

I am issuing a Freedom of Information request with regards to Phase 2 of the Sub-regional Sports Stadia Programme - especially with regard to the Ryan McBride Brandywell Stadium where Derry City Football Club play and also in regard to finding a site and building a new stadium for Institute Football Club who are currently sharing with Derry City after their own Riverside Stadium was wrecked beyond repair five years ago.

Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey, recently told the Assembly at Stormont that the DUP collapsing the Executive last month has been responsible for the delay of rolling out Phase 2 of the programme.

However, this goes back further to when the Executive was operational between 2020 and February 2022. Therefore, under the FOI act, could the Department answer the following:

1. Five years ago, the-then Deputy First Minister, the late Martin McGuinness, said that funding for the Brandywell Stadium was "guaranteed". Why hasn't this guarantee been fulfilled? Is the money still "guaranteed" and if not, why is it not?
2. In August 2021, Derry City & Strabane District Council (who also own the Brandywell Stadium) passed a motion to press the Department for a date for the funding of phase 2 for the Brandywell Stadium. As this was six months before the DUP collapsed the Executive, what was done in those six months to give Derry City & Strabane District Council a firm date of when funding would take place? Also, why was funding not released during those six months if it had been (as mentioned in question 1) "guaranteed"?
3. Has a timetable been put into place for this phase 2 funding to be released? if so, when will this happen?
4. Since the Executive resumed in 2020 and until its collapse last month, what moves were made by the Department in finding and providing funds for a new stadium for Institute Football Club (who also play in Derry) given they have now been officially 'homeless' since 2017?
5. Is funding in place to help Institute FC find a site for a new stadium and to build one or is the plan for them to indefinitely be co-tenants with Derry City at the Brandywell?

If you could get back to me with answers to the above, as obliged by the FOI Act, then that would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

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Our Ref: DFC/2022-0045

04 April 2022

Dear Mr Leslie

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I wish to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information you requested on 7 March 2022.

Below details your requests and the Department's response.

1. Five years ago, the-then Deputy First Minister, the late Martin McGuinness, said that funding for the Brandywell Stadium was "guaranteed". Why hasn't this guarantee been fulfilled? Is the money still "guaranteed" and if not, why is it not?

The Department does not hold any information in relation to funding 'guaranteed' for the Brandywell Stadium.

2. In August 2021, Derry City & Strabane District Council (who also own the Brandywell Stadium) passed a motion to press the Department for a date for the funding of phase 2 for the Brandywell Stadium. As this was six months before the DUP collapsed the Executive, what was done in those six months to give Derry City & Strabane District Council a firm date of when funding would take place? Also, why was the funding not released during those six months if it had been (as mentioned in question 1) "guaranteed"?

The Department is aware of Derry City and Strabane District Council's plans for 'phase 2' of the Brandywell Stadium, however, no funding has been agreed by the Department specifically for the Brandywell Stadium.

Refreshed proposals for the allocation of funding under the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer have been developed. These proposals will need to be presented to the Executive for endorsement. When the Programme opens for applications, Derry City and Strabane District Council will have the opportunity to apply for funding for the Brandywell Stadium along with other clubs/soccer facility owners across the region.

3. Has a timetable been put into place for this phase 2 funding to be released? If so, when will this happen?

The Department does not hold this information as it is not responsible for phase 2 of the Brandywell Stadium.

4. Since the Executive resumed in 2020 and until its collapse last month, what moves were made by the Department in finding and providing funds for a new stadium for Institute Football Club (who also play in Derry) given they have now been officially 'homeless' since 2017?

During this time the Department has continued to develop the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer. When this Programme is launched there will be an opportunity for clubs/soccer facility owners to apply for funding to improve their facilities.

5. Is funding in place to help Institute FC find a site for a new stadium and to build one or is the plan for them to indefinitely be co-tenants with Derry City at the Brandywell?

There is currently no funding in place, from the Department, to help Institute FC find a site for a new stadium. Plans in relation to the future of Institute FC are not the responsibility of the Department.

If you are dissatisfied with this response and wish to request a review of our decision or make a complaint about how your request has been handled, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You should write to the Information Access Manager, Department for Communities, Level 5, Nine Lanyon Place, BELFAST, BT1 3LP, or send an email to foi@communities-ni.gov.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,