

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Infrastructure

A6 Randalstown to Castledawson Dualling Scheme – Making of the Vesting Orders and proceeding with the scheme

*Published at 11 am on Wednesday 17 August 2016.*

**Mr Chris Hazzard (The Minister for Infrastructure):** I wish to inform Members of my decision to proceed with the £160 million A6 Randalstown to Castledawson Dualling scheme and the making of the necessary vesting orders.

This flagship project signals my commitment to redressing the investment deficit in the west. Members will recall the Executive's decision to secure £86.7million of capital funding for flagship projects within my Department for 2016/17. The A6 Randalstown to Castledawson Dualling Scheme is a key priority for me and I am delighted to announce this important milestone.

I am determined to contribute towards economy growth in a regionally balanced way so I believe it is vital that infrastructure projects such as this are prioritized. This scheme is on one of five Key Transport Corridors in the north. The planned upgrade will improve the links between urban centres in Derry and Belfast.

Four Public Inquiries have been held and four Inspector's reports submitted to the Department for individual sections of the route.

The Inspectors have recommended that the planned dual carriageway should be constructed in accordance with the preferred route, with the exception of Annaghmore/ Bellshill Junction, for which two of the Inquiries were specifically held to consider its arrangement.

The Inspectors made 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 regard to the Environmental Statement, the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the consultation responses to it, I am satisfied that the likely significant environmental effects of the planned scheme have been properly assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgments 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 A6 Randalstown to Castledawson Dualling Scheme would not by itself, or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Neagh & Lough Beg Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, or any other Natura 2000 site. Having decided to proceed with the scheme I commit my Department to carrying out the necessary actions to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and mitigation measures described in the Department's Statement and the Environmental Statement.

Construction of the scheme will upgrade approximately 14.7km of single carriageway to dual carriageway standard; 7.3km between Randalstown and Toome and 7.4km between Toome and Castledawson.

The new dual carriageway will bring significant benefits for the many people who use that road every day, with reduced congestion, and improvements to both road safety and journey times, with a reduction of peak period journey times of almost 25% over the entire length of the scheme. Protecting the lives of road users is of utmost importance to me. To that end, right turn crossing movements are prohibited along the full length of the dual carriageway.

This scheme will provide a significant boost to the local economy, both in terms of trade for the area and the demand for construction materials. I am also delighted to announce that the work will be carried out by a joint venture of local firms, Grahams and Farrans.

I have asked my Department to Make the necessary Vesting Orders to facilitate construction works on the new dual carriageway to start in early autumn 2016. Indeed, the advanced ground investigation

work has already commenced and archaeological investigatory works is due to commence in the coming week.