



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch MLA (Deputy-Chairperson).
Ms Martina Anderson MLA
Mr Roy Beggs MLA
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Ms Liz Kimmins MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Alison Ross (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Vincent Gribbin (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Johnny Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:05 am.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairpersons Business

The Committee considered a paper containing decisions made at the Strategic Planning Day on 9 September 2020. During the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions:

- The Committee agreed to make a number of visits outside of Parliament Buildings and to hold Committee meetings during the visits, where possible. The areas agreed for visits were as follows:
 - Northwest Transport Hub and Derry City Reservoir
 - Bamford Bus
 - Warrenpoint Harbour
 - Waterways Ireland

- The Committee agreed to hold 2 briefings per meeting
- The Committee agreed to the following recurring briefings:
 - Departmental Budgets
 - Brexit
 - New Deal New Approach
 - Programme for Government
 - Corporate planning and policy
- The Committee agreed to schedule the following briefings
 - Planning Review
 - Transport Regulations Unit
 - Community Transport / Disability Action
 - Reservoir Transfer of Functions
 - Roads Infrastructure Projects (A1 & A2)
 - Taxi Operators
 - Coach Operators
 - Freight and Road Haulage Associations
 - Road Safety Strategy – Rural Road Deaths and Road Maintenance budgets – Active Travel, Schools
 - DVA – MOT and Driving Tests
 - Regional Transport Network Plan
 - NI Water – drainage and sewage capacity and funding options
 - Oversight relationship between DfI and the Harbour Commissioner
 - Rivers Agency – DAERA & DfI responsibilities
 - Rural Community Network – Planning – NILGA
- The Committee agreed to conduct an Inquiry on Decarbonisation and to request a research paper on Decarbonisation models of best practice worldwide.
- The Committee agreed to request research papers on:
 - Water and Sewage funding - models of best practice
 - Infrastructure Commission
- The Committee agreed to write to the Department for information on the following:
 - An update on the Review of Planning
 - Update of the Reservoirs Transfer of Functions SR
 - An update on JustPark
 - Availability of Driving tests, booking system, and the options for dealing with the backlog
 - An update on the Regional Development Transport Plan
 - S.I.D. funding scheme, an update on the review of speed limits and speed limits on rural roads
 - A list of key contacts for Committee members to contact on the range of the Department’s remit.
 - An overview of the unused railway track in Northern Ireland, which could put back into use.
 - An outline of proposed dates for the priorities outlined in the DfI paper entitled “Potential Items for Inclusion in Forward Work Programme – Committee for Infrastructure”.

- The Committee also agreed to write to the Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Panel seeking a briefing in due course.

The Committee considered the Minister's announcement of her decision to approve the North/South Interconnector on Tuesday 15 September 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure requesting that she reconsider her approach to the announcement of major Departmental decisions such as the approval to the Interconnector and consider making a timely statement to the Assembly on such matters.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 8 July 2020 and Thursday 3 September 2020.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. Correspondence

Correspondence from Stephen McMurray regarding the compulsory wearing of facemasks on public transport.

Mr Andrew Muir declared an interest as a former employee for Translink.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for information and comment.

Correspondence from IMTAC regarding George Best Belfast City Airport, Special Assistance Service during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Copy correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the Chancellor's Summer Economic update.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Department for Infrastructure correspondence providing a copy of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company Annual Report & Accounts 2019-2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with Translink regarding its proposed plan to seek to save £20 million.

Copy of the Examiner of Statutory Rules Sixteenth Report of the Session 2019-2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Correspondence from Walter Graham requesting to brief the Committee on the compulsory wearing of facemasks on public transport.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for information and comment.

Ministerial response to Committee correspondence regarding issues arising from the meeting on 1 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an update briefing on the issues referred to in the Minister's response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Executive of the DVA to ascertain when the issue of the online booking system for MOT's will be resolved.

Department for Infrastructure response to Committee correspondence regarding issues arising from the meeting on 24 June 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from Webber Shandwick providing a Report on behalf of Belfast International Airport - The aviation sector in Northern Ireland and wider economic recovery.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence

Correspondence from the Motorcycle Action Group UK (MAG UK) expressing concern for safety in the event of a collision with wire rope type crash barriers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the correspondence to the Minister requesting her comments on the issues raised.

Copy of the Examiner of Statutory Rules Seventeenth Report of the Session 2019-2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Response from the Police Service of Northern Ireland agreeing to brief the Committee on the current state of road safety in Northern Ireland

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing in the Forward Work programme.

Copy of response from the Department for Infrastructure to the Committee for Finance regarding a funding package for the haulage, taxi and transport industry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Copy of the Examiner of Statutory Rules Eighteenth Report of the Session 2019-2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Department for Infrastructure response to Committee correspondence regarding issues arising from the meeting on 8 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure regarding its Main Estimates Exercises to facilitate the next legislative stage of the 2020-21 Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Report from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland providing the Department for Infrastructure's Investing Activity Report – July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Response from the Minister of the Economy to Committee correspondence of 8 July 2020 regarding an update on the Minerals Working Group and asking the establishing of a Northern Ireland Minerals Forum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Copy response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the Committee for Communities regarding implications for the High Street Post COVID-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure regarding the extension on Non-Executive Member Appointments to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from Hollypark Nursery requesting assistance with the refusal of planning applications.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure regarding a recruitment competition for Non-Executive Member Appointments to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Department for Infrastructure correspondence providing a copy of the Northern Ireland Water's Company Annual Report & Accounts 2019-2020

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the Utility Regulator announcing the appointment of a new Chief Executive.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Response from Northern Ireland Water to Committee correspondence of 24 June 2020 regarding the Capital Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

Correspondence from The Speakers Office regarding the Assembly Commission's decision to establish a Youth Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the August COVID-19 budget allocations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from the All Party Group UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security regarding embedding gender equality in future policy and COVID-19 response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Department for Infrastructure correspondence regarding a recruitment competition for the position of Chair of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Report from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland providing the Department for Infrastructure's Investing Activity Report – August 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Harbours Bill proceeding via accelerated passage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Copy correspondence from the Committee for Education to Translink regarding the issues being face in the restart for home to school transport.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Copy of the Examiner of Statutory Rules Nineteenth Report of the Session 2019-2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council requesting to brief the Committee on Brexit issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a briefing from the District Council once the Committee has received a briefing on Brexit by the Department.

Correspondence from Watertight requesting to brief the Committee on flooding issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing in the Forward Work Programme.

Department for Infrastructure correspondence confirming the extension of the appointment for the Chairperson of Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from Mr Paul Givan MLA regarding waiting areas at DVA Test Centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and request information on the type of shelter facilities to be provided for driving instructors at Driving Centres and the progress on their provision.

Correspondence from Brian Kirk regarding billing procedures of Power NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Correspondence from Pivotal providing a copy of their priorities for recovery report and a request to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

6. SL1 - The Planning Act 2011 (Review) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered the SL1 - The Planning Act 2011 (Review) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delay its consideration of the SL1 until it has received a briefing from the Department on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a research paper on the Planning Act 2011 and an update on the Planning Review and the implications of the proposed regulations.

7. SL1 - Amendments to the Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2010

The Committee considered the SL1 - Amendments to the Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

8. SL1 - The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 - The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 by correspondence on 14 August 2020 and agreed that it was content with the proposal.

The Members listed below gave their consent (via email) to the Department

Michelle McIlveen

David Hilditch

Andrew Muir

Keith Buchanan

Martina Anderson

Cathal Boylan

Liz Kimmins

9. SL1 - The Llewellyn Drive, Lisburn (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 - The Llewellyn Drive, Lisburn (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The officials joined the meeting at 10:38 am

Deirdre Gallagher, Head of Transport Legislation Branch;
Victor Clegg, Lands and Legislation Branch, DfI Roads (Eastern Division).

The officials provided the Committee with a briefing on the SL1.

The officials left the meeting at 10:40 am

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

10. SL1 – Taxi Licensing (Amendment No. 2) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 – Taxi Licensing (Amendment No. 2) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 by correspondence on 1 September 2020 and agreed that it was content with the proposal.

The Members listed below gave their consent (via email) to the Department

Michelle McIlveen

David Hilditch

Andrew Muir

Keith Buchanan

Martina Anderson

Roy Beggs

Cathal Boylan

Dolores Kelly

Liz Kimmins

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting that Spot Checks are used in a proper and appropriate manner.

11. SL1 - The Coolshinney Park, Magherafelt (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 - The Coolshinney Park, Magherafelt (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting clarification on the consultation process and whether the appropriate Council was consulted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

12. Subordinate Legislation – SR’s – Not Subject to Assembly Proceedings

- The Committee considered the following SR not subject to any Assembly proceedings.
 - SR 2020-137 The Road Races (Garron Point Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-156 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Ballyclare) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-157 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Kilkeel) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-158 The Taxis (Magherafelt) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-159 The Parking Places on Roads and Waiting Restrictions (Magherafelt) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-171 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Newtownards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-172 The Parking Places, Loading Bay and Waiting Restrictions (Portstewart) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-173 The Roads (Speed Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-174 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Newtownabbey) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-175 The Parking Places on Roads and Waiting Restrictions (Newry) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
 - SR 2020-176 The Road Races (Cookstown 100) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the Statutory Rules.

13. SR 2020-177 The Ormeau Road, Belfast (Footway) (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-177 The Ormeau Road, Belfast (Footway) (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the rule is to abandon an area of road comprising 3.328 square metres of footway adjacent to the Errigle Inn, Ormeau Road, Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-177 The Ormeau Road, Belfast (Footway) (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and, subject to the Examiner of Rules, has no objection to the rule.

14. SR 2020-180 The A29 New Road and B30 Newry Road, Silverbridge (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-180 The A29 New Road and B30 Newry Road, Silverbridge (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the rule is to abandon an area of 3559 square metres of former road at the junction of New Road and Newry Road, Silverbridge.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-180 The A29 New Road and B30 Newry Road, Silverbridge (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and, subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

15. SR 2020-181 The Whitla Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-181 The Whitla Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the rule is to abandon an area of 608 square metres of former road within the boundaries of a car park at Whitla Street, Belfast comprising a planted area and car park, bounded on the north by Whitla Street, to the east by Yorkgate Railway Station car park and to the west by York Street.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-181 The Whitla Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

16. SR 2020-182 The Railway Avenue, Newry (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-182 The Railway Avenue, Newry (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the rule is to abandon an area of 40 square metres of road at Railway Avenue, Newry commencing at a point 13.1 metres north-west of its junction with Monaghan Street, extending for a distance of 13.5 metres in a northerly direction.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-182 The Railway Avenue, Newry (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

17. SR 2020-183 The Back Street at Duncairn Gardens, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-183 The Back Street at Duncairn Gardens, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the rule is to abandon an area of 57.849 square metres of road comprising former back street commencing at the south-east corner of the boundary of No. 88 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast and extending for a distance of 34 metres in a south-easterly direction along the northern boundary of No. 13 Fortfield Place to its eastern boundary with No. 31 Meadow Place, Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-183 The Back Street at Duncairn Gardens, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

18. SR 2020-184 The Footpath to the rear of Albert Street, Quadrant Place and Cullingtree Road, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-184 The Footpath to the rear of Albert Street, Quadrant Place and Cullingtree Road, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of this rule is to abandon an area of 357.9 square metres of road comprising a footpath on the western side of the Westlink to the rear of Albert Street, Quadrant Place and Cullingtree Road, extending from its junction with Albert Street northwards for a distance of 115 metres to the south side of the Westlink footbridge between Durham Street and Cullingtree Road.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-184 The Footpath to the rear of Albert Street, Quadrant Place and Cullingtree Road, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

19. SR 2020-188 The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-188 The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of the Statutory Rule is to amend the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (“the Driving Licence Regulations”) in order to extend the validity of driving theory test and motorcycle special manoeuvres test pass certificates that expire during the period prescribed.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-188 The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

20. SR 2020-190 Taxi Licensing (Amendment No. 2) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020-190 Taxi Licensing (Amendment No. 2) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The purpose of these Regulations is to amend the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the “2015 Regulations”) to extend arrangements put in place for the automatic renewal of existing taxi licences due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency. The initial arrangements were implemented via the Taxi Licensing (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020-190 Taxi Licensing (Amendment No. 2) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Rules has no objection to the rule.

21. Briefing from Northern Ireland Water

The representatives joined the meeting at 10:56 am

Ms Sara Venning, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Water
Mr Ronan Larkin, Director of Finance, Northern Ireland Water

The representatives provided the Committee with an oral briefing.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA joined the meeting at 11:03 am.

A question and answer session followed.

Mr David Hilditch MLA left the meeting at 11:53 am.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with information on NIW preparations for Brexit and the cost implications.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with details of the costs to achieving the economic level of leakage.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with the volume of planning applications delayed or denied due to cost implications to NI Water.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The representatives left the meeting at 12:17 pm.

22. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

23. Any Other Business

Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA declared her dissent to the Committee decision to write to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding her approach to announcing her decision on the North South Electricity Interconnector.

24. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be on Wednesday 23 September 2020 at 10:00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Committee adjourned at 12:18 pm

**Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure**

23 September 2020