

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department for Infrastructure

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION TO PROCEED WITH THE ENNISKILLEN SOUTHERN BYPASS SCHEME, THE RELEASE OF THE DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT, AND THE MAKING OF THE NECESSARY STATUTORY ORDERS

Published at 11.00 am on 11 May 2021.

Ms Mallon (The Minister for Infrastructure): I wish to inform Members of my decision to release the Departmental Statement for the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass Scheme and to proceed to progress the scheme in readiness of funding becoming available.

I am delighted to announce this key step in the development of this significant scheme, which is seeking to reduce traffic congestion for strategic and local road users within Enniskillen Town Centre. I am very aware of how important the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass will be for the many people and businesses who have expressed their support for the scheme. I am committed to doing all that I can to deliver this scheme and will work with the Finance Minister and Executive colleagues to secure the necessary funding as quickly as possible.

The A4 at Enniskillen forms part of the South Western Key Transport Corridor which provides a strategic link between the east of the north, the Fermanagh Lakelands and cross border regions. Progressing a scheme of this scale represents significant investment in the region and provision of the bypass will greatly benefit both strategic and local road users by improving safety and journey time reliability. My announcement to proceed with the scheme addresses one of the proposals as outlined in the Regional Development Strategy document 2035, to improving a strategically important route within the Regional Transport Network.

I have been made aware of the difficulties faced by strategic and local motorists travelling through Enniskillen Town centre and welcome the positive outcome from the Statutory Consultation held in 2018 which did not require a Public Inquiry. Consultation will continue with key stakeholders particularly landowners affected by the scheme proposals to minimise any related impacts and I believe the scheme should be progressed as quickly as possible, subject to completing all the necessary statutory processes and securing the necessary funding.

Importantly and in parallel with this work, my Department will be exploring further opportunities to improve the town centre to create a sustainable, liveable place where people have the space to stay, meet, shop and safely walk, wheel and cycle. This will include opportunities for active and sustainable travel in the town.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of the environmental impacts of major road schemes. Having caused the examination of the environmental information, which includes the Environment Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), the consultation responses to the EIAR, I am satisfied that the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed scheme have been assessed. This has provided me with the necessary information which I consider reasonable and sufficient to allow me to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of this project on the environment. My reasoned conclusion therefore is that the proposed scheme will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment (including designated sites and protected species) that cannot be addressed by the mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Departmental Statement. In deciding to proceed with this scheme, I am committing my Department to carrying out all the necessary actions to facilitate the mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Departmental Statement.

My Department will now publish the formal “Environmental Impact Assessment: Notice to Proceed” and will make the Direction Order, the Vesting Order and the Bridge Orders for the scheme.

The Departmental Statement and associated documents are available for viewing at the Department’s website; <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/road-improvements/a4-southern-enniskillen-bypass>

This is an important announcement and another step forward by my department in delivering on better connecting our communities and improving the lives of all of our citizens.