The Joint Committee met at 13.30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

| Deputy John Lahart,* | Senator John O’Mahony, |
| Deputy Imelda Munster, | Senator Ned O’Sullivan, |
| Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe, | Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh. |
| Deputy Noel Rock, | |
| Deputy Róisín Shortall,* | |

* In the absence of Deputies Robert Troy and Catherine Murphy, respectively.

In attendance: Deputy Dessie Ellis.

DEPUTY FERGUS O’DOWD IN THE CHAIR.
BUSINESS OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: We have a quorum. Before we begin I ask members to turn off their phones. I propose we go into private session to deal with housekeeping matters. Is that agreed? Agreed.

The joint committee went into private session at 1.33 p.m. and resumed in public session at 1.37 p.m.

Business of Joint Committee (Resumed)

Chairman: We are in public session. I remind members, witnesses and persons in the Public Gallery to turn off their mobile phones. We will deal with correspondence in public session before commencing the main business.

Correspondence 2018/255 is an email from Deputy Munster requesting an update on Córas Iompair Éireann, CIÉ, pensions.

Correspondence 2018/262 is an email dated 14 April from Deputy Munster requesting that the committee writes immediately to CIÉ seeking clarity on whether the €30,000 limit will be maintained. The Deputy is not present so we will defer the matter until the next meeting.

Correspondence 2018/256 is an email from Senator Buttimer regarding Norwegian Airlines. The email refers to the suspension by the airline of its winter flight schedule from Cork Airport and Shannon Airport to the USA. It is proposed to schedule the meeting as soon as the committee schedule permits. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/257 and 257A are an email and attachment from Ms Aisling Dunne, who acts as an adviser to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. She forwarded the Report Stage amendments of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017. The Minister had agreed to send the amendments to the committee at the meeting dated 21 March. It is proposed to note the correspondence. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/258 and 258A are an email and attachment from Mr. Aidan Flynn, Freight Transport Authority Ireland, forwarding a press release on the report from CBRE on the rising confidence in the logistic and supply chain index. It is proposed to note the correspondence. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/259 is an email dated 18 April from Mr. Eoghan O’Mara Walsh, chief executive officer, Irish Tourism Industry Confederation. He requested an invitation to present to the committee the recently launched ITIC strategy. I propose that we schedule this matter for our next meeting. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/260 is a letter dated 17 April from the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. He responded to a letter that he received from the committee on CIÉ pensions. It is proposed that we note the correspondence. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/261 is an email dated 19 April from Ms Cáit Hayes who is a representative of the Houses of the Oireachtas to the EU. She forwarded a briefing from the Committee on Transport and Tourism in the European Parliament. It is proposed that we note the correspondence. Is that agreed? Agreed.
Correspondence 2018/263 relates to the referral of the Vehicle Registration Data (Automated Searching and Exchange) Bill 2018. The Bill was taken in the Lower House last week.

Correspondence 2018/264, is an email from Ms Cáit Hayes forwarding a link to a study on competition in air transport. It is proposed to note this correspondence. Is that agree? Agreed.

Correspondence 2018/265, is an email dated 24 April 2018 from Deputy Barry regarding the IRFU advertisement for unpaid internship. As Deputy Barry is not present, we will consider it at our next meeting.

Deputy Imelda Munster: Chairman, I apologise that I am a moment late in responding to the Chairman’s comments on my correspondence on the CIÉ issue.

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Imelda Munster: I am seeking clarification on the matter. My understanding is there is an urgency in respect of this matter. It will come before the Workplace Relations Commission, WRC, before the end of June and we need clarification as to whether the legal advice given by CIÉ is to be capped at €30,000. That is deemed to be insufficient, so we need it clarified. Otherwise Deputy Barry’s motion needs to be brought before the committee, as agreed.

Chairman: As Deputy Barry was not present and when his correspondence was reached, I moved on.

Deputy Imelda Munster: That is why I am raising it now.

Chairman: I understand that. I want to be fair and reasonable to everybody. As I understand it, we will write to CIÉ requesting an answer to the Deputy’s query on the figure of €30,000. Is that okay?

Deputy Imelda Munster: That is fair enough.

Chairman: The clerk to the committee has advised me that this will be done today. I can only take correspondence as it comes up, that is the way it is done.

Proposed MetroLink: Discussion

Chairman: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. The purpose of our meeting today is to engage on the proposed MetroLink and its impact on local amenities, in which there is significant interest.

MetroLink is a major national development. It is a north-south urban railway service that will run between Swords and Sandyford, connecting key destinations, including Dublin Airport. This 26 km route across Dublin city will service 25 stations, 15 of which will be new and a large portion of the route, mostly on the north side of the city, will be underground. It is expected to create about 4,000 jobs during construction, which will have a very significant impact on the economy nationally and regionally. The National Transport Authority, NTA, in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, recently launched a public consultation process on the emerging planned route. Members of the public have until Friday, 11 May to submit their views and opinions on MetroLink.
The request to raise this issue at a committee meeting came from Deputy Rock and other members who were anxious that it would take place. The key issue was the timeline in terms of public consultation and allowing the views of people to be heard.

I welcome all the witnesses. There will be seven opening statements and I will call on witnesses to make their opening statement in the following order: Ms Anne Graham, chief executive officer, and Mr. Hugh Creegan, deputy chief executive officer and director of transport investment of the NTA; Mr. Michael Nolan, chief executive officer and Mr. Peter Walsh, director of capital programme, TII; Mr. Michael Dowling, chairman, and Mr. Eamonn Mahon, honorary secretary, Home Farm Football Club; Mr. Cormac Ó Donnchú, chairman, and Ms Bernie Caffrey, past chairman, Na Fianna; Ms Anu Meehan and Ms Elaine Gahan, Prospect Architectural Conservation Area; Ms Marcella Nic Niallaigh, principal, and Mr. James Hart, parent, Scoil Mobhí; Ms Carmel de Grae, principal, and Ms Caroline Conroy, chairperson of the parents’ committee, Scoil Chaitríona.

I thank the witnesses for coming before the committee. I will ensure that everybody’s voice will be heard. I remind members and witnesses to switch off their mobile phones.

Today, the committee members have been joined by other Oireachtas Members. Two of our members have written to the secretariat. Deputy Troy has asked Deputy Lahart to represent him at this meeting and Deputy Munster has stated that she wishes to share time with Deputy Ellis. I accede to both requests. The tradition has been that those Oireachtas Members who are not members of the committee are called after members of the committee have spoken. Specifically, Deputy Shortall has been in touch with me and requested witnesses who have been happy to come before us. I will be happy to call public representatives from the constituency who drop in and anybody else thereafter.

There will be a question session after the presentation. I will try to ensure that everybody will be heard and everybody will be listened to. We will be fair and equitable to everybody.

Before we commence and in accordance with procedure, I am required to remind those present of the following information. I draw attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2) (l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the evidence they are to give to the committee. If, however, they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. Members are reminded of the long standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against either a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I invite Ms Anne Graham, chief executive of the National Transport Authority, to make her opening statement.

**Ms Anne Graham:** I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for the invitation to attend. I understand the committee wishes to focus upon the MetroLink project and the impact of construction on recreational amenities. To assist me in dealing with subsequent questions from the committee, I am joined by Mr. Hugh Creegan, deputy chief executive officer with the authority.
The MetroLink project is the development of a north-south urban railway service that will run between Swords and Sandyford, connecting key destinations including Dublin Airport and the city centre along the 26 km route. A large proportion of the route will be underground, including where it passes under the important city centre area and Dublin Airport. The underground section will terminate close to Charlemont stop on the Luas green line, where the metro will connect to, and run southwards on, the existing Luas green line. The Luas green line will be upgraded to metro standard as part of the project.

There will be a total of 25 stations, including 15 new stations, 3,000 additional park and ride spaces, and a journey time of approximately 50 minutes from Swords to Sandyford.

A map of the overall MetroLink route is provided.

The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 identified the provision of two metro projects, metro north extending from Swords to the south city centre, and metro south, which would further extend metro services southwards along the existing Luas green line.

Under the recently published National Development Plan 2018-2027, those two separate schemes have been combined into one metro project, now referred to as MetroLink. The combining of the two schemes has a number of advantages. First, it maximises the use of the tunnel boring machines that will be purchased specially for the project; second, it avoids the future disruption and high unit cost associated with the building of the short missing piece of tunnel between St. Stephen’s Green and Charlemont in the event that only metro north was constructed; and it allows the major growth that is expected on the green line over the next decade to be accommodated on the higher capacity metro system.

MetroLink will provide new and important public transport connection opportunities along its route. These will include interchanges with the commuter rail services at Tara Street station and Glasnevin station. At Tara Street station, the new MetroLink station will be fully integrated into the existing mainline rail station, providing an efficient linkage for passengers transferring between MetroLink and DART services.

A new integrated MetroLink and commuter rail station will be provided at Glasnevin, which will facilitate passengers transferring between metro and commuter rail services on the Maynooth and Kildare lines. MetroLink will also link with key routes of the bus system and the separate BusConnects project will ensure ease of connection between buses and the metro at the relevant stations. In addition, MetroLink also connects with the Luas system at O’Connell Street, Charlemont and Sandyford. A park and ride facility for more than 3,000 cars at Estuary will allow commuters to leave their cars and use the metro service to access the city, reducing overall road congestion. A map showing the integration between MetroLink, Luas and the heavy rail network is attached to this statement, and is included in the public consultation material.

There will be many benefits to the MetroLink project which will support the future development and growth of Dublin’s capital city. It will greatly enhance public transport capacity and accessibility to the city centre and the surrounding corridor for commuters, businesses, retail, education, tourism, as well as the overall sustainability of the city. There will be an improvement for domestic and international travel connections provided by access to and from Dublin Airport and through the national rail and road network. There will be decreased road traffic congestion on journeys to and from the airport and crossing the city from north to south.
MetroLink will include a park and ride for over 3,000 vehicles at Estuary, Swords. There will be faster journey times by MetroLink between Swords, the airport, the city centre and towards Sandyford, with high frequency and high reliability. There will be a more integrated and improved quality of interchanges with Luas, DART, Irish Rail and bus transport hubs across the city, with more direct journey opportunities. MetroLink can enhance social inclusion, providing new links from urban areas of Dublin to jobs and services in the city and across the suburbs. The project will support both the regeneration of existing areas and the development of new areas. It will generate employment during construction and operation and will support economic growth once operational. The metro system will support the environment by promoting a modal shift from car to public transport. This will help reduce emissions and energy consumption in addition to improving air quality and reducing road congestion.

The estimated cost of the MetroLink scheme is approximately €3 billion in current year values. This is a preliminary estimate, in advance of public engagement and fully developed designs. The exact cost can only be fully established subsequent to taking the outcome of the public consultation process on board, the further development of the project and the finalisation of the planning process. In line with the public spending code, a comprehensive business case will be prepared for the MetroLink project at the relevant project stage. This will provide a full appraisal of the project, including the quantification of its benefits and its costs. That business case will form part of the final decision-making process for the project and will be made publicly available. In advance of the preparation of the comprehensive business case, an initial cost-benefit analysis has been prepared based on the current project details. A copy of this analysis is available on the MetroLink website at www.metrolink.ie. It indicates that the project has a very positive economic performance, with benefits in excess of twice the project’s costs, excluding the additional wider economic impacts likely to be delivered by the project.

The National Transport Authority, NTA, is responsible for strategic transport planning and the procurement of public transport infrastructure in the greater Dublin area in line with Government policy. As such, we have worked closely with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, in the development of the emerging preferred route for MetroLink. TII is responsible for the design of the scheme, bringing the development through the railway order process and the construction of the scheme. It is managing the public consultation process that is currently under way.

Mr. Michael Nolan: I thank the Chairman and the members of the committee for the invitation to attend today. I am appearing alongside my colleague Mr. Peter Walsh, director of capital programmes.

While the invitation identifies the MetroLink project and the impact of construction on recreational amenities as the matter for discussion, I would like to take the opportunity to set out the purpose, nature and extent of the non-statutory public consultation process which is currently under way.

Over the last year, TII, in partnership with the NTA, has identified an emerging preferred route, EPR, for the MetroLink project. The EPR was identified as the route option which performs among the best in terms of public transport demand, integration with the wider public transport system and economic return. Both the NTA and TII recognise that it is important to involve the public, businesses, residents, local authorities, political representatives and all other key stakeholders in the development of the MetroLink project. We have commenced a major public consultation concerning the emerging preferred route for the project. This emerging preferred route is the proposal identified as being the optimum route for the project, subject to
the outcome of the public consultation process. This consultation process will allow us to take on board the views and inputs of the various parties and key stakeholders who participate and enable us to identify and consider concerns and issues that emerge.

On 22 March, TII and the NTA jointly announced the publication of the emerging preferred route for MetroLink. Notices were placed in the national press advertising the public consultation events. A scheme website was established where interested parties could access detailed information concerning the analysis leading to the recommendation of the emerging preferred route and register their interest in the scheme. The launch also marked the formal commencement of a non-statutory public consultation. Public consultation events were held between the 22 March 2018 and 18 April 2018 at locations along the emerging preferred route, with over 3,000 people attending the events.

I will now address the impact of construction on recreational amenities. MetroLink is a huge engineering project, both in national and international terms. Constructing such a large scheme in a built-up urban area is not possible without impacting people, businesses and property. We have strived to minimise the impacts in the planning work done to date, and we will seek to further mitigate these impacts as the project develops.

At some locations, the MetroLink proposal impacts on recreational amenities. These include the grounds of Na Fianna and the grounds of Home Farm FC, which are located on St. Mobhi Road, where a metro station is intended to be located and where a tunnel construction site is proposed. It is difficult to find locations for tunnel stations and for construction sites in a built-up urban area which do not have an impact. Such construction sites are inevitably located in open spaces. In these specific instances, the choice was between directly impacting on homes and local businesses or locating temporary construction sites and future stations in open spaces.

We are very aware of the concerns that these clubs have about the published proposals and of the importance of their facilities both to the clubs themselves and to the wider community. There has been constructive and respectful engagement on these issues between ourselves and officials of the two clubs, and we sincerely thank the clubs for that. Both NTA and TII are committed to working collaboratively with both organisations, subsequent to the conclusion of the current public consultation process, to address the issues raised and to find mitigating solutions that will ensure both clubs can continue to serve the needs of their members and fulfil the important and valuable roles they play in their local communities.

It is important that we preserve the integrity of the public consultation process currently under way and allow that process to proceed to a conclusion. This will ensure that we identify and address all of the relevant concerns and issues in a holistic way. Our goal is to provide a greater benefit from public transport investment for the entire community while endeavouring to reduce the impacts to the extent possible. For that reason, we have committed to discussing possible proposals to ameliorate the MetroLink impacts on the clubs’ operation within weeks of the conclusion of the public consultation process. We recognise the need to respect the ongoing public consultation process and allow it to reach its conclusion. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to discuss possible alternative proposals here today. I trust that the committee members will understand this position.

I note that the emerging preferred route will impact on residential and commercial properties. As part of the public consultation and in parallel with the public consultation events, we engaged and continue to engage extensively with the affected parties on a daily basis. Meetings
have been taking place with land and property owners directly affected by the proposed Metro-Link stations and alignment and their representatives.

The current public consultation will conclude on 11 May 2018, following which TII will review the emerging preferred route in light of its input. The preferred route may incorporate findings from these consultations where these point to opportunities for improvement, while preserving the benefits and objectives of the scheme. It is intended that an application for a railway way order, which is the statutory planning consent procedure, will be made by TII to An Bord Pleanála by the end of next year. The approval of the scheme is a matter for An Bord Pleanála. If planning consent is granted, it is expected that construction will commence in 2021 and that project will be completed in 2027. We are working to an ambitious programme for the delivery of this transformational element of the capital’s transport infrastructure. We look forward to the support of the committee.

Chairman: I will call Mr. Cormac Ó Donnchú next and then Mr. Michael Dowling. I am letting them know in order that they will be ready and not get caught out. I welcome Mr. Nolan’s comments, particularly on the question of engaging and listening. That is hugely important. I cannot lay enough emphasis on what he says, that he hopes to be able to engage after the public consultation with all the parties to find a resolution. That is what everyone wants, if at all possible. Glaoi anois ar Chormac Ó Donnchú, Cathaoirleach na Fianna.

Mr. Cormac Ó Donnchú: A Chathaoirligh agus a bhaill coiste, my name is Cormac Ó Donnchú, cathaoirleach Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna, and I am joined for this presentation by our former cathaoirleach, Bernie Caffrey. Ar son Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna, gabhaimid ár mbuíochas libh as ucht an cuireadh a thabhairt dúinn teacht chuig Tithe an Oireachtais agus ár mbarúil a roimnt de MetroLink agus den bhealach is dealraithí a roghnófar atá curtha chun cinn ag Bonneagar Iompair Éireann. Na Fianna is supportive of a metro rail service for the north side of Dublin and acknowledges the benefits it could bring to our community. However, we believe the construction and development of such a rail service must be balanced and proportionate. In particular, its construction and operation should endeavour to minimise the disruption it brings to people, including to their day-to-day activities and their physical and social environment as well as the social infrastructure. We firmly believe that the current proposal for the emerging preferred engineering route and the tunnelling site is neither reasonable nor proportionate, especially when one considers the major and truly adverse implications it will have on our club community, the adjoining schools, Home Farm FC and the broader Glasnevin and St. Mobhi Road community.

As we often experience difficulty relating to the scale of the effect of Na Fianna’s activities on our local community, I wish to take some time to familiarise the members of the committee with the activities of our vibrant and unique urban Gaelic community. Since our foundation in 1955, many committed and diligent members of our community have dedicated a large part of their lives to build a self-reliant, volunteer-based, inclusive Gaelic community. The fruit of their diligent work has delivered a unique and extremely successful sporting and cultural institution that is known today as Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna.

Based in the heart of Dublin 9, just 3,500 m from the city centre, Na Fianna is now one of the largest participatory sports, cultural and community-based organisations in Europe. As of April 2018, we have 2,936 members and an additional 1,044 registered parents, combining to deliver us a community of 3,980 active participants. From a sporting perspective, we field 166 teams across all our codes of indigenous Gaelic games, that is, Gaelic football, ladies’ Gaelic football, hurling, camogie, handball and rounders. Our ethos is about local community engage-
ment and inclusiveness. Our goal is to have a team for everyone regardless of age, gender or sporting ability in order to maximise participation. Our active members range in age from four to 70. To reflect a growing engagement of young females, I am happy to relate that 40% of our players are female. Our 346 volunteer mentors support our sporting teams. These committed individuals, trained by our club, offer up approximately six to ten hours of their time every week to help bind our community and keep our children and our local community fit and healthy in a positive environment.

As for our cultural activities, our work includes the daily hosting of a bilingual naíonra, or preschool; daily after-school care; weekly Irish language classes; Irish dance classes; public cèilithe; and weekly public music sessions, which attract many musicians and singers. Our games, cultural and social activities provide the glue that helps bind our community together.

In addition to our club-organised activities, we host a range of third-party social activities in our clubhouse, including weekly meetings of the Iona Bridge Club, the Corus choral group, arts classes, line dancing classes and a host of community-based events from table quizzes to christenings, communions, birthday parties and funerals. In short, our clubhouse on St. Mobhi Road hosts the full range of life milestone events in our community from cradle to grave.

Our cultural work is beautifully complemented by the very close relationship we enjoy with our nearest neighbours, our adjoining Gaelic-speaking schools of Scoil Mobhí and Scoil Chaitiriona. We work closely and share the use of one another’s facilities to create a unique, safe, educational, sporting and cultural Gaelic environment. On every level we breathe the same air. On St. Mobhi Road we have created a unique space, a vibrant breac-Ghaeltacht in which the children of our community have the option to be immersed in a Gaelic-speaking environment from preschool in Tír na nÓg in Na Fianna to primary school in Scoil Mobhí and meánscoil i Scoil Chaitríona. They may follow on to third level education, to Fiontar with our community partners up the road in Dublin City University.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna is such a unique sporting and cultural creation that it now attracts approximately 20,000 international visitors per annum to experience Gaelic games. They are provided with a unique insight into modern Gaelic culture through the medium of our national games and our club’s extensive cultural activities. All the work of our community is underpinned by selfless volunteerism and supported by the work of more than 38 committees or work groups all directed by our 15-person elected volunteer executive committee.

St. Mobhi Road and our site reverberates each day with community activity from 6 a.m., when our club gym opens, through to 9 a.m., when the grounds facilitate the arrival of students from Scoil Chaitiriona and Scoil Mobhí. During the day, the club welcomes international visitors amid the students of some of the ten local primary schools with which our club-funded coaches work every week. Most importantly, every evening and weekend, our grounds are filled with the laughter and banter of our young enjoying one another’s company in a healthy environment.

In order to maintain our level of activity, we are currently required to use 14 facilities at different locations throughout our community. The only one of these facilities to which we have unrestricted access in the long term is our site on St. Mobhi Road. Prior to the TII announcement, we had struggled with a lack of access to green space in our community as our facilities are already at breaking point. Unfortunately, the emerging preferred route proposed by TII for MetroLink involves requisitioning these grounds and shutting down our activities on St. Mobhi Road for the complete duration of the construction project. Our site is proposed to be the first
PROPOSED METROLINK: DISCUSSION

to be lost to public use and the last to be restored. If the proposal proceeds in its current form, it will have a calamitous effect on the future of Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna. Our removal from the centre of our community will have serious long-term implications for our community. It has the potential to negate years of careful and diligent work of generations of volunteers and social entrepreneurs. It will transform a space which has been lovingly nurtured by generations of volunteers as a remarkable cultural and community centre into a construction site of an unprecedented scale. It will silence the heartbeat of our local community.

The planned tunnel-boring site will effectively close down the most used gathering place of our community, leaving it silent. A generation of children will be deprived of an opportunity to engage in healthy activity within their local community during their most formative years. The seven small culturally aligned enterprises that operate from our clubhouse will face a challenge of a scale they may not survive. The livelihood of the individuals from these ventures will be placed in jeopardy and the part-time work of 60 others will be lost. In effect, our club facilities on St. Mobhi Road, that wondrous hive of sustainable community, cultural and healthy sporting activity, will be silenced. We have made these views known to TII and will document them in greater detail in our submission to the public consultation.

To reiterate our core point, Na Fianna is supportive of a metro rail service for the north side of Dublin and we acknowledge the benefit it could bring to our community. However, its construction and development must be balanced and proportionate. We firmly believe the current proposal and the tunnelling site are neither reasonable nor proportionate and will have truly adverse implications for our club members and our wider community of north Dublin. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Chairman: It is very clear how difficult things would be for Na Fianna if this were to proceed.

Mr. Michael Dowling: I thank the committee for the invitation to be here today. My name is Michael Dowling. I am the outgoing chairman of Home Farm FC, and with me today is Mr. Eamonn Mahon, our club secretary. We have both been involved with Home Farm for many years, in my case since I was a child. Before discussing MetroLink, on behalf of Home Farm I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to our neighbours Na Fianna on the recent passing of their club secretary, Ms Deirdre Lambe. We also extend sincere sympathies to Deirdre’s family on their very sad loss.

Plans for the MetroLink project were published on the 22 March by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII. I should put on record at this point that we in Home Farm recognise the importance and the benefits attaching to the MetroLink project as the Government seeks to develop and improve public transport in the city. However, the plans as published have serious implications for our club and for Na Fianna, which have been well documented in recent weeks. Under the proposals, Home Farm’s grounds at St. Mobhi Road will be unavailable to the club for a period of approximately seven years, commencing in 2020. This is on the assumption that the project proceeds as planned, with St. Mobhi Road as a main tunnelling and boring base and with a station.

Home Farm FC has been an integral part of the north Dublin community since its foundation in 1928, some 90 years ago. It provides football for over 500 players, ranging from four years of age to adults. We also run a Saturday morning academy for young players who are starting out in the game. The club is run by volunteers who give of their time day in, day out. The club has had a base in St. Mobhi Road for more than 50 years. The grounds were acquired
by one of our founding members, the late Brendan Menton Snr., by arrangement with the Department of Defence which was based at the time in St. Mobhi Road. Our main base is on the Swords Road in Whitehall.

Thousands of former players, including many Irish internationals, will have fond memories of their early playing days in St. Mobhi Road. The pitch in St. Mobhi Road, which is part of a private and enclosed ground, is played on by teenage schoolboy and schoolgirl teams. It is used on Saturdays and Sundays and for midweek games. It is also regularly made available for cup finals and for representative matches. It is of an extremely high quality and widely acknowledged as such. The club has invested significant resources in the development and maintenance of the playing surface and ancillary facilities. Home Farm FC has been assured by TII that suitable alternative arrangements will be made available as a priority to relocate our teams for the duration of the project, if it proceeds as planned. It recognises the level of disruption involved and has indicated its commitment to addressing this in any proposals to be tabled. Clearly, and at a minimum, whatever alternative facilities are proposed must be of a comparable high standard, they must be local and must be in place by the end of 2019. The club has commenced discussions with TII to hear its proposals in this regard. We will also be making a formal submission to TII with regard to the project.

We are very conscious of the particular impact which the project will have on our neighbours, Na Fianna, as St. Mobhi Road is their main base. We have indicated to Na Fianna and to TII that if we can play our part in helping to reduce in some way the level of impact and disruption for Na Fianna by way of modification of the plans we would open to hearing such proposals.

The sporting and recreational needs of the boys and girls who represent the club are of paramount importance to Home Farm FC and it is their interest and need that we place in the forefront in our negotiations with the authorities regarding this project.

Chairman: Mr. Dowling and Mr. Ó Donnchú represent the beating heart of their community. Voluntary work with young people in every aspect of their lives is at the heart of what they are doing. It really is a huge issue for Mr. Dowling and Mr. Ó Donnchú, and I acknowledge that.

Ms Anu Meehan: My name is Anu Meehan. I am a citizen representing Prospect Architectural Conservation Area, ACA. I am here today with Ms Elaine Gahan, who is also a member of the committee. I am also representing the wider community.

Our ACA is a residential enclave located east of Glasnevin Cemetery and the National Botanic Gardens, 2 km north of the city centre. Our ACA is described by Dublin City Council as:

An oasis of calm and tranquillity set against the backdrop of the trees of Glasnevin Cemetery and Botanic Gardens. The area is special because of the historical association with Glasnevin Cemetery, having the original entrance to the cemetery with surviving gate and gate lodge, historical pub associated with the cemetery and the main access route, Prospect Avenue, having its origins in the opening of the cemetery. It is the overall policy of Dublin City Council to protect and conserve the character and setting of the ACA.

We also embrace progress and are committed to community development and inclusivity. I, as well as the group I am representing, first became aware of the MetroLink project through the media and while seeing surveyors on Prospect Avenue taking measurements. When
I sought information, I was given the contact details of TII. There had been no prior contact from TII indicating that there would be any impact in our area. We attended the public consultation in Glasnevin Cemetery and other members of the community attended the consultation at the Helix with National Transport Authority, NTA, and TII. In both venues residents were given conflicting information and were left with many unanswered questions and a lack of clarity.

In light of the information obtained through the public consultation, Prospect ACA residents’ group sought feedback from local residents likely to be impacted by the emerging preferred route. With considerable effort we managed to find the relevant reports on the MetroLink website. Finding the Alignment Options report—a 362-page report—was onerous in and of itself. The information booklet from NTA-TII issued as part of the public consultation process contains conflicting information relative to the website. From the numerous maps available, it was extremely difficult to identify which properties would be impacted by the emerging preferred route. One map within a document on the MetroLink website showed a slight variation of the same route. The implications of this was that residents were unsure whether or not the lines will run underneath their properties. There is still confusion.

After attending the public consultation events and in order to understand this process and seek clarity for members of our community, we arranged a meeting with Deputy Noel Rock. A meeting with the entire resident cohort and the Minister for Finance, Deputy Donohoe, followed. Although we are grateful for our public representatives’ time and input, we are still left with many unanswered questions.

Feedback and concerns raised by members of our community encompass many areas, including the impact on our ACA, the iconic historic buildings, our community, health and safety, education and the implications for private homes and businesses. Many of our residents have raised concerns regarding the public consultation process. The process makes no distinction between those residents who are directly affected and those indirectly affected and, as previously highlighted, we have had no contact from NTA and very little from TII.

The period from the opening of the public consultation on 22 March to the submission date of 11 May 2018 is extremely short for ordinary citizens affected by this to comprehend the complexities of the work done by NTA and TII, which took years to complete with experts and a large budget. For us, we have just a small number of weeks to wade through cumbersome documents, reports, maps and statistics without any level of expertise or funding. The following is an example of how difficult it is to find and comprehend information provided in the reports impacting our ACA. From a 362 page document—once found—the reader is then re-directed to a different report, which fails to provide any clarity.

The age profile of the properties in this area ranges from 1833 to 1905. The vast majority of the ACA properties have no foundations; they were built on soil and rubble. There is no precedent in Ireland for tunnelling under properties such as these. As members will appreciate, many of our residents’ concerns relate to potential structural damage to their properties. These concerns relate to all stages of the project, including long-term concerns such as structural issues emerging once the project is completed and while trains are running under their properties every two minutes. Residents have not been contacted or reassured that structural surveys will be undertaken prior to, during or after this project. No information has been provided regarding compensation, should this prove necessary, and the timeframe in which to pursue it.

Within our ACA, there are many iconic historic buildings, such as the Brian Boru pub, mentioned in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which appear to have been proposed for compulsory purchase
order, and this has also not been clarified. The impact of a major train station in an area which, to date, has not even had a minor train station has not been addressed. This is no mere underground station; the scale of the proposed station is running from the Royal Canal to Dalcassian apartments, which is proposed for CPO. The iconic Brian Boru pub appears to be earmarked for destruction as part of this rail station development. The impact of this proposed major train station will require a socioeconomic impact analysis. At the moment, there is no reference in the proposal to the impact of this proposed station on the social fabric of an historic and well-established part of the city, not least of which would be the additional security measures that would be required and which are a necessary element of any major rail station.

Other concerns relate to the construction phase which has been estimated to be between two and six years. Again, there has been no clarity from the NTA on this. These concerns include some of the following: increased construction traffic in an already heavily congested area; parking; noise and dust pollution; and the health and safety of our residents with an estimated 100 trucks entering and exiting the proposed TBM site daily, which is in close proximity to our ACA. No clarity has been provided in respect of the working hours of trucks and the times at which boring will take place. As we have heard already, the TBM site has serious implications for the education, health, safety and sporting and recreational activity of approximately 800 children. It will be decimating a mini-Gaeltacht area.

As an ACA, we work tirelessly to improve and enhance the aesthetics of our environment. We are concerned and we are seeking reassurance that our ACA will be restored to its original state once the project is complete. In addition, we seek clarity on whether there will be one or two tunnels and the implications of vibrations resulting from this for our properties.

The decision to choose this emerging preferred route appears to have been made on economic grounds, rather than on taking into consideration our culture, history, architecture, health, education, sporting amenities and the impact on our community. Although the presence of an ACA is mentioned in the reports, no details are given of the impact this will have on our ACA and its residents.

We ask that a socioeconomic impact analysis be carried out to address the impact of a major rail station at the proposed site. We also ask that the public consultation process be extended so that all those who will be affected will be given accurate information as to what this development entails and the implications for individuals at all stages of the process. This extended public consultation process should indicate all the options considered and the reason for choosing this route ahead of all the others in order for this to be a fully transparent public consultation.

Chairman: That was very comprehensive. It is a very dedicated and committed community whose issues are the urban built environment, the quality of life and, obviously, significant matters relating to engineering and other concerns.

Glaofidh mé anois ar finné eile as Scoil Mobhí agus i ndiaidh sin Iníon De Grae as Scoil Chaitríona.

Ms Marcella Nic Niallaigh: Is mise Marcella Nic Niallaigh, príomhoide Scoil Mobhí. I am here with James Hart, the parent of one of our pupils. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chathaoirligh agus leis an gcoiste, as ucht an deis seo a thabhairt dom buairteanna ar son Scoil Mobhí a chur os bhur gcomhair. Ar mhaithe le gach éinne i láthair labhróidh mí i mBéarla.

I am grateful to the Chairman and members of the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism
and Sport for the opportunity to present the grave concerns Scoil Mobhi has regarding the NTA and TII emerging preference to locate a tunnel boring machine launch site, its support works, and a MetroLink station with a site perimeter running the full length of our school yard and which is some 5 m from the inside of our junior infants, naíonáin shóisearacha, classroom.

Before outlining the school’s concerns, I will briefly describe the site as it is now. I also invite the Chairman and other members of the committee to visit our school and the site to see for themselves exactly what I am describing. Roinneann Scoil Mobhí an campus céanna le na Fianna, Scoil Chaitríona agus an réamhscoil Tir na nÓg. Suíomh álainn atá ann i measc crainn agus párceanna imeartha. Sa timpeallacht ní chloistear ach glór pháistí ag foghlaim, ag spraoi agus ag imirt le chéile. Tá gaol ar leith idir na ceithre institiúid ar an suíomh seo, gach uile ceann acu bunaithe agus dirithe ar chaomhnú agus ar fhorbairt chultúr na hÉireann.

It is impossible to describe precisely what a tunnel boring machine launch site, support works and constructing a station will entail because those details have not been included by the NTA or TII in the public consultation. However, based on what was envisaged for the equivalent site in the previous metro north proposal, it is likely to include: a tunnel launch pit; conveyor systems; cranes; a concrete batching plant; forklift trucks; compressor, pumps and hoists; and a complement of 100 staff. It will be on a massive scale. Every element of spoil removed by the tunnel boring machines will need to leave the site by truck. That means, over a ten-hour working day, there will be a truck movement on or off the site every three to six minutes, at least half of which will be full of spoil. The expected duration of the construction is six years but this will be the first sod turned in the project and the last returned. A delay suffered anywhere else along the route will be felt at this site.

The school’s concerns are too numerous to describe in detail here but I can at least outline them. We have grave health concerns due to dust, diesel emissions, noise and vibration. Those same factors lead us to conclude that effective education would be impossible during the construction period. We have major safety concerns not just over the scale of the works envisaged but also because the proposal is to take away the only current vehicular access to the school and, materially, all its parking facilities for staff and parents at drop-off and pick-up times. A large number of pupils walk, cycle or scoot to school across the site. They would no longer be able to do this safely. It is also a sad fact of life that large construction sites and heavy machinery attract the curiosity of children. Having a site such as this sharing its perimeter with a naíonra, primary school, and secondary school is nothing less than an invitation for tragic accident.

Furthermore, our concerns are not just for the school. The proposal would tear apart a unique Irish-language community and the work of 60 years in bringing together an Irish-medium naíonra, bunscoil, meánscoil co-located with a GAA club that at every turn supports and encourages Gaelic games, culture and language. That such a proposal should have been brought forward in Bláin na Gaeltachta and at the same time as the Irish language is being placed front and centre of Project Ireland 2040 is an irony that is truly heartbreaking.

We simply cannot understand how this proposal even came to be put forward and we cannot conceive of any way in which it could co-exist with the school. We ask the NTA and TII to remove it from consideration at the very earliest opportunity. That is because the detriment to the schools is felt now and not simply once construction begins. Uncertainty over whether this proposal will move forward dominates, and will continue to dominate, the decisions parents take now, and in the near future, about whether to send their children to or keep them at our school, Scol Chaitríona and Tir na nÓg.
On Monday next, 30 April, the parents of pupils starting in naíonáin shóisearacha in September will be visiting the school. Based on calls I have already received, their first question will be about MetroLink and we need answers for them.

That concludes my introductory statement. I hope I can answer any queries that arise.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat as ucht an cuireadh dúinn dul chun féachaint ar an scoil agus an rud a thitfeadh amach muna bhíonn freagrás sásúil ar na ceisteanna go léir atá agaibh inniu. Cincite, beimid ag dul ann agus-----

Ms Marcella Nic Niallaigh: Beidh míle fáilte roimh an coiste teacht amach ar ndóigh.

Ms Carmel de Grae: Go raibh mile maith agaibh as an cuireadh teacht chun labhairt leis an gcoiste inniu. Is mise Carmel De Grae, príomhoide Scoil Chaitríona agus tá Caroline Conroy, cathaoirleach coiste na tuismitheoirí liom inniu. Táim anseo ar son Scoil Chaitríona, meánscoil lán-Ghaeilge, comhoideachas, le 449 dalta sa scoile. Tá áthas orm go bhfuil an deis againn ár mbuaírti a phlé leis an suíomh in aice leis an scoil a úsáid mar lár ionad tollta don MetroLink.

Scoil Chaitríona was established by the Dominican Sisters in 1928 as the first all-Irish secondary school for girls in the country. It was set up to promote, preserve and inspire a love for the Irish language and culture. In 1987 the school became co-educational. The majority of our students are drawn from Glasnevin, Drumcondra, Phibsboro, Ballymun and Finglas.

We are very proud of our great tradition of excellence. We celebrate the achievements of our students academically, in sport and culturally. Our past pupils have gone on to great success in all aspects of Irish life.

We are part of a shared campus with Na Fianna GAA club, Scoil Mobhi primary school and the Naíonra Tír na n-Óg. We have a mutually supportive relationship with these organisations and together we form a vibrant breac-Ghaeltacht. We share facilities and resources and there is a considerable overlap in our communities. Our students benefit hugely from being a part of this community. The facilities are used not just during school time but are available as a resource to the local community agus ba mhaith linn cuireadh a thabhairt don choiste teacht ar chuairt chun láithreán na scoile a fheiceáil. We also would like to invite the committee to the school to experience and visualise what we have to offer.

The current proposal to locate a tunnel-boring machine launch site for the proposed MetroLink, directly at the school would render the school inoperable. Parents from the school have already realised this and have expressed their worries to us that they would have to withdraw their children from the school should this go ahead. It would not be possible in any practical way to run a school less than five metres from a substantial building site of historic proportions. Our art room is about 2 m from the boundary of the proposed works. The proposed use of the site on Mobhi Road as a boring site would have a detrimental effect on Scoil Chaitríona in the following areas: the health and safety of our students and staff; the educational environment of our students and the working conditions for staff; the ability of our students to complete their State examination requirements; access to the school and traffic congestion; school enrolment; and the destruction of an all-Irish community.

I refer to the health and safety of our students and staff. We are gravely concerned about the effect the increase in air pollution due to dust, diesel trucks and chemicals used on the site would have on the health of all students, employees and visitors. Prolonged exposure to this
increased air pollution would be particularly severe on those who suffer from asthma, bronchial impairment, breathing difficulties or cystic fibrosis, or who have a compromised immune system. The proposed works will impact on their ongoing attendance at and enjoyment of Scoil Chaitríona and Scoil Mobhí.

Teaching and learning would have to compete with hugely increased noise levels as the school would be trying to operate within a couple of metres of a building site of unprecedented size. Realistically how could any school function with the noise levels that would come from this construction site? Scoil Chaitríona would also have reduced access to the facilities, sporting and otherwise, which we share with Na Fianna, Naíonra Tír na n-Óg and Scoil Mobhí.

The ability of our students to complete their State examination requirements would also be affected. The requirements for State examinations are no longer simply terminal written examinations. Assessment at junior certificate is ongoing with students undertaking school-based assessments in second and third year. Practical exams and project work are now required in many subjects at leaving certificate level. Preparation for these takes place in school throughout the whole school year. There would be a serious negative impact on our students’ abilities to reach their educational potential with the disruption from the proposals.

I refer to access to the school. The proposed works would create a serious difficulty for staff and students in actually getting to school and getting into the school grounds. Mobhi Road is currently bumper to bumper on a daily basis. Any construction will increase the gridlock for cars and public transport. Due to the the site position, school buses would be unable to drop students on Mobhi Road. Additionally, the drop off point in Na Fianna for both schools would not be available. Parents have already expressed anxiety about the health and safety of students cycling or walking to school. Construction traffic, which further jeopardises safe cycling and walking would contradict the policies of the various Government departments regarding physical and mental health and well-being.

The previous problems presume we still have a school enrolment. Scoil Chaitríona has an enrolment of 449 students which is the largest student body we have ever had. Our primary school numbers are growing and we expect to grow our numbers in coming years. This formed the basis of our application for additional accommodation which has been agreed by the Department of Education and Skills. Since the announcement of this MetroLink consultation, we have had a steady stream of inquiries from parents who are concerned about sending their children to what will essentially be a building site for the duration of their secondary education. They have indicated that if it goes ahead as planned, they will withdraw their children. We would then go from a school with growing enrolment to one which would have threatened viability.

With Na Fianna, Scoil Mobhí and Tír na nÓg, we have a well established, unique Irish language community on the north side of Dublin. Scoil Mobhí and Scoil Chaitríona are the only schools directly, adversely affected by the proposed MetroLink. Both schools work as Gaeilge. This project would appear to contradict Government policy to conserve and promote our language, heritage and culture of the community. It seems counterproductive to provide a facility for a community which would then be destroyed in the process. We are deeply committed to promoting the Irish language and culture.

In summary, fundamentally, the proposed plan will tear the heart out of the community’s educational, cultural and sporting facilities. We welcome the concept of MetroLink and any proposals to improve public transport and punctuality in Dublin but not at any cost. No reason has been given to us for this location of the tunnel-boring machine launch site other than the
engineering convenience. Surely the impact on the community at the site must outweigh other considerations. This has had an immediate, concrete impact on our school. The proposals have generated uncertainty in our school community and among current and prospective students’ parents. It is urgent that we get clarity about those proposals in order to secure the future of the school. We need that clarity before the end of this school year. We have students who have places for next September whose parents need an answer on this. We would respectfully ask TII to look for an alternative site which would not have such a devastating impact on the communities which are part of the heart and soul of the area. We need a definite answer immediately to avoid a loss of enrolment. We will be celebrating 90 years of Scoil Chaitríona through 2018. We hope that the school will be flourishing and that we will be celebrating our centenary in 2028. We would be unable to achieve that aspiration if these proposals go ahead as planned.

Chairman: Go raibh míle maith agaibh as éisteacht linn.

Chairman: Go raibh míle maith agat as ucht an ráiteas a bhí agat ansin. I want to say that we have heard all the opening statements so I now go to the elected members, the members of the committee. The rotation we take them in normally is Fine Gael, followed by Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Independents and Social Democrats who are also Independents. We had a proposal earlier to allow five minutes for each person and questions in the beginning. That is five minutes for Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin and then we will go around a second time to give everybody an opportunity to comment. Glaom ar ball Fine Gael, an Teachta Rock atá chun caint anois. Tá cúig nóiméad agat.

Deputy Noel Rock: I thank the Chair and the committee for facilitating what is on the face of it a somewhat unusual request to have a meeting like this. It can be seen from the powerful testimonies from the community groups precisely why we needed to have a meeting like this though. It is fair to say this is an unprecedentedly large project and an unprecedentedly large problem for the various groups which are facing up to this project right now. I thank all those who facilitated my request on that and I thank all the groups for taking the time to come in and present to us here today.

Often in the Oireachtas we are accused of being reactive rather than proactive, that is why the timing of this was so crucial. It was crucial to have it in advance of the closing of the public consultation deadline of 11 May 2018. The timing, as can be seen from the two testimonies of the schools in particular, is absolutely of the essence. We truly need to have clarity outlined from the two State bodies, with respect to any changes that are proposed to be made to the emerging preferred route as soon as possible after that 11 May 2018 public consultation deadline passes. I cannot emphasise that strongly enough. With respect, I put the two Stage agencies on notice in that regard. I would appreciate a commitment from perhaps both Mr. Nolan and Ms Graham that they will endeavour to announce any changes to this route, or to the boring site in particular, as soon as is practically possible following the 11 May deadline. The reason I emphasise this so strongly is that I know from the various consultations TII and the NTA have had with the various groups that a number of different dates and potential deadlines have been given, which gives rise to uncertainty. As far as the schools and enrolment are concerned, there is a massive difference between a deviation being announced to the boring site in the middle of May and one being announced in the middle of July. That has a knock-on effect in terms of enrolment, capitation and the potential viability of the schools and their operations going forward. I just wanted to emphasise that at the opening of my remarks. This is not to say that Prospect ACA, Home Farm and Na Fianna do not also have pressing timeline concerns. However, Mr. Nolan and Ms Graham can see in this case that even if TII and the NTA were to announce a deviation to the boring site, the timing of it would be crucial to the schools in particular and
their enrolment. I would therefore appreciate if the two Stage agencies could come back to me with perhaps a proposed timeline or even a commitment to look at these issues with the greatest possible urgency.

I will probably put this question to Mr. Nolan. In the event that boring is moved elsewhere, what implications would a station construction project on St. Mobhi Road have for either Home Farm or Na Fianna? If a station were to remain at St. Mobhi Road, for example, and the boring site were moved elsewhere along a sliding scale, what would the cost implications be? At what radius within the current proposed boring site does the boring site have to be in order to be viable? I know people could propose putting it at either end of the line, but I presume there is some median point at which TII and the NTA want the boring site to be. What exact radius is that from the proposed Na Fianna site? Will TII and the NTA commit to clarifying the outstanding uncertainties for Prospect ACA in particular? The witnesses outlined a number of issues in respect of which they seem to be uncertain, and I hope they might be able to fill in the detail of them, perhaps here or at a later forum in writing. I would appreciate that. I think this could potentially be resolved today.

I have another question, again for either Ms Graham or Mr. Nolan. Do they accept that the level of consultation has been lacking to date? I know they have worked quite hard to engage with, I think, each of the seven groups separately subsequent to the announcement of the project. However, as for the early forays, when it is considered that some stakeholders were only told on the Friday of a bank holiday weekend before a Tuesday public announcement, and that I as an Oireachtas Member and a member of the transport committee had not heard about it in advance of the public announcement and, in fact, was told my a member of Na Fianna by email over that weekend, do the witnesses consider that to be an acceptable level of consultation? When it is considered that there were only three weeks between the announcement of the project and the conclusion of the first public consultation date on the north side, do they consider that to be a good level of public consultation? I think it leaves a little to be desired.

Chairman: I want to be fair to everyone. The Deputy is five minutes into his address, and I have no issue with that. I will give him another minute and then I will move on because, not in any way to take from his excellent questions, but-----

Deputy Noel Rock: You are very good, Chairman.

Chairman: Someone has their phone on.

Deputy Noel Rock: Sorry.

Chairman: The Deputy will get a black mark. His speech will be wiped out.

Deputy Noel Rock: My apologies. It is certainly not the Dublin panel calling me up anyway, I assure the Chairman.

Chairman: It is just what we agreed earlier-----

Deputy Noel Rock: That is not a problem. I have two more brief questions. I will not take any more than-----

Chairman: I am happy to give the Deputy another minute to be fair.

Deputy Noel Rock: That is very good. I thank the Chairman.
I have two final questions. Are the numbers that were set out by Ms Nic Niallaigh in respect of the construction accurate? They are quite startling. They were outlined in her presentation earlier in respect of the amount of traffic on site.

Finally, as a consequence of the proximity of the two schools in particular, has a human health impact assessment been undertaken, as is a statutory requirement under EU directives, specifically EU Directive No. 2014/52/EU? I realise we are at an early date in this, but it would seem that if it breaches that directive, this conversation is somewhat nullified and the proposed works cannot go ahead at that site in any event. I would appreciate a response in that regard as well. I thank the Chairman and the witnesses once again.

Chairman: I now call Deputy John Lahart. I will give him five minutes-----

Deputy John Lahart: Lovely.

Chairman: -----and then we will ring a bell.

Deputy John Lahart: I might skip the compliments and allow those present to take them for granted. The officials from the NTA and TII, the stakeholders, have given very comprehensive contributions and reports on the impact. If I were to summarise it, the impact of this on the local community would be to close down a huge section of the community and to close down the heart of the community. I will leave my comments at that because I wish to raise other issues. I am Dublin spokesperson for my party and work alongside Mary Fitzpatrick and Councillor Paul McAuliffe. I know my party leader, Deputy Micheál Martin, was in the area and met some of the stakeholders recently, which is an indication of how seriously we take this matter.

Three clichés come to mind. I hope the Chairman does not mind my repeating them. One is “you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs”. We are into scrambled eggs already at this stage before the process has even begun. All I would say to residents is that my experience of infrastructural projects in my own constituency, such as the M50 and the Luas, is that the public comes last. TII is a brilliant organisation, as is NTA, but while they may say things about public consultation really they are project-driven. One will therefore need the support of one’s public representatives right along the way to hold them to it. If I were chief executive of any of these organisations, I would want to get the project delivered too. That will be their focus.

What is this committee’s function in respect of this matter? We do not have any statutory role in this, do we? In other words, what is the status of this meeting?

Chairman: The answer is that the Deputy is absolutely right. First, we have oversight of this project as an Oireachtas committee. I appreciate that this is the Deputy’s first time here, and I do not say that to be rude. Second, obviously, it is very important to listen to requests from Members of the Oireachtas, who reflect the views of the community, which the Deputy has just spoken about. However, as regards powers, we have nil, other than to ask questions such as the Deputy is asking now and to get answers. The other important thing is that this is perhaps a textbook example of how not to do things. In other words, it is a storm which we must contain, and we must ensure there is equity and fairness for the community coming out of this. I think someone else’s phone is on.

Deputy John Lahart: I wish to raise a few other matters. I know the MetroLink document is only a summary. If we look at page 25, we see what TII and the NTA envisaged as the issues and challenges. They outline six of them. The sports clubs, the schools and the local community are not referred to. Heritage is mentioned very briefly, but they envisaged no impact on
the local community in part 6 of this document, “Issues and Challenges”. It says a lot to me that when they put this line together, no one looked and said, “Jesus, look where it is going.” TII’s and the NTA’s issues and challenges are property acquisition; upgrading the existing green line; scheme traffic management; noise, vibration and ground settlement; materials and recycling; and cultural heritage. They need to address this strongly. I do take heart - and perhaps the members could clarify this - from the language in the report, such as “emerging preferred route”. It is therefore not a final preferred route, and I hope the community can take some solace from that. What kind of alternatives are in place?

I was taken by all the submissions. TII and the NTA now have them, as does this committee. They are powerful testimonies. I do not want to highlight one above the other, but there were a few matters raised in the ACA contribution from Anu Meehan. I hope TII and the NTA will be flexible enough to take on board Ms Meehan’s comments on the public consultation: “The period from the opening of the public consultation ... to the submission date of 11 May 2018 is extremely short for ordinary citizens affected by this to comprehend the complexities of the work ..., which took years to complete with experts and a large budget.” What we have here are volunteers. In fact, we have school principals who have much better things to do. Members of the committee can see the anxiety this is causing them from a future perspective. The time of those involved with sports clubs would be much better spent in dealing with the kids in their charge. They have had to employ professionals. The clubs are run on the money they raise through fundraising.

As Ms Meehan said, the NTA and TII are backed by a phalanx of professionals. They have dedicated employees who deal exclusively with this matter. They are up against ordinary citizens who have limited energy to give to this matter. Like the Chairman, I have seen this happen many times in projects of this nature. Volunteers can deal with one wave of activity of this nature, but it is extremely taxing for them to deal with big State organisations when they come wave after wave. That point is made in a paragraph in the document to which I have referred.

Ms Meehan made the point that the public consultation process should be extended. Those involved are not looking for a mad extension. The organisations need hand-holding by experts in the NTA and TII. Ms Meehan made another telling contribution when she said the website and the documents were sending confusing messages on a number of issues.

I assure everybody represented here that he or she will receive any assistance he or she needs from his or her public representatives. My party leader has visited the local area. I am happy to visit any of the schools and the site in question. I have been in contact with two public representatives, Councillors Paul McAuliffe and Mary Fitzpatrick. It has been clarified that the committee does not have statutory status in dealing with this issue. What alternatives are being considered? Any alternative will also have an impact, given that there is no action without an equal and opposite reaction.

I say to the representatives of the NTA and TII that a focus on public consultation and communications ought to be a huge part of what they do in the next decade. It would not cost a lot of money. I went to the Conrad Hotel for the launch of the project. It is not right that a huge number of people at the heart of the community found out about it when they heard rumours or read about it in the media. It seems that communication is not considered to be one of the priority challenges of the NTA and TII. I suggest it is possible that it will be one of the greatest challenges they face. The project cannot get off the ground without the goodwill of the communities represented here.
Chairman: I thank the Deputy for his well made points. He will have a chance to come back in later in the meeting.

Deputy Imelda Munster: An article that was published in a local newspaper and included in the agenda for this afternoon’s meeting quoted an American engineer and tunneller as saying it should take a year, or possibly two years, to complete the tunnelling part of the project, based on an average daily rate for cutting a tunnel of between 100 ft and 150 ft. He said that in normal circumstances it should be completed in three years. Na Fianna has been told that it will have no facilities for six or seven years. It seems TII is proposing to cut between 5 ft and 6 ft of tunnel per day over a period of six to seven years. Will the officials from TII explain how it could take six or seven years to cut the tunnel for the metro, bearing in mind the average daily cutting rate to which I have referred?

I would like to refer to something else that was mentioned in the article in question. The delegates can dispute these quotes if they wish. They reflect the concerns that have been raised in the presentations. According to the article, an engineer from the NTA or TII has said the proposal to dump on Na Fianna’s ground was “not the best” plan. The same engineer described the plan as “crazy”. We know the history of projects that have gone AWOL, with massive overspends, huge delays and all of the disasters involved. The serious concerns that have been expressed are understandable in that context. The engineer quoted in the article has said there is no need for a building depot and suggested the site earmarked for metro stops could be used to store kit and dirt and all that sort of thing. He said there was no need to use Na Fianna’s ground at all. I wonder whether it was chosen by the consultants for pure convenience without giving due consideration to everyone who would be affected. Will the delegates from the NTA confirm that it was done for reasons of pure convenience? Did nobody in the NTA or TII think to question it, or just to look at it, before bulldozing ahead and announcing it?

A previous speaker asked about the alternatives being considered. I want to ask about something relevant that struck me as I was listening to the presentations made. People have huge concerns. It comes back to the six or seven-year timeframe for tunnelling for the metro. Why did it take so long to lay the tracks for the Luas cross-city line? Was the NTA happy with the Luas cross-city project? If the answer to that question is yes, I despair for the MetroLink project. Most people would do likewise. One will never learn if one is not prepared to honestly accept and openly acknowledge that one has made mistakes. I am interested in hearing the NTA officials’ response to that question.

I will conclude by asking about the tendering process for the overall project. How exactly will it work? Will it be a full PPP or funded by the State? I ask these questions in the light of the history of overspends, gross delays and general chaos in PPP projects. When the State takes on these mass infrastructural projects, they tend to result in the overspend of hundreds of millions of euro.

Chairman: Glaoim anois ar an Seanadóir Pádraig Ó Céidigh.

Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh: Caithfidh mé a rá go bhfuil me fior-bródúil bheith mar Éireannach tar éis dom éisteacht leis an gcur i láthair a rinne Cormac Ó Donnchú, Michael Dowling, Marcella Nic Niallach agus Carmel de Grae. Fair play dóibh agus nár laga Dia iad. Bíonn siad ag plé le cúrsaí cultúrtha, forbartha, teangan agus oideachais. Tá an tír seo ag rith go maith, le cúnamh Dé, ach tá imní mhór mar gheall ar an mhéid atá cloiste agus lête agam. Deirim le Ann Graham agus Hugh Creggan ón NTA go gcaithfear athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an bplean seo. Tá cúpla ceist agam. Mholfaíonn go ndéanfar athbhreithniú ar pleán B, pleán
PROPOSED METROLINK: DISCUSSION

C agus plean D. Tá cúpla rud anseo mar gheall ar unintended consequences, cause and effect agus measure twice, three times, four times. Tá an obair atá á dhéanamh ag an dream seo mar eiseamhláir den súrt tir - an súrt comhluadar agus an súrt daoine óga - go bhfuilimid ag iarraidh a fhóirbairt anseo.

Tá sé soiléir go bhfuil an fhadhb seo ag cur as go mór dóibh siúd atá bainteach leis. Tá seans mhaith ann go ndúnfaidh sé scoileanna, club Na Fianna nó club Home Farm. I heard of Home Farm a long time ago because many lads and girls who grew up playing for the club represented the country and went on to play for clubs like Manchester United. Home Farm is even known in Connemara for what it does, agus nár laga Dia iad. My background is very much in the GAA space.

Ms Meehan made the very good suggestion that the public consultation process be extended because many believe they did not have a proper chance to engage. Will the delegates confirm that it is possible to extend the consultation process to give people a reasonable amount of time to engage? I plead with them not to go ahead with plan A in its current format. I looked up statistics from the Central Statistics Office on the population in the Glasnevin-Drumcondra-Mobhi Road, general Phibsboro and Ballymun area, that Na Fianna club covers. One is talking of the region of 200,000 people. That is more than the population of County Mayo, and there is only one football pitch. Imagine that for the whole population of Mayo. The biggest challenge in Dublin is that there are not enough facilities for young people to go out and enjoy themselves. Only for the volunteerism of those people, our education system would break down, and I am say that with huge respect for our teachers. I was a teacher myself. The greatest impact on my life was not entrepreneurship or anything like that but the classroom. I would say to not only listen but to enable those communities that are here and are fully engaged.

I suggest that the Chair, on behalf of the committee, takes up the offer to visit the facilities and meet the people there. I propose also, if it is acceptable to the committee, that we invite these people back over the coming months in regard to plans B, C and D and get feedback so this is not just a one trick pony, or just one meeting.

Ná laga Dia sibh, go raibh maith agaibh agus leanaígh ar aghaidh leis an dea-obair.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat agus b’fhéidir go mbeidh peileadóirí agaibh ag teacht go dtí contae Lú uair éigin. Ta ganntanas peileadóirí againn, uaireanta, ar aon nós. I call Teachta Shorthall to speak now.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I thank the witnesses for their attendance and presentations today and the Chairman for agreeing to my request that the schools be included in this very important session. This is a very worthwhile session but the fact the schools were not included initially speaks volumes about the approach of some agencies to this whole issue, and I will talk about that a bit more in a moment.

As a local public representative in the Glasnevin-Whitehall-Drumcondra area for some time, I have been very closely involved with the previous two iterations of metro and I was somewhat taken aback when on 22 March, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, announced this new route upon which there had been no consultation, no engagement whatsoever with public representatives in the local area and no engagement directly with public representatives since 22 March.

I, like others, went along to the public consultation sessions but the least the witnesses could have been done would have been to brief the public representatives in the areas directly af-
fected. That was a mistake on their part and I am concerned that it indicates a generally flippant attitude to local interests in terms of the need for good engagement and consultation.

It is noteworthy that all the groups that presented today made it very clear that they are fully supportive of the metro project. They believe that it is a very positive thing for Dublin and for the northside, in particular, and that they are not objecting to it. That is an important statement to make. What they are obviously concerned about are the implications of different aspects of this major project. Everybody accepts that in a major infrastructural project, there is always collateral damage. There are downsides to any big positive. Sometimes the collateral damage or the price paid is simply too high, and that is certainly the case in this instance. I am increasingly concerned that there was a complete lack of awareness and appreciation of the area that would be affected by the proposal, the general campus of Na Fianna, as well as the associated activities that go on around it.

To a large extent, it is hard to think of a more sensitive area on the north side of Dublin than this particular campus. Several of the contributors referred to this as the heart of the community, and there is no question about that. It is a sporting, educational, cultural and social campus. I do not believe there was an appreciation of that on the part of TII because I cannot imagine that anybody who would be aware of the extent and diversity of the activities and the sensitivity of that site would come up with the proposal that would have such a hugely negative impact on the site for six or seven years.

I was quite taken aback by the opening comments of Mr. Nolan in regard to this whole issue. He spoke of TII being in negotiations and engaging with both clubs. This is not a case of simply both clubs. The impact obviously on both clubs is enormous and could sound the death knell for at least one of those clubs. This is not simply about finding alternative pitches for a couple of clubs. It is a much wider issue than that. I do not sense any appreciation from TII of the scale of this being so big in respect of four educational institutions associated with that site. I include in that Whitehall College of Further Education as well as the naíonra, Scoil Mobhí and Scoil Chaitríona.

It is all very well to look at this from a theoretical point of view and to talk about a period of six or seven years. The reality is that six or seven years represents practically the entire primary school career of a child. That could be wiped out. It also represents the entire secondary school career of a child but there does not seem to be any recognition of that whatsoever. It is impossible to think how one could proceed with the scale of the construction works at this site, including the launch pad for the tunnel boring machines plus the construction of a station that would take six to seven years to complete, without having an appreciation of the massively detrimental impact that will have on the 1,000 children attending those educational facilities.

One has a situation that is extremely sensitive. There is a movement of 1,000 young people twice daily from that entire site. When one adds in parents, teachers and staff, one is talking about the movement of 2,000 people twice every day beside a major construction site.

**Chairman:** Tá an t-am istigh anois.

**Deputy Róisín Shortall:** It is impossible to see how one could have considered that as a viable or feasible option.

**Chairman:** Glaoin an Seanadóir John O’Mahony anois.

**Deputy Róisín Shortall:** Can I ask some quick questions, please?
PROPOSED METROLINK: DISCUSSION

Chairman: I try to be fair to everybody. There is no problem getting back in.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Can I ask three quick questions?

Chairman: The Deputy can but she can ask them afterwards as I want to be fair. I do not want to stop anybody nor am I trying to cut anybody out. I am trying run this as well as I can.

If the Deputy wants to ask her questions, I do not have a problem with that if she can keep to one minute. There are others who-----

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I will keep it to one minute. I thank the Chair. Can the witnesses tell us how many alternative sites are being considered and examined for the Glasnevin general station? Can they tell us to what extent the engineering issues, in terms of whether it is single or a twin tunnel, will impact the route and the moving of the stations? There are engineering issues in regard to the tunnel and the length of the stations, which I understand are, to some extent, negotiable. Can the witnesses outline the number of alternative routes that have been considered? None of that information has been made available to us and to enable us to understand the thinking behind this and the options for moving this proposal forward, it is important we are provided with this information.

Chairman: Anois, glaoim ar an Seanadóir O’Mahony.

Senator John O’Mahony: I thank the witnesses from the State agencies and, in particular, the community groups, the sporting clubs and the schools for presenting. We have heard about the problems associated with the preferred route but I would hate to hear about the problems associated with the less preferred route. I would defer to the local public representatives who are directly affected but as somebody who has been involved in volunteerism and in sporting activity, in particular in the GAA, over the years, and who was a teacher, I very much empathise with what has been outlined today. I simply cannot see a situation where six years of community life in this region is going to be wiped out. I do not think it can happen. I believe if one has an issue or a problem, one should spend 20% of one’s time on outlining the problem and 80% on finding a solution. I would urge all sides here, including the machinery of the State, to find an acceptable solution to this. Everyone wants this to happen but it needs to take account of the people and people are most important. That is the purpose for which anything is done.

On a couple of specific issues - I will defer to the local people and local public representatives involved - mention was made of extending the consultation period. The probable difficulty with that is that this would extend the uncertainty that is there already. I am not sure how that would work. After the public consultation on 11 May 2018, if there is a deviation from what is already proposed, then will there be public consultation on that as well? I presume there would need to be, and that may be the way to proceed.

A knocking together of heads is needed to serve the people of this community and also to provide them with the most up to date system of public transport; that is the key to it. As somebody who has worked as a teacher, community volunteer and coach, I believe there needs to be an acceptable solution. Today is about highlighting this issue, and it is good to get the relevant people in the one room.

Chairman: Glaogm an Seanadóir Ned O’Sullivan.

Senator Ned O’Sullivan: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome all the representatives of the State agencies and of the community groups here today. My initial response is that this a very
exciting project and hugely important for the city for lots of reasons. It is good to note that there is a positive acceptance and a welcome for it despite the serious concerns people have. If anyone is listening in on live TV from rural Ireland they are probably flabbergasted at the size of this budget. It is a €3 billion estimate, and we know the nature of estimates, to provide 15 new railway stations and 3,000 additional park and ride spaces. One will be able to get from the north of Dublin down to Sandyford in 50 minutes. It took me six years before I could get a lift across the railway station in Charleville. This is not about the woes of rural Ireland but this example may put it into perspective.

It is a very familiar story. We have a major project, with big budgets for the overall good of a region, side by side with the legitimate concerns of a local community who very often find themselves frightened, defenceless and bewildered by what is going on around them. We have heard of how difficult it has been for the representatives to access information. That worries me. I have to say, and I am reluctant to be critical of State agencies, but I am a bit underwhelmed by the level of approach and contact and interaction that has been taking place to date.

How advanced is this preferred route? Let us come clean about this, are these agencies open for serious and meaningful change, in consultation with the groups that are here today? If the agencies are not, we might as well know about it and people might have to look at alternative ways forward. I always believe in dialogue and I would hope that what the presenters of this programme have said is true, and that they are open to and do want to talk, and want a meaningful interchange with the public. Otherwise this is a waste of time. I hope it is not written in stone. I suspect it is not, it is too big a project for that.

I really was impressed by the presentations made here today, a Chathaoirleach. I would be very familiar with Na Fianna; as a Kerryman we try to keep as good an eye as we can on the enemy. We know how all of the good Dublin clubs are progressing. I have tremendous time for Home Farm FC also. I know the area fairly well, having spent two years in the teacher training college in Drumcondra. I was particularly impressed by the contribution of Ms Meehan representing the residents’ group, because it is a very special place. It is a quiet oasis, Glasnevin, with the Botanic Gardens, the graveyard and the canal. It is very special place with a particular history not just for the region but for the country. Ms Meehan makes a very strong case which I hope will be listened to.

My party leader has visited the area and taken an interest in this; he has appointed Deputy Lahart with a special remit for the Dublin area, and along with our local representatives, Councillor Paul Mc Auliffe and Mary Fitzpatrick, we have all been fairly well briefed on our side of the House and we are very much on the side of the community.

I do hope that the big body, which in this case is the developers, is prepared at this stage to get into serious discussions with the sports clubs, agus go háirithe leis na scoileanna, mar treaslaím dóibh as ucht an cháis ina bhfuil siad agus an cáis a chuir siad romhainn inniu. It is clearly worrying for pupils staff and parents. Tá súil agam go mbeidh réiteach ar an bhfadhb, for the schools also.

Chairman: What is hugely important here is that there is a constructive outcome. One of the balances that is not here is the balance of the community versus the semi-State or the State organisation, particularly in terms of funding and access to professional legal and planning advice. This is something that is not going to end today. There ought to be a mechanism where one can access an independent fund or independent legal advice that one can commission but will be paid for from that fund, that would meet certain standards, and would not and could not
be anything other than what one would need. That would certainly ensure that the community case that the witnesses have articulated so clearly and strongly is backed up professionally because when these issues move on into planning fora and such bodies, this support is required. I remember an experience when a number of us opposed an incinerator in our community. When it came to the planning stage, we had our own people there as we had no money to pay anybody. All of the other parties had a bevy of lawyers and solicitors and planners. We won the argument at the end of the day. It was a huge battle, however, and it is a huge battle to try to get equality for one’s community. There is a balance nationally that we ought to address in that regard. Groups should be enabled to have access to professional proper advice that articulates their case in the planning fora not the legal fora they need to present to. I call Deputy Ellis to speak.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: Go raibh maith agat a Chathaoirligh. I dtús báire ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a thabhairt do gach duine a tháinig anseo inniu agus an imní a thaispeáin sibh go léir dúinn. Tá Sinn Féin i bhfabhar metro ach go háirithe táimid an-bhuartha mar gheall ar an bplean suíomh Mobhi a úsáid agus na impleachtaí atá leis sin. First, I thank everyone for coming. This discussion was very valuable and is badly needed. When I was over in the Conrad Hotel at the consultation and I was talking to Mr. Creegan who was outlining the plan, the first thing that struck me was the Brian Boru issue about taking down or compulsorily purchasing the Brian Boru, Kelly’s Carpets and the apartments there and the implications that would have. Whatever the implications that action would have, the residents have a lot to say about this issue and they will make their views known.

The first thing that really struck me was when he started describing the plans for Na Fianna grounds and Home Farm FC’s grounds. I said to him straight away, and he will remember this, “that is not going to happen, that is not going to work”. I could not see any logic in it. I could not see any logic in destroying a whole community, which is what it would do, for six or seven years. If all that machinery and those works were to be put on that land, the club and a whole generation would be destroyed. Thousands of people use that area weekly. Moreover, the traffic on Mobhi Road is massive and is chock-a-block daily because I use it myself coming into Leinster House so I know what it is like. I go back to all the consultations we had with the metro north. I must have been at about 30 of them going back to 2010 or 2011, when it was scrapped. Millions was spent on the whole consultation. I never saw a full figure but it was very substantial. Then the plans changed whereby Drumcondra has been excluded and now we are going through Glasnevin. Whatever the reasons were for that are among the things we need to tease out. Why did this happen? I do not know what lessons we have learned from the previous consultations but we certainly need to consult with people. We must go to the ends of the earth in consulting with the clubs etc. I believe we have to look at alternatives and I do not think there is any way about it. Originally the plan was Albert College. I am not saying that is the right thing to do but originally that was the plan. We would operate from Albert College. How we got down to Na Fianna is still baffling. What is the problem about going to the north of Ballymun, up towards the airport, where there are virgin lands. The operation could be done from there. There might be engineering issues posed and it probably would be a little more difficult but it is not impossible that the work could be done from those lands. I know it was said that we do not want to discuss options but this is about options because the people here are clearly indicating they will not accept this. There are obviously concerns for other residents as to where tunnels will go under their properties etc and how that will be handled will all have to be addressed. I raised this in the Dáil and have been consulting with Deputy McDonald on what is going on and we both are in agreement that this site simply is not acceptable.

I know the Irish schools that are there. The three main schools; Scoil Mobhi, Scoil Chaitrio-
na and the other college there will be absolutely decimated by this. I cannot get my head around the logic and how this idea was come up with to go on that site. I am still baffled by this. There are things we need to know. We need to know whether a traffic management plan has been put in place? Have we done an environmental impact statement, EIS, or are we about to do an EIS because the effects this will have are massive? I would have expected that something will be outlined on when an EIS would be done on this site. This term “the emerging preferred route”, is one I always worry about because it tends to focus people into an area instead of giving them solutions. That is what seems to be happening. We seem to be focused on this being the only solution, that is, we operate from somewhere within the Glasnevin area and it is more convenient. My take on it from talking to people is that it is much easier to operate from the centre and work both sides and that is what the idea here is. That is why I have suggested that we should be looking north of Ballymun to see whether this would be suitable. I believe it can be done. We all know the benefits of a metro. People here are not saying they are against a metro but they are certainly not going to take it at any cost or at any cost to the community.

Chairman: Deputy Ellis made some very important points there. I propose that if it is in order, we break for ten minutes to give people a chance to have a cup of tea. Thereafter, we will have replies and the elected members could get answers to the questions. I am trying to keep it positive and constructive so that if anybody wishes to come back who either has not spoken or would like to add something, we might get a constructive engagement out of it. The message here is very clear. As Chairman of the committee I was very pleased to see it on television because I am a supporter of the project but engaging with public representatives has not been top of the witnesses’ agenda and by implication, they are not thinking enough about the community and what their real needs are. Deputy Ellis made the point that there are technological issues and whether it can be done from an engineering and technological perspective. Even if there is a cost overrun, if it left the community in peace and harmony that might be of the most benefit.

Sitting suspended at 3.26 p.m. and resumed at 3.45 p.m.

Chairman: I compliment everyone on the way the meeting has been conducted. We have had a very useful and constructive engagement with all of the community groups. Oireachtas Members have asked their questions and Ms Graham and members of her team will respond. I suggest they answer questions whichever way they wish and we can return to certain matters if the members feel they need further details. The community groups and clubs can comment afterwards, if they wish. Let us listen to the answers first and people can make a further comment later. I hope to finish the meeting at 5 o’clock if that seems reasonable. If not, we can extend the meeting a bit longer although I am conscious of people’s time. I call Ms Graham.

Ms Anne Graham: I will give an overview response to the questions and then my colleagues in Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, and my colleague, Mr. Creegan, might answer some of the more detailed questions.

I wish to emphasise again that we are talking about an emerging preferred route and it is not the final route. We are talking about consultation on an emerging preferred route. That means the proposal is not fixed in stone and there is a facility to make amendments, where feasible.

We are happy and welcome the statements that have been made here today. In terms of our opening statements, we addressed the sporting facilities because we were unaware that the representatives for the schools and residents were going to present. We do not underestimate the impact on the schools and residents also, rather it is just that we did not address those aspects in our statements. We do not underestimate the concerns of those groups who are represented
here today. We will make every effort to clarify any questions that groups have, particularly in this period up until the closing date of 11 May. If people need more information, I suggest that they contact TII through the various numbers and contacts and we will try to ensure that the information is available. My colleague, Mr. Creegan, will give a detailed response.

Mr. Hugh Creegan: I will start with some of Deputy Rock’s questions, some of which were quite detailed. His first question was if we would commit to announcing changes as soon as possible after the consultation ends. The answer is “Yes”. It will take us a little bit of time to absorb all of the feedback because many issues are involved, not just the issues that have been mentioned here but many other issues as well. It will be as soon as practicable after the end of that work. We are conscious that people would like certainty and TII and ourselves will try to make an announcement as quickly as possible.

The Deputy asked if there were implications if the tunnel boring launch moved to a different location. The short answer is that there are implications, such as cost. Every time one makes a change, it has a cost implication. We are conscious of the fact that we have a certain allocation of money from the Government. The sum is very significant but we must still deliver the project within budget. There may be time implications or implications on residents and other things nearby. It would all be about the specifics.

The Deputy asked about the number of truck movements. We have not reached the stage of assessing individual truck movements. A couple of people have provided information from the previous metro north project. We would say that is probably in the right order but we have not reached the stage in the project where we have detailed information because, as we have said, we are at the emerging preferred route stage. A human health assessment has not been undertaken as of yet, but the Deputy is absolutely right that it has to be done. It is usually done as part of what used to be called an environmental impact statement but is now called an environmental impact assessment report. At that stage it would have to be undertaken. The other queries about consultation will be dealt with by Mr. Nolan.

Deputy Lahart raised a number of questions. One of points he made was that we did not highlight the sports ground among the issues and challenges in the document. He is perfectly right about that. We thought we had included it under property acquisition. It arises out of the temporary acquisition of the site and we thought we had covered it but obviously we were not clear enough. The Deputy asked us what alternatives had been considered. There is a document available for download on the MetroLink site, which shows all of the alternatives that were gone through. I would say that all in all we probably looked at more than 100 alternatives for the scheme and teased through each of them one by one to try to work out the best option to bring forward at this stage.

Deputy Munster asked about the rate of boring advancement and spoke about her American colleague who gave her some information. We have given a time range, which is probably the worst case scenario, and we are right to give the worst case scenario. If we were to sugar coat it and say it was less than that people would rightly be concerned. Whatever rate is technically possible, and I do not think it is as fast as the rate quoted by Deputy Munster, is the rate the tunnel will advance at each day. I do not think tunnels of this size would get up to that particular rate of advancement.

The Deputy also asked whether this would be a public private partnership or an Exchequer-funded scheme. We are operating on the basis the Government is allocating funding from Exchequer resources, but I am conscious the national development finance agency has a part to
play later in advising whether this is the right decision. We are advancing on the basis that is Exchequer funded and not a public private partnership, but this will be concluded later.

Deputy Munster also asked why it took so long to lay the tracks for the Luas cross city. I realise it is a different project but her point was whether we learned any lessons from it. The Luas cross city took as long as it did because we were being very careful going through the city centre of Dublin, where traders were expressing their views to us that they were struggling from a retail activity point of view and needed us not to shut down the streets fully in the way we might like in order to do it expeditiously. We had very close engagement with the TII and the traders for several years and did the scheme in a way that kept businesses operational and functioning. It might not have been the fastest way to do it, but had we done it the fastest way it is not what they would have appreciated or wanted.

Senator Ó Céidigh mentioned extending the public consultation process and he was quite passionate about it. This issue with this was raised elsewhere, which is the longer it is extended the longer there is uncertainty. We will take that away and consider what is the right thing to do. There are pluses and minuses as we can see.

Deputy Shortall had a number of queries. One was about a briefing for public representatives. We are conscious we tried to do that on the day of launch, when we organised a briefing session for all of the public representatives. That is what we tried to do at that stage. The Deputy also asked how many alternative sites we had examined for Glasnevin. We have not looked up the exact number but we looked at a myriad of station locations in that general area. They are all in the document. In terms of alternatives, we looked at more than 100 alternatives for the overall project. With regard to sites for specific stations we looked at tens of alternatives in each case. There are also issues which Mr. Nolan will cover.

Mr. Michael Nolan: We welcome this engagement. It is very productive and it has been good to hear all of the views of the groups today. I need to emphasise this is not the first time we are engaging on this. Engagement started a few weeks ago and we give a full commitment from the NTA side and the TII side to continuous engagement over the coming weeks and after the closing of the public consultation stage. With regard to public consultation, as Ms Graham said, it is an emerging preferred route so it is fluid to some extent. There will be more opportunities for public consultation. There will be a six-week statutory public consultation stage once we published the railway order. It is very important to provide this opportunity for people to air their concerns and views to An Bord Pleanála.

We give a full commitment to continue to work on developing alternative solutions in the coming weeks, taking on board the submissions that have already been made. We have had submissions from many quarters and we also have what we have heard here today and what we will hear over the coming weeks from the clubs and schools. We are very happy to meet Prospect ACA and perhaps we will arrange a meeting to hear its views and clarify any confusing information that people come across when looking at our route section reports and mapping. After this session we can arrange a time that is suitable and begin engaging on this.

Mr. Creegan has dealt with all of the other questions. I want to respond to Deputy Shortall. As Ms Graham said earlier, we were informed that today we would deal with the impact of MetroLink on recreational facilities, and we were unaware the schools would be here. This is the only reason I did not address it in my opening statement. That is the explanation. Obviously we consider schools, sporting facilities and community groups very seriously and I reiterate we will give full engagement and a full commitment to work on this in the coming weeks.
Chairman: I was going to ask whether that was it. That is the response to the questions. In fairness to the members, significant issues were raised by many people that I did not hear answered. Deputy Ellis spoke about the engineering costs involved in locating to a greenfield site. There is a cost-benefit analysis, and after public consultation there will be a preliminary costing of the project, after which there will be a further detailed costing and then it will go before the Government based on the totality of all the costs. What Deputy Ellis was asking, and I am sure it was an implied question from other people, is how the NTA and TII can assure the public that other alternatives are being examined, greenfield or otherwise. Is that the Deputy’s point?

Deputy Dessie Ellis: The point I was making, and I will pick up on what Mr. Creegan just said, is that analysis was done in the Glasnevin area on the basis of cost. Mr. Creegan outlined this. I am asking whether everything will be weighed up. It can move outside of the Glasnevin area and north towards the M50, but will we weigh up the cost of moving a club and reinstating all of its facilities, including pitches? There is also the whole issue of destroying an entire community. That is the crucial issue at the end of the day.

Chairman: I am not taking from the importance of the club, because it is hugely important, but a school is a structure and a building and it cannot just be taken away somewhere else. I used to be a teacher-----

Deputy Dessie Ellis: We cannot put a cost on that.

Chairman: It is a seven-year cycle plus two years. This would be a huge impact. There is also the question raised about danger and children crossing the road. There is also the noise issue. Teaching cannot take place in a noisy environment. Will the witnesses look at the opportunity cost to them of moving to a greenfield site, wherever it might be? There is an additional cost, but there is also the fact that a lot of the other problems that might otherwise arise would be avoided. I will go back to committee members now before we go to our guests.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: Can we get some answers on the environmental impact assessment?

Chairman: I want to try to keep order. I have no issue with that, and I am happy to have the members taken in whatever way they want. I will come back to Senator Ó Céidigh.

Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh: Ní bheidh mé ach dhá nóiméad.

Chairman: Ach an ceist seo a bheith as Gaeilge.

Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh: I dtosach báire, caithfidh mé a rá go bhfuil mé an-buíoch do Anne Graham, Hugh Creegan, Michael Nolan agus Peter Walsh. Tá a fhios agam go bhfuil siad dáirire. They are totally committed to doing the best they can from a Dublin and a transport perspective. I take that fully on board. We have met in this committee before and the committee and I are very appreciative of their efforts and commitment. Everybody here has mentioned the schools, Home Farm and Na Fianna. There is strong support for metro north. We all believe that is the way to go. Dublin is the only capital city in Europe in which there is no train link to the airport whatsoever. It has to be done. I did a little research on this and the Government was first speaking about this back in 2005. As Deputy Ellis stated, he is aware of 30 or more consultations on this and God knows how much it cost. I am sure it cost millions. I suggest that extending the time would be helpful but extending time must be ring-fenced. It has to be stated that an extra two weeks, four weeks or whatever will be given. That would mean an awful lot to the communities and the sporting organisations to give them a chance to get their thoughts together. From the Chair’s perspective, I think it was a fantastic idea to look at offering some sort
of financial support to these organisation to put a case in place. I thought it was a brilliant idea.

**Chairman:** Or professional advice.

**Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh:** Or professional advice. I thought it was a fantastic idea.

I wish to mention another point. While I have not had the chance to go through the website in detail, was consideration given to having more above ground, rather than boring down underneath in particular areas? Alternatively, in the UK and other countries, there is a tier process. It could be much higher than road level, for example. That seems to work quite effectively as well and often is a lot cheaper than drilling down underground.

**Deputy John Lahart:** I do not want to let the opportunity go by without reiterating what my colleagues have said. I welcome this project. I know the NTA and the TII want to deliver it. I have queries about its southern link, given that I represent a constituency that basically has been abandoned from the perspective of modern infrastructure. That is an argument for another day. It was mentioned in the response that multiple alternatives were looked at. One hundred different alternatives were mentioned, as were tens of alternative specific sites. Given this location is the one that is selected for entry under the ground essentially, did it raise any red flags when it was examined? That is the first question. If it did not, I must ask why and if it did, why was there no engagement with the groups that are represented here today?

I welcome Mr. Nolan’s commitment to ongoing consultation and assistance. Financial assistance would be great but I have never known of it previously. I see a head shaking over there. What is plan B in this regard? As much access as possible should be given to these groups to assist them to access information. There should be an open door on that. The groups should keep compiling the questions and if they run up against a road block, their public representatives are here to help them. I would, however, try to adopt an open door here. No one wants this scheme delayed. It is an ambitious timeline, given my experience of other infrastructural projects. Were alternative sites looked at for the planned entry underground? The emerging plan is to locate it and decimate the areas that people are representing here. What alternatives were looked at and why were they discounted? Will the presentations being made here today be accepted as part of the public consultation process? Will they form part of the public consultation process and-----

**Chairman:** Transcripts are available anyway so we can send them to the-----

**Mr. Michael Nolan:** Absolutely, we will accept today’s submissions, previous submissions and future submissions. I apologise for interrupting.

**Deputy John Lahart:** Will the witnesses commit to return here? It is a decision for the committee but it would be useful to set up a calendar of communications between the committee and representatives of the State bodies. I went to the Conrad Hotel. While that was considered as a briefing, it was really a launch. It was flagged as a launch. I brought an intern up to it and he was fascinated by it. It was a helicopter view of it, not an inch-by-inch view. I have experience of dealing with major infrastructural projects in my constituency. They were significant, including the M50 and its extension from four lanes to eight lanes, as well as both Luas projects at different times. The one major gap always was keeping the public informed. Has a budget been set aside for that? As one goes from area to area, ongoing public consultation and ongoing public information become a critical part of this task. People like to be communicated and consulted with. What gets people’s backs up is when they wake up some morning and see
something happening but have not heard a thing about it.

**Chairman:** Especially when the see that a sports field is gone in their school. I believe that is what has happened.

**Deputy John Lahart:** The most important question I have asked and to which I would like an answer is whether this site - this point of entry under ground - raised any red flags. If so, what red flags and why were they not acted on with the local community? If not, why did they not?

**Chairman:** If it is in order, I will take the members and then we will go to our guests. I will try and keep it separate. Deputy Rock wants to come in, followed by Deputies Ellis and Shortall.

**Deputy Noel Rock:** I thank the Chair for taking up the offer of the invitation. It is important that-----

**Chairman:** I hear a telephone. Who is doing a live broadcast on Facebook?

**Deputy Noel Rock:** It is not me this time. It is important that as a committee, we take a look at the tangible material impact this will have on the schools, clubs and communities. It is important that members take that responsibility seriously and I am glad to hear the Chair is willing to engage in that regard. As Deputy Ellis noted, we have been talking about this for an awfully long time. We have been talking about this since 2005 and I re-emphasise my commitment to getting this project done. It goes back so far that I had hair when we started talking about this project.

**Chairman:** Does the Deputy want it all gone?

**Deputy Noel Rock:** Please God I still will have hair by the time it is completed but the important point to be made is that we have been talking about this for a long time. None of us here, of the five groups that have presented, are in any way opposed to progress or to this project. What we are opposed to is this particular detail. What we want to see resolved is this particular detail. We want that to be fleshed out and fixed as soon as practicable, to use Mr. Creegan’s words. I am delighted to hear that commitment. I would appreciate a firm date or timeframe on that commitment because while “as soon as is practicable” sounds good in this room, on leaving this room it will be scant consolation to the parents on 30 April, for example, when the school is having their parents’ night. It is scant consolation in terms of enrolments and the knock-on effect due to people choosing not to enrol their children in the school and so on. I would appreciate it if a firmer timeframe could be put on that. There may be a few outstanding questions but I refer to achieving the engineering objectives with regard to the radius from the proposed boring site. In effect, my question is the same as that asked by Deputy Ellis, albeit phrased slightly differently. How far north or south can one go from the proposed boring site without undoing the engineering objectives? I presume one would start at the northern end of the line and there would not be a boring site at the mid-point of the line. I presume it is not possible to go beyond a certain radius as otherwise there would be no point in having a median boring site. I would appreciate some information on that issue as it would allow us to start considering other sites and options along the route. This is an important consideration.

Mr. Creegan stated that the NTA considered tens of sites. It is time to revisit those sites because the proposed route is not acceptable, as the NTA will be aware from the number of people who participated in the consultation to date and the number of submissions received. I respect
the NTA’s remit and that it has a right to continue this process until 11 May. While that is right and proper, a decision and announcement will need to be made as soon as is practicable after that date. I would appreciate it if the NTA would provide a firm date by which an announcement will be made.

I thank all the witnesses, including those from the community groups, for attending.

**Deputy Róisín Shortall:** I am somewhat disappointed with the responses from both the NTA and TII, neither of which gave any indication that it had heard the concerns raised at this meeting. How much more starkly can we spell out to them that the current plan and configuration are simply not acceptable to the local community and the other interests represented today, including public representatives? It is not good enough to state that the NTA and TII will not move on to the statutory process. We all know what this means. Once a project proceeds to the statutory process, it is essentially set in stone and it becomes extremely difficult to reverse it at that point because the costs involved would usually be prohibitive. If the NTA and TII are serious about public consultation, they will listen to what members of the public in the greater Glasnevin area. Public consultation does not mean telling people what one is planning to do but listening to what they have to say. I have not had any indication from either of the two agencies that they have heard what we are saying.

I am also interested in hearing from the NTA and TII about their assessments of the alternative options. Can they provide an assurance that they examined other options and have found these to be feasible? While none of these may be the preferred option, are there other feasible options that will address the serious concerns raised? It is important that we have that information. Let us stop fooling each other about this issue. We do not want this project to proceed as currently proposed. What can the agencies do to respond to the very serious concerns expressed about it?

With regard to the schools, time is of the essence because this is a particularly difficult and sensitive time of the year. We heard that key decisions are being taken about the schools to which parents will send their children from next September onwards. The confidence of parents has already been knocked in respect of the two affected schools and the Naoinra. Given that there is no time to waste in this regard, the NTA and TII must issue a response on the matter at an early stage.

This has been a worthwhile session and I hope both agencies will give consideration to all the concerns raised today and appear again at an early date. While different approaches to addressing this matter are available, the joint committee, as a formal forum, is good way to address this issue. It allows all the different interests to be represented in one room and all members can hear the same story. This is very important and I ask the agencies not to attempt to fob us off by arguing there is a statutory process under way and people can submit their views to An Bord Pleanála. That argument is of no use to us.

I ask the NTA and TII to make a commitment to appear again at an early stage and give a clear indication to the joint committee that they have heard what members and witnesses have said today. I hope the penny has dropped to the effect that we do not believe the proposal is acceptable in its current form. The two agencies must examine alternative sites and routes before we could consider allowing this project to proceed.

**Chairman:** If it is in order, after Deputy Ellis contributes, I will ask the community groups to make a further round of contributions if they wish to do so. I will make a point arising from
Deputy Lahart’s contribution. Given that the cost of MetroLink will be €3 billion, I do not see any reason the community should not benefit from professional advice, by which I do not mean legal or planning advice but rather technical and engineering support. This would enable members of the public to gain an understanding of what is proposed. The affected schools and the GAA and soccer clubs are community organisations, rather than vested interests or property owners in the traditional sense. They do not have anything to lose and the State would not lose if it were to seek to ensure that they were as satisfied as could be reasonable possible with what was being proposed. For this reason, the local community should have access to the types of independent advice I described. They would then have facts about which they are not aware and would gain insights.

I fully support infrastructure projects that work, which includes working with the community. Instead of placing their consultation notes at the back of a document, the agencies should place them on the front page. People would then view the project as one from they would greatly benefit, rather than as a TII or Government project. Having ownership of the process and access to advice would be good thing and would cost little in the context of the overall cost. Nobody would lose and people would be better informed.

**Deputy Dessie Ellis:** One of the issues that annoyed me and, I assume, many residents and groups was that reference was made to the emerging preferred site before the consultation had even begun. That was hard to swallow.

I made suggestions with regard to options. The location of the boring machine, whether it is double or single bore, can make a big difference. I am curious as to whether the NTA and TII considered the idea of having separate compounds, with the boring machinery located in one compound and other complementary works done elsewhere. Would that offer some leeway or scope for considering different areas as options?

We heard that alternative sites would not be discussed. It is clear from the community, including sports clubs, schools and local people in general, that the proposed route will not be accepted. We cannot adopt an approach of using compulsory purchase orders or railway procurement orders to railroad this project through against the wishes of the community. I am fully in favour of MetroLink but not at any cost. It would not be acceptable if the cost was the destruction of communities.

I asked about the environmental impact statement. Did it examine the effects of the project on local communities? Did someone consider what is happening to the community? Has a report been done on this issue? This would have been the first thing I would have done. I hope most of the underground route will be bored under roads, rather than houses. One would have expected work on these issues and the effects of the project on communities to have been done.

When a metro route through Ballymun was planned, the local authority imposed fees on every planning application in the area. Is this being reviewed? The fee amounted to between €1,000 and €3,000 per house and the money had to be returned. Will that issue be part of the considerations?

**Mr. Cormac Ó Donnchú:** Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach agus leis an gchoiste ar fad. Is cúis iontach dóchaíse é fad a chloisteáil inniu. Tá sé iontach a bheith anseo san Oireachtas chun an t-áthar sin a phlé. We are absolutely delighted that the committee has decided to accept the invitation to come and join us on site. It is an opportunity for us to explain why referring to Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna as a sports club does it a disservice. We see
ourselves as a very strong, vibrant and unique urban Gaelic community. Our reach and community impact is far greater than just the field of play, although we would like to think much of our reputation comes from there.

There are many lessons to be learned from the public consultation process to which we have been exposed and which we have experienced to date. As a community and voluntary organisation, we find it a little bewildering that the State has spent more than €180 million on a project to date and that, despite that level of funding, it fell upon us as a community volunteer organisation to inform our nearest neighbours and educational institutions of the plans. We also find it somewhat bewildering that we had less than 48 hours notice before the public announcement was made when, as a community organisation, we are likely to receive the most discomfort or discommoding from the transport infrastructure project. Again we will emphasise what all of the groups here have said; we are supportive of improvements to our public transport infrastructure and think it is important to maintain it.

On the wider public consultation process, we hear with interest today that 3,000 people have engaged in the process. To our knowledge, approximately 2,000 of those have been members of our organisation. That would imply that only another 1,000 individual members of the public have engaged in that consultation. We feel that is perhaps an issue which should be of greater concern to this committee and the organisers of the public consultation.

We have heard much about principles of consultation and engagement. Since the beginning of this process we have made three requests. We requested to attend the launch at Conrad Dublin and that request was refused. When we first heard about the public consultation period we asked if it could be extended because it was so brief. That request was refused. As the Cathaoirleach has suggested, we asked that, in light of the fact that we are a voluntary organisation, we be supplied with some resource or assistance in independently assessing the plans which the State presented to us and on which it has spent a budget of €180 million. We were refused. We have been refused all three aspects of the practical support and assistance we have asked for to date. Notwithstanding that, we are still positively disposed to engaging in this process.

On the point Deputy Lahart made in respect of public transport that eggs must be broken in order to make omelettes, we appreciate that our community may suffer some discomfort but we do not believe that this must be progressed at any cost. We do not believe that we should know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Deputy Lahart spoke about community and volunteer organisations and how, when they come into contact with such statutory bodies and large projects, after the first wave of response the enthusiasm and energy of such organisations are quite often broken down. I assure the committee on behalf of our members that Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna has faced wave upon wave, indeed a tsunami, of globalisation and other challenges in our existence in north Dublin and our community is ready to face more to ensure that we continue to exist and deliver for the benefit of our people and our community within North Dublin. We will continue to do that whatever it takes. My colleague, Ms Caffrey, has some comments which she would like to add.

Ms Bernie Caffrey: This is a brilliant opportunity for the committee to hear the passion which Na Fianna feels about the impact of this project. That passion is shared by all of our community representatives and by committee members who are here today. Our club is one of the largest in Europe. Our community is one of the largest in Europe and is unique. In a community of that size it is very difficult to stay galvanised and united around a common purpose. Heretofore, we thought that Na Fianna had achieved that, but little did we know that the impact of this project, as Mr. Ó Donnchú has said, would be to galvanise us further. In terms of les-
sons learned on public infrastructure projects, it is absolutely clear that the balance of power, resources, information and money lies with the State. Despite our best efforts and our early and ongoing consultation with TII, we have not met with an equal and appropriate response. Since the beginning of this process some short weeks ago we have sought to comprehend the detail of what is the most ambitious infrastructure project the State has ever proposed. We have used the voluntary resources of our club to try to make sense of it in a way which we could communicate to our large membership. Apart from the 2,000 members who engaged in the consultations in The Helix and the other northside venues, we have had one information meeting with our members at which there was standing room only. We had to look for larger and larger facilities and restrict the meeting to adults only, such was the weight of opinion and passion against this project.

As it stands, notwithstanding all of the obstacles and the lack of support we have received to date, we are prepared to believe in the integrity of the process. We believe in the commitments which TII and the NTA have given us in terms of a timely response. That tolerance and patience is, however, time-limited. Unless we get clarity on the outcome of the review of public consultation in a timely manner, we will have to consider what is an appropriate response at that stage in the interests of all of our community members and in the belief that we have a responsibility to the founding members of Na Fianna and to the people of Glasnevin and Drumcondra to deliver a result which is in the best interests of all concerned.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for their heartfelt words. I am sure they are echoed not just in this room, but in many other places. I think the key message they are giving me is the same as what I believe myself, namely this must be our project, not their project. The witnesses are at the heart of the project and they have to have ownership of it. Without being disrespectful to anybody here, what these people are doing has to be taken on board. This affects their whole lives and their communities. The fact that most of the people who have commented are from the witnesses’ community shows that this is the pressure point and that it must be addressed. Everybody here has spoken about goodwill. The witnesses spoke well about it themselves. Let us get together and sort this out before anything else goes wrong, because we all want this.

Mr. Cormac Ó Donnchú: In respect of consultation with public representatives, I assure Deputy Shortall that Na Fianna is holding a consultation tomorrow night at which we will outline what we understand of the project to our public representatives in the area. We have engaged, and will continue to engage, in that consultation both with our members and with our public representatives, of whose support we are very appreciative.

Chairman: I want to get through all the people who are here. I will call on Mr. Michael Dowling to give his address and then move on in the order in which the witnesses are sitting.

Mr. Michael Dowling: There have been some really excellent contributions from the people concerned. First, I thank each and every member of the committee. In my opinion as an ordinary citizen, seeing the representatives of the groups affected and impacted having an opportunity to speak to people like the committee members is democracy in action. I compliment the Chairman and each and every one of the Deputies involved. I am delighted that they will avail of the opportunity to come out and visit the various grounds, because I think they will immediately see the impact. As Deputy Ellis said, Mobhi Road is a busy road anyway. When one then comes off Mobhi Road and looks at the grounds of Na Fianna and ourselves and at the two schools, one will see the immediate impact this project will have. This has been a very refreshing afternoon for an ordinary, humble citizen. On the practical side, I have to leave now as I manage a team which is not a soccer team but is rather a ladies’ football team. We have a
match this evening and they require some words of wisdom from me that will, hopefully, help them. It is illustrative of the nature of sport in Ireland that I am involved with a ladies’ senior football team as well as my role within Home Farm. What is great about sport in Ireland is that we are all involved with every sport. I welcome the kind words of Senator Ó Céidigh that Home Farm is known as far and wide as his jurisdiction. I welcome this opportunity and hope the Government agency whose representatives are sitting behind us will engage and come back to give us another opportunity to address this.

Ms Anu Meehan: I have a few observations. There were questions about alternative routes. There is one report here but the maps in it and those which have been downloaded from the website are totally impossible to make out. Even if one opens the maps on the web itself, one cannot make out where these lines and tunnels actually run. I may be wrong, but my understanding is that using Drumcondra as a station is options 1 to 8 and using Whitworth’s new station is options 9 and 10. The reasoning weighing up Drumcondra versus Glasnevin is at options 7 and 9, respectively. The only thing I can deduce from that is that the money is a drop in the ocean in comparison to €3 billion and there would be a greater passenger experience if the option is to use Whitworth because it would be all new and there would be no need to work around the existing station at Drumcondra. There would be a further distance to walk for passengers in Drumcondra. As such, there would be a quicker transfer time in Whitworth. However, my understanding is that Ireland is about to be the fattest nation in the European Union within a few years. As such, it might be worth thinking about walking the passengers from one place to another as it may be only exercise they get all day.

We support the schools and clubs on the importance of the time restraints and we support the request for a speedy resolution. We would like that too. Drumcondra is already there and Whitworth is a whole new ballgame. The other difference in outcomes was that Drumcondra would have fewer passengers. However, it was a matter of a few thousand whereas the journey time would be two to three minutes extra. Passengers would save two or three minutes if they were landing at Whitworth rather than Drumcondra, but in the overall scheme of things two to three minutes is not a great amount of time. Another issue that arose for me was to do with the foundations in our architectural conservation area. I went to the public consultation meeting in Glasnevin and spoke with five representatives of TII, not one of whom was able to tell me conclusively whether my house would remain standing as such. One representative said: “When the cracks appear, we will do something about it.” Another representative said “of course, there are foundations under your house” whereas another member of my community came over and noted that there were no foundations and the houses were built on clay and rubble. It was very upsetting to be dismissed to that extent by people who do not know. My house was built in 1850 and my parents moved into it as a newly wedded couple in 1900. It has gone through our family. My great grandfather was living in Prospect Avenue in 1830. I know my house but I was dismissed as not knowing what I am talking about. I have a fair idea of what I am talking about.

Rezoning is proposed for the area behind the Brian Boru, when demolished. I understand that the land there belongs to the NTA. Once the new station is put in place, the area behind it will be rezoned and built on. At the moment, it cannot be rezoned for housing because there is no access to it. That is a hidden agenda sitting there and waiting to happen. Our whole community consists of 2,000 people in the architectural conservation area and on the Iona District Residents’ Association. Importantly, it is not just a small enclave, it is a much wider community. Taking into consideration Iona and Lindsay Road, most of Iona was also developed without foundations. All of these wonderful houses will be impacted by constant vibrations. The trains
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will impact indirectly on their properties every two minutes and they will travel at 80 km/h once they leave the station. We will have trains travelling underneath our houses at 80 km/h every two minutes for the rest of our lives. I thank the committee.

Ms Caroline Conroy: I am a chairperson of the parents’ committee in Scoil Chaitríona and a parent of two lads in the school. My daughter will also be going to the school in the near future. From a parent’s point of view, I will have to take my kids out of the school if this goes ahead. There is no way I could put them at risk. When I was deciding what school they would go to when they were still babies, it was a long process. I wanted them to have their education through Irish and took a long time to decide where to send them. We have to make a trip to get there as their national school was in a football club, which was unsuitable, before being moved further out from the area. I have to make that trip every day and committed to doing so because I want them to have the Irish language. I did not have a great experience with Irish and I definitely did not want them to have that. My husband and I made the decision to send them to that national school and, because we live locally, we decided Scoil Chaitríona was the best fit. It was the best decision we ever made for our two lads who are having a whale of a time, in particular my eldest who is in transition year and is off to Italy tonight.

The placing of a drilling site at Na Fianna, which my lads are also in, will destroy it and will also have a massive impact on their school. There is no way the school will be able to operate. One will not be able to open a window with the noise and dust and it will not be possible to have the kids cycling or walking unattended. As a parents’ committee, we have been fundraising for bike racks to encourage children and staff to cycle more because of the massive congestion out on Mobhi Road, which is awful and bumper to bumper on a daily basis. I try to get my lads to cycle and they do it most days albeit, depending on their mood or the weather, they may walk or take the bus. When they do, I have to tell them to use the path as the risk is unbelievable at the minute. If one were to put that site there, we will have 100 trucks going in and out, spewing diesel. Research has been done on that and An Taisce reports that 3,400 people died prematurely in 2013 due to air pollution. TII now wants to add another 100 diesel trucks to a built-up area which is already suffering from air pollution.

There are very few green spaces on the northside of Dublin. This is one massive one. The site at Na Fianna is used to the maximum extent by schools, the club itself and other local groups. Community groups use the clubhouse. It is not like it is used for a few hours here and there. The benefit it provides to the area is huge. On the traffic, I note that there was an accident last week on Mobhi Road. I have to go down Santry Avenue with my daughter and the traffic was backed up to the M50 exit at Ballymun. That is how bad it is. It is an absolute bottleneck. It is maddening that we do not even have a proper bike lane on the road there, yet it is proposed to allow 100 trucks to use the road. Placing a building site at Na Fianna flies in the face of current Government policy, which is all about a healthier Ireland. Dublin City Council is promoting play here, there and everywhere. There is no way that can happen if this goes ahead. Under Healthy Ireland, we are dealing with an obesity crisis among our children and it is so unfair that they have to deal with this. As members of the parents’ committee, we are trying to work on that. That would all stop if my children had to leave that school. It would impact our family and lots of families. It is not just that they go to school and can go somewhere else. Our family life would be impacted because we want them to have the Irish language. We want them to have the best start, as one does as a parent, and we want them to have the best future they can have. That is not going to happen if this goes ahead.

To TII and NTA, I note this is a quality of life issue as well. There are other alternatives that
would not have the massive negative impact this would have on our community. This is the future of a generation in north side Dublin. It is not that unusual a project for these bodies - I am sure they do these projects all of the time - but this will have a massive impact on us.

For me, it is a waste of taxpayers’ money to be conducting any more reports, consultations, meetings etc. It is a waste of our precious time and that of the witnesses to be engaged in this. They should look at all the evidence we have presented today and make the right decision, which is not to proceed with this development here because there are alternative sites. Thank you.

**Chairman:** Go raibh maith agat. Do Ms Marcella Nic Niallaigh or Mr. James Hart wish to speak now?

**Ms Carmel de Grae:** Táim thar a bheith buíoch as an deis labhairt le chuile duine anseo in-niu agus ár dtuairimí a nochtadh. I wish to thank everybody, the TII, NTA and all of the groups here today and particularly the members, agus bhi sé go hiontach go raibh cúpla múinteoir ann as they had a great understanding of the realities we are facing. I also thank our local Deputies, that is, Deputies Shortall, Rock and Ellis, who are supporting us here today. We were delighted to be able to outline the issues and catastrophic consequences including the noise. In one small example of this, the hurley maker in Na Fianna works around our school times. He only uses one saw at a time and is also a past pupil.

We were very disappointed not to be informed in advance of the public launch. We got a letter the day before explaining that something would be happening. We had to reach out to TII ourselves and in fairness, while we had a meeting with TII, we had to request it. There was no pre-consultation with us as - we believe - important stakeholders in the area.

The delay and the uncertainty will cause us to lose numbers. School enrolment is a delicate balance and process and if these students are lost to us, they also will be lost to the Irish language. As noted earlier, even our most dedicated and loyal parents must put the needs of their children first and we cannot argue with them on that point. An extension, which was mentioned, unfortunately would not help us. If the metro is produced for a community that no longer exists then it really is not particularly helpful.

We are delighted that the committee will accept the invitation to visit us. We will have the kettle on and will have our students ready. Members should believe our students will articulate this even better than we have done. We also will show the spot we have reserved where we would like to build a sports hall in conjunction with our partners, Na Fianna and Scoil Mobhi. That is an issue that we would prefer to be talking about to a committee rather than this topic. We have a wonderful symbiotic relationship with those organisations and to endanger this would be a pyrrhic victory for anyone to produce at that expense.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid agus ba mhaith linn leanúint ar aghaidh go dtí an chéad bhliain in 2028. Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

**Ms Marcella Nic Niallaigh:** A Chathaoirligh, a bhaill den choiste, ar son phobal Scoil Mobhi gabhaim buíochas libh as ucht an deis a bheith anseo chun an t-ábhar seo a phlé.

Tacaímid leis an MetroLink ach ní ar chostas sláinte agus sábháilteacha páistí agus foireann ár scoileanna. Tá páistí agus foireann Scoil Mobhi agus Scoil Chaitríona i dtéideal foighlama agus múinte a bheith acu i suíomh slán. Támid iontach buartha go bhfuil ár scoileanna agus
Cumann Lúthchleas Gael na bhFiann i mbaol faoi láthair agus an gaelcheantar an-éagsúil ar fad atá suite i nGlas Naíon. Tá muidne ag brath go mór ar Na Fianna agus ar Scoil Chaitríona chun áiseanna a roinn, mar nil a dhóthain áiseanna againne i Scoil Mobhi agus dar ndóigh, feicfídh síbh go bhfuil caidreamh iontach speisialta eadrainn sa thri ghrúpa anseo.

Cuirfear faíltho roimh na comhaltaí nuair a thiocfaidh siad isteach agus mar a dúirt Carmel de Grae, beidh an citeal ar siúl agus b’fhéidir go mbeidh cúpla briosa chomh maith, ni bheadh a fhios acu. Feicfídh siad agus gheobhaidh siad blas den áit iontach speisialta atá ar Bhóthar Mobhí nach bhfuil ar fáil, dar liomsa, in aon áit eile, sa tир seo. Tá Mr. Hart le cúpla focal a rá chomh maith.

**Mr. James Hart:** In the interests of time, I would like to adopt all of the thanks that has already been heard from every body else. There is one I wish to add in particular, and that is to Deputy Shortall for making the representations that brought about our invitation.

I have two substantive points to make but before I do, perhaps I can give a small bit of context. I am the father of two boys. The elder is in naíonáin shinsireach, senior infants, in Scoil Mobhi and the younger is at the naíonra Tír na nÓg which is in the clubhouse of Na Fianna, and he will be going on to na ranganna sóisireacha in September. All other things being equal, I would expect them to then go on to Scoil Chaitríona.

They also attend the Na Fianna nursery every Saturday where also I do handball mentoring. Put very simply, the vast majority of their waking hours are spent on this site and will be until they are 18 years of age.

There is a very popular phrase: short-term pain for long-term gain but the one sector of our society one cannot say that about is school-age children. They get one shot at getting the education they need and getting the intellectual skills and the social skills to make everything else in their lives possible. It is genuinely heartbreaking to see that threatened.

The two substantive points I have are to echo what Ms de Grae said about public consultation being extended. It is a generous offer but it really just means, as Mr. Nolan pointed out, an extension of uncertainty for the schools. That does not mean, however, that we do not think there needs to be iterative stakeholder consultation. There absolutely must be. What do I mean by iterative stakeholder consultation? It is not what we have had so far.

The committee will have heard the responses to Deputy Rock’s questions about whether the descriptions of the potential site that we have provided are accurate. The committee will particularly have heard the first part of TII’s answers which is that its representatives do not know because they have not looked at it.

It is not the only thing they have not looked at. They have not looked at the environmental constraints specific to the site. I can say that with some assurance, because in the environmental constraints report, when they look at air quality, noise and dust and at vibration, they have done desktop studies of the entire study area of MetroLink, also known as Dublin, and have come to the non-startling conclusion that there are a lot of schools, hospitals, and other community facilities in Dublin. That led to the conclusion that, for the purposes of deciding the emerging preferred route, they would not look at those factors, because wherever the route goes, it is going to have an environmental impact.

That is fine to a point, but it is not fine when that leads to the decision to propose a tunnel boring launch site bounded in its perimeter by a naíonra, primary school and secondary school.
There should have been red flags but from what we have been provided with, there were not. As I have read every page of the public consultation documentation, I am confident in being able to say that.

What is proper engagement? It is identifying and telling us what the construction work will involve. Second, it is to work with us to scope what are the environmental and cultural constraints on that site. Third, if that remains the preferred option, it is to explain to us, only in headline terms, what are the mitigations that TII and NTA have in mind that will enable them to abate the nuisance of noise, dust and those factors and to ameliorate the health and safety concerns we have. If TII and NTA are not doing that, they are not engaging in consultation in any meaningful sense.

The final point I want to make is that I was pleased to hear from both NTA and TII that they are keen to respond to our questions. They are particularly keen because we sent them a letter with 35 questions on 9 April in which we gave them until 23 April to respond. As they have not responded, I choose to be encouraged that we will be getting a response tomorrow. I would be even more encouraged if NTA and TII could commit to, within the next 48 hours, providing responses to the questions they have had since 9 April. We cannot write our submissions until we have some facts and at present, we do not have the facts we need to write our submissions.

We are grateful that they have sat down with us and have talked to us but we do not feel we have been given the information we need.

Chairman: I will ask the NTA and the TII to respond. I hope Home Farm wins its match, by the way. I believe Mr. Hart has summarised it all there. We must engage, listen and communicate and make it our metro. That is the real message. Nobody in this room at this moment sees it as their metro. They see it as the metro as belonging to TII and NTA, and that is what is really wrong. I would ask the witnesses from TII and NTA to respectfully respond to the questions and after that we will close the meeting. We will arrange through our clerk that everybody will get a link to the transcript; we will have that meeting on site and then we will work out a timetable for a return visit.

Ms Anne Graham: I want to assure those here today and anyone listening to this broadcast that we are listening. We are a body that tries to respond to those who make submissions to us. We are listening and we will respond where we can, wherever possible, to mitigate against the impact of what will be the preferred route. Again I say this is an emerging preferred route. We put forward what we feel was the optimum route, primarily from an engineering point of view, but it did raise flags. Of course there are flags when one is putting a major construction project like this through a residential community and through facilities that support the community in Glasnevin and Drumcondra.

What we want to do now is to take the submissions, take what has been said here today, and give that consideration. We will then come forward and have further meetings with the affected parties to see if we can put forward a preferred route that everyone can support. We are not naive in that because we understand we are never going to be able solve everybody’s problems, and there may not be a solution where everyone is going to be able to support us. What we will try to do is to mitigate and provide a solution that most of the community can support.

We were very careful in terms of our consultation. The launch was a media launch to ensure that the media were informed about what the project was. Any individual stakeholder that was going to be impacted directly by the proposed emerging preferred route received correspon-
dence in advance of that.

We organised a consultation period specifically for public representatives on 22 April from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and a number of representatives did attend. We will be happy to do more, and we certainly can do further briefings, if requested; we will be open to doing that at any stage. We are always open to setting up further briefings, and of course if we are requested to attend any committee we will do so; we have never refused to attend this committee or any other.

**Chairman:** We found out about this development, like others, from a television report. I appreciate what the witness has just said but the committee was not informed. There is no link and is that not the point?

**Ms Anne Graham:** I accept that the committee was not informed but every Deputy did receive notification-----

**Chairman:** I am not nitpicking here, I respect everything that the witness has said. Could I ask or would it be reasonable that when we do agree to visit, when we get the date, that maybe the witness might accompany us as well, so that we can all get an impression, a feeling of exactly what the needs are?

**Ms Anne Graham:** That is all I have to say for the moment.

**Chairman:** Would Mr. Nolan like to finally comment?

**Mr. Michael Nolan:** We are obviously hearing a very clear message here today, from all of the groups, Chairman. It is crystal clear from all sides of the standing and the value to the community of the schools and of these facilities, and the impact that this emerging preferred route will have on these valuable facilities.

I hear also that time is of the essence in arriving at clarity for the clubs and the schools to find an alternative solution. We will give an absolute commitment to work on this very closely over the coming weeks, to strive for a solution taking on board all of the views we have heard here today.

Deputy Lahart asked if we would appear before the committee and of course we will appear before the committee, if we are asked and invited. We will be happy with any further engagement that the committee deems necessary.

As Ms Graham said, with an infrastructural project of this size, there will always be red flags. We are trying to find solutions where we have the minimum number of red flags. During the development of the environmental impact statement and the environmental impact assessment, we will be going to great lengths to see what the impacts are and how we can mitigate those impacts.

We give a full commitment to come back here again, but also in the next number of weeks to develop alternative solutions and bring them back to the committee.

**Chairman:** Can I ask the witness to respond to Mr. Hart’s letter from his group as well to build up goodwill from this meeting?

**Mr. Michael Nolan:** My apologies to Mr. Hart if he was expecting a letter by 23 April and did not receive it. I will give a full commitment that we will have that letter to him by this Friday. My apologies again; I give him that assurance, Chairman.
Chairman: That is good. On that positive note, we will adjourn our meeting now. My thanks to everybody for attending. When we get the date for the site visit we will circulate it and hopefully the witnesses will be able to attend with us.

The joint committee adjourned at 4.56 p.m. until 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 2 May 2018.