

Please find attached response document.

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A call for views from the Northern Ireland Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for inviting the Road Haulage Association to make comment on plans for future growth in the Northern Ireland.

The Road Haulage Association is a substantial trade association representing road haulage and logistics companies throughout the United Kingdom. Our members range from small hauliers with one lorry to the largest road freight logistics operators with hundreds of vehicles. We also have interest in multi-modal operations, in particular, sea and rail transport. In addition to our representational role we provide advisory and operational services including training, educational, legal, and compliance auditing. The Road Haulage Association has an office in Edinburgh with staff serving members in Scotland and Northern Ireland. We now have two members of management staff based in Northern Ireland to help meet our plans for future operational expansion 'across the water'.

SUMMARY:

The Road Haulage Association supports the overall aims of the proposals to attract investment, expand the economy and create more jobs in Northern Ireland. We are very keen to get involved with these plans and giving assistance whenever possible to achieve action outcomes.

Detailed Comments: We have been asked to in particular give feed-back to the Committee on subject matter listed on page 19 of the 'Manufacturing Makes Northern Ireland Strong' document:

Actions:

1) Road infrastructure creation and upgrading is vital for the road freight logistics sector to provide efficient and reliable services to manufacturing and service industries. Improvements to the A6 route between Randalstown and Londonderry are therefore significant to this aim.

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2) As noted in item 1) the A5 route is another example of an important roadway that requires modernising and upgrading as soon as possible.

3) Moving goods in and out of the ports is one of the Road Freight Logistics sector's busiest tasks. Many UK ports are within city boundaries area of which are prone to traffic congestion and consequent delivery delays. We would support any plans to ensure lorries get to their destinations as quickly as possible thus reducing operators cost, end user charge and pollution levels.

4) We understand the need for robust systems of fuel supplies such as gas electricity and petroleum based fuels. Looking ahead, gas and electricity supplies in 'Low Carbon Economies' may be very important for road vehicle propulsion including freight and passenger carrying modes.

5) We are presently involved with Scottish Government and their Freight Ferry Fare Structure Review Consultations. Should such a review take place in Northern Ireland we would be happy to be involved.

6) The freight logistics sector is deeply involved in data transmission and telematics thus relying on high speed reliable GPS and internet connections.

7) The Association would agree for the need of a central regime co-ordinating infrastructural developments within Northern Ireland. We have recently given evidence to the Investment and Capital Expenditure Committee of the Scottish Government regarding freight transport and would be happy to participate with such a regime if set up in Northern Ireland.

Finally, if we may, a comment or two on other matters not directly related to the items we have been asked to respond.

There are concerns about recruitment within our sector, with staff shortages particularly in the area of commercial vehicle technicians and lorry drivers. It would seem that funding of trainees and apprentices in Northern Ireland is less generous than in GB and this situation should be reviewed. Also, at present, we are lobbying UK Government to help with grants to fund Vocational Licence acquisition to increase the number of professional lorry drivers needed to meet increased demand for such skills.

The question of commercial high property rates and fuel costs are other factors that cause us concern. At this stage we have not gone into detail regarding the matters mentioned in the last paragraph but would be pleased to do so at a later stage if requested.

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ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND and NORTHERN IRELAND

Document dated 9th March 2015 reference NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY.

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