

24th February 2021

Ms Stella McArdle
Clerk, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
stella.mcardle@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Stella,

Thank you for your invitation for Translink to submit feedback in relation to the Committee for Climate Change's (CCC) advice for Northern Ireland in relation to the UK's 2050 emissions reduction target.

There is no question that climate change is the most pressing environmental challenge of our time, with overwhelming scientific evidence that we must act now. For Translink, this is a matter of particular importance, and public transport has a key role to play in meeting wider climate change targets.

Translink notes CCC's advice that Northern Ireland may be best served by achieving an 82% net zero emissions target by 2050, as opposed to the broader UK target of 100%. However, we would wish to point out that the achievement of this target will still require transport to achieve the net zero emissions target and Translink continues to be committed to reach net carbon zero public transport in Northern Ireland by 2040.

To achieve these ambitious plans, a wide-ranging Climate Positive strategy is being applied across the entirety of Translink's operations, including the transport fleet, buildings, estate and all associated aspects. Having an aspirational Climate Positive strategy will help us to improve our air quality, keep the population active via a broader drive to sustainable transport and help rebuild our economy to be fit for a low emissions future as part of a 'green recovery' from COVID-19.

In the aspect of our business that is most prominent – our services – the first hydrogen double deck vehicles on the island of Ireland are already in operation, powered by green hydrogen manufactured on a County Antrim windfarm and joining an existing eco-friendly hybrid-powered fleet of Gliders.

By spring 2022, over 100 zero-emission buses will be in service in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry, the same year in which all Metro, Foyle Metro and Goldline vehicles will operate to EU clean air Euro VI standards or better. On our railway network, we are currently procuring 21 additional carriages as part of the 'New Trains 3' programme and working towards acquiring new bi- or tri-mode units for NI Railways services under 'New Trains 4'. In parallel, we are developing a new Enterprise fleet for an hourly service between Belfast and Dublin which will be capable of zero emission running, with a longer-term objective to electrify parts of the network.

In his letter of 1st February 2021, Michael Oliver notes that "it is important to recognise policy interventions need to happen now and be delivered in the 2020s and 2030s." Translink is, with Northern Ireland Executive support, making those interventions with our plans to move towards Net Zero. This includes investment in new and emerging bus and rail technology,

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including hydrogen, battery and electric and will drive an enhanced environmental, social and economic dividend for our entire community.

Translink has three strategic targets in relation to our Net Zero plans –

Achieve at least 50% reduction in our current emissions by 2030 in line with our Climate Action Pledge – As a key driver of the economy, we will engage with other organisations and stakeholders with the aim of providing leadership across the local business sector and supporting local organisations in their quest for zero emissions.

Place Translink at the forefront in the journey towards zero emission public transportation, and for all our buses, trains and buildings to be Net Zero by 2040 - We have adopted a Net Zero emissions target by 2040 ahead of the UK Net Zero emissions target of 2050; this shows that our commitment to combating climate change is more than simply focusing on a CO₂ reduction and will demonstrate a measurable reduction in NO_x and particulate emissions.

Be Climate Positive by 2050, going beyond achieving Net Zero to create an environmental benefit by removing additional carbon dioxide from the environment while growing our business - We will reduce all emissions that we viably can, then go beyond offsetting the remainder and become climate positive. The use of 'offsetting' aims to neutralise a certain volume of greenhouse gas emissions through projects which create an equivalent reduction of greenhouse gases, such as through tree planting. We want to go beyond offsetting which goes beyond 'doing no harm'; we wish to provide an environmental benefit, with the objective of being a leading Climate Positive business in Northern Ireland.

In relation to the four key recommendations outlined by CCC, I would like to take each of these briefly in turn:

Take-up of low carbon solutions – I have already summarised Translink's plans for low and zero-emission public transport in the years ahead. I would emphasise that our achieving of Net Zero public transport is vital if Northern Ireland is to meet either an 82% or 100% zero emission target by 2050.

In our broader business, we will change the way we design, build and operate our infrastructure and assets, including vehicles and buildings, so we can minimise our whole-life carbon and air pollution emissions, making an important contribution to the UK's targets and look after the safety and wellbeing of our passengers, neighbours and employees.

Expansion of low-carbon energy supplies – Translink is at the forefront of low carbon solutions to public transport, particularly via the harnessing of new and emerging technologies. In turn, we are providing demand to the energy supply chain, including the renewable electricity sector and the future hydrogen economy. We will continue to develop our current fleet operation management systems with an emphasis on energy efficiency and service performance improvement to ensure we are maximising the environmental benefits.

Reducing demand for carbon-intensive activities – Translink has been successful in recent years in driving significant increases in public transport usage in Northern Ireland. During the year ending 31st March 2019, 84.5m passenger journeys were recorded on all our services, the highest such figure in 20 years. This helps to drive modal shift away from private car usage, reducing pollution and congestion and driving improvements to air quality, with an additional impact on public health.

Land and greenhouse gas removals – As outlined elsewhere, Translink is actively bringing new and emerging technologies on-stream. We will continue to look after nature and protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity, helping habitats and ecosystems provide essential services such as carbon storage, clean air, food and our wellbeing.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that Translink's plans for Net Zero public transport, as well as being vital for our environmental, economic and social wellbeing, are essential in order to meet either challenging target of an 82% or 100% reduction in emissions by 2050. We will continue to invest in technological improvements to drive this progress, demonstrating the benefits an efficient, environmentally sustainable public transport network can bring to all aspects of our life, including action to address climate change, improving air quality, enhancing public health, restoring vitality to our urban centres and reconnecting communities safely in the aftermath of the pandemic.

I trust you will find this short response worthwhile. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you require further clarity on any matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Conway". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Chris Conway
Group Chief Executive, Translink