

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

The content of this ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the Official Report (Hansard) process.

Regional Development

A26 DUALLING — GLARRYFORD TO DRONES ROAD — PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF INTENTION TO PROCEED AND MAKING OF STATUTORY ORDERS

Published at 12 noon on Tuesday 19 November 2013

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I wish to inform Members of my decision to proceed with the £65 million A26 Dualling – Glarryford to Drones Road scheme.

As Members will be aware, following the October Monitoring Round announcement in the Assembly on 21 October 2013, I welcomed the Executive's decision to secure £75 million of capital funding for my Department for 2014/15. As a result of this, the A26 Frosses Road Dualling scheme is one of the projects I identified to take forward. Public Inquiries have been held and the Inspector's report was submitted to the Department in April 2013.

The Inspector recommended that the proposed dual carriageway should be constructed more or less in accordance with the preferred route.

The Inspector made three minor recommendations relating to accommodation works, all of which were accepted by the Department.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of environmental impacts of road schemes. Having caused an Appropriate Assessment to be carried out and having considered the Environmental Statement and the consultation responses to it, I am satisfied that the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed scheme have been properly assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgements on the scheme. Accordingly, in light of the assessment undertaken and information presented within the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the Environmental Statement, I accept the Department's conclusion (as the Competent Authority) that construction and operation of the A26 Dualling Scheme would not by itself, or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the Main Valley Bogs, Special Areas of Conservation.

I have carefully considered the Department's Statement and agree with its conclusions. I have therefore decided to proceed with the scheme. In doing so, I commit my Department to carrying out

the necessary works to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and the environmental design measures, as well as the mitigation measures detailed in the A26 Departmental Statement.

Construction of the scheme will provide approximately 7 km of new carriageway between the B64 Glarryford crossroads (the end of the existing dual carriageway) and the A44 Drones Road junction.

The new dual carriageway will closely follow the existing road corridor, with the section adjacent to the Frosses Trees going marginally off-line, thus protecting these iconic sets of trees. The new dual carriageway will have significant benefits to the road user, with the main objective of the scheme being to reduce congestion, improve journey times and road safety. To improve road safety, a central reserve road restraint system will be erected along the full length of the dual carriageway and will prevent central reserve crossover.

The scheme will benefit the economy. The local construction industry will also benefit through an increase in demand for construction materials, as well as giving a significant boost to commercial trade in the surrounding area.

I have asked my Department to publish the formal Notice of its intention to proceed with the scheme and to make the necessary Statutory Orders. Subject to successful procurement, construction of the scheme is programmed to start late 2014.

Please note the above statement is embargoed until 12:00 on 19 November 2013.