatment or behaviour that you expect in a professional meeting.

Mr McMullan: Who gave you the abuse?

Ms Strong: There were representatives there from DCAL, the GAA, Buckingham —

Mr McMullan: Who gave you the abuse? Was it collective abuse or singular abuse?

Ms Strong: It was collective. There were many different individuals.

Mr McMullan: So everybody was attacking you.

Ms Strong: There was just Paul and I there to answer questions.

Mr McMullan: But they were all attacking you. Those three groups were all attacking you?

Ms Strong: Yes. We felt so. We felt that very much. I do not think that we are overly sensitive and that we cry in a corner very regularly. I think that we are quite capable of —

Mr Scott: One of the representatives of the GAA phoned me the next morning and said, "Paul, I am so sorry about what you had to put up with yesterday. It was just uncalled for." Another member of the GAA said similar things when I met him a few days later.

Mr McMullan: What is the relevance of the pages of the report that you sent to the Committee last week about you and Mr —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): We have already dealt with that issue.

Mr McMullan: I just wanted to get to —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Also, your time is up.

Mr Scott: It is one of the documents that I referred to in —

Mr McMullan: What was the hot thing in it?

Mr Scott: The hot thing —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): The Committee agreed not to include it —

Mr McMullan: OK, sorry. It is not included.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): — and your time is up. The next person is Dominic Bradley.

Mr D Bradley: Good afternoon, as it is now. Thanks very much for your presentation. Mr Scott, several of the witnesses — Carl Southern, Noel Molloy and Ciarán McGurk — all gave evidence here and led us to believe that there were no red flags raised regarding safety, I think until the police raised the scenario of the Andersonstown Road being closed. Now, the stadium was in planning, and work had been going on over several years at that stage. Those people, who are professionals — as you are — told us that you and the STG did not raise any safety red flags until the police came up with the scenario of the possible closure of the Andersonstown Road.

Mr Scott: That is not the case. There are the emails that went to Carl Southern, and he copied Noel Molloy, who was his boss at that time, into many of them; Ciarán was possibly more on the business than the money side of things. We have the emails and can show them to you. I am amazed that they came up with that scenario. Amazed.

We had a very robust meeting — although not as robust as the meeting at the Wellington Park Hotel — at Causeway Exchange on 16 October 2013. It was made very clear — because DCAL was saying "You must sign this off. You have to sign this off", and we were saying, "We cannot sign this off", and then we were asked, "Well, could you not sign it off and we will work it out later?". That has been one of the problems: the attitude of "Let's build the thing and we will worry about the exiting or emergency evacuation afterwards". Once it is built, you cannot do that. We can produce — and have produced — the evidence to show —

Mr D Bradley: I am just telling you that that is what they told the Committee. In fact, Mr Southern said that he had a very good working relationship with you —

Mr Scott: We had a robust —

Mr D Bradley: — not only in the formal setting but outside it as well.

Mr Scott: That is right.

Mr D Bradley: He said that you did other work outside your official work and that he advised you on it and so on.

Mr Scott: That is right.

Mr D Bradley: He said that he was quite taken aback when you appeared and expressed the views that you did on 30 April.

Mr Scott: On the 30 April? I do not see how he could. The emails were there —

Mr D Bradley: In fact, he thought that it was quite out of character, given the relationship that he had had with you up until then.

Mr Scott: I cannot comment on Mr Southern's views. All I can say is that I have nothing against Carl Southern. We have had differences over the design of the stadium, although Carl subsequently said to me that he did not necessarily agree with the DCAL views, but all the emails, etc, etc —

Mr D Bradley: That is not what he told the Committee.

Mr Scott: It may not be, but there are the emails.

Mr D Bradley: OK. If we go to your appearance before the Committee on 30 April, you said that the stadium would be safe for only 18,000 people.

Mr Scott: Somewhere in that order. Indeed, Populous said that if the Andersonstown Road is closed, it is safe for only 13,776.

Mr D Bradley: The figure that you mentioned on that day was 18,000.

Mr Scott: I think that Populous —

Mr D Bradley: Let me finish, please.

You said that that was due to the possibility of an incident on the Andersonstown Road, which would cause the exit on that side of the ground to be closed. Would it be fair to say that the incidents that you highlighted, such as a bomb outside the ground, a house fire or a traffic collision, would fall under the term "contingent"?

Mr Scott: There would have to be a contingency plan, but for a contingency plan to work, you need suitable emergency-exiting arrangements. The contingency is how you manage that, but you can manage it only if you have suitable exits to get people to a place of safety or to a place of relative safety.

Mr D Bradley: So, under the red and green guides, those incidents would come under contingency planning.

Mr Scott: There is a bit of a duality. There is a requirement to provide a suitable number of exits at appropriate locations; that is how you should design a stadium. If a stadium is designed in that manner — and in accordance with the guidance — and if there is a problem, the contingency planning will enable all the people to move to a place of safety or to a place of relative safety. We cannot see how that is done. We are not saying that it cannot be done, and we certainly look forward to receiving emergency —

Mr D Bradley: According to the red and green guides, what is the evacuation time in the event of a contingency?

Mr Scott: It is always eight minutes to a place of safety or relative safety.

Mr D Bradley: Is there any evacuation time?

Mr Scott: That is the emergency evacuation time. You have to get people to a place of safety or relative safety within an eight-minute period.

Mr D Bradley: OK. Paragraph 2.15(1) of the red guide 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".

Under what circumstances would people need to stay in the ground?

Mr Scott: People should always be able to evacuate, because panic is the big thing, and after eight minutes, no matter what —

Mr D Bradley: You said earlier that evacuation meant going to a place of relative safety.

Mr Scott: Safety or relative safety. That can be inside or outside the ground, but there are certain parameters for both. You cannot evacuate people out onto a busy road, for example. That is not a place of safety, although it can be addressed by working with emergency services. They need either to be outside the ground or inside the ground in a place of relative safety.

Mr D Bradley: Were there places of relative safety within the design for the ground that you saw?

Mr Scott: There are places of relative safety, but for a limited capacity. We could only see approximately 3,000 to 4,000 people being accommodated in those places of relative safety. If Mike Trice has got proposals, we are more than happy to look at them and discuss them with him.

Mr D Bradley: Pages 40 to 44 of your own bundle consists of notes of the STG meeting held on 12 April 2013. Paragraph 6 on page 41 confirms that the PSNI advised that there was a possibility that the Andersonstown Road would be closed for exiting or emergency exiting. Surely, if the Andersonstown Road was closed, the threat of the incidents that you mentioned would be removed, or at least largely reduced.

Mr Scott: No. As I said earlier, the big fear is panic and crushing. Experience has shown that at many types of event, be it the Love Parade in Germany or Great White in America, the problem is crushing. After eight minutes people tend to worry and panic, and there should therefore be appropriate exits for them from the stadium to a place of safety or to a place of relative safety moving towards the place of safety.

Mr D Bradley: Do the last drawings that you saw of the new Casement Park in emergency evacuation mode comply with the red and green guides?

Mr Scott: For an audience of 16,000 to 18,000; not for one of 38,000.

Mr D Bradley: What are your reasons for saying that?

Mr Scott: It is based on the rate of passage, which is 82 persons per metre per minute. Using the eight minutes and the width of the exit gates, you get the number of people who can leave the venue. They still have to get away from the venue — maybe that is another discussion. Then there will also be a number of people in the protected routes who are able to move at the rate of 82 persons per metre per minute. These routes were substantively six to eight metres wide and probably about 80 to 90 metres long. They are fire protected I have no difficulty with that — and at that point there is no funnelling or narrowing. A number of people in addition to the 14,000 who will get out could also therefore be considered to be in a place of relative safety, taking the capacity up to between 16,000 and 18,000, depending on the finer detail.

Mr D Bradley: Yet, we have this company, Populous, which has an international reputation —

Mr Scott: It has, absolutely —

Mr D Bradley: — for stadium design, putting it in writing that the stadium, as most recently designed, met the red and green guides.

Mr Scott: And we will welcome the proposals so that we can verify that and discuss it with Populous. It says that it has; and we are more than happy to look at them. However, we must also bear in mind that the stadia that Populous have developed in recent years have always had outer circulation zones and 360-degree exiting served by more than one arterial road. This is a challenging site. It is not insurmountable, but it is going to be challenging.

Mr D Bradley: Mr Ó hOisín says that the Aviva stadium in Dublin has a similar type of arrangement.

Mr Scott: No. The Aviva has one side and one end where there is exiting that will get you out of the stadium to a place of safety. I would need to refresh my knowledge of it, but I looked at it when I went down and spoke to the people during the design stage. My recollection is that there are two sides and one end that are suitable. There is certainly one side and one end and, I think, part of the second side.

Mrs McKeivitt: Thanks very much to everybody for coming this morning and to Paul for his further presentation.

Mr Scott: Thank you.

Mrs McKeivitt: My question is for Anthony; I am just seeking confirmation. I think you said that no one involved in this project applied any pressure and that all meetings were held in order to get a solution. Will you confirm that that is what you said?

Chief Inspector McNally: In respect of meetings with the GAA? Is that what you are referring to? Yes; in the time that I was involved in the project I was present at a number of meetings with the GAA. I was there to identify the PSNI's position for the purposes of clarity. There was no pressure applied and during those meetings I can say, as I have said on a number of occasions, that the PSNI's view was always that the strength is in the collective. We welcome the opportunity to work as part of the STG.

Mrs McKeivitt: Would it be fair of me to describe the STG that was established as part of the previous Casement Park project as being an advisory committee? I am touching on that because you were saying that you were invited in and out of committees.

Mr Scott: The STG was convened by Noel Molloy, who asked us to provide advice. Ultimately, the stadium will receive a safety certificate from Belfast City Council in accordance with the recognised guidance. This was done in order to ensure that there were no surprises at the end and that the stadium would receive a safety certificate with a capacity equating, give or take, to the design capacity.

Mrs McKeivitt: Yes, we talked about that when you appeared here previously on 30 April. Could you remind me of your role with Belfast City Council, your remit and how it fits in with the statutory authority?

Mr Scott: Under the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Belfast City Council will issue a safety certificate for Casement Park; it being a designated stadium. The council will look at compliance with the red guide in terms of the stadium's layout and structure —

Mrs McKeivitt: Is this your role, Paul?

Mr Scott: Oh no, this is Belfast City Council's role —

Mrs McKeivitt: I want you to tell me about your role. You mentioned it last time but I would like you to remind me.

Mr Scott: I am the head of the safety compliance unit at Sport Northern Ireland. We have three remits, the first of which is to oversee the certification processes by the various district councils across Northern Ireland at the 30 designated stadia and to report twice a year to DCAL — to the sports unit rather than the stadium unit. We do that twice a year and we will advise on whether the councils are applying suitable terms and conditions to the stadia in their remit.

Secondly, we are supposed to be the font of knowledge for governing bodies, venue operators and the emergency services, which can come to us for advice. We have done that for all the governing bodies and I have spoken to the GAA on many occasions to help with its safety management issues.

Mrs McKeivitt: I suppose that that coincides with the presentation that we got from the GAA, during which it was said that you had a good working relationship with that organisation.

Mr Scott: Yes. I have gone to Croke Park and given presentations for them.

Mrs McKeivitt: You are clearly regarded as an expert in these matters. How would you rate the GAA's track record in managing very large crowds, given that over 30,000 people attend Ulster football finals and that there are 80,000 in Croke Park for the all-Ireland finals? They must know what they are doing, because I have never heard of any disasters, near misses or anything like that.

Mr Scott: Generally, they are very good. There have been one or two blips, but we have worked through them with the GAA.

Mrs McKeivitt: OK. Honestly, these red and green guides — I am not going to go into what it is like for a layperson.

Mr Scott: I share your pain.

Mrs McKeivitt: Is it correct to say that the red and green guides are used in the STG report for the evacuation of stadia when the emergency is in the stadium? What regulations are used when the emergency is outside the stadium? Is there a difference?

Mr Scott: As Jeremy said in his presentation, the factor can be internal or external.

Mrs McKeivitt: That is in the red and green guide.

Mr Scott: It is.

Mrs McKeivitt: Will you guide me to that?

Mr Scott: Can we read out the last bit of Jeremy's presentation? Jeremy, maybe you could repeat it.

Mr Cowen: Section 3.17 states:

"Contingency plans should lay down a structured and graduated response with clear guidelines on the measures to be adopted in particular circumstances, bearing in mind both internal and external factors specific to the individual sports ground."

Mrs McKeivitt: Thank you. The red and green guides also give the specific safe passage-flow rates in the stadium. You touched on them earlier. Can you confirm where the red and green guides recommend the use of those passage rates to the adjacent streets of any stadium development?

Mr Scott: It does not, but we have always taken it that the conditions are the same, provided that the street is reasonably level. Of course, there can be issues if there are cars parked on the street or, indeed, traffic moving on the street, but we have used —

Mrs McKeivitt: The fact that it does not is good enough; that is OK. I know that I am probably going to run out of time, but I have a few more questions that I would like to ask. You tapped the comprehensive bundle a couple of times today. Why were two emails to DCAL on emergency exiting and the sign-off to the project omitted from your bundle?

Mr Scott: They were not. They were exiting. There was discussion, debate and calculation, and, at that time, we were working with the GAA, the design team and DCAL on how we would secure the exiting element.

Mrs McKevitt: Which email are you talking about?

Mr Scott: Both of them.

Ms Strong: The emails from 19 June and 23 August.

Mrs McKevitt: Twenty-third of August.

Mr Scott: It says:

"There appears to be consensus that the latest proposals address the exiting concerns."

Ms Strong: That is very different from emergency exiting.

Mrs McKevitt: The subject that you have put on the email is, "Casement Park, final stage technical report".

Mr Scott: That originally came from Carl.

Mrs McKevitt: No, it is from you to Carl; it is dated 23 August.

Mr Scott: The email sent before has that ending. That is Carl's heading.

Mrs McKevitt: Why did you not include the emergency exit in that?

Mr Scott: We have been telling them, repeatedly, that we need the emergency exiting.

Mrs McKevitt: Why is not in that one if it is under the subject of the final state technical report?

Mr Scott: This was during a period in which we were discussing exiting. We were saying, "We have now reached consensus on the exiting.". Prior, and subsequent, to that, we were stating that we had big concerns about the emergency evacuation. Indeed, subsequent to those emails, at the meeting that we had at Causeway Exchange, for example, the Department was very well aware that we could not sign off on emergency evacuation because no one would give us any information.

Mrs McKevitt: Yes, but the subject was "Final [stage] technical report".

Mr Scott: That was their heading, not ours.

Ms Strong: Carl originally sent that email at 12.10 pm.

Mrs McKevitt: That is not included.

Mr Scott: I was responding to an email from Carl, which he titled "Final [stage] technical report" and advising him that the exiting was OK. Anyone with competence in stadia design would know that emergency evacuation and exiting were not one and the same. Indeed, the guides specifically state that. There is the four-stage process in arriving at final capacity. All four stages are needed, and we go with the lowest of those four. Three of them could be fantastic, but, if the fourth one is not up to scratch, that is what we go with.

Mrs McKevitt: In response to that, Carl said that he was:

"surprised you're meeting again given the layout hasn't changed substantively and in light of your previous in principle approval."

Can you enlighten us on that?

Mr Scott: My email in response said:

"The exiting arrangements did change significantly."

Mrs McKevitt: Is that email in the pack, Paul?

Mr Scott: It is indeed, yes. There we are — I can show it to you.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It is the paper that was tabled today.

Mrs McKevitt: It is not in the bundle of papers.

Ms Strong: It was not in the bundle because it was in relation to exiting, not emergency evacuation.

Mrs McKevitt: Surely, the two are together. Surely, exiting —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): In fairness to everyone, at the start of this process, Mr Scott produced a bundle of papers at very short notice and said that there would be more. Given the length of time that it has taken the Department to get the papers together, that is understandable. The paper in question was tabled today, and you have it in front of you. If you want to refer to it, please do so.

Mrs McKevitt: I already have referred to it.

Mr Scott: We were told on Friday afternoon to get ourselves together for today.

Mrs McKevitt: So were we.

Mr Cree: Good afternoon. Reference has been made to the "blue light brigade", and it is quite clear from evidence that we have taken that a lot of people had the idea that this would be sorted out by the blue light brigade at the end of the day. Was that view ever expressed to you, and were you in a position to challenge it?

Mr Scott: Never. That was the first we saw of that. If you look through all the minutes, you will see that that was never raised.

Mr Cree: OK. Who chaired the meeting with the design and build team?

Mr Scott: The meeting should have been chaired by the GAA, although Mr McCloskey appeared to take the lead.

Mr Cree: Was that consistently the case?

Mr Scott: There were previous meetings that should have been chaired by the GAA but seemed to be chaired by Carl Southern. He seemed to take the lead on going through the various matters that they wanted to discuss.

Mr Cree: Can you remember Populous discussing emergency exiting with your people?

Mr Scott: No, because we kept asking them for the emergency exiting strategy.

Mr Cree: What was the response to that?

Mr Scott: The response was, "We'll work it out and get it back." Our initial point of contact was DCAL, namely, Carl Southern. Carl raised the issues with Populous, but there were times when we spoke directly to Populous. There were a couple of meetings with Populous, but they were pretty conceptual. Rather than, "This is what it is" and "Here are our drawings", it was, "What do you think of this?" and "What would your thought process be?"

Mr Cree: Was there any urgency on their part to have this matter resolved?

Mr Scott: We still do not have any drawings, some two and a bit years later.

Mr Cree: That speaks for itself. Paul, you referred earlier to Carl Southern's views differing from those of DCAL. Can you flesh that out a bit? In what respect? Which views?

Mr Scott: I think that he was concerned that there was a stadium of that magnitude, with that number of people, in a residential area. That is his view, as conveyed to me.

Mr Cree: Surely DCAL would then be aware of the concerns. He was a member. He was the leader.

Mr Scott: I do not know whom he confided in in DCAL or what the discussions would have been.

Mr Cree: Interesting. Finally, Anthony — you will notice that I am very brief and succinct — in your report, you mention the concerns in October 2013 "going on record" — to use your expression — most notably with respect to the emergency evacuation arrangements. Who was that to? To whom were you talking?

Chief Inspector McNally: A report was submitted to the STG at that time. Equally, that was taken to the meeting that my colleagues had with DCAL — they referred to it — in October, which Sergeant Steve McQueen attended. He conveyed the views of that documentation at that time.

Mr Cree: So, at that meeting on 13 October —

Chief Inspector McNally: It was 16 October 2013.

Mr Scott: At the Causeway Exchange.

Mr Cree: So, again, it was clearly a red light issue —

Mr Scott: Yes.

Mr Cree: — as some people like to call it — or a red flag issue.

Mr Scott: Yes. It was certainly an issue.

Mr Cree: Have you had any information recently to say that the emergency evacuation arrangements will ever be with you?

Mr Scott: No. Buckingham's came to us and spoke about its ideas, but those ideas involved using the pitch as the place of safety, which is clearly against the green guide. They also involved using a technique called "phased evacuation", which is used in smaller buildings or buildings that hold fewer people, but it is certainly against the ethos of the recognised guidance for a stadium.

Mr Cree: It certainly was not an issue for DCAL, by the look of it.

Mr Scott: DCAL was aware of the meeting, because, when we asked whether we could take the proposals to the other members of the STG, we were told that we could not and that DCAL had advised them to speak to each constituent organisation separately. We were, of course, concerned about that, and it was confirmed in a later meeting with a DCAL official, who said that that was the case and that instruction had been given.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Who was that official?

Mr Scott: Ciarán McGurk. Laura can give you the date of the meeting.

Ms Strong: It was 12 November 2014.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you. Just before we go on to Basil, the steering group gets complex, because there are so many steering groups, advisory groups and so on. The GAA steering group is part of the GAA element. You then have the IFA steering group and the rugby steering group. It is clear that that was the group that met in the Wellington Park Hotel. We are waiting for the minutes for that.

Mr B McCrea: I will start with Mr McNally. The PSNI went on record saying that it had concerns about the Andersonstown Road exit being used. How did it go on the record?

Chief Inspector McNally: We submitted a report to DCAL via the STG. It was supplementary to the STG report. The rationale for that was that we were conscious that a lot of the conversation up until then had involved matters inside the stadium, but, ultimately, a lot of —

Mr B McCrea: On what date was that report submitted to DCAL?

Chief Inspector McNally: I do not know the exact date, but it was in October 2013.

Mr B McCrea: Would it be possible for us to get a copy of the report.

Chief Inspector McNally: I believe that you have a copy of it.

Mr B McCrea: Do we have a copy of the police report?

Chief Inspector McNally: No?

Mr B McCrea: I have to say that it is one of the big game changers. Mr Southern's submission was that things had been relatively tickety-boo up until October when, out of left field, the idea of 100% utilisation of the Andersonstown Road changed the whole dynamic. Your PSNI report is fundamental to the issue.

Chief Inspector McNally: The PSNI report was submitted at that time, but, as my colleague has mentioned, this was not something new; it had been mentioned significantly prior to October 2013. Paul, you may wish to add to that.

Mr Scott: From March —

Mr B McCrea: Hold on a tick. I have a certain amount of time. Does the PSNI stand by your earlier statement that:

"we cannot see how all persons within the stadium could reach a place of safety or reasonable safety within the eight-minute time frame if the Andersonstown Road exits were unavailable for any reason."

Chief Inspector McNally: That is correct.

Mr B McCrea: Do you accept that the likelihood of that is low, but that it is not unforeseeable?

Chief Inspector McNally: That is correct.

Mr B McCrea: I will now move on to some issues I put to Mr Southern. We talked about the use of the pitch, and Mr Southern said that the guidance is that it be discounted, and that it is not considered at all:

"other than in a major one-off incident contingency."

Mr Southern is on the record at page 46 as saying that there is something — it might be to do with the issue that was brought up by the fire officer.

Chief Inspector McNally: Chair, if I may come in, I think it is important that we get the opportunity to reflect our views. It was mentioned that the PSNI raised the issue in October 2013. It is important on behalf of my colleague to reiterate that the issue was raised significantly before October 2013.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Go ahead, Mr Scott.

Mr Scott: We have been expressing our concerns to DCAL orally since December 2012 and in writing since March.

Mr B McCrea: Mr Scott, I would like to ask you a few questions. For the record, I am convinced that you have been sending back records; so, I am on board with that. However, there is new information from the two officers here, which I would like to follow up, and then I will come to you for your bit, if you do not mind.

I would also like to clear up just one thing before I come back. Can you make a categorical statement for the record? Allegations were made that Mr Ryan Feeney had put pressure on the STG or on the police in some way. Has the PSNI any knowledge of pressure being brought to bear by the GAA to change the positions of the police on these matters?

Chief Inspector McNally: I can assure you that I was involved in conversations with the GAA, including with Mr Feeney, and at no stage was there pressure exerted on the PSNI. The purpose of the conversations was to ask for clarification on a number of points.

Mr B McCrea: Clarification and helpful discussion and whatever — OK; that is useful.

Jeremy, the STG cannot see how emergency evacuation could be achieved in safety and in compliance with recognised guidance. Is that your position, and not just Mr Scott's or Laura's?

Mr Cowen: We have never received any of the documents that we have been asking for since spring 2013. I look at them independently. They are on a ShareTree. I get to download them, but I have not seen anything. Unfortunately, I cannot say that we are satisfied that the emergency evacuation arrangements at the proposed development are sound.

Mr B McCrea: I am happy with whoever wants to answer this. One of the points I put to Mr Southern — and he had repeated this on a number of occasions, and I happen to agree with you — was that the 100% absence of the Andersonstown Road is a show-stopper. It is a fundamental change that puts the whole delivery of the project in jeopardy. Do you agree with Carl Southern?

Mr Scott: It is not necessarily a show-stopper. You can reduce the capacity. You might be able to get some additional capacity by extending the concourses. The other option would be to create additional exits, although that would involve the purchase and demolition of homes in the area.

Mr B McCrea: I put it to Mr Southern that, if it was a relevant factor, the 100% non-availability of the Andersonstown Road fundamentally changes the viability, not necessarily of building a stadium, but of the Casement Park project. He replied, "Yes, it does."

Mr Scott: Again, it depends on whether there must be 38,000. Would a smaller number suffice? Could we get additional exits? We can also get some increase in capacity by maximising the design of the concourses, although I do not believe that there is a lot of slack there.

Mr B McCrea: Let me ask you about that then. Mike Trice said that you can evacuate to a place of safety, and he said that the concourse could be a place of safety. It was pointed out to him by me — maybe not to him, actually — would it be the case that that is only the case if you can get free movement from that place of safety?

Mr Scott: You must be able to move 82 persons per metre per minute.

Mr B McCrea: So the position at the concourse is that, even though it is a fire-safe place, because you have no movement out of that area, that negates that issue.

Mr Scott: Absolutely. That is my understanding of the guidance.

Mr B McCrea: Will you also clarify for me — I think you have it in your notes — that people were talking about the use of the pitch for another stadium and saying that the pitch could be utilised, but that that pitch had direct access to a place of safety?

Mr Scott: There are several issues there. First of all, at that time, Windsor Park was an existing stadium, and there are relaxations for existing stadia, but, going by the red guide, which was the guidance operative at that time — bear in mind that it was a number of years ago — the proposals of the Irish Football Association/Linfield Football Club were in accordance with the guidance at that time. Thus, the council issued the safety certificate to reflect that.

Mr B McCrea: So you agree with Mr Southern? I put it to Mr Southern that reservoirs, whether it be the pitch or the converse, can be used, but only if they are part of a secondary movement — in other words, you can get movement through — and that, if there is no movement through the Andersonstown Road, they cannot be used.

Mr Scott: You can only use the concourses in getting to a place of safety. The guidance is very clear that, for new build, we cannot use the pitch in assessing the safe capacity of the stadium.

Mr B McCrea: Can I just check a couple of points? Jeremy, just confirm your statement that the writing of the emergency evacuation plan rests with the stadium ground operator.

Mr Cowen: It does, and we are very keen to work with any event organiser for soccer/football, football, cricket, rugby or whoever. We are very keen to do that to assist them in that smooth transition. As I said earlier, we take care of people once they are in a place of safety, but they really do need to have a process and a build, frankly, that will allow people to get there.

Mr B McCrea: Laura, were any venues in Great Britain with an emergency evacuation time of greater than eight minutes ever identified?

Ms Strong: No, but we were speaking to them about the grounds that are designated under the 1975 Act, so they were able to come back to us and confirm that there were no grounds within England and Wales that had an emergency evacuation time of greater than eight minutes.

Mr B McCrea: OK. You referred to the Tenos report and the 29 minutes if there is zero availability, but that report — I think it is page 195 in Paul's bundle — also refers to the fact that calculations were done where there is only 50% availability or 25% availability. Can you tell me what the outworkings of those were?

Ms Strong: They went through the different scenarios if 50% of the exits on to Andersonstown Road were available and worked out how long it would take people to get out in that eventuality. Then they worked through 25%.

Mr B McCrea: Although it is low probability for 100%, is there an increase in probability for 75%, 50% or 25%?

Ms Strong: There is no real difference on that matter, no.

Mr B McCrea: It also concludes that, if the south-west corner stairs were unavailable, that would be over the eight minutes.

Ms Strong: There are various different scenarios that would still bring you over that eight-minute period of time.

Mr B McCrea: There are a couple of points for the record that I want to move on to, Paul, because great store is being put on your email of 19 June. The Department argued that you used the same language in that that you had used in a previous report for Windsor and Ravenhill, which was to say that there was the potential that the (S) and (P) factors would be 1. Can you tell me why you wrote that letter? Why did you write that there is a potential, when you clearly had some concerns?

Mr Scott: Bear in mind that the (P) and (S) factors come after safe capacity is assessed. If, as it looked like, the various dimensions, stairs, handrails etc were all in accordance with recognised guidance, we really should be able to get a (P) and an (S) factor of 1 — but a (P) and an (S) factor of 1 on the exiting.

Mr B McCrea: This was the date upon which planning permission was submitted; on 19 June. You have helpfully put the date for us in your bundle. You wrote your email at 10.46 am saying that there was potential. The Department relied upon your email.

Mr Scott: Amazing. We also went on to say that:

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

That should actually have said "emergency evacuation arrangements". We are saying that, yes, we agree and are now in consensus on entrancing, viewing and exiting, but, please, show us the emergency exiting.

Mr B McCrea: Mr McGurk said in the official record that the programme director, Mr Molloy, will have needed your sign-off to go forward for planning. The emails that were sent before that drew it to your attention. The email on 14 June says that planning was scheduled for 19 June and asks whether you could please make a response. You would have known that the Department would rely on your statement.

Mr Scott: We also knew that the permanent secretary was saying that unless we had sign-off they would not go. We kept saying, and if you look at my email dated 22 May — sorry, 30 April. My apologies.

Mr B McCrea: I am looking at an email dated 22 May and a handwritten note dated 30 April.

Mr Scott: That is right. In this email and in the handwritten note, which was essentially of a phone call that I had made to Mr Southern, we are saying, "Look: show us the emergency-exiting arrangements, the emergency-evacuation arrangements."

Mr B McCrea: I am looking at a document at page 57 of your pack that says, "Casement Park stadium redevelopment". It has a number of connotations in it.

Mr Scott: What are we saying?

Mr B McCrea: It says, "reviewed on 4 June 13" based on information available. This is the draft report, which you obviously got. When was that provided to whoever it was provided to?

Mr Scott: I believe that it was in September, but I would need to check that.

Mr B McCrea: Why was it delayed? Given that you had written it and had it reviewed on 4 June, why was it not given to the Department at that time?

Mr Scott: It was because we were saying, "We cannot say anything about emergency exiting. Please give us the documentation; then we can complete the assessment." We were told, "Yes, we are working on that." We waited for it. Then we were told, "No, you must provide us the report." We did provide the report, albeit that it was incomplete.

Mr B McCrea: I will just conclude, Chair, by saying that I find your evidence compelling; I find the evidence of all four of you really useful. Those who try to argue that there is not a significant emergency-exiting problem around Casement Park are simply wrong. I believe that you were not listened to, and I think that you should be listened to. I think that people should be working with you. They should find a way. We all want to see a stadium built. I think that it will be built if people address the issue properly. Thank you for your contribution.

Mr Scott: Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): At this point, we have about 40-odd minutes left. I have just two questions that I want to ask. We will then go back round again. There is about three minutes for everybody. Basil has already used up his three with that go.

Mr B McCrea: You cannot bring in a rule retrospectively.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Oh, I can: it is the Chairman's authority. Everybody will get a chance if I go round in the same order as previously for questions, because everybody was in. We will do them in that same order again but give everybody three minutes.

You may not be able to answer this, Mr Scott, and I can understand that, but you might be able to because you seem to know the red guide and the green guide and all those guides inside out. With regard to the green guide, the GB one, when Mr Daly was in with the GAA, he said that:

" 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."

When they were developing the green guide — you may not know this either — was Mr Trice on the oversight group or the steering group?

Mr Scott: No, the main person steering the project of the green guide was a gentleman called Jim Froggatt, who was an inspector at the time but has subsequently retired. He was an inspector with the Football Licensing Authority, which subsequently went through a metamorphosis and is now the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. As I understand it, Jim was the mainstay. The inspectors at the Sports Grounds Safety Authority all have their own specialties. There are structural engineers and fire engineers, etc. These people are world-renowned.

So, it came to a draft process and went out to something like just shy of 700 organisations that it would like to contribute. One of those was a company called HOK Sport, which is now Populous. My understanding is that Populous, or HOK Sport as it was then, made a number of submissions — just over 20, I think — of variations that it would like to the wordings and that, out of those, maybe a third were taken on board by the Football Licensing Authority at that time.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): OK. That clarifies it. So, he was not employed by the group that developed —

Mr Scott: Not as I understand it.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It was developed by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority or whatever.

Mr Scott: Yes.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): He was on the consultation list along with hundreds of other people.

Mr Scott: He was; yes.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Just to get clarity on this, it said there that he was a significant contributor.

Mr Scott: I can confirm that, Chair. I can go back to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and find out exactly how much.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): If you could find that out, that would be helpful.

Mr Scott: My understanding is that there were over 20 comments made by the HOK Group. However, you should bear in mind that HOK is a big organisation. It is not a one-man band. It is a big, big organisation.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): So, he was a consultee really. OK; that is fine.

The second thing that I want to ask is of the police. I apologise that I had to leave there. Would you be able to send us a copy of the police report that was mentioned?

Chief Inspector McNally: Of course; absolutely.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): That is fine.

This question is for Mr Scott and possibly Laura. There was mention of meetings with DCAL in 2014 at which demolition of houses was talked about but was not to be discussed externally.

Mr Scott: Yes.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Or at the STG?

Mr Scott: The STG would get proposals from DCAL, but they were not formal proposals. They were, if you like, scoping exercises on what would be needed, in our view, to get the capacity up.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Who was present at those meetings in 2014 and, therefore, would have known that there was discussion of —

Mr Scott: Nick Harkness and I would have been there representing Sport Northern Ireland, and Ciarán McGurk and Carl Southern would have been there representing DCAL. At one of the meetings, Antoinette McKeown would have been present.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): So, there were two meetings at which there was discussion of the demolition of houses.

Mr Scott: There were at least two. I believe that there was also a third involving just myself and Ciarán McGurk. I can certainly get you those documents, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you very much.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your persistence and endurance. I have proposed that the Sports Grounds Safety Authority is brought in front of the Committee in the autumn.

Mr Scott: As the authors of the green guide and with the red guide based on the fourth edition, that —

Mr Humphrey: I put this question to the GAA, and it said no. Did anyone in Sport NI ever suggest to the GAA that it should seek that organisation's professional guidance on this?

Mr Scott: Yes. Antoinette McKeown and Nick Harkness met the GAA in, I believe, October 2014 on a variety of matters. One of those was that the STG would do a quality assurance, if you like, on the proposals. I was not at the meeting, but I was advised that the GAA was broadly in agreement with the content of the meeting, of which this was only part. Minutes were sent by, I think, Mr Harkness, and a letter came back to Ms McKeown to say that the GAA had not agreed to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority reviewing the drawings and that it would re-contact Ms McKeown. However, I do not believe that that had been done. At least, I have not been told that it had been done.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. I want to go back and ask you about the sponsor board. Was Nick Harkness representing Sport NI at the time?

Mr Scott: No, it was the chief executive. In the chief executive's absence, Mr Harkness and, on occasions, Mr Sloan represented Sport NI.

Ms McCorley: So they did not always, but they did sometimes?

Mr Scott: No, it was the chief executive, but, if the chief executive was attending other meetings, was on leave or whatever, she would have asked one of the directors to substitute for her.

Ms McCorley: OK. During those times, would you have been giving advice to any of them about your concerns?

Mr Scott: No. Other than prior to the meeting in December 2013, I was not asked, other than on one occasion when Mr Sloan was deputising, and I gave him a one-page written summary of where we were with the three stadia. However, Mr Sloan advised me that he had been instructed that he was only to go and listen.

Ms McCorley: So did it surprise you, then, that those concerns were not raised at that level?

Mr Scott: Yes. Indeed, I then tried to get the minutes of the sponsor board, and I had to jump through hoops. I was initially told that Sport NI did not have them, and then I was told that DCAL would not release them. It was only about three weeks ago that I was given access to those documents. To be honest, with everything else that is going on, other than a quick sift through them, I have not read them. In any that I have read, I could see no reference to safety being raised.

Ms McCorley: I want to ask you again about the Andersonstown Road closure.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Please be quick; you have only eight minutes.

Ms McCorley: At one point, it was to be a partial closure, and, at another point, it changed to a full closure. What brought that change about?

Mr Scott: This document was given to us by Tenos, who are the fire engineers for the Buckingham group. It came up with those scenarios. However, as Laura mentioned, if there is a fire in a house to the front of Casement Park, it is hard to see how the road could be partially closed; it would generally be all or nothing. I am not saying that there would not be times when half the people, or a quarter or even three quarters of them, could go out.

Ms McCorley: Could I just ask Anthony —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I am sorry, Rosie; I am afraid the time is up.

Ms McCorley: I was short-changed the first time; just let me have one minute.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): No, I think that you got your full time.

Ms McCorley: I did not. For the record, I was short-changed.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You got an extra minute the last time. I carefully checked.

Mr Dunne: I thank the panel once again for coming in and dealing with this in such a professional manner. The Minister recently indicated to the Assembly that new plans were in progress for Casement Park. Paul, are you aware of those plans? Have any of you been made aware of them?

Mr Scott: No. My director, Nick Harkness, has asked Rory Miskelly that we should be involved sooner rather than later, but we have heard nothing to date.

Mr Dunne: Nothing to date. This proposal is for a 38,000 capacity. How do you see that proposal relatively in scale and numbers of people?

Mr Scott: A stadium with a 38,000 capacity is a big stadium, but there are bigger stadia in GB.

Mr Dunne: Northern Ireland-wise, how do you see that?

Mr Scott: It is more than twice the size of the next biggest stadium, which is either the national football stadium or the rugby football ground.

Mr Dunne: How does it compare with the Odyssey Arena, for example?

Mr Scott: When the Odyssey Arena uses the floor area for standing, it has a viewing capacity for concerts of about 10,000, but the decking around the Odyssey has a capacity just shy of 5,000.

Mr Dunne: In relation to venues for public events, this is a new scale. We are moving onto new ground here with a capacity of 38,000, so there are major issues to be addressed in relation to —

Mr Scott: It is going to be a challenging figure.

Mr Dunne: — the management of people, car parking and all the environmental aspects surrounding the project. Do you recognise those as major issues?

Mr Scott: It will be very challenging.

Mr Ó hOisín: First, Carl Southern stated last week — and this is not a question — that all safety and technical recommendations were under Paul Scott, and he had every opportunity to comment on all aspects of safety, including exiting strategy. That was the statement by Mr Southern. I just want to —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): If we throw a statement out at someone, we need to let them respond. You will get time.

Mr Ó hOisín: It will be in Hansard, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It was in Hansard last week. Mr Scott?

Mr Scott: What was the question?

Mr Ó hOisín: There was no question.

Mr Scott: It was just a statement. We did comment, and we communicated our concerns to Mr Southern.

Mr Ó hOisín: He said that you had every opportunity to comment.

Mr Scott: And we did.

Ms Strong: I think he was referring to the outline business case, though, and I think you have already answered that question in relation to how you were brought in just to discuss.

Mr Ó hOisín: Why, despite all the safeguards, did Sport NI approve the development moneys of £4.4 million public spend on Casement, if there had not been a change of mind since 2014? I refer in particular to the purchase of additional land and, indeed, housing, and we have seen newspaper reports of proposals for upwards on 16 houses.

Mr Scott: I would not have been involved in the finances. I do not know.

Mr Ó hOisín: Sport NI was.

Mr Scott: All I can say is this: I joined the process in 2009. I raised my concerns during the drafting of the business case and then, when the design proposals came out, I rejoined the process.

Mr Ó hOisín: Can I ask the PSNI whether, in any emergency exiting plan, there has to be a comprehensive event management plan drawn up. In what circumstances could you see the situation as outlined here developing?

Chief Inspector McNally: It is as mentioned. We have discussed this with the GAA directly as well. We accept that the likelihood of closing the entire Andersonstown Road is low; however, if we have to do so, the impact will be high, both on local residents and, equally, on those attending the stadium. We still welcome the opportunity to do a table-top exercise, or whatever we need to do, for the emergency evacuation procedures; but, as yet we have not been provided with them.

Mr Ó hOisín: Would you consider examining the Aviva, which can exit —

Chief Inspector McNally: That is a matter for the entire group, as the chair has said.

Mr Ó hOisín: But surely it is relevant to —

Mr Scott: We will endeavour to get the drawings of the Aviva and provide you with comment.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Just for the record, 16 houses were mentioned in some newspaper reports.

Mr Ó hOisín: I think it was in the 'Sunday Life' this week.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Right. OK. I will not comment on that.

Mr Ó hOisín: I will not either.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Maybe this is not Mr McNally's area, but there was a report on the news of two people who were up in court in relation to the accident on the Malone Road in which a student was killed. Can you recall how long the Malone Road was closed on that occasion?

Chief Inspector McNally: I am sorry. I know it was a number of hours, but I cannot remember the detail.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): It struck me this morning when I saw it on the news. Now, we are talking about road closures.

Chief Inspector McNally: After a fatal road traffic road collision, a main road will most likely close for a number of hours. Obviously, we would endeavour to reopen it as soon as possible, but we have to be conscious of the sensitivities and the investigation.

Mr McMullan: In February 2012 you worked closely with Sport NI —

Mr Scott: I was employed by Sport NI.

Mr McMullan: There was an offer of £4.4 million.

Mr Scott: I do not know anything about that.

Mr McMullan: You do not know anything about that either?

Mr Scott: As I said, I was involved at the business case stage —

Mr McMullan: My time is limited here. That £4.4 million was triggered for the cost. In that letter of offer, there were no recommendations for emergency exiting. Could you comment on that?

Mr Scott: I was involved in 2009 and made comments on the drafting of the business case. I did not rejoin the process until 2012 when the initial concept drawings —

Mr McMullan: Who was the head of safety compliance?

Mr Scott: At that time?

Mr McMullan: The head of safety compliance had the chance then to flag up safety issues when that letter of offer was going out. It was £4.4 million, and nothing was raised.

Mr Scott: I am unaware of the £4.4 million.

Mr McMullan: Oh, you are unaware that £4.4 million was released, and you are the safety compliance officer.

Mr Scott: I am the head of — yes, that —

Ms Strong: We deal with safety. We work in the safety compliance team.

Mr McMullan: Sorry; I am not talking to you.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Oliver, with respect —

Mr McMullan: I am trying to —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Oliver, with respect to the Chair —

Mr McMullan: I respect —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Please be respectful to the lady if she speaks.

Mr McMullan: I am. I did say "respect to her".

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Well then give her a chance to answer.

Mr McMullan: The lady should not have interrupted, with respect, if I was talking to the gentleman.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Please —

Mr McMullan: You were the safety technical officer —

Mr Scott: I was head of the safety group.

Mr McMullan: — the head of the safety group, I beg your pardon — at the time the £4.4 million was offered, and there was no issue raised about emergency exiting.

Mr Scott: Until you mentioned the £4.4 million, I have been unaware of that figure. As I said, I gave evidence in 2009. I rejoined the process to assess drawings. I have no remit with regard to finances.

Mr McMullan: Can I ask — sorry, I cannot —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Your time is up; thank you.

Mr McMullan: Sorry, I cannot see the gentleman's name. Very quickly —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Your time is up, actually, Mr McMullan.

Mr McMullan: No, this is very relevant.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Sorry, Mr McMullan, everybody got the same time. Thank you.

Mr D Bradley: Hello again. I get the impression that there was a communications issue around some of these problems between the various people involved. For example, I mentioned earlier that Mr Southern, Mr Molloy and Mr McGurk said that there were no red flags, and you said that there were. On reflection, do you think there was confusion around the terminology that was used? I get the impression, from reading some of the material, that some people took "exiting" to mean exiting in an

emergency situation, and some took it just to mean exiting under normal circumstances. Then we have the other term "emergency evacuation". On reflection, do you think that there was a lack of clarity in terminology and that that may have led to the issues being confused?

Mr Scott: We were going by the guidance, which is DCAL and Sport Northern Ireland guidance. I would have expected Mr Molloy, Mr Miskelly and Mr Southern to be aware of that. It is very clear in the documentation, although they have subsequently said that they are not experts in the green guide. However, we were their technical experts, but they have decided to basically ignore us.

Mr D Bradley: I did not get the impression, from what they said in evidence, that they thought that they were ignoring you. Their view was that you had not raised those issues to the extent that they would be red-flag issues.

Mr Scott: There is a full dossier of emails to them, phone calls and meetings, including the meeting that I referred to earlier in the Causeway Exchange. There is no way on this earth that they could not have known of the problems. From the phone calls and the tenor of the language, they did understand. They wanted to ignore the problem.

Mr D Bradley: It seems that there was some sort of communication problem.

Mr Scott: We believe that we acted appropriately. We notified the Department appropriately on many levels. Our problem is even getting the terms of reference, the minutes of the meeting at Causeway Exchange or minutes of the steering group meetings. We request and we request, but we do not get. We share with the Department. We need them to reciprocate.

Mr D Bradley: That sounds to me like communication problems.

Mr Scott: OK.

Mrs McKevitt: Thank you, Chair. I had a minute left from a previous one. I want to use it so that everybody is fair and square. That is a wee bit of tongue in cheek.

Mr D Bradley: Use it or lose it.

Mrs McKevitt: Oh, God, I have forgotten your name. I am sorry, Anthony, will you briefly describe what it would take for a road to be closed 100% to traffic.

Chief Inspector McNally: As previously mentioned, there are a number of scenarios. There is no definite or absolute. One road traffic collision is not the same as another, one crime scene is not the same as another, one terrorist attack is not the same as another, but any and/or all of those could close the Andersonstown Road in its entirety. However, the likelihood of those is significantly low.

Mrs McKevitt: Are footpaths closed 100% if the road is closed?

Chief Inspector McNally: In what scenario?

Mrs McKevitt: Say there was a house fire and the wind was blowing. I am sure that is the way you have to think, because it was mentioned by Paul [*Inaudible.*]. If there was a fire right outside the Andersonstown entrance, and the wind was blowing towards the traffic rather than the entrance, so you closed it to the traffic — because obviously they might not be able to see through smoke or whatever — and maybe for the emergency services to come through, but the footpaths could still be in use. Does that come into the equation or does it just —

Chief Inspector McNally: Every circumstance is treated on its own merits. Sometimes, if there is a need to close footpaths, roads and any access, that is what we do.

Mrs McKevitt: So footpaths are not ruled out in a —

Chief Inspector McNally: Every circumstance is dealt with on its own merits.

Mrs McKeivitt: OK. Thank you for that. It was in my head that I did not know whether a road would close totally, but it does not.

Paul, on page 55 of your bundle, there are meeting notes provided for 5 September. The notes are under various important headings, one of which is exiting. There is no heading for emergency exiting.

Mr Scott: No, there is not.

Mrs McKeivitt: In fact, there is no reference at all to emergency exiting in the meeting notes. However, "place of relative safety" is mentioned.

Mr Scott: It is because we had not had anything to comment on, but there are other emails from in and around that time in which we ask, "Please show us the emergency exiting". We were —

Mrs McKeivitt: Do you accept that, therefore, one would assume that the heading relates to all types of exiting?

Mr Scott: Anyone who is familiar with the red guide or green guide should not assume that. No. A layperson, perhaps, but anyone with competence in the green guide or the red guide would be aware. It says, and we quoted it earlier, that there is a difference between exiting time and emergency evacuation —

Mrs McKeivitt: When you are a layperson looking at it, it would seem from the notes that the vital issue of emergency exiting was dropped, or was resolved at that stage. If it was not, why not?

Mr Scott: This is —

Mrs McKeivitt: Why were they not jumping off the page? Look, I do not know about a red or green guide. I have heard plenty about them and I think I will be an expert by the time all of this is over. It might not be a one man show. I am only trying to —

Mr Scott: The recipient of this is the technical manager at DCAL, who should be an expert in the content of the red guide and the green guide. I accept that a layperson would not necessarily pick it up, but certainly an architect specialising in sport would most certainly pick that up.

Mrs McKeivitt: Why was it not red-flagged in emails and stuff?

Mr Scott: In this particular one it is not, but there are numerous others, before and after, where it is red-flagged. Every email. Could we have done things slightly differently? With hindsight you always could, yes.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thank you.

Mrs McKeivitt: I have one more. I still have time. I want to keep it to the end. In your opinion, did you find today's meeting robust?

Mr Scott: I thought it was very business-like. I thought it was fine. Absolutely.

Mr Cree: Thanks, Chair. Finally, in the tabled papers today there is an email from yourself, Paul, to Carl, from 19 June 2013. That is very important. It is a long time ago. At line 8, you make it quite clear:

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

Did you ever get a reply to that email?

Mr Scott: Dear me.

Mr Cree: It does not seem to be here, and I thought it would have come up again.

Mr Scott: No, that question was not answered, because I — sorry, I would really need to look at the full list of emails.

Mr Cree: Can you think of any reason why it would not have been answered, apart from wanting to avoid the issue?

Mr Scott: We asked in that email, and in many other emails, and we still await the emergency exiting arrangements.

Mr Cree: So there is a reluctance, on someone's part, to address that.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): I think that is a fairly accurate observation.

I want to ask one question. Clearly, within the architecture dealing with stadia — we are not just looking at what happened or did not happen or should have happened, but also at what we can learn from this. Clearly there are people in your organisation and Belfast City Council — and we heard from Valerie Brown, and she knows her stuff, in that regard.

Mr Scott: Absolutely.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Laura and Paul, you both clearly know a lot about the guides, how they should be applied, and so on. However, there others the next couple of tiers up — however high it goes — who are programme managers and directors. There is clearly huge expertise at your level. You know the ins and outs of this, but do you agree that it would be good to have people at the next level up with more than a very rudimentary knowledge of the guides?

Mr Scott: Mr Harkness has a reasonable —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Not necessarily in Sport NI. I am talking about people such as Mr Molloy, Mr McGurk, and so on.

Mr Scott: Yes, absolutely. We would be more than happy to speak to the people at DCAL and talk them through the red guide and the green guide.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): When we questioned them, a number of them said, "Well, actually, I am not an expert in that field". That was particularly the case with Mr Molloy, yet he was the programme director. Therefore, as a lesson, the Committee ought to look at ensuring that there is expertise not just at the technical level but at that other level.

There were questions asked about letters of offer of £4 million, or however much it was.

Mr McMullan: It was £4.4 million.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): You are not financial people. Your role is purely technical.

Mr Ó hOisín: Chair, it is not about finance.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): If I can ask my question, please.

Your role is purely technical. Is that correct?

Mr Scott: It is purely technical, but we do have a good knowledge of how much seats would cost in a stadium —

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Aye, things like that. I appreciate that.

Mr Scott: We have people in Sport NI who deal with business cases.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Who specialise in those.

Ms Strong: That is what I was trying to say. We are the safety compliance unit, and we deal with technical issues and safety. We are not accountants, we are not auditors and we do not review business cases. Those things do not fall within our remit. It is the role of other people in the organisation.

Mr Scott: Last time, we used the term "anoraks" to describe ourselves.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): And nobody disputed that.

Is there anything else that anyone wants to say?

Mr B McCrea: I would like to ask a question.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): What is the question, Basil?

Mr B McCrea: It is in reference to an email from Carl Southern on 17 June 2014. I want to get the timeline correct. The email states:

"These latter emerging requirements are significant and have imposed factors that completely change the approach to emergency exiting."

Is that one year after the police report?

Mr Scott: He is basically saying that the issue of the closure of the Andersonstown Road was raised only recently, but it had always been an issue.

Mr B McCrea: There is a police report from the year before. I want to know why, one year later, he is referring to "emerging requirements".

Mr Scott: Many, many meetings over a long period opened with DCAL saying, "Why are we hearing about this only now?" We kept referring DCAL back to March and April 2013. It cannot be a new thing every month, month on month.

Mr B McCrea: Are you — the STG as a collective — confident and completely comfortable that you have raised issues of concern about the emergency exiting plan at all times and on a continuous basis?

Mr Cowen: Yes.

Ms Strong: Yes.

Mr Scott: Yes.

Chief Inspector McNally: Yes.

The Chairperson (Mr McCausland): Thanks very much for your presentation. It has been helpful. We are working our way through the mountain of information that we are getting, and today's meeting has been extremely useful.