

One of the more emotionally enduring aspects of being a minister is appearing in front of a select committee. The purpose of Committees in parliamentary procedure is hugely important. They are an opportunity to scrutinise in depth government policy and practice. And although I thoroughly enjoyed my time sitting on the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee cross-examining witnesses, it is far less enjoyable being on the other side of the horse shoe being asked penetrating questions about a vast array of subjects.

The Committee itself is looking at a number of really important issues in sport and the minister's appearance before them traditionally signals the near end of their inquiries on most. While there were a number of topical issues discussed two of the inquiries relate to ongoing matters which are dear to my heart – accessibility to stadia and homophobia in sport.

It is essential that we make sports stadia fully accessible so that everyone in society can enjoy watching and engaging in sport. This is an issue that reaches beyond football but is one where the spotlight often shines on our national game for its failure to act. There is progress in some areas but much more needs to be done.

This is the same for homophobia in sport. Again it is a pan-sports issue but one where the focus is on football. Societal views on homosexuality are very different now than ever before and yet sport lags behind in the number of opening gay participants. Support needs to be there from the authorities and yet the perception is quite the opposite.

The Committee will publish its reports in the New Year and I get to respond to them. In the meantime I get to recover from the grilling from my colleagues, maybe with a run or a swim...followed by a glass of wine!