

**Northern Ireland assembly  
Monday 11 June 2007**

**Culture, Arts And Leisure  
Football Offences Act  
Maze Prison**

**Source:** <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/070611.htm#9>

3. **Mr S Wilson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much his Department has spent on the Maze Prison to date.

(AQO 42/2007)

National Stadium

5. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether his Department is in possession of a comprehensive business plan in relation to the proposed national stadium at the Maze.

(AQO 61/07)

**Mr Poots:** With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 3 and 5 together.

Given that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure does not have responsibility for the Maze/Long Kesh prison, to date it has spent no money on it. Up to the end of the previous financial year, the Department had spent a total of £879,392 on the development of proposals for a multi-sports stadium at the site of the former prison.

In response to Mr Beggs's question, my Department, in conjunction with the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), is in the process of finalising a business plan for the proposed multi-sports stadium at the Maze/Long Kesh site. That plan is being developed with the support of the governing bodies of the three sports that have agreed, in principle, to participate in the project.

**Mr S Wilson:** I thank the Minister for the assurance that his Department has spent no money on the promotion of what many people see as a shrine to those who committed suicide in the Maze Prison in the 1980s. Will he also give an assurance that no money will be made available for that project in future and that his Department will not lobby the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister for money for any such project that most people in Northern Ireland would consider obnoxious?

**Mr Poots:** The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure will deal exclusively with proposals involving the stadium. Any other issues will fall within the remit of the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister. I have every confidence that that office would not wish to establish a shrine at the Maze site or support any proposal that would be offensive to victims of the Troubles or would rub their noses in it. I will leave that matter with the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister.

**Mr Beggs:** I have listened carefully to the Minister's remarks. The full cost of the stadium ought to be disclosed because each part of the project will have implications for the other parts. Will the Minister ensure that the Maze business plan will be fully transparent and that a cost breakdown will be provided? What is the latest cost of the stadium, the H-block shrine, the motorway slip roads and the potential railway spur? What is the full cost of the project, not only to his

Department, but to other Departments? Who will be responsible for any cost overrun and the annual running costs? Other stadiums, such as the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, have faced those costs.

Mr Poots: We are working on a full business case for the overall plan and site. That business case will be completed in the autumn. I will therefore not be able to answer questions such as those that the Member asked until then. I assure the House that when that information becomes available to me, and after the Departments have had an opportunity to analyse it, it will be made available to Members and the public for their perusal.