

CELG(4) WPL 26

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into the Welsh Premier League

Response from Jim Kerr, Chairman of Linfield FC

The Northern Ireland Assembly fund local sport through its agency, Sport NI. All Premier League Clubs, with the exception of Linfield, have benefitted from grant aid. The degree of aid has varied, with some clubs having two new grandstands with a capacity of 2000 seats, new floodlighting and assistance to install 3G/4G playing pitches. Linfield own the National Stadium and any request for funding has been consistently turned down. Sport NI insist that any request must come from the National Association. Money has now been made available for a major refurbishment of Windsor Park. It is anticipated that this will be completed in 2015.

Two clubs playing in the Premier League use artificial surfaces, one 3G and one 4G. The respective clubs benefit financially from the hire of the pitches when not required by the clubs. The playing surfaces are not liked by managers and players.

There is not a strong desire to change the playing season. All Premier League clubs are part-time and the general feeling is that the status quo should remain.