

Belfast NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR Telegraph

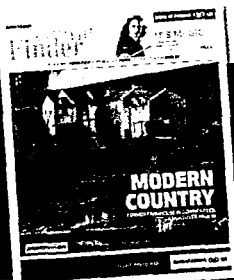
■ NORTHERN IRELAND'S DAILY NEWSPAPER ■

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• Minister's adviser in 'sex for access' scandal

Dr Brian Crowe is a special adviser to Employment and Learning Minister Danny Kennedy

UUP man suspended after sleazy chatroom boasts

EXCLUSIVE: SEE P4,5&6; COMMENT, P32



NEWS | P2

McCausland in row over festival

CULTURE Minister Nelson McCausland has requested pro-Israeli views and Christian music to be included as part of the Belfast Festival at Queen's. The DUP MLA made the unusual request in an email to the director of the Belfast Festival. "I am saying to the festival "if you are having political discussions try to ensure that there is another perspective," he said. Mr McCausland also asked that "southern gospel music" be included.

LIFE | P27

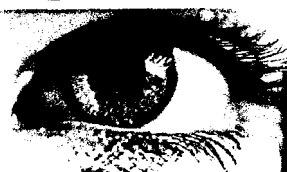
DEATH OF A LEGEND



SPORT | P72

England boost as Bale misses game

TOTTENHAM Hotspur winger Gareth Bale has been ruled out of the Wales team to face England in Saturday's Euro 2012 qualifier in Cardiff. The injury to the key player is an obvious blow to Welsh chances and a real boost for England who had been setting up their team to counter the threat posed by Bale's speed. Reports from the Welsh camp said the 21-year-old full-back had suffered a hamstring injury.



open your eyes

With Northern Ireland's Daily Newspaper

Belfast Telegraph

He's one of the rising stars of the UUP, but now he's

ANNE MADDEN

KEY adviser to a Stormont minister has boasted of abusing his position to influence policy for lobbyists in return for sexual favours, the Belfast Telegraph can reveal.

Dr Brian Crowe, special adviser to Employment & Learning Minister Danny Kennedy, who boasted to a female lobbyist on an internet chatroom over a period of months of abusing his position for sexual favours, was last night suspended pending an investigation by the Government department.

The Ulster Unionist politician is right at the heart of Government in Northern Ireland, described in a series of online conversations about "grooming" lobbyists before suggesting to them that he could carry out their wishes in exchange for sexual favours.

The 40-year-old special adviser described himself as an "intellectual slut". There is no suggestion whatsoever that Mr Kennedy was aware of, or in any way party to, Dr Crowe's behaviour.

The married father-of-two from Millinderry was a former full-time member of Ireland minister and continues to preach in a non-remunerated role at Christ Church Irish in Lisburn and at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast.

The Belfast Telegraph met Dr Crowe yesterday with a dossier of evidence and asked him for a response. He denied being on the

The special adviser and a chatroom promise to influence decisions in return for sex favours

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Influential figures must be held to account
Comment, Page 32

chatroom, saying it was "used by teenagers", and insisted special advisers do not have much influence on ministers.

Dr Crowe reported the allegations to DEL and last night the department issued a statement confirming he "has been suspended from duty with immediate effect as a precautionary step to enable a full investigation to take place".

Dr Crowe actively pursued the whistleblowing lobbyist, who wants to remain anonymous, for several months on an internet chatroom in which he openly boasted of his position of power and conquests with various women. "I was totally gobsmacked at his indiscretion and abuse of position," the lobbyist said. "Dr Crowe volunteered this information himself. He talked about how he used the website to find women to have sex with. He then moved in to reveal that he had been doing political favours for lobbyists for sexual favours."

Dr Crowe first made contact with the lobbyist on the chatroom last August when he candidly revealed he was Department of Employment and Learning special adviser. She didn't chat with him again until December when he boasted of abusing his position in return for sexual favours from female lobbyists.

Concerned by this admission, she continued the dialogue with him to find out more. The Govern-

ment adviser also bombarded the woman with 18 obscene photographs of himself, some emailed from his hotel room while on a taxpayer-funded visit to the USA with Mr Kennedy in February.

The Belfast Telegraph has obtained copies of the internet transcript — much of which we are unable to print because of its offensive language. During a two-month investigation this newspaper was able to link Dr Crowe to the damning transcripts after we photographed him with the lobbyist in a meeting which was arranged via the chatroom.

Mr Kennedy's special adviser, known as a 'Spad', painted a murky picture of Northern Ire-

land politics in which he boasted of being "more attentive to those (lobbyists) who sleep with me".

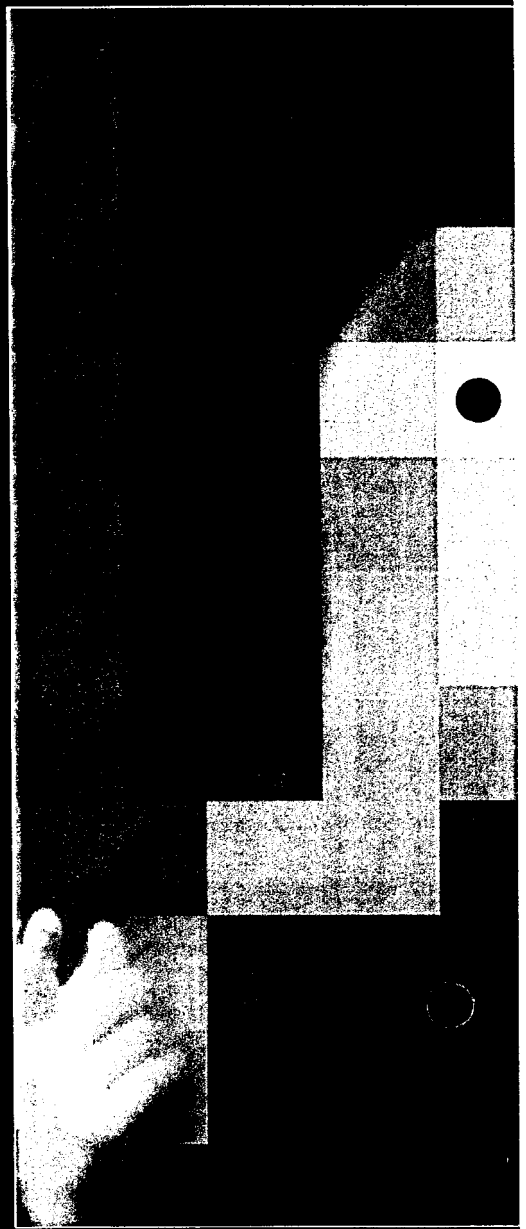
In one transcript, the lobbyist asked: "If I was looking access to DK (Danny Kennedy) would my chances increase if I had sex with you? Be honest." He replied: "Yes."

Dr Crowe described in graphic detail a specific incident in January when he went to the offices of a voluntary-sector organisation where a lobbyist performed a sextact on him in return for a political favour. He also claimed he had done similar favours in the past, at both party and departmental level.

Dr Crowe also claimed to have leaked party and Executive infor-

mation to a journalist in the hope of receiving sexual favours in return. The journalist did not appear to have been aware of his intentions. There are 19 special advisers at Stormont who provide political advice to ministers. Each minister has a 'Spad' and there are a total of eight in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister alone. The DEL minister has a significant portfolio, with responsibility for helping people get jobs, supporting the economy and promoting the population's skills.

Have you had any dealings with Dr Crowe? Contact the newsdesk at newseditor@belfasttelegraph.co.uk or at 90 264440.



STATEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

"Statement regarding serious allegations made against a special adviser in the Department for Employment and Learning.

"A special adviser to the Minister for Employment and Learning has made the department aware of serious allegations that have been made against him by Independent News and Media (Northern Ireland).

"The Department for Employment and Learning can confirm that the individual has been suspended from duty with immediate effect as a precautionary step to enable a full investigation to take place. This suspension does not imply any pre-determined position on the outcome of the case.

"The allegations have been strenuously denied by the individual concerned."

suspended as DEL probes alleged abuse of position



Exposed: Dr Brian Crowe outside the office of a female lobbyist to whom he boasted of using his position to influence policy for lobbyists in return for sexual favours

The Church of Ireland minister who was 'Brains' behind party

BY ANNE MADDEN

HE is one of the rising stars of the Ulster Unionist Party.

Brian Crowe was appointed special adviser to the Ulster Unionist Minister for the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) in January 2010. At the time the minister was Reg Empey, who was replaced by the current DEL Minister Danny Kennedy last October.

The 40-year-old was previously head of policy for the UUP for five years. The married father-of-two lives in Ballinderry, near Lisburn.

Dr Crowe studied for ordination at the Church of Ireland Theological College in Dublin. He was a full-time practising minister for several years before he went into politics.

He rose swiftly through the Ulster Unionist ranks. He was formerly a researcher for MLAs Joan Carson, Sam Foster and Billy Armstrong.

In 2004 he was appointed a policy officer with the party and became head of policy for the UUP within a year.

He was policy adviser to Jim Nicholson's successful European election campaign. He is widely regarded in party circles as the intellectual might of the party, to the extent that his colleagues nicknamed him 'Brains' Crowe.

However, under his direction the Ulster Unionists made their controversial link-up with the Conservative Party before the last General Election which saw them lose their only MP, Lady Hermon, who was re-elected as an independent.

In September 2009 Dr Crowe shared a platform in Belfast with Owen Paterson, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in a seminar entitled 'A Conservative Government: what will this mean for Northern Ireland?'

Despite his key role, he keeps a low profile in the party, and unlike fellow special adviser Philip Robinson, has not stood for an electoral position.

Dr Crowe retains a role as a non-stipendiary Church of Ireland priest, ministering at Christ Church parish in Lisburn and at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast.

In January Dr Crowe gave a lecture at St Bartholomew's Church in Belfast entitled: 'Kingdom and Cuts - Can a Christian



Minister: Danny Kennedy



Seminar: Owen Paterson

vision of the common good inform policy decisions in a time of cuts?

The Church of Ireland website described how the lecture addressed "the burning issue of how to apportion the financial cuts facing Stormont ministers. While these could be decided upon using a range of different criteria, it is not necessarily easy for anyone to see how the standards and priorities of the Kingdom of God might

INSIDE

'When I finally met him all he wanted was to talk about sex' News, Page 6

throw light on this urgent political issue?'

In his theology blog, Dr Crowe referred to his lecture and stated that the Anglican Church "produces no policy template for this cut or against that cut, but seeks to create a community of character that will allow the virtues, the common good to shape our society's economic discourse and decision-making, irrespective of whether the coalition or Labour are correct on the timing and extent of the cuts?'

The experts paid out of public purse

SPECIAL advisers, or 'Spads' as they are known, provide political advice to Government ministers and are paid out of the public purse.

They are classed as temporary civil servants, but are ministerial appointments and can be hired without any open competition procedures.

Effectively they are political civil servants and hold a very influential position as the minister's closest adviser. It is understood a typical Spad is

paid more than an elected Assembly Member.

In response to a Freedom of Information request from the Belfast Telegraph in 2009, the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) said its special advisers are "paid within the pay band £57,300-£79,740".

There are eight advisers in the OFMDFM alone. Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness have three each, while junior ministers in the de-

partment, Robin Newton and Gerry Kelly, have one apiece.

Ministers in the other 11 Government departments have one special adviser each. That makes a total of 19 special advisers at Stormont.

If each special adviser is being paid a basic £60,000, the total annual bill would come to at least £1.1 m.

One of the highest paid Spads in the UK was Andy Coulson, the Prime Minister's communications chief, who

was on a salary of £140,000.

He resigned his position under a cloud earlier this year after he, in his words, "became the story" as a result of the News of the World phone tapping scandal which occurred while he had been editor of the tabloid newspaper.

Spads are rarely mentioned in the media, yet many are well-known to political journalists. They provide the inside track on what is happening in Government.

I finally met him face-to-face. All he wanted was to talk about sex'

The lobbyist at the centre of Brian Crowe scandal came across the Northern Ireland Government adviser completely by chance on the internet. The woman had been using a social networking site UK matherbox, which provides a forum for people to meet online to discuss a variety of topics from hobbies to parenting. The chat facility allows people, often strangers, to communicate through instant messaging. The lobbyist, who is single, was in the Belfast chatroom of the website. Dr Crowe, under the name 'guyfromlisburn', initiated a conversation with her last August.

"He contacted me by opening a conversation and one of my first questions was to ask if he was married, because I didn't want to get involved in chatting with any married men," she said. "Most of the men freely admitted on the chatroom that they were married and Dr Crowe was no exception. He very quickly boasted that he worked for the Government and when I asked him if he was a civil servant, he described within a matter of minutes that he was, in fact, the special adviser to the Employment & Learning Minister."

The woman had an initial conversation with Dr Crowe last August. There was a lull in communications until he contacted her again the week before Christmas. She soon became concerned that someone in his position was boasting about his sex life so openly.

"I couldn't believe that a family man and religious minister was looking for women in a chatroom," she said. "He talked about how he used the site to



Anne Madden

find women. On some occasions he said he had met them during his lunch hour, leaving his workplace to go and meet them at their homes. He then moved on to suggest that he had also been doing political favours for lobbyists for sexual favours."

In a transcript on December 27, 2010, Dr Crowe mentioned three lobbyists that he claimed to have been intimate with. By this stage Dr Crowe had begun sending the woman obscene photos of himself and begged her to send him some of herself. He sent these from an email address, 'alwaysstoical@gmail.com'.

In order to confirm his identity for herself, the lobbyist arranged to meet him a few days after Christmas in a Belfast coffee shop.

"The conversation quickly became lewd as all he wanted to talk about was sex and what I was going to do for him," she said. "I felt very uncomfortable but had to meet him face-to-face to confirm that he was who he said he was."

It was his conversation on January 26, 2011, when he described in detail abusing his position with a charity lobbyist, that prompted the woman to re-



The woman lobbyist first made contact with Brian Crowe through an internet chatroom. POSED BY MODEL

veal the full details to the Belfast Telegraph.

"I was totally stunned at this guy's indiscretion and abuse of position, as well as his blatant abuse of women," she said. "He volunteered this information

himself, he opened the conversation topic and I just asked the questions. I had contemplated reporting him to the Ulster Unionist Party, but, given Dr Crowe's position, I didn't think I would be believed. He openly

admitted that he was taking risks, but said they were 'calculated risks' and he was in control."

The chatroom transcripts are peppered with references to the work of the Department of Em-

ployment & Learning, its deputy permanent secretary Catherine Bell and the minister that clearly identifies Dr Crowe. He also sent a photograph clearly identifiable as Dr Crowe from his 'alwaysstoical' email address on December 22. He sent a further 18 obscene photos from this email address.

The special adviser arranged to meet the lobbyist via the chatroom on the Wednesday after Christmas. They did in fact meet at a south Belfast coffee shop and the Belfast Telegraph has obtained a number of texts

'I was totally stunned at this guy's indiscretion and abuse of position'

sent from Dr Crowe's mobile phone confirming this meeting took place.

The lobbyist then arranged another meeting for midday on February 17, this time at her office. She made the arrangements via the chatroom, giving him the address and directions to her office.

The following morning he emailed via his 'alwaysstoical' email address to cancel but then rescheduled to meet at 12.30pm instead. The Belfast Telegraph witnessed him arriving at her office and took photographs of him standing with the woman as he left after a 15-minute meeting which was interrupted with a phone call to the lobbyist.

Internet encounters: excerpts from the chatroom

December 27, 2010

<guyfromlisburn = Dr Crowe > offering access for sex would be inappropriate

<lobbyist> of course it would, but have you ever done it?

<guyfromlisburn> lol (laugh out loud)

<guyfromlisburn> mmmm perhaps it is something of a grey area

<lobbyist> as in?

<guyfromlisburn> as in ... I probably am more attentive to those who sleep with me, yes

<lobbyist> so who makes the first move?

<lobbyist> would lobbyists openly approach you? (for sex?)

<guyfromlisburn> implied yes

<lobbyist> seriously?

<guyfromlisburn> yes

<lobbyist> are they looking access to Danny Kennedy or to party members?

<guyfromlisburn> when it has happened, ministerial

<lobbyist> and do you accommodate?

<guyfromlisburn> lol

<lobbyist> :)

<guyfromlisburn> you know a lot of journalists ... that is not a question I should answer

The exchanges continued

<lobbyist> so have you ever had sex with someone who asked you for favours in the aftermath?

<guyfromlisburn> yes

<lobbyist> and?

<guyfromlisburn> she would have got access anyway

<guyfromlisburn> I guess we both enjoyed the role play

January 22, 2011

<guyfromlisburn> (named journalist) appears to think that i have fallen out with her

<lobbyist> why would that be?

<guyfromlisburn> not passing information to her now

<lobbyist> about?

<guyfromlisburn> party and executive

<lobbyist> is there information to be passed?

<lobbyist> or is she just being paranoid?

<guyfromlisburn> lol

<guyfromlisburn> of course there is

<guyfromlisburn> but i had expected sexual favours in return

<lobbyist> did you request sexual favours?

<guyfromlisburn> no ... that would be ever so slightly risky

January 26, 2011

In one of the most pertinent exchanges, Dr Crowe boasted of a sex act with a charity lobbyist earlier that week.

<guyfromlisburn> I semi-jokingly asked how badly she wanted this favour... I asked her how good she was with her hands... she responded positively... I said I could ease through a decision if she showed me how good

There are several exchanges.

<guyfromlisburn> I begin working on the favour for her tomorrow

<lobbyist> How long will that take?

<guyfromlisburn> Not particularly long - just need to cover my tracks. Something of a u-turn

<lobbyist> What do you mean?

<guyfromlisburn> It is something I have been arguing against in the dept...now have to show I have been convinced otherwise

Dr Crowe then reveals that he will present his argument to the deputy permanent secretary of the Department of Employment & Learning, Catherine Bell.

<lobbyist> you might have a queue of lobbyists at your door

<lobbyist> keep you busy for a while

<guyfromlisburn> lol no... it is somewhat risky... policy for

sexual favours?

<lobbyist> but do you not feel a sense of disloyalty to your party/minister by doing that?

<guyfromlisburn> no - i guess i am an intellectual slut

<guyfromlisburn> i wouldn't do it over a serious issue

<guyfromlisburn> the issue in question is a complete side-issue for us

<lobbyist> ah, so it's not exactly gonna have major impact

<guyfromlisburn> LOL... practically zero

<lobbyist> so you choose your prey carefully :)

<guyfromlisburn> i guess it does involve grooming

<lobbyist> and a low level issue

<guyfromlisburn> yes

sexual favours?

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