

**Committee for Regional Development**

**Response to the Consultation on the  
Draft Programme for Government 2011-15, the  
Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland  
2011-21 and the Draft Economic Strategy**

**Together with the Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee  
relating to the Report and the Minutes of Evidence**

**Ordered by the Committee for Regional Development to be printed 25 January 2012  
Report: NIA 33/11-15 (Committee for Regional Development)**



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# Committee Powers and Membership

## Powers

The Committee for Regional Development is a Statutory Departmental Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of strand one of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48 of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Regional Development and has a role in the initiation of legislation.

The Committee has the power to:

- Consider and advise on departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on matters brought to the committee by the Minister for Regional Development.

The Committee is appointed at the start of every Assembly, and has power to send for persons, papers and records that are relevant to its inquiries.

## Membership

The Committee has eleven Members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, with a quorum of five Members.

The membership of the Committee since its establishment on 16 May 2011 has been as follows:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Doherty (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Roy Beggs  
Mr Joe Byrne<sup>1</sup>  
Mr Michael Copeland<sup>2</sup>  
Mr Stewart Dickson  
Mrs Dolores Kelly  
Mr Sean Lynch  
Mr Ian McCrea  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

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1 With effect from 6 June 2011 Mr Stewart Dickson replaced Mr Trevor Lunn.

2 With effect from 26 September 2011 Mr Michael Copeland replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt.

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

PfG	Programme for Government
ISNI	Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
EA	Economic Strategy
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
CTA	Community Transport Association
CSR	Current Spending Review
EYF	End Year Flexibility
NIW	Northern Ireland Water
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely.

# Introduction

1. The First and deputy First Ministers announced formal consultation on the draft Programme for Government (PfG), Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) and Economic Strategy (EA) on 17 November 2011. The consultation is scheduled to close on 22 February 2012. The First and deputy First Minister have signalled that the Executive hopes to agree the PfG at its meeting on Thursday 8th March, with a plenary debate on Monday 12th March 2012.
2. The PfG contains 76 commitments, of which six fall to the Department for Regional Development (the Department). These are as follows:
  - Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline;
  - Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government;
  - Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;
  - Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel;
  - By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport; and
  - Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure.
3. The Committee for Regional Development (the Committee) considered the draft strategies at the meeting of 23 November 2011 and agreed that they would invite the submission of oral and/or written evidence from the Department for Regional Development and a select list of stakeholders. A seminar was held in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on 12 December 2011 for a selection of invited stakeholders to provide oral evidence, with letters inviting written submissions issued to a wider group of stakeholders.

## The Committee Approach

4. In order to provide a structured approach to the consultation, the Committee identified four key areas contained within the Pfg, ISNI and EA documents:
  - Public Transport;
  - Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment;
  - Sustainable Transport; and
  - Water and Wastewater.
5. The Committee sought focused views in respect of the above categories on the following three points:
  - Gaps in the Programme for Government;
  - Comments on the Milestones and Outputs; and
  - What is the best way to monitor progress?
6. The Department and nine other invited stakeholder organisations were each invited to attend the seminar on 12 December 2011 and to speak specifically to one of the above categories. Each presentation was 8 – 10 minutes in length, followed by up to five minutes of questions from Members of the Committee. Invited stakeholders could also provide written submissions to support their presentations. A full list of stakeholders who provided oral evidence is contained at Appendix 1 of this document.
7. Letters were issued to a further 47 stakeholders asking for written submissions. 23 responses were received. A number of local councils sought extensions to the deadline for response to allow for consideration at full councils and these requests were accommodated. The written submissions received are contained at Appendix 2.



# Summary of Consultation Responses

8. Overall, there was a sense of disappointment in the draft strategies. Whilst there was recognition of the progress made since the last PfG, there was a consensus that an opportunity to address the many challenges facing Northern Ireland had been missed. A number of responses suggested that the commitments were based on existing targets and budgets, that these were generic and lacked overall detail and that they did not take into account the current economic climate facing Northern Ireland and the global economy. In addition, it was suggested that the generality of the outputs made measurement of progress extremely difficult.
9. Copies of all written submissions are contained in Appendix 2 to this document.

## Public Transport

10. The key departmental commitments with regards to public transport are:
  - Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of transport (£174m capital and over £318m revenue funding in respect of on-going commitments for delivery of public transport services); and
  - Upgrade of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line.
11. Whilst these commitments were welcomed by the majority of respondents, it was felt that there were a number of gaps that required clarification. There appeared to be a conflict between sustainable transport objectives in the PfG and those contained in major, existing policy documents, such as the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS), in particular with regard to the fact that the budget appears to be moving away from the 65:35 funding split between roads and public transport. It was suggested that approximately 14% - 17% of the budget would only be available now for investment in public transport.
12. Further evidence offered to support the opinion that the PfG did not deliver in respect of sustainable transport included:
  - The investment of £500m would be used to maintain passenger numbers at 77m per annum. This target has been in place since 2008 and was said to be indicative that the PfG merely sought to maintain the status quo and would not create (rather than promote, as stated in the commitment) the environment and circumstances that would bring about significant modal shift away from cars to public transport;
  - The target to reduce journey times was deficient in two ways. Firstly, targets exist for the reduction of journey times through the upgrading of key roads, whilst no targets were in place to improve public transport times, where, it was claimed, journey time trends were increasing. Secondly, the reduction of 2.5% was against a 2003 baseline, rather than a more recent starting point. This was not seen as significantly challenging the Department.
13. There was a further belief that public transport was too “Belfast-centred” and that an opportunity had been missed to create priority corridors for public transport in other towns and cities. Additionally, there were calls for the creation of a public transport agency to access the needs of all public transport providers and to ensure accessibility and integration of public transport options.
14. The Department and other executive departments were criticised for not adopting a strategic approach to all facets public transport, including education and health transport arrangements. It was believed that significant economies could be achieved through the efficient operation of the entire public sector transport fleets. This might also include opening the procurement process up to all, in particular to Community Transport Associations (CTA's).

The Department was congratulated on its continued support of CTA's, although it was noted that funding beyond 2015 could not be guaranteed.

## Road and Rail Infrastructure and investment

15. Investment allocations to the Department have been spread across two pillars in the draft ISNI, Networks and the Environment. Roads and public transport are categorised under the Networks pillar, whilst water and wastewater fall to the Environment pillar.
16. The Network investment allocation for the period 2011 – 2015 totals £1.386b, whilst 2015 – 2021 is £1.561b. This latter figure includes £118m, representing the deferred balance from the £400m allocated by the Irish Government towards the A5/A8 capital roads project.
17. The Environment investment allocation for 2011 – 2015 is £668m and £600m for the period 2015 – 2021.
18. The Department has pointed out that the vast majority of the £1.2b earmarked for roads is designated towards the A5/A8 project. There are varying forms of opinion in respect of this proposal, from full dualling to commencement of stages to major upgrading of the route. The Department indicated that a new implementation was being developed for consideration at the next North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). The Irish Government has, in the meantime, indicated that it will provide a total of £50m toward this project, spread equally across the 2015 – 2016 and 2016 – 2017 financial years. It was noted that the Departments contribution to the project is spread across the current CSR period, scheduled to complete in 2015.
19. Whilst there is no clarity with regards to the future of the project, there is a concern that the departmental allocations will not be achieved within the relevant financial years and, without End Year Flexibility (EYF), will be lost to the project. Some respondents, therefore, have asked that the Department progress “shovel-ready” projects to allow for reallocation of these monies, arguing that the delay cannot be afforded in respect of damage to the economy and employment.
20. With regards to rail, there is concern that the proposed budgets for 2015 and beyond are significantly less than investments in other regions and jurisdictions. There is a belief that greater investment in roads and integrating rail and the other public transport modes will bring about a re-energising of the local economy and the construction industry.
21. Finally, there was some disappointment that alternative forms of funding and revenue generation had not been explored to fund roads maintenance and infrastructural development.

## Sustainable Transport

22. The key commitments and issues in respect of this category have already been recounted in paragraphs 10 – 14 above. Broadly speaking, the Executive were commended on the targets in respect of walking/cycling to school, although some did suggest that there should be a similar commitment and relevant targets in respect of commuting to work.
23. The ISNI contained some deliverables in respect of sustainable travel:
  - Potential investment in sustainable transport initiatives and ICT investment in transport services;
  - 3 – 6 Active Demonstration projects;
  - A number of park and ride projects;
  - Belfast on the Move sustainable transport enabling measures;
  - Rapid Transport enabling measures; and

- 
- Over 100 charge posts for electric cars.
24. Further gaps were identified as:
- Insufficient focus on local travel;
  - No specific targets for reduction in greenhouse gases, including transport-based emissions; and
  - No targets aimed at climate change and reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

## Water and Wastewater

25. There are two main commitments in respect of this area:
- No additional charges during this PfG; and
  - Maintain high quality drinking water and improve compliance with wastewater standards by investing over £600m in water and waste infrastructure (with a further £600m for the six years beyond 2015).
26. Concerns were raised with regards to the governance issues within Northern Ireland Water (NIW), with a general view that these hindered strategic planning and hindered the efficient delivery of services.
27. The levels of funding identified in the PfG and ISNI caused grave concern, as they will drop significantly up to and beyond 2015 (currently at £188m p/a, dropping to £167 p/a by 2015 and down to £100m p/a for the period up to 2021). It was estimated that it costs up to £80m p/a just to maintain the asset base, which left very little to invest in the infrastructure, particularly with lack of opportunity to carry capital funding over the financial years.

## Milestones and Outcomes

28. A number of respondents stated that the milestones and outcomes were not SMART targets, were vague and unambitious which would therefore lead to difficulty in assessing their progress. Again, it was felt that an opportunity had been lost to use appropriate milestones to drive the PfG commitments that would result in a “tick-box” exercise, rather than a meaningful analysis of progress. It was seen as a priority that clear, measureable, ambitious targets were needed for each commitment.
29. It was also seen as important that delegation of Executive commitments to individual departmental corporate plans should also result in meaningful, measureable and ambitious targets and outcomes.

## Monitoring Progress

30. Again, there was some consternation that a clear monitoring mechanism was not evident and, therefore, it would not be possible to ascertain whether these targets had been achieved. There was a general consensus that progress should be reported on at least on an annual basis to both the Executive and the Assembly, and that this process should not be recording progress as being “on target” but with meaningful data showing progress against appropriate baselines.





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 1

# Minutes of Proceedings



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## Wednesday 11 January 2012

### Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Doherty MP MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA  
Mr Joe Byrne MLA  
Mr Michael Copeland MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA  
Mr Seán Lynch MLA  
Mr Stephen Moutray MLA  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

**In attendance:** Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)  
Mrs Shauna Mageean (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Andrew Larmour (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:** Mr Ian McCrea MLA

**10.30am** The meeting commenced in public session

**6. Draft Committee Response to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government 2011-15**

*Agreed:* The Committee considered the draft response and agreed to forward any comments to the Committee Clerk for inclusion in a final Committee response.

**[EXTRACT]**

## Wednesday 25 January 2012

### Gilnahirk Primary School, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA  
Mr Joe Byrne MLA  
Mr Michael Copeland MLA  
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA  
Mr Seán Lynch MLA  
Mr Ian McCrea MLA  
Mr Stephen Moutray MLA

**In attendance:** Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)  
Mr Oliver Bellew (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Andrew Larmour (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

**10.31am** The meeting commenced in public session

#### **7. Committee Response to the consultation on Programme for Government**

*Agreed:* Members noted a draft copy of the Committee's response to the consultation on Programme for Government and agreed to forward the response to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister as part of the Assembly consultation response on the draft Programme for Government.

**[EXTRACT]**





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 2

# Minutes of Evidence



# 12 December 2011

## Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)  
 Mr Pat Doherty (Deputy Chairperson)  
 Mr Roy Beggs  
 Mr Stewart Dickson  
 Mrs Dolores Kelly  
 Mr Seán Lynch  
 Mr Stephen Moutray  
 Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

## Witnesses:

Ms Kellie Armstrong	<i>Community Transport Association</i>
Mr Scott Kennerley	<i>Consumer Council for Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Antoinette McKeown	
Mr Graham Smith	
Mr Ciaran Doran	Department for Regional Development
Mr Andrew Grieve	
Mr John Mills	
Mr John White	
Mr Patrick Thompson	<i>Energy Saving Trust</i>
Mr Declan Allison	<i>Friends of the Earth</i>
Mr Trevor Haslett	<i>Northern Ireland Water</i>
Mr Gordon Best	<i>Quarry Products Association</i>
Dr Liz Fawcett	<i>Sustrans</i>
Mr Steven Patterson	
Mr David Brown	Translink
Mr Ciarán Rogan	
Ms Jo Aston	<i>Utility Regulator</i>

1. **The Chairperson:** OK, folks, good morning. I welcome you at this early hour to the Committee for Regional Development's seminar on the draft Programme for Government (PFG), the draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) and the draft economic strategy. Thank you very much for attending, especially as you responded in a very short period.
2. The format for today is explained in your invitation letters, but I will briefly

remind you of the four key themes to be covered: public transport; road and rail infrastructure; sustainable transport; and water and waste water. You have been invited to speak on a specific theme to outline what gaps you perceive there to be in the draft strategies, to comment on the milestones and outputs and to indicate the best way to monitor progress on the strategies.

3. The discussion on each theme will commence with an overview from the Department, followed by presentations from stakeholders addressing that theme. Due to the very tight time constraints, the presentation will be between eight and 10 minutes, followed by up to five minutes of questioning from members. I will be strict on those times because of the schedule and the fact that we need to be out of this room for another function here in the afternoon. I will take members questions as they indicate to me. When the five minutes is up, the members who indicated too late will fall off the list.
4. So, without further delay, I call Ciaran Doran, director of financial operations and transportation division, to provide an overview of public transport.
5. **Mr Ciaran Doran (Department for Regional Development):** My role in the Department for Regional Development (DRD) is to look after the funding arrangements for Translink, the rural transport partnerships and the Door-2-Door contract. So, it incorporates the biggest elements of the public transport budget.
6. Before going into the detail of the commitments in the draft Programme for Government from the Department's point of view, I suppose it is worth making the obvious point that we are working to some extent within the budgetary context that was set in April.
7. I will try to cover two commitments in the draft Programme for Government.

- The first is that £500 million would be invested to promote more sustainable modes of travel. The second is the specific commitment to the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line. The terms of the commitment to sustainable public transport are deemed as equivalent. In other words, public transport is seen as a more sustainable mode of travel. The first commitment of £500 million is, essentially, a statement about how much funding the Department can attempt, or will attempt, to put into public transport over the next four years.
8. In broad terms, the £500 million splits into £174 million for capital and roughly £318 million for revenue. I will go into capital in a bit more detail later on. It is worth highlighting the amounts of revenue and subsidy to which the Department is committed: roughly £96 million over that period for railways in the form of a subsidy or public service obligation; £125 million for concessionary travel; £43 million for fuel duty rebate; and £34 million, incorporating the rural transport fund and the door-to-door services.
9. The second commitment concerns the Coleraine to Derry track relay. I am sure that members are well aware of the situation, but I will go back over what has been agreed. The current Minister has agreed to bring forward the phasing of that project and is committed to finding an additional £22 million from the roads capital project to partly fund the first phase of the relay. Five million pounds will be found from Translink's capital budget. The second phase will happen in 2014-15, with a resignalling and a passing loop option in place. We are hopeful that, by the end of 2015, an hourly service will be in place.
10. I now turn to capital in a general sense. As a result of the transfer of the £22 million from the roads budget to the railways capital budget, the ratio of public transport expenditure to roads expenditure increases from roughly 17% over the budget period to 19%. That is an important point to make at this stage.
11. From the Department's point of view, what will the £500 million deliver? I will run through some of the highlights. It completes the New Trains Two programme, which is well under way and features the entry into service of 20 new trains. It will enable the completion of a major capital project to stable trains at Adelaide station, and it will deliver a series of platform extensions to allow those trains to be used at all railway halts. As I mentioned, £47 million will be spent on the Coleraine track relay project. There will also be expenditure on Portadown railway station, the integrated bus and railway system in Antrim and some upgrades to the Enterprise trains. There will be bus replacements. We expect 44 new Metro buses and 35 Goldline buses to be delivered in 2012. That will allow us to make preparations for the rapid transit project and take forward the Belfast on the Move project, which will put in place new bus and cycle lanes. Finally, by the end of the period, the money will, hopefully, allow for a substantial increase in bus and railway park-and-ride facilities.
12. I will make a couple of points about revenue. The entry into service of the new trains will, hopefully, lead to further growth in the number of rail passenger journeys. It protects the concessionary fares scheme as it is at present. It protects — this is a very important point — rural transport and the door-to-door budgets that are already in place, and, in the Department's view, it should enable us to continue to achieve 77 million passenger journeys each year.
13. What are the problems with the position? From the Department's point of view, it is worth highlighting the reductions in Translink's revenue budgets in the third and fourth year of the budget, and I am sure that Translink will highlight that issue. Bus replacement capital expenditure is minimal at this point beyond the current year, and that will become an increasing problem as we go forward. From the Department's point of view, the bus fleet in Translink is well up to the mark in average age and accessibility but,

- without continuing replacement each year, that will become more of a problem.
14. As for general pressures, there is no additional revenue in place for extension of the rural transport fund. For example, there is no provision in DRD's budget to deal with issues that arise with health transport, but I am sure that we will come back to that issue.
15. Beyond 2015, some significant issues will have to be addressed around the amounts of public transport capital investment that are available. Specifically, our understanding is that, in the early years, 2015-16 and 2016-17, when the rapid transit project is due to come in and when most of the spending will take place, ISNI, the investment strategy, does not allow for significant additional capital for public transport. The Minister has highlighted that issue in the consultations that are going on at the minute.
16. When discussing the Programme for Government and its links to the Budget, it is important to bear in mind that there are monitoring rounds each year. Additional funding will very often come into play for public transport, and that will be allocated either to the rural transport partnerships or to Translink. We will continue to keep an emphasis on that. For example, this year, Translink has received something like £5 million in additional revenue.
17. **The Chairperson:** You have one minute, Ciaran.
18. **Mr Doran:** I will make one other point about the rural transport partnerships and the whole issue of health and education transport. We, as a Department, have already made contact with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to try to put in place a forum to consider the issue in detail. However, it is a complex area, and that will take some time.
19. **The Chairperson:** We will have five minutes of questions.
20. **Mr Beggs:** You mentioned extending park-and-ride facilities. If I picked you up right, you said that that may happen towards the end of the Budget period. How much is available specifically to improve park-and-ride facilities? Encouraging people to move from cars to public transport is essential.
21. **Mr Doran:** We have ongoing plans to develop park-and-ride facilities, particularly for railways in the short term and particularly with Translink. There are specific plans for some train stations. The Department has also set aside a specific pot of funding for the later years of the budget, and that is part of a wider review of park-and-ride facilities. It is anticipated that, when the review is completed and is being implemented, there will be something in the region of £8 million to £10 million available as we head towards 2014. So, it is not that work on park-and-ride facilities will not happen before then, but, hopefully, there will be a significant increase in provision by that stage.
22. **Mr Copeland:** There is £318 million of revenue built into the document. What are we going to get for that?
23. **Mr Doran:** The most important revenue grant is for concessionary fares, which is the reimbursement of the schemes for anyone aged over 60 who is entitled to free public transport. That is a significant amount. On top of that, there is the railway subsidy of close to £100 million over the period, which allows the railways to continue to operate as a sustainable service. There is something like £34 million for accessible transport schemes, whether in rural or urban areas, such as the Door-2-Door scheme, and that continues through the period. On top of that, there are specific subsidies for Translink and other bus operators for fuel duty rebate. Those are the main elements.
24. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission. Can you elaborate on the uncertainty that you say exists around school transport?
25. **Mr Doran:** School transport is an issue that Translink will, I think, raise. My understanding of the current arrangements is that there

- is, essentially, a contract between the Department of Education or the education and library boards and Translink. There have been some discussions over the past 12 months, and there has been some uncertainty on the part of Translink about the long-term nature of those arrangements. I am not best placed to go into the details of that. You may want to raise the issue with Translink officials.
26. **Mr Lynch:** How long will it be before the rural transport forum is up and running?
27. **Mr Doran:** Ongoing pressures on the rural transport partnerships have emerged, in that there is uncertainty about who is responsible for providing specific forms of transport to hospitals. Translink is keen to look at the wider issue of whether we are making the best use of the vehicles that we have throughout Northern Ireland for education and health. We feel that it would be best to approach the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety at a fairly senior level, possibly including the Ministers, and break down the project into different streams, rural transport being one stream. Procurement issues, including how vehicles are looked after, could also be looked at. From the Department's point of view, we also have to be conscious that the statutory responsibility for school transport and health transport — if you use that term — rests with different Departments.
28. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ciaran, for your presentation. I remind everyone that the proceedings are being recorded for the Hansard report, which will be useful when the debate takes place.
29. We now move to the presentation from Ciarán Rogan and David Brown from Translink. Ciarán is the marketing executive and David is the commercial and services director. You are very welcome. Again, you will have 10 minutes, gentlemen.
30. **Mr David Brown (Translink):** We are going to do this as a double act, and we will split the time down the middle.
- We appreciate the opportunity to come here today and comment on the draft Programme for Government and the draft investment strategy.
31. I am sure that you will agree that the investment that we have received from the Department to date has been very successful. If you look at the introduction some years ago of the new trains under the New Trains One programme and the recent introduction of the New Trains Two programme with its 20 new three-car sets, you can see that they have been a clear success. We believe that they have resulted in very tangible benefits to the economy. We agree with what the departmental officials said a few moments ago — that excellent public transport lies at the heart of sustainable development for Northern Ireland. So, we are clearly very much in agreement on that.
32. There are some challenges in the current comprehensive spending review (CSR), particularly, as the Department has mentioned, in years 3 and 4. However, over and above capital investment, which is imperative, four other things are very important, and at least one of those has already been mentioned this morning. We need very supportive policy structures for planning and parking. There is an oversupply of parking in the centre of Belfast, and the charges are very reasonable. As a result, a lot of people opt to bring their car into town rather than use public transport. We need supportive policy structures that focus on planning at a very early stage and on the cost and availability of parking.
33. Another thing that will deliver very tangible benefits in the short to medium term is improvements in park-and-ride facilities. I have worked in this sector for only three years, having previously worked in the energy sector. For people who are not used to using bus and rail services, there is a real benefit to be had from taking your car from a rural setting and then getting out of the car and onto good, sustainable transport. On top of that, priority should be given to buses, particularly on the approach to cities

- and towns. That will cause people to convert in the sense that they will start to use public transport. Priority for buses is particularly crucial at this stage, given that recent statistics suggest that journey times have increased not decreased. We have noticed that worrying trend in the recent past.
34. I will highlight something that has been successful in recent times. Because of the funding that we received from the Department, coupled with us driving our costs down, we have been able to offer a fare freeze to the Northern Ireland public. That has worked really well. We have been surprised. We first did it against the backdrop of rising fuel costs and so on, but people have latched on to it. A number of people have started to use public transport, probably because the cost of fuel has gone through the roof.
35. If we understand it correctly, the £500 million that was mentioned this morning is the total of the existing funding. As we look at years 3 and 4 of the current CSR, we see a couple of challenges. We understand that only 14% of the DRD capital budget has been allocated to passenger transport, whereas the regional transportation strategy suggested that it ought to be something like 35%. In previous CSRs, only as much as 20% has been delivered. In the current CSR, only 14% has been set aside for public transport. In year 3 of our programme, funding for buses has been reduced by a third; it is down to a very low level. In fact, keeping our buses at a sensible average age would require something in the order of £15 million per annum. However, in 2013 and 2014, we have only £58,000, which would buy only half a bus. As well as that, the steady investment that is required for maintenance across the rail network is £40 million to £50 million per annum, but, by year 3, we have only £11 million. We do not want to suggest that we are ungrateful for what we are getting; we are very grateful to the Department for every penny that we get. However, if we are really committed to sustainable public transport, there will be challenges
- as we get to the last couple of years of the CSR.
36. The Department has set us a challenge by giving us a target of 77 million journeys for this year, 2011-12, and that happens to be the same as the out-turn for 2010-11. Our numbers were starting to go down at the end of last year, but we have accepted the 77 million target, and we are doing all in our power to deliver on it. We have been able to hold the fare freeze, and we are going to hold it through to the end of this year. We will look at our position next year to see what we can do as far as the freeze is concerned. That will be coupled with efficiencies, and we will look at our budget line by line to try to make sure that there is no duplication of spend. With that work and effective contract management, we hope to be in a position to deliver as we move forward.
37. **Mr Ciarán Rogan (Translink):** A lot of what is being covered in this session is also relevant to the second session and to the infrastructure of the railways, in particular. We will take that as read for the second session, but we will answer questions on any additional issues raised at that stage.
38. The invitation for today's event referred to how the outcomes and milestones of the Programme for Government can be evaluated. That relates to the nuts and bolts of what we will deliver through the capital and revenue spend context that has been outlined.
39. Frequently, we appear before the Committee to talk about reviews of our networks, and we have explained that we do that annually. We will continue to review our networks each year over the next three to four years within the cost and funding context that has been outlined. We continually look for opportunities to integrate bus and rail services and to reduce duplication — that tends to be our objective when we do reviews. If we have a situation in which a service is carrying low numbers and it is appropriate to remove it, we always have the basic objective of maintaining the geographical scope and

- reach of the network. That being said, there are parts of the network that are growing strongly. The Goldline service is a particularly strong part of the network. There is also growth on a relatively local basis. For example, we introduced a new bus service into the Titanic Quarter in Belfast — service 26 — in September, and that has been a huge success. Where we see opportunities for growth, we grasp those and put in services.
40. To turn to the railways specifically and without repeating a lot of what Ciaran Doran outlined: the New Trains Two programme is ongoing, and, out of the 20 trains that were ordered, five are currently delivering services. We will complete the entry into service of all 20 new trains throughout 2012. The priority is to replace, on a like-for-like basis, the older trains on the Larne line. However, as part of that programme, we are also building a new maintenance facility at Adelaide and extending platforms across the network to allow us to run longer trains and to increase capacity.
41. The situation regarding the Coleraine to Derry track relay programme has been explained. That programme has been accelerated and brought forward. Assuming all procurement and tendering goes to plan, we will commence that work in June 2012, with the line to be fully reopened at the end of March / the start of April 2013. Services will be returned to their current level for the bulk of the 2013 City of Culture year, and the relay programme will be completed after that. As Ciaran said, the passing loops and phase 2 will be completed by the end of 2014-15, which will allow for hourly services. It should be pointed out that our increasing services between Coleraine and Belfast to an hourly level will be of significant benefit. The amount of commuter travel between Coleraine and Belfast is large and growing, and that particular line has been a huge success in passenger number terms over the past number of years.
42. As I indicated, the Goldline service is an area of the business that is growing strongly. At the moment, that part of the business is the jewel in the crown.
43. **The Chairperson:** You have one minute left, Ciarán.
44. **Mr Rogan:** We are due to relaunch that service and to increase its frequency in 2012.
45. As regards the Metro service, all that we are asking for is the ability to have additional bus priority measures. That is not mentioned in the Programme for Government, as it will not require a huge amount of capital spend. Bus priority from park-and-ride facilities is what delivers passenger numbers, and that is basically how our performance is evaluated.
46. The written briefing gives you the specific capital investment highlights that are included in our corporate plan and in the Programme for Government. Those include upgrades at Antrim bus and railway station and Portadown station; a station footbridge and cycleway at Ballymoney railway station; a footbridge at Moira railway station and a rolling halt, which is a safety provision. We will also implement park-and-ride extensions at Ballymoney, Coleraine and Antrim, and we will complete a feasibility study for larger park-and-ride works at Moira and Lisburn West. The major capital expenditure will be for the replacement of buses, which is relatively low in comparison to the rate of previous years. We will seek to have 35 new buses for the Goldline service and 44 new buses for the Metro service.
47. I also want to point out the innovations that we are carrying out for things like ticketing and passenger information. For example, we are seeking to introduce mobile phone ticketing and to extend our ilink product. We are also investing in customer information systems and our journey planner. That summarises the outputs.
48. **The Chairperson:** Thanks for that, Ciarán. You stated that the Programme for Government is restrictive in respect of public transport. What would you have expected or, indeed, recommended that would allow for appropriate development?
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49. **Mr Rogan:** I indicated that the basic measure that we have for the success of public transport — it was quoted in the regional transportation strategy — relates principally to passenger numbers. The Programme for Government targets passenger numbers to sit at 77 million over the next couple of years, which is a fairly static state. We have seen passenger numbers grow significantly over the period of the regional transportation strategy, and that represents the context of our target.
50. **Mr Copeland:** Thank you for your joint presentation. Will you define the uncertainty that apparently exists in respect of school transport? Are you aware of a school of thought that says that the provision of free transport for school-age children on the ordinary public transport system would be cost-neutral within greater Belfast and would allow a new generation of passengers to become used to using public transport?
51. **Mr Brown:** I will take your first question first. Historically, Translink has enjoyed a three-year contract with the Department of Education for school transport. However, because of a lot of the uncertainties around the Department of Education's own budget, we find ourselves in a situation where we are currently in the process of entering into a one-year contract with the Department. The Department of Education has to take a fundamental look at how it moves boys and girls from home to school. We are in negotiations with the Department for a longer-term contract. For us to be able to do bits and pieces and get economies of scale and scope, we need that longevity. We hope to get there, possibly, in the next few months. We are in discussions with the Department of Education.
52. With regard to your other point, I see where you are coming from. We are cognisant of the fact that, if you can get young people to use public transport at that formative age, it is likely that you will get a pull through into adulthood. I will ask Ciarán to speak to you about the work that we are doing to encourage young people to get the most cost-effective use of our services.
53. **Mr Rogan:** At the moment, children under 16 travel using a half-fare ticket. We do not want children between the ages of 16 and 18 to necessarily have to travel on the full adult fare. We want them to have access to the cheapest possible fare. Therefore, we are looking at having a new type of ticket that is specifically for the pupil and student market and gives them instant access to the lowest possible fare. That is part of a large suite of things that we are doing to get young people on board our buses and trains year on year. However, they all pay fares to some degree.
54. The point that you make would more properly be addressed within the concessionary fares scheme in its entirety and would involve extending that scheme to include free travel to people under the age of 16 or even 18. That is really something for the Department to initiate. It was one of the options looked at when the scheme was extended to people aged 60 and over, but the Minister at the time decided that the 60-plus market was the one to go for. Concessionary fare schemes have to be funded, and Ciaran has already indicated the pressures in funding the existing concessionary fares scheme. Would it be of benefit to young people and get them on board? Yes, certainly, but somebody has to pay for it.
55. **Mr Beggs:** I am always alarmed when maintenance appears to be cut, because it can cost big-time in the long term. You are getting £11 million a year by year 3. Is £40 million to £50 million the amount that you think that you need? What will be missed?
56. **Mr Brown:** Yes, you are right. As we understand it, we will be getting £11 million by year 3, whereas we say that to maintain a steady state and to keep ahead, so that we do not end up with a backlog of activity that we have to address, we need much more.
57. One of the things that we always put to the fore is anything that is safety-critical.

- That will always come to the fore. As your estate ages over time, there are always areas and particular issues of geography that you want to go back and address and bring up to date. What we find that we have to do with a limited budget is to address, first and foremost, anything that is safety-critical. We do not believe that anything will be missed out in that. Then, with the balance of money that we have, we will do as much as we reasonably can. Sometimes, that means doing a tidy-up in order to keep the track open and the speeds up so that the journey times can be reduced.
58. We have calculated that, in better times and if there was an abundance of money, we would need circa £40 million to £50 million per annum to maintain the steady state, so that we are not leaving challenges for ourselves down the line — no pun intended there.
59. **Mr Lynch:** With regard to young people travelling to school, many of their journeys are short. Have you looked at measures to encourage them to walk or cycle to school? Such a scheme down South has increased the percentage of children taking that route.
60. **Mr Rogan:** The lead for that would be taken by the Travelwise division in DRD. We work closely with Travelwise in the sense that our priority is to get young people out of cars. The school run in the morning adds to congestion, adds to cost and is economically difficult. I know that walking and cycling are part of the Travelwise initiative. We would play our part by, for example, putting in cycle facilities at bus stations and rail halts.
61. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your presentation, David and Ciarán.
62. We move on to the Community Transport Association and Kellie Armstrong, please.
63. **Ms Kellie Armstrong (Community Transport Association):** Good morning everyone. Time is a bit tight, so I will move through the paper that we submitted. We provided you with some written evidence from the Community Transport Association (CTA), and I will refer to that in this oral evidence.
64. I will jump straight to the Programme for Government and the investment strategy for Northern Ireland. Although we accept that both are draft documents and are out for consultation, the community transport sector has some concerns about them. Our vision is that people have access to the right form of transport that suits their needs at a time that suits them. When we look at the Programme for Government and the investment strategy for Northern Ireland, we see some fundamental gaps between what people in Northern Ireland need and what will be delivered over the next few years.
65. To look at the gaps in the Programme for Government: one of our major concerns — it has been referred to this morning — is that there is no strategic transport plan for Northern Ireland. By that we mean that general access to services is not considered in the round and no cross-departmental consideration is given to transport expenditure. For instance, how much money is spent on education transport, how much on health transport, on employment transport or access to employment transport? Then look at public transport. If all that data were pulled together, we would have an opportunity to create an integrated system that will not only provide access for people who need to access education and health but will benefit our economy by making sure that people have access to employment.
66. What are we doing to our population by excluding the consideration for transport as access to services? Basically, we are saying that what you have is what you will get. We looked at the investment strategy for Northern Ireland and, unfortunately, although it is a forecast, it appears that that is what we will keep getting until 2021. We believe that there should be a change. The Programme for Government should be steering the ship that would have taken us forward to consider what our future in Northern Ireland will look like.

67. A future Northern Ireland will have a greater number of older people. Will they be driving cars? Will they need greater access to health services? Yes, they will. So how will we look at their needs? We had hoped that the Programme for Government — with the aim of building for a better future — would have started to consider that. We had hoped that it would propose higher investment for, for instance, Translink and sustainable transport, so that we can move towards a shared future.
68. There is a need for the Executive to consider how people will be able to access various services. Without a transport accessibility plan at the heart of the Programme for Government, how do we move Departments out of their silo mentality? You heard from Ciaran Doran and from Translink that there are proposals to try to work with other Departments. However, one of the things that concerns us about the Programme for Government is that, although it mentions cross-departmental and partnership working, no targets are set to make that a reality. The investment priorities in the investment strategy for Northern Ireland and the Programme for Government talk about working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector; but, again, no targets are set to make that a reality.
69. There is no plan to review the public procurement system. Transport is the one area of procurement from which the voluntary and community sector is excluded from entering into contracts. If you do not have a commercial operator's licence, there is no opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to take part, unless through a grant scheme. Therefore, we are excluded from procurement. How does that constitute partnership working? Why is the level playing field that everyone talks about for profit-making organisations only?
70. The investment strategy for Northern Ireland varies from the Programme for Government in that social enterprise and social clauses are mentioned in passing, but there is no tangible evidence of commitment to progress. In the absence
- of a commitment to consider and review the procurement system, effective social clauses will be excluded and social enterprises will no longer be able to provide services, because the grant scheme has disappeared. Last year, we had a presentation from the Central Procurement Directorate of the Welsh Assembly Government, which said that it took a proactive move to include social enterprises, and, all of a sudden, tenders in which social enterprises were included jumped from 4% to over 30%. If that type of target was included in our Programme for Government, we could move forward.
71. As I mentioned, there are no targets to ensure effective partnership working. We would have liked to see a very clear target in the Programme for Government that asked each Department to prove how they were working in partnership with their colleagues in other Departments. If that had been included, instead of mentioning it in passing, we could have had a proactive engagement between, for instance, DRD and DHSSPS. Speaking from personal experience, I know that the community transport sector is being inundated on a daily basis with requests from social workers to provide transport for people who are not able to access non-emergency patient transport services. Indeed, in relation to special education transport, education and community transport have looked at ways that we can provide a linking service to bring young people to their main education transport routes. We are trying our best to work in partnership, but it would have been better had the Programme for Government included a commitment to showing that those targets were necessary.
72. I am being quick because I appreciate the time. The milestones and outputs mentioned in the Programme for Government are outcomes. That means that they are not actual outputs. There are no time-specific, measurable actions included. How can performance be measured when there are no targets set in the Programme for Government? The CTA suggests that, in order to achieve

- progression, milestones should be considered relative to the timescales of each key commitment and departmental work programme. We would like to see the programme board provide an update report on an annual basis.
73. I will now move on to the best way to monitor progress. If the programme board presents an annual update, we can see exactly how effective the Programme for Government will be. The delivery level must ensure that update reports are provided to the programme board, stating the progress to date and confirming when targets have been met and the progress on any outstanding items. We suggest that the delivery level should provide that to the programme board in advance of the next financial year in order that, if there are any changes to budget plans or something is failing, changes can be made so that we can take that forward and be more proactive in the Programme for Government.
74. CTA encourages cross-departmental work on the issue of transport to start in the first year of the Programme for Government — that is now. We have only a few months left. Why can we not have round-table discussions or a cross-departmental approach to transport to make sure that considerations are put forward now, which we can take through the Programme for Government? There are opportunities for DHSSPS, the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Department for Regional Development to come forward now so that we can discuss the best way to spend money most effectively and the best use of resources. We do not want to see yellow buses for education underutilised throughout the day. We want to see people who work in call centres and get out at 11.00 pm or midnight being able to get home using public transport instead of having to depend on a car.
75. In the economic climate, the people of Northern Ireland will be most affected. I am coming from the voluntary and community sector to talk to you today, and I feel that it is vital that you know how the people of Northern Ireland feel about all the changes coming forward. In order to monitor progress, it is vital that the views of the public are known. We feel that, through the Programme for Government, the programme board should have engaged in dialogue with the people of Northern Ireland to ascertain if the priorities are actually effective in bringing benefit across our communities. Therefore, CTA proposes a rolling workshop of outreach clinics across Northern Ireland, where the public can comment on how their lives are being improved or made more difficult or where priorities are not being realised. That proactive framework will help with the future planning for the next Programme for Government. We suggest that the planning for the next Programme for Government starts today, not after a Budget has been set. Thank you.
76. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Kellie. We will go to questions.
77. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission. How crucial do you think it is that we have a public transport agency?
78. **Ms Armstrong:** If the public transport agency is one that will look holistically at transport across Northern Ireland and across all Departments, absolutely. There needs to be some sort of co-ordinating body to bring that approach forward.
79. **Mr Dickson:** Thank you for your presentation. For you, what would a cross-departmental transport planning model look like?
80. **Ms Armstrong:** We would start looking at what it is that people in Northern Ireland need access to, where they need to go, why they need to go and at what time they need to go. Starting from that fundamental transport planning framework, we can decide what the routes will be and who will provide them. As Ciaran Doran mentioned when he talked about the health forum between DRD and DHSSPS, the fundamental

- question is: what do our people need? Then we fit our system round that. There is no point in running routes that are not economically viable. A route running at 11.30 am from a rural town to a market town may not suit the needs of someone who has to get to a health appointment at 10.00 am. We need to start with a very basic transport planning service that looks at accessibility and at what people need, and then we need to build on that. At the end of the day, it is the people using our transport who will make it sustainable.
81. **Mr Copeland:** I recently heard a phrase —
82. **The Chairperson:** A question, Michael, please.
83. **Mr Copeland:** This is a question. The phrase was transport poverty. Does such a thing exist? Is the term widely used? Is it defined? If it does not exist, should it?
84. **Ms Armstrong:** Whenever you talk about fuel poverty, people talk about home heating oil. I have to tell you that 10p in every pound earned in Northern Ireland is spent on car fuel. For once, I would like the Assembly to realise that we are car dependent. It is costing our people a fortune, and we do have transport poverty. A number of older people, people with disabilities and people with limited mobility because of their age or rural location are facing major hardships. You only have to look at people in Belcoo, for instance, who have to go to Altnagelvin Area Hospital because of the centralisation of services. If they have a 9.00 am appointment and are using public transport, they have to leave home at 5.30 am or 6.00 am to make their way to Enniskillen, Dungannon or Omagh and up to Altnagelvin. It costs them a fortune. If they do not use public transport, a round trip in a taxi costs £70. That is for one health appointment. I would call that transport poverty.
85. **Mr Lynch:** Thank you, Kellie. What efficiencies in community transport would a review of the public procurement system bring about?
86. **Ms Armstrong:** As far as community transport is concerned, we try to be as efficient and effective as possible by using a number of volunteer car drivers. That means that we do not have to buy vehicles and we only reimburse drivers for their out-of-pocket car mileage expenses. Where do we see efficiencies happening? Why not let community transport have access to the yellow education buses outside term time or in the evening so that we can help people, outside the main public transport times, to come home from employment or for recreational purposes, which are part of Northern Irish life?
87. Another thing to consider is the sharing of services. For instance, if it is not economically viable for Translink to run a large bus on a rural route, it would be better to use a smaller vehicle that could be shared with health providers and used outside health operating hours. A minibus or a 24-seater vehicle used by health providers for dementia day care could be used at other times by Translink. We can also share resources by sharing drivers. That could save an absolute fortune. It costs community transport £125 a day for a bus to sit there doing nothing. How much money is being invested through education and health? We know what is happening in DRD. How could those resources be better used? We believe that millions of pounds could be saved.
88. **Mr Ó hÓisín:** Other than route rationalisation and using yellow buses, what changes will have to be made to the provision of community transport?
89. **Ms Armstrong:** Community transport is completely excluded from the procurement system, and grants are disappearing. We have a number of rural community transport partnerships that can access DRD's rural transport fund. We are very grateful for that and for the groups and organisations that deliver the majority of community transport in Northern Ireland. From the CTA's point of view, however, we have over 100 community transport organisations that receive no funding. We want those organisations to be developed so

- that they can help to fill the void, but, because we are completely excluded from the procurement system, they cannot apply for tenders and contracts to any Department, be it Health, Education or DRD.
90. We would like the Government to say,  
*“We recognise that the voluntary and community sector is here, that it has capacity and that it is efficient. It uses volunteers and their cars, which means that we do not have to buy vehicles. We will reimburse them and see how they get on.”*  
Even if there is a pilot scheme, let us see how that goes.
91. **The Chairperson:** You are over time, Kellie. Please finish very quickly.
92. **Ms Armstrong:** Community transport can provide the linking service to provide bodies for Translink. Rurally isolated people who live two or three miles from a bus stop can be provided with links to Translink to keep that a sustainable service, and we would like to see a commitment to that.
93. **The Chairperson:** Kellie, thank you very much indeed for your presentation.
94. We move on to the Consumer Council, and Antoinette McKeown, its chief executive, and Scott Kennerley, its head of transport. You are very welcome. You have 10 minutes.
95. **Ms Antoinette McKeown (Consumer Council for Northern Ireland):** Good morning. The Consumer Council very much welcomes the opportunity to give a short presentation on the draft Programme for Government. We commend the Committee for organising this event.
96. We want to look at three or four aspects, and I will hand over to Scott for the detail on those. The Consumer Council asks whether the draft Programme for Government commitments to public transport are genuine about intending to move towards more sustainable modes of public transport or are just maintaining the status quo. We do not believe that the Programme for Government is clear enough on that. For example, an investment of £500 million simply to secure 77 million passengers, which has been a target since 2008, maintains the status quo. We want more clarity on that.
97. Another issue for us is that some of the objectives in the draft Programme for Government seem to be contrary to current policy. It is important to review that so that policy is clear and coherent. For example, we are seeing the commitments in the draft Programme for Government moving away from the 35:65 split between roads and public transport. If we are genuine about sustainable modes of transport and getting people back to using public transport, we need to get more clarity on that.
98. We also need more clarity on plans for road, bus and rail simultaneously, because the draft Programme for Government seems to have a disjointed approach in talking about public transport without going back to the regional transportation strategy and making that its grounding. We want to see more fit and complementarity between bus, rail and road so that there is clarity for consumers on where the Programme for Government’s commitments lie.
99. I will now hand you over to Scott, who will go into a little more detail.
100. **Mr Scott Kennerley (Consumer Council for Northern Ireland):** Once again, thank you for the opportunity to present the Consumer Council’s views of the draft Programme for Government with regard to public transport. Members will have had a written brief on the issue, so I will keep this presentation short.
101. Four commitments in the Programme for Government relate to public transport. The first is the commitment to progressing the upgrade of key road projects to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2-5%. In our brief, we highlighted the fact that the draft Programme for Government has a specific target for improving journey times on key transport corridors but

- no specific target for public transport services. There is no indication of what schemes will be developed or, more importantly, what role public transport could play in improving those journey times.
102. Earlier, a colleague from Translink stated that priority should be given to buses and that, in recent times, journey times have increased. Public transport has a huge role to play in increasing modal shift and taking more cars from the road. The Consumer Council believes that developing road infrastructure should include a focus on transport priority measures. However, again, as was stated, more information is needed to clarify what improvements will be made to public transport services in line with that target to improve journey times.
103. The second commitment that we wish to comment on is the pledge to invest over £500 million to promote more sustainable modes of transport. As was stated, the £500 million to be invested in a programme of measures is essentially to achieve an annual average target of 77 million journeys by public transport. That target has been in place since at least 2008 and was included in public service agreements between DRD and Translink for 2008-2011. I believe that Translink, to its credit, has been achieving that target since 2007-08. Therefore, we believe that the £500 million will, at best, keep pace with what has been happening since 2008. It will not improve investment in public transport, and the fact that the target for public transport journeys will be the same for 2015 as it was for 2008 confirms that there is no expectation of a significant improvement in modal shift, which has been a key aim of the regional transportation strategy since 2002.
104. With regard to the milestones set in the Programme for Government, the Consumer Council believes that it would be more beneficial to list the public transport improvements that will be achieved over those milestone periods. To echo the comments of Kellie Armstrong from the Community Transport Association, it would be more beneficial to do that rather than simply stating the amount of money that will be spent cumulatively.
105. The third commitment to comment on is the aim of creating the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport. The Consumer Council welcomes that commitment. We feel that more could be done across a range of journey types, such as commute-to-work, and the programme should include a focus on the role of public transport. I am a young father, and I know from personal experience that the school journey and work journey are often linked. Therefore, a comprehensive response is required to consider those issues together, rather than in isolation. We welcome the fact that the milestones set in this area have been clearly outlined. However, it is not possible to comment on whether the target is realistic or challenging without knowing the current position. The milestones should also consider improvements for other journey types, not just school journeys. A more efficient way of measuring success would be to establish the current position, the improvement being sought, and how that will be achieved.
106. The final commitment for comment is the upgrading of the Coleraine-Derry/Londonderry railway line. The Consumer Council supports the decision to bring forward this upgrade. We are pleased to see it in the draft Programme for Government. However, we question why that one section of railway is being highlighted, as opposed to focusing on improving the rail network itself. We recognise that this is a major project to be delivered, but it is only one project. It is only one part of the rail network, and the draft Programme for Government makes no further detailed comment in relation to the developments or improvements expected for the rest of the network. The draft improvement strategy does make reference to some programmes that will be taken forward, such as the Knockmore-Lurgan railway

- line, the development of an integrated transport hub and investment in sustainable transport initiatives, but they are only potential developments that will be considered and taken forward. The focus for monitoring progress should be to improve the rail network as a whole, of which this particular stretch of railway is a part. In that way, there would be a clearer picture that could be drawn from the improvements planned over the Budget period for the railway network.
107. In conclusion, the draft Programme for Government and investment strategy do not give sufficient detail on the improvements that will be made in public transport by 2015. From the information available to us, it appears to us that the target of modal shift — moving to more sustainable methods of transport, increasing the number of people from the car to public transport — is not going to be a priority for the Executive within this Programme for Government. We will have a passenger journey target in 2015 that is the same as it was in 2008.
108. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much indeed. Your conclusion is quite damning in that you do not believe that the Programme for Government delivers on its objectives in respect of public transport. Given the current budgetary conditions, do you think that there is scope to deliver, and how would you suggest that it be done?
109. **Mr Kennerley:** Our concern is that the Programme for Government talks about the building blocks — the regional transportation strategy, the regional development strategy. At the moment, the programme basically maintains the status quo and the level of investment. Ultimately, the target for passenger journeys, which Translink has said is how its success is measured, will remain the same. As to how the pie could be sliced differently, I do not really feel that the Consumer Council is in a position to specifically say that money should be taken from one area and put into another. Our duty is to comment on the fact that the research that we have conducted with people who would like to use public transport services states that they would use them if they were available. The Committee will be familiar with the Transport Matters research that we produced in line with Youth Action Northern Ireland and Translink. In that piece of research, young people said that they would like to use the services if they were available and that the lack of services impacts on their ability to access education and employment opportunities. The appetite and desire is there, as are the high-level strategic aims. However, the investment is missing.
110. **Mr Doherty:** Thanks for your submission. You talked about the potential for a model shift from cars to public transport. How do you suggest that the required cultural change be achieved?
111. **Mr Kennerley:** It is a considerable piece of work. This Committee's briefing and information report, which was published in August, stated that, for the regional transportation strategy to succeed, there needs to be a cultural shift and a change in attitude. A number of actions need to be taken. The person who spoke previously was asked about the public transport agency. The Consumer Council believes that any public transport agency that is set up must consider public transport needs across all public transport providers. The accessibility of a journey needs to be considered from the door to the destination so that the entirety of the journey can be planned, not just the main transport provision, which is the case at the moment.
112. A wide range of organisations and Departments have a hand in public transport. We are only starting to see initial discussions and developments. The first speaker from the Department said that discussions between the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety are starting to take place. However, the briefing paper to which I referred earlier states that modal shift has been the subject of policy for the past 10 years, yet there has not been a significant change in the number of people who rely on a car for the vast majority of their journeys.



- The latest statistics from the DRD show that about 81% of journeys in Northern Ireland are as a car driver or passenger.
113. **Ms McKeown:** We want to see investment following the commitment in the 2002 regional transportation strategy, which was 65%:35% funding between roads and public transport. It shifted back again in the previous budget, and we raised concerns with the Department for Regional Development.
114. There is an absolute necessity to educate. We have been working with young people, because they are the starting point. Car insurance is so horrendously high at the minute for young people; it is almost prohibitive. It is even more important that public transport serves young people well so that, at 15 years of age, they do not want to be looking at simply pass their test at 17 and having to get public transport because they cannot afford insurance. We see opportunities, and we concur with what Kellie Armstrong said previously about fitting public transport to the need. If we do that throughout Northern Ireland, we will start to see that shift as well.
115. **The Chairperson:** Thank you for the presentation. I know that two or three other members indicated, but if they would pass their questions to the Committee Clerk, we will send them in writing to the Consumer Council.
116. We now move to the second discussion, which is on road and rail infrastructure and investment. I call John White, director of strategic programmes in Roads Service, and Ciaran Doran, director of financial operations and transportation. Go ahead, John. You have 10 minutes.
117. **Mr John White (Department for Regional Development):** Good morning, everybody. I want to speak for a few minutes about the roads-related key commitment in the draft programme, which, as the previous speaker mentioned, is to progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times in the key transport corridors are reduced by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline.
118. Against that target, we ask where we are today. My slideshow will be useful in highlighting the sort of schemes that we can deliver. The current slide shows some of the recently completed capital road schemes, which, together with similar schemes in the future, will benefit not only the road user but the Northern Ireland economy and will play their part in meeting the target set out in PSA 13.
119. However, capital funding in the current Budget period amounts to somewhere around £1.2 billion with the emphasis, as shown in this slide, on the construction of the A5 and the A8. I draw your attention to the relatively low levels of funding in this Budget for smaller capital improvements and structural maintenance. Structural maintenance mainly involves resurfacing.
120. The slide also shows the original levels of funding expected from the Irish Government for the A5 and A8 schemes. The figure at the bottom of the slide is the revised ROI contribution, and you can see that there is a significant difference between that and the one above. That is where we have some difficulty. You will be aware that at the North/South Ministerial Council plenary meeting on 18 November, it was noted that provision of further funding by the Irish Government for the A5 and A8 schemes was being deferred and that the Irish Government would provide £25 million per annum in 2015 and 2016.
121. The relevant Departments have been tasked with preparing a new funding and implementation plan for the two projects for agreement at the transport sector meeting. That is likely to be held in March 2012, with endorsement at the subsequent plenary meeting. You will appreciate that, until this work is complete, I am not really in a position to advise you of the roads programme.
122. I will say a little more about ISNI. You will see from the slide that the indicative

- allocation in ISNI over the 2015-2021 period is around £200 million per annum. That would enable Roads Service to take forward a significant programme of structural maintenance, targeted primarily at the strategic road network, and a programme of minor capital works. That would leave us with about £100 million per annum to spend on strategic road improvements, again, mainly in the key transport corridors. In other words, in the 2015-2021 period, schemes such as the York Street/Westlink interchange, the A26 at Glarryford, and further improvements to the A6 should all be done. However, the extent of the programme set out in the original investment delivery plan published in 2008 could not be met under this funding level.
123. I am sorry that this presentation is very short, but given the state of flux that we are in due to the funding from ROI and the impact on the Department's budget, there is not a great deal more I can say at this point in time.
124. **Mr Ciaran Doran (Department for Regional Development):** To some extent, I covered the issue of railways in the earlier presentation, so I will try to keep this short. The first point I want to make is that railways have clearly been a major success. Over the past decade, passenger journeys have doubled to roughly 10 million journeys at the end of last year. To facilitate that, there has been significant investment, not just capital investment in railways but in revenue support. That is a very important point to bear in mind. Rail is subsidised quite significantly. The public service obligation currently runs at £22 million to £24 million per annum. To grow railways further will require more investment. Alongside that is the reimbursement of the concessionary fares scheme. Although railways have clearly had a major success in growing passenger journeys, we need to understand that continuing that will require investment in revenue and capital.
125. As regards the £500 million referred to earlier, we have explained that that is essentially broken down into capital and revenue, with roughly £174 million being put into capital investment. Most of it is in railways, whether it is in the New Trains Two programme or the Coleraine to Derry track relay.
126. Moving beyond that, to the investment strategy period 2015-2021, I have already highlighted that in the initial two years of that programme there will be an issue about the priority assigned to the rapid transit project as opposed to public transport in general. Clearly, if additional funding is set aside for public transport, a number of projects could be taken forward. For railways specifically, the sort of projects that we have in mind are, for example, a transport hub at Great Victoria Street, which could reduce journey times between Dublin and Belfast by five to 10 minutes, and discussions are taking place about that. It may require some investment during that period. However, if we look seriously at improving journey times on the Belfast-to-Dublin corridor; that will require major investment, which is not currently planned for. If we want to extend the railways in any way, whether to the airports or by bringing new routes into play, that will require a significant amount of investment. I understand that there has been quite a bit of discussion about that with the Committee recently, so I will not restate that. Essentially, that is the position; the investment strategy as it currently stands envisages the status quo as regards the rail network.
127. General points were made earlier about growing public transport. I want to make two points about that. It is important to bear in mind that, currently, the vast majority of public transport journeys take place on buses. To some extent, investment in roads facilitates that. Statistics show that 67 million passenger journeys take place on buses, 10 million take place on railways and roughly a million take place on what you might describe as accessible transport schemes, whether that is rural transport or door-to-door. It is fair to say, without going into the detail, that investment in capital and revenue has been skewed towards railway and

- accessible transport. To some extent, that is the nature of the industry that we are talking about, but I ask the Committee to bear in mind that to move away from that will require significant amounts of investment, which, I will say again, is going to prove difficult under the current budget scenarios.
128. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, John and Ciaran. We move to questions now, beginning with the Deputy Chairperson, Pat Doherty.
129. **Mr Doherty:** Thanks for your submission. In relation to John's comments about the A5 and the A8, has the re-profiling work emanating from the North/South Ministerial council started? Who is heading it up on the Assembly and Executive side?
130. **Mr White:** The work has started in the sense that there have been meetings at official level. The Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of Finance are due to meet in that regard very shortly. We have made appointments, but we have not yet met the Departments in the South.
131. **Mr Beggs:** The Consumer Council was critical of the fact that a smaller percentage of funding is going towards public transport and other forms of sustainable transport. Given the reduced capital funding, why is public transport suffering? How do you prioritise the investment of the limited capital funds we have?
132. **Mr Doran:** That is a difficult one.
133. **Mr Beggs:** Should there not be transparency?
134. **Mr Doran:** Yes. Clearly, the amount of capital investment in public transport relative to roads is not at the 30% level that was talked about in the regional transport strategy five or six years ago. However, as a result of the decision to invest in the Coleraine to Derry track relay, the percentage has moved quite significantly in favour of public transport over the current budget period; from 17% to 19% by 2015. I am not trying to suggest that that addresses everything, but it is important to make that point.
135. **Mr Beggs:** How do you prioritise the capital investment you do plan to make?
136. **Mr Doran:** One of the major themes of the new regional transportation strategy that was referred to earlier is that we need to look again at the way in which we make judgements about investment between roads and public transport schemes and look at the benefits. Hopefully, over time, that will allow for more sensible investment decisions to be made, which will give greater weight to public transport and sustainability, which is a key theme of the RTS.
137. **Mr Ó hOisín:** John, you mentioned some unspecified improvements on the A6. Can you be more specific on those?
138. **Mr White:** The document contains a commitment to progress schemes on the A6. There are a number of strands. The main line on the section between Randalstown and Castledawson has been through a public inquiry. A small public inquiry is due; I anticipate that that will be in February 2012. Following the outcome of that, the scheme should be ready to go to procurement subject to funding. I expect that draft orders on the A6, Derry/Londonderry to Dungiven, to be published later this week, which will lead to a public inquiry next year. Their delivery will then depend on funding.
139. **Mr Lynch:** Your capital budget shows that structural maintenance continues to fall behind what is required. At what stage will the Department feel the need to address that and maintain existing roads against a priority for new roads?
140. **Mr White:** It has been indicated in a number of documents that, in 2011-12, about £112 million would be needed to address the backlog and keep up to speed. In recent years, we have got around £50 million or £60 million for structural maintenance. The dip was particularly severe in the slide that I showed you, which reflected the very heavy levels of capital spend on the A5 and A8. Going forward, a balance needs to be found so that we both maintain our

- existing network and build new schemes to improve journey times and the key transport corridors for public transport and freight.
141. **The Chairperson:** That ends questions. Dolores, if you have a question, you can put it through the Committee Clerk's office, and we will send it to the Department in writing. We are on a tight time schedule.
142. Ciarán, you indicated that Translink has already made its presentation. Do members have any questions on the particular section of the presentation on road and rail infrastructure and investment for Translink?
143. **Mr Doherty:** Money has been spent on new trains at, perhaps, a faster rate than it has been spent on the infrastructure to allow them to run to maximum efficiency. You talked about that balance. Is one section getting ahead of the other?
144. **Mr Rogan:** Do you mean the balance between bus and rail?
145. **Mr Doherty:** No, I mean the money that is spent on new trains and that spent on the infrastructure of the rail network.
146. **Mr Rogan:** The programmes to introduce new trains and to relay the Coleraine to Derry line section were designed and appraised as a single programme. If anything, previous decisions, which have now been overturned, to delay the relay would have put the entire programme out of balance. What is being done at present is actually bringing it more into balance, so that the line section between Derry and Coleraine is being reopened as new trains are coming on-stream.
147. **Mr Beggs:** As regards capital investment in public transport, and given the investment that you understand to be available, will you indicate the projects that are not currently included that you would include were more money available? I am thinking of bus and rail transport hubs — anything to facilitate public transport. What is not being done that could be done if more money were provided?
148. **Mr Rogan:** I suppose that a significant gap that is concerning us is the bus fleet replacement, which has already been highlighted. In any one year, for the bus fleet to stand still as regards average age, which was the target given in the RTS, would require the procurement of around 95 buses. As we have said, by years 3 and 4 of the Programme for Government, in essence, no buses will be procured at all. Therefore, the average bus age will increase fairly significantly.
149. Ciaran Doran also pointed out that some rail infrastructure projects, such as renewal of the line between Knockmore and Lurgan, have been put back. The Belfast transport hub is not firmly in place. It is beyond the scope of the Programme for Government. The other major issue is that it is not as though specific schemes have been deferred or left out. The one thing that we always emphasise is the need for large-scale strategic park-and-ride facilities and whether money will be available for a feasibility study on that towards the tail end of the Programme for Government. We would like to have seen, and the RTS had in it, scope for large-scale park-and-ride facilities on the ground.
150. **The Chairperson:** There have been no other indications from members. Thank you very much, indeed, Ciarán.
151. We move to the presentation from the Quarry Products Association, which is represented by Gordon Best. Gordon, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation, after which there will be five minutes of questions.
152. **Mr Gordon Best (Quarry Products Association):** Thank you, Chairman and members, for giving the Quarry Products Association (QPA) the opportunity to present its views on the draft Programme for Government and investment strategy. First, I want to recognise the significant financial constraints that the current economic situation and the Government's

- comprehensive spending review have placed on the Executive and Departments. In our view, that makes it even more important than ever that maximum benefit is gained from every penny of taxpayers' money that is spent.
153. The QPA recognises the progress that the Executive have already made. However, we believe that much more could have been done. We highlight the slow speed of many changes to the planning process and the fact that roads-infrastructure spending still falls way behind that of our nearest economic competitors in the Irish Republic and Britain. We also believe that given the serious economic situation facing the Northern Ireland economy, the consultation period on that particular Programme for Government and investment strategy is too long. We believe that the failure to rebalance the economy during the good economic times a few years ago has led to many more problems in these difficult times. We must focus on the economy.
154. Much has been said today about investment in public transport. I spent an hour and a half getting here from Lurgan this morning, so nobody needs to tell me about the problems with getting into Belfast. However, we believe that the roads infrastructure is the veins and arteries of our economy. In our view, roads infrastructure is there primarily to enable what is now a much more export-focused manufacturing sector to get products and services to the ports as quickly as possible.
155. As regards the gaps in the Programme for Government, our main criticism, as in many other years, is that there is a lack of detail in balancing the books. However, as stated, we recognise the financial constraints that the Executive face.
156. As regards roads and rail infrastructure, we recognise that the withdrawal of funding for the A5 has placed the Department in a position where it is unable to include more detailed information in the Programme for Government. However, this Programme for Government will not address the infrastructure deficit that we face in Northern Ireland compared with our nearest economic competitors. Recent figures show that we invest 32% less per capita in our infrastructure than the Scottish Government and 16% less than the Government in England. That shows that the existing infrastructure deficit will grow. The lack of money available in years 2, 3 and 4 of the current Budget period for roads structural maintenance will result in a further deterioration in the condition of the road network, which was highlighted in John's presentation. Given the recent decision by the Irish Government to withdraw its funding from the A5 project, we believe that immediate attention — and we believe that this is happening — needs to be given to reallocating funding to other roads and construction projects that sustain the maximum number of jobs and create the widest economic ripple effect in the local economy.
157. Our view is that a major reallocation of funds to projects that deliver significant benefits to the economy and maximum creation of employment should be considered. Those projects should be priority schemes already identified in the Roads Service strategic roads programme. We also urge the Executive and the Regional Development Minister to reallocate £168 million of funds to structural maintenance in years 2, 3 and 4 of the current CSR period in order to bring the structural maintenance expenditure over the four-year period up to that outlined in the Department's structural maintenance funding plan. The economic ripple effect of investment into the redirected funds in those projects would, I believe, be enormous and be a real springboard for re-energising the growth of the local economy and the construction industry. We welcome the Executive's recognition that certain labour-intensive activities such as facilities and roads maintenance, refurbishments and upgrades can employ twice as many people as other construction-related projects that require the purchase of land or specialist materials.

158. As regards railway infrastructure, the fact is that people in Northern Ireland are almost completely reliant on the road network for all their transport needs, and that will not change in the foreseeable future. There are obviously a number of reasons for that, namely that Northern Ireland has a rural-based economy, is a small area, has a small population and that most of our railway lines were closed between 1950 and 1970. However, we believe that we must invest more in an integrated public transport system, primarily in the greater Belfast area. The QPA welcomes the continued support for the Belfast rapid transit system and the proposed £500 million towards the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport. We would, however, welcome more detail on that, although John and Ciaran gave us a wee bit more detail this morning.
159. We also believe that the Programme for Government and investment strategy do not go far enough on a number of issues, such as changes to the procurement process and support for local jobs through the introduction of social clauses to government construction projects. We are also disappointed that more focus has not been given to attracting alternative forms of funding and revenue generation in order to fund roads maintenance and infrastructure development. We believe that the Executive should follow the example of the Scottish Government, which work with the likes of the Scottish Futures Trust to explore alternative funding mechanisms. We also believe that the Executive's online investment strategy information portal is a welcome addition to communicating progress. However, our experience to date indicates that the website is not being kept up to date by some Departments and that some of the information going on it could be of more value to the construction industry.
160. As regards milestones and outputs, we believe, as stated, that there is an inadequate level of detail about how many of the commitments will be funded and about the benefits measured from, for example, the priority road schemes. We recognise that the two main public transport schemes — the Derry/Londonderry to Coleraine railway line and the Belfast rapid transit scheme — are in there, and that is to be welcomed.
161. We believe that the Programme for Government and investment strategy lack key performance indicators to measure progress in achieving roads infrastructure and public transport objectives. We would like to see resurfacing being included. National statistics show that resurfacing of the roads network is 20 times more effective than patching, and over past years, because of the historical underinvestment, the level of firefighting and patching of our roads network that has gone on is, unfortunately, unacceptable in our view. We believe that the Scottish Government's approach should be considered by the Executive. In Northern Ireland, we need to do more to ensure that the whole of government is more outcome-focused in their approach to performance. It means that they will be judged on the results they achieve; results that reflect real and meaningful improvement in public services, which will add to the quality of life for people in Northern Ireland.
162. As regards monitoring, the Programme for Government states an efficient transport system is essential for economic growth, and section 3.1.3 mentions developing an economic infrastructure. If we know the extent and estimated cost of congestion at present, the Programme for Government should attempt to project the savings and benefits plus inward investment and export growth that would be attracted by road and public transport improvements.
163. The vision of the Executive should, in our view, be to ensure that Northern Ireland will remain competitive in the global and international marketplace; ensure that the fruits of our economic success will be more equally shared at regional level and throughout society; and deliver key sustainable development targets. The QPA recognises that the commitments and priorities outlined in this Programme

- for Government can achieve the vision; however, like so many other Programmes for Government, it is our view that it lacks detail, particularly in how the progress towards goals and objectives will be monitored and measured. We recognise that the Programme for Government's economic strategy and investment strategy exhibit joined-up thinking, and there is significant integration between these documents, for which the Executive should be commended. The QPA, like so many others, now wants to see delivery, quick decisions taken, regular and effective monitoring and clear accountability for responsible individuals.
164. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for that, Gordon.
165. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission. You said that you are disappointed that there is not more focus given to alternative forms of funding. Will you elaborate on that and give us some examples of where that could come from?
166. **Mr Best:** I suppose that this may be a difficult one for the Assembly, but there are questions around internal revenue-raising powers, such as water charging, etc. I also highlighted the methods that the Scottish Government are using such as involvement with the private sector through the pension funds and so on. There is very little mention of that in the Programme for Government. There is also the issue of how we fund roads infrastructure and whether we should move towards road-tolling, as has been done in the South. I am sure that many of us travel to Dublin quite regularly, and we think nothing of stopping at the toll booth and throwing in a couple of euros.
167. Is there any way of extracting money from road tax as a mechanism for roads maintenance? I do not want to go over old ground, but our association has been quite active in highlighting the fact that the biggest asset that any Department looks after is our roads network, which is basically funded by money that other Departments cannot spend. The Committee is aware of the historical underspend of some £400 million roads maintenance. It is quite evident that roads come behind health and education, so we need to think outside the box, in our view. I am not an expert on international finances or bringing in other forms of revenue, but I am sure that the brains are there to work on that. We have seen the example of what the Scottish Executive have done. The fact that they have spent 32% more on infrastructure shows that they are doing something right. So, maybe there are lessons to be learnt.
168. **Mr Lynch:** Gordon, you said that roads infrastructure is the bane of the economy. You agree that the A5 is crucial to us but, on the other hand, you say that the Department should look at starting to reallocate the money that has been ring-fenced. How do you square that?
169. **Mr Best:** We were always supportive of the A5 project; there is absolutely no doubt about that. In fact, we all recognise the infrastructure deficit, particularly west of the Bann, but that project basically stood on its own with the support of the £400 million of Irish money. I do not think that the Northern Ireland Executive can replace that £400 million because the money is just not there. So, given the current economic climate, the priority should be to protect jobs. If you go to the airport this morning, you will see that easyJet and Flybe aeroplanes are full of young people heading over to England to get jobs. They are moving to Australia, which needs 30,000 construction workers in the next two years. The Irish Government money has gone. They have offered £25 million in 2015-16, which is outside the current Executive's funding programme, and we need to think quickly to reinvest that money to protect jobs and the local economy. It is down to pounds and pence.
170. **Mr Beggs:** You mentioned maintenance and said that patching, as well as being more expensive, is very disruptive to road users. Is there evidence of increased patching on our main trunk roads?

171. **Mr Best:** I do not have evidence of that to hand today, but you can look at the levels of patching over the past number of years, and the main funding for resurfacing has dwindled. John showed you figures for structural maintenance resurfacing, and that is basically money for the private sector. We had £92 million this year, and we are down to £56 million and £52 million in the next two years and then back up to about £82 million. However, when you take out the £25 million that is ring-fenced for Road Service's own direct labour force, that is a drop of 60% in the money allocated to the contracting fraternity that is doing most of the repairs. An industry cannot sustain itself by peaks and troughs; we need steady forward planning.
172. **Mrs D Kelly:** Thank you for your presentation, Gordon. Some others have criticised the Programme for Government and the procurement strategy and the fact that there are no social clauses. Do you think that the inclusion of and a greater emphasis on social clause would help your industry more?
173. **Mr Best:** Yes, very much so. I was on the construction industry forum working group, along with the CEF, that discussed the introduction of social clauses. So, you are talking to the converted. The point that I made in our presentation — we have raised it with the CPD and the Departments — is that we want social clauses to be extended to support the use of local products. I have written to Nelson McCausland highlighting the fact that there will be 30 public-realm projects. However, the public-realm projects that have been delivered to date have seen massive amounts of construction materials coming in from China, India and so on when we have very good products here in Northern Ireland. So, keeping in mind EU procurement law, we want the Departments to do everything they can to support local products and, therefore, local jobs.
174. **The Chairperson:** Thanks for the presentation, Gordon. I thank all the contributors to the first session. I intend to break for about 10 minutes. We will start again at 10.00 am sharp.
175. **The Chairperson:** Members, we move to our third discussion, which is on sustainable transport. I welcome Andrew Grieve, the head of Travelwise Northern Ireland. Andrew, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and we will then have five minutes for questions.
176. **Mr Andrew Grieve (Travelwise NI):** Good morning, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members of the Committee. Two draft Programme for Government commitments are linked to sustainable transport. The first is the commitment to invest over £500 million to promote more sustainable modes of travel. That includes encouraging the use of public transport, which the Committee will probably have heard a fair bit about this morning. It also includes increasing the provision, and promoting the use, of park-and-ride facilities, car sharing, walking and cycling. The second commitment is specific to walking and cycling to school. Through that, we want to arrest and reverse the decline in the number of schoolchildren for whom walking or cycling to school is their main mode of transport.
177. Investment in sustainable modes of travel will help to support economic growth while reducing environmental impacts. Transportation also has an important role in supporting health, education, employment, leisure activities, social inclusion, rural and urban communities and the environment. The largest part of the £500 million investment is in public transport, and you will also have heard about that this morning. However, there is also a provision for work to be taken forward in a number of other areas. We hope to launch a public consultation on the draft active travel strategy, building an active travel future for Northern Ireland, later this week. We are also drawing up plans to run a competition for active travel demonstration projects, and we plan to initiate those projects by October 2012.
178. The Department recently published a report on the strategic review of



- park and ride. The review revisited the planned provision of park and ride in the regional transportation strategy and associated transport plans. It identified priority locations for park and ride and set out a number of recommendations, funding permitting, for its delivery. The Department and Translink are finalising details of the schemes that will be delivered up to 2015.
179. The main aim of Belfast on the Move is to reorganise traffic management in Belfast city centre in order to facilitate a reduction in general traffic levels and encourage greater levels of walking, cycling and use of public transport. That will require the redistribution of available road space in favour of public transport and cyclists. A number of measures enabling sustainable transport will, we hope, be completed in 2012-13, subject to statutory procedures. Those will provide just over 2.5 km of new bus lanes, which will also be available to permitted taxis, cyclists and motorcyclists, 1 km of new dedicated cycle lanes and 20 new controlled pedestrian crossing points.
180. The pilot e-car project will install electric vehicle charging infrastructure in six towns and cities across Northern Ireland, and it will run for 2011-12 and 2012-13. Northern Ireland is one of eight UK regions to receive funding from the Plugged-in Places initiative, and we hope to install more than 100 charging posts in Belfast, Londonderry, Newry, Armagh, Enniskillen and Larne, as well as near some of the major trunk routes.
181. Given that the rates of walking and cycling to school have been declining over the past decade or so, the milestones in the draft PFG document are stretching. Currently, about 32% of children walk or cycle as their main mode of transport to primary school, with the figure for secondary schools about 21%. In the lead-up to the end of the Programme for Government period in 2015, we aim for figures of about 36% for primary schools and 22% for secondary schools. Those targets will be difficult to achieve, because most levers of change are outside the Department's control. Our main contribution will be in promoting awareness, increasing safety and investing in cycle lanes.
182. The school run is a major contributor to congestion. In Great Britain, for example, the school run is responsible for one in four of all cars in urban areas at 8.50 am. In Northern Ireland, one traffic-flow study in Larne found that at least 44% of traffic during the morning rush hour was attributable to the school run. Congestion is real, the school run's contribution to that is real, and there is, of course, a cost, to the Northern Ireland economy.
183. There is evidence that many children want to walk or cycle to school. In schools in which Sustrans has worked — I will tell you a wee bit about this later on, no doubt — it found that about two thirds of children want to cycle to school and about 60% would like to walk.
184. The evaluation of whether we meet the targets will depend on information collated in the travel survey for Northern Ireland. It is based on a three-year rolling survey, so we will have to think a wee bit about how the targets in the draft Programme for Government are expressed in light of the fact that the collation of data will be in a slightly different format than appears there.
185. Additional funding of about £1 million per annum would be required properly to address all that is required. A little re-prioritisation in the Department's budget will be needed to achieve that.
186. The draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland indicates the potential of investment in sustainable transport initiatives. Following the Budget 2010 exercise, some capital allocations were made for sustainable initiatives: active travel demonstration projects; park-and-ride schemes, including quality bus corridors; work on Belfast on the Move, including various enabling measures; and the seed funding for the charging infrastructure for electric cars. All are included in Budget 2010 and the investment strategy, and there are

- enough resources available to enable us to go ahead.
187. Finally, I will outline what the draft investment strategy might not enable us to achieve. The strategic review of park and ride has identified many potential projects and drawn up a priority list. Although some funding has been secured and is in the budget for park-and-ride schemes, the implementation of park and ride will take place in a more constrained budgetary context, and that may impact on the ability to deliver all of the priority projects that we have identified.
188. The draft strategy does not include large amounts of money for sustainable initiatives. Specifically, the bulk of it is to be spent on public transport. The projects that we are funding over the PFG period, however, represent some initial programmes that aim to lay the foundations for the move to a more sustainable transport network. They are building blocks for the future. Behavioural change, which is central to modal shift, is a long-term process. We hope that the initial projects that we are taking forward will give rise to an increase in spend on that type of scheme. That is one of the aims of the proposed active travel demonstration projects.
189. That concludes the presentation. I am happy to take questions.
190. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Andrew. Again, the Department appears to be more specific about what cannot be delivered. Do you think that that is acceptable in an investment strategy?
191. **Mr Grieve:** The draft investment strategy is largely geared to what is already in the Budget, and the draft Programme for Government reflects what was in the Budget agreed by the Assembly last year. So the draft strategy looks at the whole area of sustainable transport, including what we do already and what we plan to do.
192. We have tried to cut the cloth as best we can to enable us not only to maintain the existing public transport infrastructure but to start the move to a more active and sustainable transportation initiative. My desire would have been for more money to be targeted specifically at those areas, but it is now a matter of reprioritising the Budget to do that. One benefit of having a seminar such as this is to try to encourage the Department and the Minister to make the move that we are seeking to achieve.
193. **The Chairperson:** The proposed investment goes beyond the current Budget period. In fact, the strategy goes to 2020 in many areas, does it not?
194. **Mr Grieve:** It does.
195. **The Chairperson:** So should the Department not be more innovative in its thinking and in trying to influence?
196. **Mr Grieve:** Although the draft investment strategy looks to the future, the further into the future we go, the less specific its detail. Through the projects that we fund at present, such as the demonstration project, we hope to show the benefits of that more sustainable approach to transport. We hope that those will enable us to argue for a re-prioritisation of future work and to move it to more sustainable transportation modes. A lot of work has to be done on that, and the Committee, of course has a big role to play.
197. **Mr Beggs:** Can you provide the Committee with a list of the park-and-ride schemes that you indicated cannot be delivered during the period and some idea of costings? I realise that it is probably too much to tell us everything now. Secondly, do you agree that, as fuel becomes more expensive, car sharing and the greater use of public transport will become more important?
198. **Mr Grieve:** In answer to your second question, that is one of the factors that we hope will effect a behavioural change. The move away from using the private car, which is so convenient for us all, is about giving people an incentive and showing them the benefits. Also, people having to pay so much for fuel loads the undesirable side of the

- equation and makes the desirable side more attractive. So that has its part to play in behavioural change.
199. Your first question was about park and ride?
200. **Mr Beggs:** Can you provide the Committee with a list of the park-and-ride schemes that you do not envisage happening and an idea of their cost in a constrained budgetary time?
201. **Mr Grieve:** I cannot do that right now, but I will take a note and provide that information.
202. **Mr Lynch:** You set targets of 4% of primary-school children and 1% of secondary-school children walking and cycling to school. Are those targets really challenging?
203. **Mr Grieve:** It will be interesting to hear what Sustrans has to say about that because it has worked with a lot of schools. We feel that they are challenging targets because it is not just a matter of continuing an upward trend. It is a matter of arresting a declining trend and moving it in the opposite direction. Although the 4% and 1% targets do not immediately appear to be particularly challenging percentage increases, we have to turn round an entire parental behaviour. It is a matter of stopping and reversing the supertanker, and that challenge is hidden when expressed in purely numerical terms.
204. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Andrew, for your presentation.
205. **Mr Grieve:** Thank you.
206. **The Chairperson:** OK, we now move to Sustrans. Steven Patterson is the Northern Ireland director, and Liz Fawcett is the Sustrans policy adviser. You are very welcome. You have ten minutes to make your presentation, after which there will be five minutes of questions.
207. **Mr Steven Patterson (Sustrans):** Thanks very much, Mr Chairman and Committee members. The initiative to hear feedback on the draft PFG is very welcome.
208. Our presentation will concentrate on four issues: the strengths of the draft PFG; gaps in the draft PFG and the investment strategy; milestones; and monitoring progress. I want to highlight the draft PFG target to increase the numbers walking and cycling to school, which Andrew Grieve mentioned. We call that active school travel, and we commend the Executive on the initiative. It is an important target. Governments in GB and the Republic of Ireland have well-funded and well-resourced initiatives aimed at getting more children to walk or cycle to school, but there has been nothing of the same scale in Northern Ireland.
209. The results of the GB initiatives can be seen in the comparative school travel figures for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In Britain, 50% of primary school kids walk or cycle to school; in Northern Ireland, the figure is only 32%. So you can see that the difference is quite stark. That has negative implications for congestion, and it also means that many pupils are not using the school journey to take physical activity. As we know, only one in six young people does the recommended 60 minutes of exercise a day. Yet, in a pilot scheme at 18 rural primary schools in Northern Ireland, the targets set in the draft PFG are surpassed. Before the intervention in those schools, 23% of pupils walked or cycled to school. After working with the schools on capital and revenue initiatives, 40% of pupils walked or cycled to school. So it is time to roll out that scheme to all schools in Northern Ireland.
210. In our view, there are four gaps in the draft PFG and investment strategy: lack of broad modal shift targets; a low percentage of investment in sustainable transport; insufficient focus on local travel; and no specific target for reduction in greenhouse gases, including, most importantly, transport-related emissions.
211. As already discussed, there is a need for targets on outcomes. Setting targets for the way in which the population chooses to travel is important, because they can provide a strategic focus for

- investment, thus helping to ensure value for money. That approach is much more cost-effective than simply opting for a shopping list of large capital schemes.
212. Broad modal shift targets to increase the percentage of journeys made by sustainable transport would have particular benefits. They would reduce congestion, journey times and transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. Setting modal shift targets would improve access to employment, bearing in mind that a quarter of all households in Northern Ireland do not have access to a car. It would improve travel choices for ordinary people, businesses and tourists, and it would improve health and quality of life. We consider it especially important to have modal shift targets because we are becoming a very car-dependent society, as the figures demonstrate.
213. Our presentation includes a graph showing the balance of transport-related investment in Wales and Northern Ireland. In Wales, just over half of all transport-related investment is in sustainable transport. Here, as we heard earlier, the figure is just 19%. We would like the current draft balance of transport investment to change. The draft PFG includes a target to spend more than £500 million on sustainable transport, but that is really just the total of the budgets for public transport, cycling and walking, as you heard earlier. We are concerned that, in the draft investment strategy, only £200 million is allocated to capital investment in public transport, compared with nearly £1.2 billion to roads. If we include walking and cycling under sustainable transport, we see that Northern Ireland compares poorly with Wales.
214. We have heard a lot today about long journeys and big money, but a lot of our journeys are local. Some 63% of journeys made are less than five miles, and we would like more focus on that. It is vital to invest in local transport, such as maintaining local roads and pavements, developing quality bus corridors and innovative rural public transport solutions, as well as networks for cyclists and improvements for pedestrians. There is huge, untapped potential for active travel. One third of journeys are less than two miles, yet half of them are driven. Of the one in six journeys of less than one mile, one third are driven.
215. It is, perhaps, no surprise that transport-related greenhouse gas emissions are also an issue. The big rise in transport-related emissions in Northern Ireland coincides with a reduction in Great Britain. Indeed, Northern Ireland's transport sector produces more greenhouse gas emissions than any sector other than agriculture, and it is the only sector in which emissions continue to grow, thus undermining the good work of other Departments.
216. I will move on to milestones and outputs. Given the evidence, we believe that the overall active school travel targets are realistic. However, to achieve the draft Programme for Government's relatively modest targets, it is vital that DRD invests sufficient resources in the infrastructure and schools-based programmes that will be required to achieve it and that it begins the programme for delivery straight away.
217. Progress in achieving the active school travel target can be monitored through at least two sources: the Northern Ireland travel survey, supplemented by individual monitoring at each of the schools where programmes are being run to change the way that pupils travel. Any other broad modal shift target for transport could also be monitored through the Northern Ireland travel survey. As the DOE collates statistics on transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, monitoring performance against targets would be relatively easy.
218. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission and presentation. They focus more on schoolchildren than adults. Have you carried out any study on how adults travel to work? Why is the focus on children and not more widespread?

219. **Mr Patterson:** As we say in our presentation, we would like the draft PFG to have modal split targets across the range for adults and young people and for different ways to travel, such as the work journey. We focus on the school journey because it is a specific target in the draft PFG Government, and we re-emphasise that we would like the Committee to support that. The Northern Ireland travel survey shows that, in Belfast, commuting by cycle has risen from 1% to 3%. We agree that there need to be more outcomes and targets in the Programme for Government and in future transport strategies, because only by concentrating on what you are trying to achieve through your investment can you decide how to invest. If there are no targets, for example, to increase public transport or cycling, that influences the schemes on which we decide to prioritise investment.
220. **Mr Copeland:** Given the possible future effects of the envisaged rationalisation of the schools estate and the likelihood that schools will close and children will find themselves living further from their places of education, will that help or hinder the achievement of the targets for the number of pupils walking or cycling to school?
221. **Dr Liz Fawcett (Sustrans):** It is, undoubtedly, a factor, and we have taken it into consideration.
222. The results of the Sustrans pilot on safe rural routes to school, which Steven outlined, must be borne in mind. The targets in the draft PFG are to increase from 32% to 36% for primary schools, and from 21% to 22% for secondary schools, the number of children cycling or walking to school. Sustrans hopes that DRD, or whichever organisation takes on the challenge, will achieve those bigger increases at the targeted schools. It does not help that some schools may close and that the average journey to school may become longer in some instances. However, if an intensive effort is made at the considerable number of schools across Northern Ireland to which many children will still be able to travel by cycling or walking, we believe that that target can be achieved. Obviously, not every school can be targeted with an intensive effort; it is about targeting the right schools. One will look at how feasible it would be to cycle or walk in the first place.
223. **Mr Patterson:** The intervention that showed the modal change happened in rural primary schools. We think that there is more potential in urban areas, where the distances are shorter.
224. **Mr Ó hOisín:** What is the cost-benefit analysis of the focus on local travel?
225. **Mr Patterson:** I do not have the exact cost-benefit analysis. We assume that we need to make the best use of our limited capital transport funds, so it is surely about concentrating on the potential for change. Some 64% of journeys are less than five miles, so we should try to bring about a change from people driving to making other choices, such as walking, cycling and using public transport. There is significant potential there, and bringing about that change may not be that expensive. It is partly about a mindset of how the existing road space is used. The reallocation of current road space to public transport, walking and cycling is relatively inexpensive and can achieve positive change.
226. **Dr Fawcett:** Part of the problem is that traditional cost-benefit analyses tend to look only at the number of construction jobs, for example, that a road scheme will generate in the short term. We should, however, consider the cost benefits of cycling and walking and add in the health benefits, such as a reduction in the number of people who will have to attend hospital with obesity-related problems. If we add to that the reduction in congestion, we are looking, collectively, at a very beneficial piece of work. It depends on how cost-benefit analyses are measured and whether you are thinking of a traditional cost-benefit analysis or in a more holistic sense?
227. **The Chairperson:** Your time is up. Thank you for your presentation. Roy, if you pass your question to the Committee Clerk, we will send it to Sustrans.

228. The next presentation is from the Energy Saving Trust, and Patrick Thompson will begin. Patrick, you have ten minutes in which to make your presentation. That will be followed by five minutes of questions.
229. **Mr Patrick Thompson (Energy Saving Trust):** Thank you for the opportunity to come to speak to you today. Ours is one of the less well-known organisations in this area.
230. We provide fleet advice on behaviour change and eco-driving information in Scotland, Wales and England. The evidence that I will present today is based on that advice activity and on the wider policy issues, but it is more about helping the consumer to make choices.
231. Sustainable transport cuts across many themes in the draft Programme for Government, but there was no explicit sustainable transport priority. I thank Andrew Grieve for putting a bit of meat on the bones of that earlier. As you can see, sustainable transport cuts across a number of strategies. I suppose that the underlying factor is carbon emission reductions, which is what we have been about for at least 15 years. What should sustainable transport look like? Consumers here need a suite of options. We have very high car dependency, and some areas will always be disadvantaged by limited public transport. We have problems with fuel costs being considerably higher in rural areas than in cities. Furthermore, not only are we wedded to our cars, we are welded to them.
232. Some people will not move to other forms of transport, and we need to look at what we can do to help them as well. We also need to look ahead to electric vehicles and alternative technologies.
233. Delivering sustainable transport will be complex. It can be many things to many people, but, ultimately, it is rooted in reducing overall transport emissions. With transport accounting for about a quarter of domestic emissions alone, we have problems there. Given the rural/urban split, the restricted public transport and our love affair with the car, we need a suite of options that includes people who are not able to cut journeys or use public transport or who simply will not make that switch. Those people cannot be ignored. We need to invest in the sustainable use of transport rather than simply promoting sustainable modes of transport.
234. Consumers need to be empowered to effect their own changes. We need to engage people beyond the big policy decisions such as road building, and the Government need to invest in providing advice on how people can make those changes. Behaviour change is seen as an important component in reducing travel-related emissions. The Energy Saving Trust has been providing behaviour-change advice on a range of themes for over 15 years.
235. The Department of Transport in GB has looked at behaviour change in the past and has concluded that advice and information is critical in engaging drivers in making informed decisions. Consumers need to be empowered to make those decisions themselves; they do not want to be preached to. However, advice and information for people who do not wish to car share or use public transport is lacking here. Eco-driving or smarter driving techniques are something that all drivers can use, whereas modal shift can and will affect only some of the population. Keeping an eye on the all-island dimension is critical, particularly if we are going to look at the infrastructure for electric vehicles. If we can get people to drive efficiently in the cars that they have now, should they move to electric vehicles, they can use them just as efficiently.
236. Currently, Northern Ireland is the only UK nation that does not provide a telephone advice service for drivers to find out how they can save money and cut emissions, over and above schemes such as Travelwise, which provides useful information, and the public transport campaigns. We have provided transport advice to the Scottish Government for over 50,000 people in the past couple of years. We provide a

- travel energy check for drivers, which in six simple steps can help people to understand that, even if they had bought the best car in its class for emissions, rather than even buying a smaller car, they can save fuel, reduce emissions and cut down journey times. We also provide fuel saving tips. Rational vehicle choice is a critical first step. No one wants government to tell them to drive a smaller car when our car purchases are often done with the heart and not the head. Those are not rational decisions, and we need to address that.
237. Northern Ireland businesses with fleets need all the help that they can get. Advice needs to be tailored to companies that have fleets with large mileages, and not just for freight, but for company car drivers as well. We need to help them to drive down costs and make for a more efficient business. Current fleet sizes in Northern Ireland are much smaller than those in GB, and the tailoring of the advice would be critical to making that a success. Such an approach could also be extended to government fleets, given that councils and other bodies have large fleets of vans and lorries and other vehicles. The widespread implementation for learner drivers and licensed drivers (ECOWILL) programme, a European programme with which we are involved, incorporates energy-efficiency driving skills at the learner stage. There is potential there to provide behaviour-change advice from the word go, when people get behind the wheel for the first time.
238. The results of that work are easily evaluated. There are no specific milestones and outputs for sustainable transport in the draft Programme for Government, but, as you can see, fuel cost savings in Scotland and England can be as high as £350 a year; £250 is about the average. We have put that into perspective with the work that we do in energy saving; about £300 a year in savings can be made in a house by installing energy-efficient materials such as insulation. For drivers, there is no such cost; you just learn to drive better and in a more efficient way. When it comes to green fleet reviews, we are seeing savings of around 11,500 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year and mileage reductions of up to 5%. Seventy per cent of people whom we engaged with took specific actions with their own fleets.
239. The final point in our paper is, perhaps, an interesting one, as it shows that eco-driving techniques can cut the number of accidents. That brings a massive range of cost-cutting benefits that impact on insurance and healthcare treatment costs, vehicle replacement, downtime, police time and general road safety. Those are huge impacts that are, perhaps, less well known so far. Outcomes from this kind of advice are fuel cost savings, reductions in carbon emissions and economic benefits for business. It also gears us up for the next steps in a low-carbon economy and gives us definitive and measurable outcomes.
240. I will conclude with the gaps in the draft Programme for Government. We need more specifics on what sustainable transport is. We need to flesh that out and incorporate widespread behaviour-change advice, not just for modal shift but for everyone who uses a car. This is a quick hit for all motorists. Milestones and outputs very much depend on what the vision of sustainable transport is. Ultimately, they need to take account of reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the number of people advised and the number of people making public transport journeys. It is reasonably easy to monitor progress on advice. It involves monitoring the numbers advised and evaluating fuel savings from the advice received and the economic impacts for businesses that took advice on fleets.
241. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Patrick. We move to questions.
242. **Mr Beggs:** You seem to be advocating the establishment of another advice service, the benefits of which I can see. However, are there too many advice services at the minute? We already have Travelwise and Sustrans. Would a third service complicate the issue?

243. **Mr Thompson:** I do not think that it is about creating a new advice service or adding a third party. It is about making sure that there is advice that everyone can take on board. There will be people who will never move to public transport because they cannot or they will not. For them, it is not practical.
244. **Mr Beggs:** Just to be clear: are you saying that big road schemes will not be good for the future?
245. **Mr Thompson:** No. I am saying that big ticket items like that may not engage the consumer. Consumers need advice that they can take at their own level so that they can make their own decisions. They may not be that involved or that fussed about road building schemes, but they want to know how they could save money and how they could make better use of public transport.
246. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission. You have set a target to have over 100 electric cars. Is that challenging enough?
247. **Mr Thompson:** The electric car debate is interesting because we are in a chicken-and-egg situation. I would like to see people move to that kind of transport, but they will not do it unless the infrastructure is there or it suits their lifestyle. We perhaps need to advise people that there are situations in which choosing an electric car is right; for example, if they are in inner cities and doing small journeys. Whether the target is 100 or 1,000 cars, we first need to get the infrastructure, advice and information around it correct.
248. **Mr Doherty:** When you talk about infrastructure, are you talking about infrastructure at garages or at a person's home?
249. **Mr Thompson:** I am talking about charging infrastructure across the board. It is about whether people can get to Dublin and back, for example, or whether they can get to Fermanagh.
250. **The Chairperson:** A programme for charging electric cars was considered for a new, very energy-efficient housing development. All of that has changed because of the costs involved and the fact that charging times and all the rest of it were considered unviable. At the end of the day, are the programme and the spend viable in Northern Ireland? You talk about city driving, but is it viable for rural users?
251. **Mr Thompson:** It depends on whether the infrastructure is in place to allow somebody to make the journeys that they want to. At the moment, there are probably other solutions that we can look at, be they increased public transport or better use of the vehicles that we have, before we make the step to electric vehicles. There is a parallel with, for example, using solar panels in houses. People need to insulate their house first and get it up to standard before they think of the next step. I would say that the same applies to transport.
252. **Mr Lynch:** You talked a lot about a modal shift. How can that shift be best achieved?
253. **Mr Thompson:** How do we lead people to other forms of transport?
254. **Mr Lynch:** Yes.
255. **Mr Thompson:** Advice and information play a part, and so, too, does seeing the benefits of park-and-ride facilities, for example, by driving for miles to a facility and then taking the rest of the journey from there. It is about providing people with options that seem to them to be practical.
256. **The Chairperson:** OK. There are no indications of any other questions, so thank you for your presentation, Patrick.
257. We move on to Declan Allison from Friends of the Earth. Declan, you have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation, followed by five minutes for questions.
258. **Mr Declan Allison (Friends of the Earth):** Thank you for inviting me to make a presentation. I do not have a PowerPoint presentation, so I will just speak to my notes. I deal largely with big picture issues. I thank those who



- spoke previously for their more detailed contributions.
259. Friends of the Earth suggests that the current balance of spend is bringing our transport policy in entirely the wrong direction. Two big drivers are heading our way: climate change and a rise in fuel prices. We need to tackle those urgently. Climate change, in particular, is an urgent issue that needs to be tackled. The current balance of spend in the DRD budget is counterproductive. There are five key priorities in the draft Programme for Government, and I would suggest that the current balance of spend will make achieving those extremely difficult.
260. We have heard that about 80% of the transport budget is allocated to roads. Indeed, about 60% is allocated to just two roads: the A5 and the A8. We suggest that it is irrational and counterproductive to commit such a significant proportion of the transport budget to just two roads. In order to do that, DRD has to slash the budget for roads maintenance, public transport, walking and cycling. DRD admits that the proposed balance of spend will result in a deterioration of the current roads network and a reduction in public transport patronage. That is clearly counterproductive.
261. The roads bias is based on three myths. The first is that most people have access to a car; secondly, that road building is good for the economy; and thirdly, that congestion is a technical problem that can be solved by building more roads. I suggest that all three of those are wrong. The House of Commons Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment said that building more roads in an attempt to regenerate a region has the opposite effect. It actually sucks investment out of a region because firms find it easier to service that region at a distance. In Northern Ireland, for example, we can decide to build great roads to the north-west and to the south-west, but that could result in firms setting themselves up in Belfast to service those areas from there. It does not provide any real benefit to those outlying regions.
262. Public transport has a greater long-term economic benefit. Evidence from Los Angeles, for example, demonstrated that about 85% of every dollar spent on petrol leaves the local economy, whereas if 80% of that were spent on the wages of public transport workers, it would generate about \$3.80 in the local economy. Therefore, investing in public transport is a much better way of stimulating the economy than simply building more roads.
263. Of course, if you build more roads, you just move the congestion elsewhere. You are then left with the problem of a new bottleneck, and you have to create more roads to overcome that. Essentially, you lock yourself into the endless cycle of building more roads, which is not a good thing. There is also the phenomenon of induced traffic, whereby people who would have left their car at home or had not bothered to buy a car decide that now that there is new roads capacity, they will use their car or buy a car. That creates more congestion, leading to more roads being congested, so you get into further difficulties.
264. I mentioned climate change, which, in our view, is probably the single biggest threat facing our way of life. Transport emissions have grown over the last while, and, indeed, since 1990, they have grown by about 38.8% over the 1990 baseline. The draft Programme for Government has a target of reducing carbon emissions by 35% by 2025. We argue that that is woefully inadequate, especially when compared with the targets in the UK Climate Change Act 2008, which are for a 50% reduction by 2027. You can also compare that with advances in the science of climate change. Friends of the Earth has produced a report called 'Reckless Gamblers', and it suggests that we need to make an 80% cut in our emissions by 2030. So, in that context, 35% is clearly inadequate.
265. The Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature report that came out in October

- confirmed that the planet is warming and that human contribution is the most significant driver of that. The International Energy Agency recently said that we need to tackle climate change, put policies in place and reduce our emissions significantly by 2017. You good people will probably still be in power at that time, so the decision lies with you. Taking action immediately will save us money. If we delay it until after 2020, it will cost even more. All that suggests that we need to take action immediately. If we have a transport system that is running counter to that, we need to rein that back and change the policy.
266. There is also the issue of transport poverty. You are all probably familiar with fuel poverty, but transport poverty is probably not quite so well known. The heavy bias towards cars in the current transport system is likely to exacerbate it. Many people in rural communities and urban inner-city communities do not have access to cars or, at least, struggle to run a car. In some of the poorest wards in Northern Ireland, car ownership is extremely low, and 80% or more of households do not have access to a car yet also have to cope with a pretty inadequate public transport system. So there is a real issue of justice. The decision to slash the cycling budget for Belfast will simply exacerbate that further.
267. I will talk a little about technical solutions. We have heard about electric cars, but I urge a little caution. They are a good idea, and we should invest in them, but, again, the suggestion is still that people have access to such cars. If we have to deal with climate change, electric cars that are powered by fossil fuel and heavy electric generation systems will not do a terrible lot and could be counterproductive.
268. We live in a financially constrained environment at the moment, and the simplest way to get people out of their cars is to build a decent public transport network and to invest in walking and cycling. With that in mind, we suggest that continued investment in rapid transit is probably not a good idea at this time. It is a perfectly laudable scheme, but it is expensive, and simpler, cheaper and more efficient alternatives include extending the quality bus corridors and the services on them.
269. To sum up, we have to take action very soon on climate change and rising fuel prices.
270. **The Chairperson:** You have one minute, Declan.
271. **Mr Allison:** The way to take such action is through investing in sustainable transport, not through the continuation or perpetuation of our car-biased, road-building transport policy.
272. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Declan. Members may ask questions.
273. **Mr Ó hOisín:** Declan, you state that building more roads results in bottlenecks. That is certainly true in the case of the A6 at Toome. However, surely not building more roads would result in increased pollution. There are many examples of that as well. Do you agree?
274. **Mr Allison:** No. If you get people out of their cars, it will reduce pollution. The way to do that is through public transport and providing sustainable means of transport. Take the A5, for example, which starts at a small village and ends at a small village. It does not actually go to where people want to be going; you are just creating a bottleneck at the ends. That will increase congestion and pollution as people are stuck in traffic. Certainly, there are safety issues with the A5 and other roads with bad bends or junctions. Let us improve the safety of the road, but to do that you do not need to build an entirely new road that runs parallel to the existing road; you just need to sort out a few safety issues. That would be much cheaper and much more efficient. At the same time, you can use the money that you have saved to invest in public transport and sustainable transport modes.
275. **Mr Beggs:** Friends of the Earth has been critical of large-scale roads

- schemes, and you are critical today. Does Friends of the Earth support some road-widening schemes? I am thinking about the A2 in my constituency. The average speed is 10 mph, and there is no possibility of a quality bus corridor because there is only one lane. Do you support some road-widening schemes?
276. **Mr Allison:** As I said, where there are safety issues, such as bad bends or junctions, we can certainly look at that. As for the example that you gave, there is a perfectly good rail line that runs parallel to that road, so let us invest in that rail line and get people off the road and into the trains. Each example can be looked at on its own merit. We do not say that there should never be any new roads, but that should not be the first option.
277. **Mr Lynch:** Thank you, Declan. You have been downgrading road infrastructure, but do you not agree that good road infrastructure would be good for public transport?
278. **Mr Allison:** Certainly. We have a very good road infrastructure at the moment. We have about twice as much road capacity as the GB average, for example. We already have a perfectly good road infrastructure. We do not need more roads. We need good public transport, which is the one thing for which there is not good infrastructure. Road building is an extremely expensive way of trying to alleviate the problem of congestion or whatever the problem happens to be. It just moves the problem on. We were told that the Westlink, for example, was going to be a very important strategic transport route that would sort out the congestion issue. All that it does is move the congestion to the end of the road, so the proposal is now to spend £100 million on a flyover at the Shore Road. All that we are doing is moving the problem along. If you invest in public transport, you tackle the problem at its source.
279. **Mr Copeland:** Do you support the use of planning law in certain types of urban residential developments to plan out the car, which would increase the density and thereby reduce the cost by as much as 30% per unit?
280. **Mr Allison:** Absolutely. Density is very important, and the planning system is absolutely crucial in that regard. We need to put sustainable development, climate change considerations, environmental justice, community involvement and all those issues right at the heart of the planning system. We will then be able to plan our cities much better so that people do not have to drive so much.
281. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Declan.
282. We now move to discussion four, which is on water and waste water. I invite John Mills, the director of water policy at the Department for Regional Development, to come forward. John, you have 10 minutes in which to make the presentation, after which there will be five minutes of questions.
283. **Mr John Mills (Department for Regional Development):** Good morning. The draft Programme for Government sets out a number of aims, and they are fairly self-explanatory. The first is to not introduce additional charges for water during the Budget period. That is a reflection of what is in the Budget document: it said that the Executive decided, in the light of the current economic downturn and the ongoing financial pressures on households, that they should continue to defer the introduction of domestic water charges. The Department will, therefore, continue to pay an annual subsidy of around £270 million per annum, and, next year, primary legislation will be required to extend the Department's power to pay that subsidy beyond 31 March 2013. The other side of the funding is the governance, and the Minister is currently considering the options for long-term governance and funding.
284. I will move on to the industry targets on drinking water and waste water. The Executive propose to invest over £600 million during the draft Programme for Government period. The Executive's current key investment priorities for

- Northern Ireland Water (NIW) are set out in the social and environmental guidance document that was agreed in April 2010. The main principles of that are based on affordability, EU compliance, service delivery and improvement and sustainability. That significant investment will enable NIW to maintain current high levels of drinking water quality, continue to improve waste water treatment and deliver more efficient and sustainable services to customers. The investment will also provide much-needed work and jobs for the local construction industry. The drinking water and waste water targets for year 1 have been set through the regulator's price control, PC10, as it is referred to. Those are set out for year 1. Targets for years 2 and 3 will be determined by a revision of the regulator's price control process, PC13, which has just got under way.
285. Finally, I will move on to long-term water and waste water investment. The photos included on this slide summarise the realities faced by Northern Ireland Water. The four smaller photos show the positive side; clean beaches meeting European bathing-water quality standards, improving water quality in our lakes and rivers and high-quality drinking water and waste water services. However, those long-term achievements can be outweighed by the immediate impact of flooding, pollution incidents or major interruptions to supply, as reflected in the larger photos.
286. Continuing investment is needed to maintain the positive aspects and address the negative ones. The draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland proposes over £1.2 billion in investment over the next 10 years. That should enable us to maintain the current high standards of drinking water. However, at £100 million a year, after the current Budget period — that is, after 2015 — the long-term investment levels in the draft ISNI are lower than the level that the regulator is currently recommending is needed for investment in water. Therefore, we face challenges to improve the standards of waste water collection and treatment to meet European quality requirements, including the water framework directive and other changes, such as revised bathing water and drinking water standards, the increased lead standard and so on.
287. Of course, the investment strategy and the Programme for Government are draft proposals that will ultimately be informed by the ongoing public consultation process. We, therefore, look forward to receiving the views of the Committee, the Consumer Council, Northern Ireland Water, the regulator and other interested parties through the consultation process.
288. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, John, for that presentation.
289. You mentioned that the Minister was currently considering governance issues within Northern Ireland Water. Can you assure the Committee that those will be addressed during the current CSR period?
290. **Mr Mills:** Well, I can assure you that the Minister is attempting to address them. Whether they will be addressed requires a level of political and stakeholder agreement across the board to resolve them. However, the Minister certainly intends to bring forward proposals or options to the Executive by March 2012. That is the target in DRD's own business plan, which I think has only just been sent to the Committee.
291. **Mr Beggs:** I understand that, under the sewage treatment requirements, a wider range of facilities will have to be upgraded in smaller towns during this period because of changes in the regulations. Are you satisfied that we will not have a risk of infraction, given the current level of investment envisaged over the next four years?
292. **Mr Mills:** What we have at the moment is a good investment programme. It is somewhat less than the regulator recommended; £50 million, roughly, next year. Next year is likely to be one of the harder years. Unless something new comes up in the short term, the investment is there to make improvements on waste water. Going

- forward beyond that, I think that we would have concerns.
293. **Mr Beggs:** You say that there is £50 million less than what was recommended. My question is very specific: do we have sufficient resources to avoid infraction proceedings against us and potential fines?
294. **Mr Mills:** I think that that question is impossible to answer, because European requirements change —
295. **Mr Beggs:** Current requirements.
296. **Mr Mills:** If we take things as they are, the answer is yes. We are not one step ahead of infraction — as the previous Minister would say — as we were in 2007, when we had three live infraction cases.
297. **Mrs D Kelly:** Thank you, John. You say that the overall investment is somewhat less than the Utility Regulator said you would need. In an ideal world, what investment is really needed to bring the whole infrastructure, whether it is waste water or sewerage infrastructure, up to date in terms of what is required?
298. **Mr Mills:** That is a good question. A previous chair of Northern Ireland Water told me that there was no limit to what you could spend on sewerage, but — to try and give a very simplified answer — I think that we are looking at a number around £150 million or £180 million per annum over a fairly sustained period. A couple of other things that would really help would be if that was a fairly constant level of investment, rather than going down and up. That is difficult for Northern Ireland Water to manage. Obviously, the public expenditure controls mean that things like end-year flexibility are not available to Northern Ireland Water, which again is not as good as it could be.
299. **Mrs D Kelly:** It is a feature in Roads Service that, if there is money that is underspent in other Departments, it can be spent by Roads Service. Does NIW have projects that are, in the new phrase, shovel-ready if money were to become available?
300. **Mr Mills:** Yes, it does. Let us say that Northern Ireland Water wants to invest £150 million at the start of a year; it will have projects of about £180 million to meet exactly the point that you make.
301. **The Chairperson:** When you state that the final Programme for Government and ISNI proposals will be formed by the public consultation, are you really suggesting that the Department does not have a short- to medium-term plan for Northern Ireland Water? Is it really reliant on suggestions coming forward, either from the organisation itself or from relevant stakeholders?
302. **Mr Mills:** In terms of governance?
303. **The Chairperson:** In terms generally where you have stated within the programme that:
304. “The final PfG and ISNI proposals will be informed by the public consultation.”
305. Is that really all that you have? Are you saying that the Department does not have a plan in place for Northern Ireland Water, or at least some thoughts about the whole thing?
306. **Mr Mills:** Yes, there is a very detailed plan in place until 2013, through the regulator’s PC10 process. That sets out 26-odd key targets. There is a very large list of infrastructure projects to be taken forward. Those are all monitored by the regulator, who is carrying out another revision and will produce detailed plans going up to 2015.
307. **The Chairperson:** OK. Thank you for the presentation.
308. We move to Northern Ireland Water and Trevor Haslett, the chief executive. Trevor, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation and five minutes to answer questions.
309. **Mr Trevor Haslett (Northern Ireland Water):** Thank you, Chairman and Committee, for the opportunity to comment on the Programme for Government and also to support the theme of building a better future. Northern Ireland Water has an important role in most of the priorities that have

been identified, and I hope to touch on most of them this morning, including our Go-co and non-departmental public body (NDPB) status, which John has just commented on. I support what John has said; it is not ideal for delivering efficient services in the long term. I am accompanied this morning by George Butler, our director of asset management.

310. I notice that the Programme for Government makes reference to what has been achieved. Northern Ireland Water has played an important, if sometimes understated, role in what has been delivered locally — £1 billion of capital investment since being established as a Go-co, for example. That investment, and the hard work of the staff on the ground, has ensured the best ever drinking water quality and waste water compliance. That translates to achieving compliance with stringent EU standards. We are catching up rapidly; in fact, I believe that we are ahead of most of our European counterparts in this area. We are very proud of what we have achieved, particularly in rural areas. I will illustrate that later, continuing the theme of the Programme for Government. Despite what many think, we are reducing pollution incidents year on year, the main source of the only serious negative news that we have had recently.
311. We will continue to balance our priorities. We have talked about funding — at least, John has mentioned it — and investment to ensure that all parts of the community benefit, both urban and rural. We have already targeted areas where we can support the increase in visitor and tourist numbers, for example, proposed in the Programme for Government. Newcastle and Benone are two examples of locations where treatment works are being upgraded at the moment. Those are flagship areas of the Province. We continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that our social and environmental guidance, which underpins our objectives and business targets, delivers the best outcome for customers. That includes inclusivity in

our procurement contracts for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which is also covered in the Programme for Government. We have adopted a sustainable approach to investments and have actively sought greener and more energy-efficient solutions, setting challenging targets such as low-dig technology, recycling excavated material and reducing waste from our sites and depots — that is to mention just some small examples.

312. Northern Ireland Water has an important role in the shared priorities of the Programme for Government. I can briefly illustrate some examples. In terms of priority 1, Northern Ireland Water has already achieved a target of 15% renewable energy use. Since we are the biggest user of electricity in Northern Ireland, we not only have made huge strides in energy efficiency but are committed to delivering our responsibilities up to 2015 and beyond. It does not just stop there. By enhancing our infrastructure, we have played and continue to play a part in providing a modern infrastructure to attract not only visitors but industrial inward investment. It is also our aim to work more closely with the private sector and to see if we can contribute to building the export market that is mentioned in the Programme for Government.
313. Under priority 2, we will do our part in matching the infrastructure with a social housing target. We will also make a commitment to employing more apprentices, to give younger people a start on the career ladder. I also note that no additional water charges will be introduced during the Programme for Government period. You would not expect me to comment on that, so I will not.
314. As regards priority 3, Northern Ireland Water is fully regulated by an environmental and economic regulator. We are delivering against targets in a challenging economic environment. We are investing in accordance with the priorities identified in social and economic guidance and are working with stakeholders to enhance biodiversity on our landholdings. We have reduced

- pollution incidence, as I mentioned, and maintained our improvements in drinking water quality. That does not come cheap, and I for one recognise the level of public investment that has been put in to Northern Ireland Water over the past five years and, indeed, is proposed under the Programme for Government.
315. Under priority 4, we have built some better relations with our customers, despite what happened last Christmas. I notice that John has that photograph on his slide; the photograph that I love to hate. However, it is used as a motivator for staff. We have a strong internal culture of support volunteering with local communities, particularly up in Westland, where our new headquarters are. We plan to spend a lot of time in Northern Ireland Water on volunteering.
316. On priority 5, providing a service to the public, our record speaks for itself, with year on year efficiencies. By rationalising our estate, our offices and our depots, we are delivering better value to the taxpayer.
317. We do have concerns with the Programme for Government. It is inevitable that, under the current fiscal restraints, tough decisions will have to be made on investment projects, guided now by meeting the objectives of the Programme for Government. We believe that water and sewerage services should be delivered within a long-term framework. It is not efficient to run a capital-intensive business with no end-year flexibility or certainty of financing. Working under the current status of NDPB and Go-co is far from ideal. We need to be flexible, to make speedy decisions, to have autonomy and to have less governance but more governance support. We need to be fleet of foot to react to a changing environment. I do not think that anyone would ask Usain Bolt to run the 100m wearing diving boots, but sometimes it feels like that in Northern Ireland Water.
318. I am happy to take questions, Mr Chairman.
319. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Trevor.
320. **Mr Ó hOisín:** One of the commitments under the Programme for Government is the increase in online services. Certainly, if last winter teaches us anything, it teaches us about the dissemination of information. What are the plans or proposals within NI Water to be more open through, perhaps, social networking and online services?
321. **Mr Haslett:** Since the freeze/thaw last year, the customer relations centre (CRC) has spent a lot of time on that. We have opened up quite a lot of the new lines of communication that you would expect, besides enhancing our website to make it more customer friendly. We have recently approved a business case that would mean that if someone wants, for example, to order a septic tank emptying, they can do that online without having to go through a series of phone calls. It will be the same for new water connections for any member of the public. That business unit, or that part of the system for the CRC, will be developed over the next few months, having been approved as a business case, to try to give us a one-stop shop in the CRC.
322. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you, Trevor, for your submission.
323. Given the experiences in Scotland, England and Wales around the model of delivery, what model would you like to see emerging here, now that the Executive have set their faces against water charges?
324. **Mr Haslett:** I was down in Dublin two weeks ago, and one of the Scottish Water directors spoke just before me. It goes back to that word that I used: flexibility. Scottish Water has more flexibility in how it runs its company. I have to say, because the director said it, that that is because there is less political interference. The phrase that he used was: “make sure that the politicians stay off the park.” We were at Croke Park at the time, so I would not want to comment on what I said. It is about better flexibility. The model that Scottish Water set up evolved in nearly the same way that Northern Ireland

- Water did, from local councils through what was then three regions. We had four regions; we now have one, and we have reduced the number of depots. It is around charging. There is no point in hiding that. Scottish Water levies its charges through the rates. By charging through the rates, the level of public subsidy is more visible than it would be locally. From what I understand about the public subsidy, if we can get it to less than 50%, we could move more towards a Government company, as opposed to an NDPB.
325. **Mr Doherty:** You mentioned that you were in Croke Park and talked about politicians being kept off the park. It should be noted that a lot of players at Croke Park subsequently became politicians.
326. **Mr Haslett:** Yes.
327. **The Chairperson:** I do not know whether that was a question or not, Pat. I should not have let you back in again.
328. **Mrs D Kelly:** On the point about comparisons with the English, Welsh and Scottish water companies: the Utility Regulator's analysis shows that for every £1 spent by an efficient company, NI Water spends £1.64. How is the Programme for Government going to allow you to address the inefficiencies within NIW?
329. **Mr Haslett:** As I said, we have made huge strides in efficiency, sometimes despite the restrictions of being both a Go-co and a non-departmental public body. The Scottish Water model and the Welsh Water model are all about a clear income stream. Our operational performance assessment scores, which I think is what you are quoting from, Dolores, show us that we have been steadily increasing over the years. We have a long way to go to become more efficient, but Northern Ireland Water is striving hard to make those improvements, in line with Scottish Water.
330. **Mrs D Kelly:** The question was whether the Programme for Government allows you to maximise those opportunities. Perhaps you could also tell us how, if your asset base requires £80 million of investment year on year just to stand still, given the commitment that there is within the Budget and PfG to NIW, it is going to be a very difficult three years for you to maintain, build and develop.
331. **Mr Haslett:** We have to prioritise the investment that we have. To go back to Roy's question about the infraction areas: we did have nine out of the 13 infraction areas in the UK. We no longer have that on waste water treatment works because of the investment that we have made. Most of our investment in the infraction area is aimed towards sewerage schemes. We have only one area — up on the north coast, at Ballycastle, which in fact has a scheme in the programme — that could become infraction if we do not get started on it pretty quickly. We have prioritised what we can. Looking ahead, most of the difficulties, I expect, will be in trying to improve that waste water target year on year. We have a very successful rural investment programme, with much smaller areas, which has been going on for some five years now.
332. **Mrs D Kelly:** Chair, some of that is PFI.
333. **The Chairperson:** Sorry, Dolores. Roy Beggs.
334. **Mr Beggs:** You mentioned the difficulty that you have with the lack of flexibility in your finances, etc. What is the risk of that to how you operate as a company and utilise public money?
335. **Mr Haslett:** The risk of that was demonstrated last year. If we think that we cannot invest during the year, we have to surrender finance. That is not just because Northern Ireland Water is not delivering anything. In fact, last year, and not just because of the freeze/thaw situation when a lot of work stopped, we were seeing a lot more competitive tenders coming in from the market, much lower than our estimated costs and the costs that were in the programme. We have to bring forward schemes to put in to the programme to do those, and we also had some



- procurement issues that impacted on that. That is being transparent about it.
336. This year, we said in the capital investment programme that we are holding our £145 million expenditure to make it this year. Looking forward to the PfG, George's asset management team will have to look at how that £600 million is spread over the priorities that we have to meet, any EU infraction priorities, and ensuring that everything in the PfG, such as servicing social housing and the tourist industry, is actually met through that investment.
337. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much indeed for the presentation, Trevor. It has been worthwhile. Michael, you had a question; if you pass it to the Clerks, they will forward it to Northern Ireland Water for written answer.
338. The next presentation is from the Utility Regulator. Jo Aston is the director of water regulation. Jo, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and then five minutes of questions.
339. **Ms Jo Aston (Utility Regulator):** I want to say hello to the Committee and thank you very much for the opportunity to give you the Utility Regulator's views on the Programme for Government and the investment strategy for Northern Ireland. You asked us to particularly focus, in our oral evidence, on the gaps, the milestones, the outputs and the monitoring aspect. I am going to dwell a little bit more on the concerns and issues that we have on looking through the Programme for Government. It will not be surprising that, since we are an economic regulator, our focus is on the investment side.
340. The slide shows what we picked up, in very short bullet points, as being in the Programme for Government and the long-term infrastructure strategy. There will be no additional water charges, and that immediately has us asking where the funding is coming from for Northern Ireland Water. We have questions about its quantum and security. The Public Accounts Committee picked up on the point about the security of funding for Northern Ireland Water as well.
341. As regards maintaining the high quality of drinking water, it is the best it has ever been, and that is fantastic. We have percentage targets in there for waste water treatment. I suppose that the question is about putting those alongside all the other drivers for investment. They cannot be looked at in isolation. We have drivers for growth, to facilitate development, and we also have, as Dolores mentioned, the need to maintain the existing asset base. Through the price control process, we will look at all those factors and bring them together.
342. The sustainability and other targets that are in both programmes are very helpful. It is really good to get targets and visions for the future that can be put into the regulatory process and brought forward.
343. In respect of the funding levels, we tried to look at what was in the Programme for Government and what was in the investment strategy for Northern Ireland. We also looked at what we had identified in our price control final determination. That is when we come to the end of a review of Northern Ireland Water's business plan and scrutinise all the drivers for investment. The funding that we identified for Northern Ireland Water in the first three years of PC10 equates to an annual spend of £188 million. The Programme for Government has brought it down to £167 million. The investment strategy for Northern Ireland indicates £100 million a year, which is quite concerning. We have done benchmarking in relation to the asset base of Northern Ireland Water; it is £6 billion. What would you do in looking at the assets? Northern Ireland Water has a very extensive asset base, and it needs to maintain that to maintain the levels of service. That was tested in the freeze/thaw situation last year.
344. Our benchmarking, and what we have allocated to Northern Ireland Water through PC10, is £80 million a year to maintain that asset base. That is pretty

- scary when you look at £100 million being allocated to Northern Ireland Water from the investment strategy for Northern Ireland. You still have growth. You still have EU directives knocking on the door. That was a springboard for water reform in Scotland, England and Wales and, indeed, here. Infractions cost potentially £350,000 a day. It is quite frightening, and that is a concern for us.
345. Moving on, I have outlined some of the risks that I have identified. We still have EU statutory compliance. We have to comply with EU directives, otherwise we could be open to fines. We still have the urban waste water treatment directive, and while we are out of the very near threat, through investment, it is still knocking on our door. A number of our waste water treatment works have already been pushed out because of reductions in capital expenditure for PC10.
346. We still have pollution incidents. There has been a very big investment in sewage treatment works, but it has been focused on the larger waste water treatment works. There is a big job of work to be done on the smaller works. As regards improving the levels of service, Northern Ireland Water is going in the right direction. It is improving the levels of service, but there is still a big gap between where it sits now and where the English and Welsh water companies sit, so it needs to continue to do that. It is not all about money; it is about having the freedom and the focus and business acumen to deliver that.
347. You heard Trevor speak about the sustainability agenda. Northern Ireland Water is on top of that and is already driving ahead. Again, it will be good to have those targets in there. Northern Ireland Water will be able to put them into its business plan, and we will be able to consider them in our regulatory price controls.
348. Capital is a big issue in terms of the current NDPB status of Northern Ireland Water. Trevor mentioned the difficulties arising from an annual focus of spend in relation to procurement and being able to deliver efficiently and to programme your works. PC10 is only for three years, and the capital expenditure is fairly flat. The Programme for Government and the current comprehensive spending review have left us with a very peaky capital investment for the first number of years. That is not a good way to run your programme. It is very difficult to start major works and then stop-start them, because you have that big baseline of capital spend. You can see from the slide the dramatic fall under the investment strategy for Northern Ireland, which reflects the £100 million per annum. I know that I am labouring the point, but just maintaining your asset base costs in the order of £80 million per annum, so that is a bit of an issue.
349. The next slide is on operating costs. The red line shows when the company was in with the Department. You could say that that is very low, which is great, but there is then a big increase. There is a big increase because we also had the PPP schemes coming on board, and those are considered an operating or service cost. The thing to focus on is that the line has peaked but is coming back down again. Northern Ireland Water has achieved its target for PC10. In fact, it has exceeded it. We have published our cost and performance report, and that is very good news, and, at the same time, Northern Ireland Water is improving its level of service. However, there is a lot more to be done. Dolores mentioned earlier the £1.00 versus £1.64, and it needs to get after that. That will help with capital as well.
350. You mentioned milestones, outputs and monitoring and asked how that should be done. I will reflect on the regulatory process. We talk about price controls. Price controls span a number of years. Our current one, PC10, spanned three years. The company works up a detailed business plan and submits it to us. We scrutinise that plan and look to make sure that it reflects any targets and the social and environmental guidance published by the Department. I see that as being the vehicle by which the milestones from the Programme for

- Government can be taken on board by the company. We will scrutinise that to make sure that the company is delivering. The business plan also includes consumer consultation with consumer bodies involved in the process and public consultation. It is a very open, transparent process. What we end up with is a contract between the regulator and the company. We look to have a good monitoring plan, which we do have for the current price control, and to assess on a quarterly basis how Northern Ireland Water is doing on that. As we did last week, we publish an annual cost and performance report. Therefore, we are on top of that. It is a good process, and I am very happy to take any comments. We briefed the Chair and Deputy Chair on that cost and performance report last week.
351. I will move on to sustainability. That is the way to go, given the big water framework directive that is a requirement for the company at the moment, and which is very much sustainability focused. It is not all about capital spend. We need to look across and see what the best solution is out there. Therefore, there is an opportunity, and it is helpful to get some sustainability targets in there. There is a big focus on working with the company to get the right information, targeting the spend and thinking about what the best solution is, not just a capital one.
352. Finally, I will draw on my conclusions. A big number appears under funding, but, when I start to look at that on an annual allocation, I see that it brings risks. It brings risks to the levels of service, and it brings the risk of potential EU infraction. The Government subsidy, and Northern Ireland Water's consequential classification as a non-departmental public body, brings with it constraints. Those constraints impact on the company's ability to maximise. All the water companies started out in the same place as Northern Ireland Water in efficiency and performance. English and Welsh water companies took 20 years; Scotland took 10 years. I think that Northern Ireland Water has been inhibited in how quickly it can deliver.
353. Targets and milestones are very positive. It is good to have those in there, and they can feed through to the social and environmental guidance. However, they need to be looked at alongside other funding and other drivers for investment. To reiterate on that last point: Northern Ireland Water is performing and delivering, and we want to continue that line of travel for the future.
354. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Jo, for that presentation. To continue on a theme from some of the other presentations: how significant are the current governance arrangements for Northern Ireland Water in the Northern Ireland context? What are the issues, as you see it, around those?
355. **Ms Aston:** Water charges is a difficult political issue. Take a step back and think about funding, as opposed to charging. Northern Ireland Water's problem at the moment is that it has its hands tied behind its back. It has too much governance. It is tied into public expenditure, as well as being a government body. Northern Ireland Water needs to get back to being a government-owned company (Go-co) that is responsible to the regulator, has the freedoms of a company to make the decisions that it has to make quickly — flexibility on capital spend, in particular — and has more flexibility with its operating costs. It is about getting it out of its NDPB status in the first instance and then giving it much more autonomy to be accountable and responsible for its own decisions.
356. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your submission. You talk about the potential for EU infraction. Can you elaborate?
357. **Ms Aston:** Through the price control process, we look at all the investment drivers. We work very closely with the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). It is really those quality-driven agencies that look to ensure that we are compliant with the directives that are coming along. Even

- for PC10, Northern Ireland Water had a list far longer than what it could afford to do. Affordability does come in here: not everything can be done. All that I know is that, in the current PC10 price control, some of the waste water treatment works that were prioritised had to be delayed because of the reduced investment.
358. How close is the potential for EU infraction? I cannot answer that directly, except to say that it is still there. Through our price control process we seek to mitigate that risk, because the list is very long. We come up with what the investment need is, and it has already been cut in PC10. I suppose that the Environment Agency will be able to give you more information on how close, or how real, the threat of infraction is.
359. **Mr Lynch:** Thank you, Jo. Can the price control process be adapted to take on board the PFG milestones and commitments?
360. **Ms Aston:** Yes. It is all about the social and environmental guidance that the Department issued to the company and to us. It is what the company then looks to achieve. By statute, that social and environmental guidance has to be consulted on and laid before the Assembly. It very much buys everybody into the process. If the PFG targets are there, the Government are the policymaker, and those are the targets that should be met.
361. **The Chairperson:** Jo, thank you very much for your presentation. It was very helpful.
362. The next presentation is from the Consumer Council. Graham Smith is its interim head of water. Graham, you have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation and five minutes for questions.
363. **Mr Graham Smith (Consumer Council):** Thanks for the invitation. I do not have any slides to show you; it will just be me speaking.
364. You will have already heard a lot of what I have to say — *[Inaudible due to mobile phone interference.]*
365. **The Chairperson:** Sorry for interrupting. Somebody has a mobile phone on, and it is going to interfere with the recording equipment that Hansard uses. Sorry about that.
366. **Mr Smith:** As previous presenters have said, we have seen significant improvements in both water and waste water services in the past couple of years through increased investment and increased service provision. The draft Programme for Government contains two specific water commitments, which are related. I will be concentrating on the three points that the Committee asked to be covered, which are the gaps in the Programme for Government, milestones and outputs, and the best way in which to monitor progress.
367. The first commitment is to ensure that there are no additional water charges. The recent Family Resources Survey (FRS) gave us an indication of the grim reality for many households in Northern Ireland, with 23% of individuals, 28% of children and 26% of pensioners living in poverty. The average unmeasured bill would be just over £400 a year, so we welcome the decision to continue to defer domestic charging. It provides welcome relief to hard-pressed households. However, we are aware of the difficulties and risks created by that. The reclassification of Northern Ireland Water as an NDPB impacts on its finance and governance. The lack of end-year flexibility and the potential for VAT costs have been spoken about this morning. We need clarification on whether the current pricing policy contravenes article 9 of the water framework directive.
368. I was interested when John Mills said that the Minister will bring forward proposals. The gap is not with the commitment in the Programme for Government. Where we see the gap is around what we do now that we have a bit of time to look at the longer-term future for Northern Ireland Water. The difficulties and risks mentioned need to be understood in detail. Options for mitigation of those risks need to be looked at in detail. The review must

- consider the short- and long-term finances of Northern Ireland Water. We must look at the social utility to the consumer, who is being protected from the additional charge, and compare it with the reality of additional costs overall to Northern Ireland to provide a water and sewerage service.
369. The investment strategy explains how, because we have less money to go around, the Executive will invest in better and more efficient ways in which to deliver our essential public services. The continued deferral up until 2015 will give us an opportunity to have a look at that.
370. On the milestones and outputs on that commitment, the output is to apply policy, and that is very straightforward to monitor. An additional milestone may be a commitment to setting out a timetable for the evaluation of the long-term options for Northern Ireland Water.
371. The second commitment is to maintenance, pipes, quality drinking water and compliance with water standards by investing £600 million. That £600 million-plus is obviously a substantial investment over the Programme for Government period, and work is under way to determine the best way in which to spend that through the PC13 price control. It is less than the Utility Regulator assessed was needed and is having an impact on what we would like to be able to deliver for consumers.
372. In the longer term, the draft investment strategy allocates, as we have seen, around £100 million a year to water and sewerage services beyond 2015. Although my figures vary slightly from others presented, I can tell the Committee that Northern Ireland Water requires in and around £200 million a year to maintain its assets and to meet agreed targets and service improvements. The £100 million would cover only the cost of maintaining and would not allow much room for service improvements.
373. We have concerns. Longer-term funding levels are seriously inadequate. We have seen the significant challenges that lie ahead for our water and sewerage services: growing and changing populations; climate change and carbon costs; increased environmental standards; and the increased risk of flooding. The investment strategy clearly explains that investment is needed but then comments on improvements to the extent possible where funding allows. What will be possible might not be enough. In the shorter term, if clearer links between investment and outcomes are provided, there are advantages in investing now. The downturn in construction means that contracts can be negotiated at more favourable rates, meaning cheaper prices now, which would lower the costs to consumers. Consumers would get the benefit of an improved service earlier, and jobs would be created with the social clauses as explained in the investment strategy.
374. The reality of restricted finances over the period requires solutions that are more sophisticated than simply building more. We support the proposal from DRD to take a more strategic approach to price controls, looking beyond each five-year period. Taking such a strategic view would help bring together the many policies that contribute to the management and betterment of our water environment and our water and sewerage services. On the milestones and outputs, we support completely the milestone to comply with regulatory targets. What those targets are may be the question. We would also like to see a commitment included to develop a more strategic approach and to look at price control as a five-year period within a 25-year plan.
375. On the best ways to monitor progress, the current regulatory regime provides a comprehensive and robust way of monitoring the improved delivery of our water and sewerage services.
376. To conclude, we see two issues. First, now that we know that domestic charges are to be further deferred until 2015, that allows us the opportunity to take a serious and sensible look at long-term options. We need to take that opportunity. Secondly, the reduced capital available, especially in the longer term, is unlikely

- to be enough to meet the demands placed on Northern Ireland Water, and we need to have serious consideration of that.
377. The Chairperson: Thank you very much, Graham. What did you mean by a “catchment management” approach in your paper? How would that benefit the process and, more importantly, how would it be funded?
378. **Mr Smith:** The catchment management approach looks at the totality of the water cycle in certain geographical areas. It involves the management of water all the way through: rain through to ground water, into the river, and so on. By improving management across the catchment and managing water better from source before it gets to Northern Ireland Water, we reduce the amount of treatment that Northern Ireland Water needs to administer. The same applies to the reverse situation on the waste water side.
379. As for how it will be funded —
380. **The Chairperson:** First, how does it benefit the process?
381. **Mr Smith:** If we manage, for example, rain falling on agricultural land in a way that is more environmentally friendly, there are fewer nasties in the raw water for Northern Ireland Water to take out. Therefore, Northern Ireland Water has to do less cleansing of that water, and that means using less energy and fewer chemicals.
382. You asked about the funding of the catchment management approach. I do not imagine that it would be a massively expensive project. I think that it is more about —
383. **The Chairperson:** That is not the question, Graham. I am asking how it would be funded. The approach is your suggestion, so surely the Consumer Council has some idea how it would be funded.
384. **Mr Smith:** We do not think that it would take a huge amount of funding. Through taking a longer strategic view, it would be a question of aligning all Departments and policies. That is already starting, but we think that it might need to be given more emphasis.
385. **The Chairperson:** The answer is that you do not know how it would be funded. Is that right?
386. **Mr Smith:** I do not think that it would require any additional funding. It is a change in approach rather than a change in financing.
387. **The Chairperson:** We will park it there for the moment.
388. **Mr Doherty:** Thank you for your presentation. You talked about the difficulties with, and the risk caused by, the current structures. Part of your focus is on revenue source, and your concern is about the lack of end-year financial flexibility. How do you propose to deal with that?
389. **Mr Smith:** That lack of flexibility is a difficulty, and everyone who spoke today mentioned that. It is about the social utility to the consumer: we must compare introducing to the consumer an additional household charge in the form of a water bill with the risk of Northern Ireland Water becoming increasingly inefficient in delivering its capital projects. We need to look at that during the period. I do not have a definitive answer for you today as to how we can overcome that. A political decision made after weighing up all the options might mean that we will not have a water charge in Northern Ireland. In that case, we would have to accept the increased inefficiency, or difficulty, built into Northern Ireland Water through its not having that end-year flexibility.
390. **Mr Copeland:** Thank you for your presentation. If possible, I want to get some clarification. I may have misheard what you said about milestones and targets. You appear to be in agreement with the chief executive on the targets but question what the targets are. That sounded a bit strange to me.
391. **Mr Smith:** I will clarify: the target is to reach regulatory targets for drinking water and waste water. Those have

- been set for the first year of the programme but not for the following years. Therefore, it is a matter of looking at what those targets are. Currently, the quality of drinking water, for example, is the highest that it has ever been in Northern Ireland. Should we set a target that is 0.1% higher and spend an awful lot of money chasing it, or should we accept that it is OK as it is and seek to maintain that high level?
392. My assumption is that that target will continue. That was what my comment was about. I was merely saying that the targets have not been set yet, so we need to make sure that those are the right targets for years 2 and 3 of the Budget.
393. **Mr Copeland:** Compliance itself is the baseline target, yes?
394. **Mr Smith:** Yes, there are regulatory compliance targets set.
395. **Mr Beggs:** The Chairman was questioning you on this idea of water management, and you said that there were minimal costs involved because it was simply changing policy, and so on. Have you looked at the overall approach and at how it might cost the economy?
396. **Mr Smith:** The short answer is no. Not in detail.
397. **Mr Beggs:** Is that not a major flaw? Surely we need to know how it will affect businesses out there. I declare an interest as somebody who owns 25 acres of land.
398. **Mr Smith:** Having a more sustainable management plan would cost less to do. If it means using less energy and fewer chemicals to manage the land or the water cycle, we see that as being less expensive.
399. **Mr Beggs:** Do you agree that a look needs to be taken at the overall expense of all the businesses and the entire water industry —
400. **Mr Smith:** Yes, it needs to be looked at holistically. It is not about picking out Northern Ireland Water and looking at what it does or at what, say, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development does. It is about looking at it holistically.
401. **Mrs D Kelly:** You said that the average cost per household of unmeasured water was around £400 and therefore welcomed the freeze on any introduction of water charges per se. What analysis, if any, have you done to determine how much water is wasted in households? Is the £400 a consumption estimate or one that includes both consumption and possible wastage?
402. **Mr Smith:** The £400 would be an unmeasured bill. It would not be a metered charge; it would not be how much water the household uses. How much water is wasted in the household? I think that every household could use water more efficiently and improve how it uses water. It is difficult to get a wastage figure per person, per household. There are figures for consumption per head of population, and certainly they need to be brought down. It is not just a Northern Ireland problem but one throughout western Europe.
403. **Mrs D Kelly:** I appreciate that, but would it be useful to have a Programme for Government target that, although recognising that there are no charges, promotes a sustainable use of water to try to bring about that same modal shift that was talked about earlier when we discussed transport?
404. **Mr Smith:** When I was talking about a longer-term strategic view of how we manage water, a target to bring down consumption per head would be one of the things that we would expect to see in there. The difficulty is in how we go about that, but that is the challenge.
405. **The Chairperson:** Thank you for your presentation, Graham.
406. I thank everyone for coming along today. The presentations have been very helpful to the Committee. I thank our Committee staff, the Hansard staff and the people who set up and operated the recording equipment. It was an early start, but I think that this Programme for Government seminar has been worthwhile for the Committee. Thank you, one and all.







Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 3

# Written Submissions



## Written Submissions

1. Ards Borough Council
2. Ballymena Borough Council
3. Belfast City Council
4. Belfast Healthy Cities
5. Belfast International Airport
6. Carrickfergus Borough Council
7. Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation
8. Construction Employers Federation
9. Cookstown District Council
10. Craigavon Borough Council
11. Down District Council
12. Fermanagh District Council
13. George Best Belfast City Airport
14. Guide Dogs
15. Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)
16. Institute of Public Health in Ireland
17. Cyclists Touring Club
18. Northern Ireland Environment Link
19. Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
20. Omagh District Council
21. Rural Community Network
22. Sustrans

## Ards Borough Council

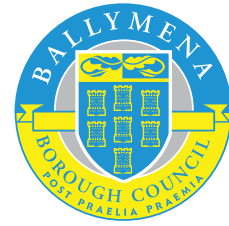
Page	Comment
N/A -General	<p>The publication of the draft Programme for Government is welcomed and the Council appreciates the opportunity to provide constructive feedback.</p> <p>Whilst the general direction is welcomed, the document is short on detail on how the commitments will be achieved.</p> <p>The range of priorities is welcomed as is the focus on the economy. In delivering on this, the Council would welcome improved initiatives to enhance the local economy, particularly the small business sector. Streamlining of processes such as applications for funding/grant aid would also be welcomed.</p> <p>There are however a number of gaps on how the Assembly intends to address youth unemployment, rising poverty levels and societal problems such as housing and increasing petty crime.</p> <p>It is also noted that the Executive Programme funds which appeared in the last Programme for Government are not included, which may inhibit the Executive's ability to tackle key issues.</p> <p>A number of the areas in the draft document may benefit from further consideration as highlighted below, including through reviewing whether or not the stated milestones are the best indicators of achievement of the related commitments.</p> <p>Progress should be regularly monitored and the publication of a milestone report, showing progress against stated commitments, at least on an annual basis, would be welcomed.</p> <p>More specific comments follow below.</p>
30	<p><b>Concerning – Visitor Numbers and Tourist Revenue</b></p> <p>To ensure these targets are met, product development is critical to the delivery of visitors and revenue. The process of completing successful funding applications is crucial to this, and therefore the application process must take into account the fact, that on all occasions, the standard economic appraisal is not the most suitable method i.e. it does not take into account any speculative estimates of visitors etc. A substantial contribution to these applications also comes in the form of contribution in kind, and the applications must give appropriate weighting to this contribution to the overall project cost.</p>
32	<p><b>Concerning – Creative Industries Innovation Fund</b></p> <p>A robust creative industries strategy would be welcomed.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Our Time Our Place/Titanic</b></p> <p>The following should be added to this section: “recognising that the Titanic project can be enriched by content from locations beyond just Belfast” to reflect the wider opportunity outside of Belfast.</p>
33	<p><b>Concerning – Road projects/Road network</b></p> <p>Journey times should not be the only driver for road improvements – improving roads, including widening them to accommodate coaches, is key for tourism development in some areas, notably the Ards Peninsula.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Support People into Employment</b></p> <p>This requires reflection of the need to anticipate the right skills and training needed to supply the rebalanced economy – i.e. not simply just provide more of the training that already exists. There should be an emphasis not only on upskilling or re-skilling but also collaboration and coordination between industry, government departments and academia to ensure that individuals leaving the education system and embarking on a career in the have the appropriate skills in relation to demand.</p>

Page	Comment
36	<p><b>Concerning – Regeneration/Social Investment Fund</b></p> <p>The detail needs to reflect that this is not only to promote better living standards, but to enhance the economic potential of towns and villages which could have appeal in key sectors (such as tourism).</p>
39	<p><b>Concerning – Obesity Prevention Framework</b></p> <p>The Council welcomes the commitment to focus on tackling obesity and is keen to develop further programmes in line with the Obesity Prevention Framework and create appropriate partnerships to bring these programmes forward.</p>
42	<p><b>Concerning – Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Environment</b></p> <p>This may benefit from amendment or addition to reflect the need to ensure an appropriate balance between environmental and economic considerations. This should seek to ensure that our natural environment is protected and that any development is appropriate, sustainable and sensitive to our important biodiversity.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Reducing Environmental Impact from Waste</b></p> <p>Measures should be expanded from the current household waste only. Commercial, industrial, construction and demolition and agricultural waste far exceeds the volume of household waste produced in NI. As household waste is well managed, controlled and measured by local councils, it is an easy waste stream to set targets for though other waste streams should also have associated targets otherwise the overall commitment may not be achieved.</p> <p>All NI councils have now introduced recycling measures at the kerbside. To achieve further improvement legislative changes may be required to compel the householder to participate in recycling schemes and refrain from placing recyclable materials in the residual bin.</p> <p>In terms of developing new waste recycling facilities to help meet the targets there is a need to improve the speed at which planning applications are determined. If, for example, the Council submitted a planning application for a new Waste Recycling Centre today, it is unlikely that it would contribute to meeting the 2014/15 target on the basis of the current turnaround time -the planning process for waste management facilities need to be streamlined.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Reduce the Level of Serious Crime</b></p> <p>This commitment is welcomed. Violent crime is one of the priorities of Ards DPP based on local consultation. Ards DPP and Ards PSNI will soon finalise the Ards Local policing Plan for 2012 2013 and will consider targets for violent crime. Ards DPP also has related targets for reducing the number of non domestic violent crimes involving injury and domestic violence.</p> <p>Ards DPP has over a number of years received detailed victim information concerning domestic violence. Violent domestic crimes are recorded separately on the crime stats. but none the less have the potential for serious violence or death directed towards that vulnerable group. It is suggested that the figures for violent crime are amended to include this currently excluded group to give a more accurate figure.</p>

Page	Comment
43	<p><b>Concerning – Tackling Crime Against Older and Vulnerable People</b></p> <p>This commitment is welcomed. Ards DPP 2011 Consultation report listed addressing attacks on the elderly appeared as one of our priorities. Ards DPP / Ards PSNI will soon finalise the Ards Local policing Plan for 2012 2013 and will consider crime against older and vulnerable people as a target. New sentencing guidelines are required and evidence that it is working from sentencing statistics and victim surveys.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Community Safety and Anti-social behaviour</b></p> <p>Ards DPP is working towards the implementation of PCSP's -The DPP has always sought to consult with and inform the public of the problem and implementation of potential solutions concerning anti-social behaviour It is envisaged that the new PCSP will continue that tradition.</p> <p>The current milestones established relating to anti-social behaviour appear to relate solely to perceptions. Although this is an important issue and should be measured it should be balanced against factual statistics to demonstrate whether anti-social behaviour has reduced. For instance the level of anti-social behaviour within Ards has reduced significantly over the last three years. The perception as determined from residents' surveys, DPP consultation etc is however that anti-social behaviour remains a significant problem.</p> <p>There is likely to be a time lag between actual improvements on the ground and public perception. An additional milestone may be introduced i.e. to reduce the actual level of anti-social behaviour.</p>
46	<p><b>Concerning – Building a strong and shared community</b></p> <p>The Council welcomes that “Building a strong and shared community” has received the level of priority assigned to it in the current Programme for Government, which is a more overt level of priority than in the previous PFG.</p>
47	<p><b>Concerning – CSI and Good Relations</b></p> <p>The Council welcomes that the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy is a separate, albeit linked, entity to the Good Relations Programme and that the vehicle for delivering the new CSI strategy remains the District Council Good Relations Programme.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Strategy for Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture</b></p> <p>The reference to this strategy is welcomed as an important issue for this Borough though, at present, no further detail is provided of what is planned in terms of Commitments and Outputs on the two pages which follow.</p>
48	<p><b>Concerning – World Police and Fire Games</b></p> <p>The commitment to host the World Police and Fire games in 2013 is welcomed and this Council looks forward to being able to play a full and complete part in the delivery of the games.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Cohesion, Sharing and Integration</b></p> <p>The Council welcomes that the criterion for the involvement of organisations in this area is the suitably broad, “with a specific interest in this area of work”.</p> <p><b>Concerning – Peace walls</b></p> <p>The Councils welcomes the active consultation on “peace walls”. However, this is very Belfast centric and there are no specific key commitments for other parts of Northern Ireland, particularly to address the Good Relations issues in rural areas.</p>
50	<p><b>Concerning – Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services</b></p> <p>The Council reaffirms our commitment to delivering excellent service and value for money – both of which are key elements of our corporate strategy.</p>

Page	Comment
52	<p><b>Concerning – 11 Council model</b></p> <p>The Council would urge that further detail on this programme is provided to Councils as soon as possible. The previous issues and delays in the RPA programme have resulted in substantial and understandable scepticism and ‘change-weariness’ and , if the programme is to succeed in achieving the desired outcomes, further clarity and certainty of direction is required.</p> <p>In particular detail is sought regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The legislative timetable</li> <li>• Whether outstanding political issues such as boundary disputes have been resolved</li> <li>• Programme management arrangements and related timeframes and key, more detailed, milestones at regional and local levels</li> <li>• Whether the proposed suite of ‘transferring functions’ remains the same and how this will be managed to avoid the lack of engagement and progress seen to date</li> <li>• How the programme will be resourced</li> <li>• How the programme will be funded to facilitate change whilst maintaining the delivery of high quality services– the Council expects that previous commitments that this would be at no cost to the ratepayer will be honoured</li> </ul> <p>The Council believes that Transition Committees would be limited in value and that the Shadow Council model of transition is preferable.</p> <p>The Council would welcome further dialogue in developing plans for delivering reform.</p> <p>The Council reaffirms our commitment to leading the organisation towards the future model of local government – though in the interests of high quality and efficient public services, this requires further clarity.</p>

# Ballymena Borough Council



## **Response to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021**

For background and context to this submission, please see Appendix One.

Ballymena Borough Council in its response to the 10 year review of the Regional Development Strategy (March 2011) was broadly supportive of the aim to ensure the REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY was cross-cutting and recognised the important relationship between physical development and the Economic, Social and Environmental pillars of Sustainable Development and welcomed Ballymena's designation as a Sub-Regional Centre.

Council recognised the position for Belfast as the key regional Economic driver, but encouraged the Executive to work towards achieving an appropriate balance with the sub-regional centres to ensure the strengthening of Belfast did not impact negatively on these sub-regional centres.

These sub-regional centres that have the greatest potential for Economic growth, provide a range of accessible centres for concentrated development of industrial, commercial, health, education and community services, were supported by strategic guidance SG9, SG11 and SG12. In addition, Council's response also supported the recognition of the need to sustain rural communities and that this requires new development and employment opportunities with respect to local, social and environmental circumstances. The strategic guidance (SG13 & SG14) which proposed to support development in rural areas through,

- Establish the role of multi-functional town centres
- Connect rural and urban areas
- Revitalise small towns and villages and promote neighbourhood renewal
- Facilitate the development of rural industries, business enterprises in appropriate localities
- Improve the overall connectivity of rural communities to services and other parts of the region
- Integrate local transport

were also supported by Council.

The Programme for Government acknowledges that the current immediate challenges lie in supporting Economic recovery and tackling disadvantage, and although the balanced sub-regional growth is one of three guiding principles for rebalancing and rebuilding, our Economy Ballymena Borough Council consider that this is not evident in either the Programme for Government or the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI)

Council considers this a major gap in the draft documents which must be addressed in the final programme. Indeed the investment priorities through to 2020/21 have nil resource allocation towards Regional Development Strategy gateways which are strategically important transport interchanges which are important for Economic development, freight distribution activities and additional employment generation. The importance of the key sub-regional centres which are well placed to benefit and add value to regional Economic growth, appears once again to have been ignored, with development focused on Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

In essence, the proposals failure to recognise the strategic importance of the sub-regional centres in supporting the Executive's number one priority in supporting Economic recovery and tackling disadvantage is a major gap. Ballymena Borough Council would again encourage the establishment of an effective partnership relationship between central government and local government through the Community Planning Structure to be established, to ensure



scarce resources are targeted and utilised to enhance the opportunities and quality of life for all our citizens.

### **Public Transport**

Council fully support investment in Public Transport linking people to employment, educational opportunities and access to services.

Council note the Regional Development Strategy inclusion as a building block under priorities 1, 2 and 3, but also note that no key commitment nor milestone is evident in the Programme for Government document in relation to developing public transport. Public transport links are central to the development of sub-regional centres and the connectivity between cluster towns and key transport corridors.

Council would be fully supportive of a new Regional Transport Strategy which developed an holistic interconnected transport network to support Economic and Social Development across the region.

### **Road and Rail Infrastructure & Investment**

The Programme for Government states two key commitments in relation to roads and rail infrastructure, namely:

1. Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015, journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline (DRD)
2. Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line (DRD)

Ballymena Borough Council fully support the key commitments stated above. It does however consider the target of 2.5% reduction in travel times (against 2003 baseline), given improvements already completed, to be insufficiently challenging and will do little to improve Northern Ireland's competition advantage in the Global Market. Furthermore with a major review of the Health Service underway and emergence of a proposal to consolidate acute services, this will put more demand on the road infrastructure as it has a bearing on the time it takes for ambulance services and non-ambulance patients to reach acute hospital sites. Council is concerned at the length of time which people may take to reach these acute facilities from rural areas. The travel time reduction target should be increased to a minimum of 5% with limited resources targeted to enhance connectivity between regional centres and the main Economic hubs of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and provide for speedy access to acute Health Services.

### **Sustainable Transport**

Given the infrastructure requirements to support and encourage a modal shift from the private-car, Council consider that the proposed budget to promote more sustainable modes of travel will have little impact over the period.

However, Council supports the renewed focus on sustainable transport initiatives.

### **Water and Waste Water**

The programme of continued investment to maintain our high standard of drinking water and address the challenges of effective waste water treatment to meet rising standardsRegional Development Strategy for river and bathing water quality and reduced leakage, is fully supported by Ballymena Borough Council.

Council are also supportive of the commitment to ensure no additional water charges are imposed at this time.

Ballymena Borough Council recognise the high level strategic nature of the Draft Programme for Government (2011-15) and the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21, and that milestones and outputs are not explicit and focus on process and policy implementation rather than detailed outcomes. However, the departmental implementation strategies which support the Programme for Government and the ISNI should ensure that specific outcomes which support the Programme for Government are measurable to allow the impact of investment decisions to be fully transparent.

As stated earlier in this response, the proposals failure to recognise the strategic importance of the sub-regional centres in supporting the Executive's number one priority in supporting Economic recovery and tackling disadvantage is a major gap. Ballymena Borough Council would again encourage the establishment of an effective partnership relationship between central government and local government through the Community Planning Structure to be established, to ensure scarce resources are targeted and utilised to enhance the opportunities and quality of life for all our citizens.

## Appendix One

### Background and Context

On 17 November 2011, the Northern Ireland Executive unveiled the draft Programme for Government 2011-15, the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-17 and indeed the draft Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Regional Development subsequently wrote to Council stating it would like to take evidence in order to inform the Committee's response to the Programme for Government and the Investment Strategy (not the Economic Strategy) and to this end, invites Council to provide a written submission, focusing on four main topics: Public Transport, Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment, Sustainable Transport and Water and Waste Water. The Committee is particularly interested in Council's views on – Gaps in the Programme for Government, comments on the Milestones and Outputs, What is the best way to monitor progress?

Ballymena Borough Council was a consultee to the 10 year review of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, and will take into account in this response the relevant points it made in 2011.

The following main references are made in the Government's draft documents to (i) Public Transport (ii) Road & Rail Infrastructure & Investment (iii) Sustainable Transport and (iv) Water and Waste Water.

#### a. **Draft Programme for Government – Our Commitments**

- Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line; (p9)
- Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% (p9)
- Invest over £500 million to promote more sustainable modes of travel
- By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of Primary School pupils and 22% of Secondary School pupils to walk or cycle to School as their main mode of transport (p9)

#### b. **Draft Invest Strategy for Northern Ireland – Looking Forward**

- A new Regional Transportation Strategy will seek to build on what has been achieved, set out a range of objectives that we want to achieve and outline how we propose to get there. It will focus on moving people rather than moving vehicles, creating space on the networks for people and also for freight and on maintaining what is in place and using it in a smarter way.
- Roads Service is responsible for the maintenance of 25,000km of public roads and footways. Going forward we will focus our structural maintenance investment on maintaining the condition of the motorway and trunk road network
- The planned improvements to the A5 and A8 will deliver a major upgrade to the strategic roads network\*. This investment will improve safety and journey times to the North West and to the Port of Larne.
- Further upgrades on routes on the strategic roads will improve journey times, enhance safety and improve access to the ports and gateways thereby contributing to an improving Economy
- The Derry/Londonderry – Coleraine rail relay is to be completed in three phases with the first phase starting in July 2012. Completion of re-signalling works and construction of a new passing loop will be undertaken in 2015, with a full relay of the track expected to be completed in 2021

- Potential investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives and ICT investment in Transport services will be considered and taken forward
- Reduce the Environmental impacts from the waste we generate
- Ensure no water charges during this Programme for Government
- Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standardsRegional Development Strategy by investing £600 million in water and sewerage infrastructure
- Continue to provide project support to local authorities to change the way we manage waste, by increasing recycling, diverting residual waste from landfill, and enabling more sustainable technologies to be introduced that recover energy from the waste treatment process
- Capital works schemes to alleviate flooding and provide drainage outlets for future development will continue to be delivered as funding allows
- DARD will deliver Flood Risk Management Plans for the region detailing objectives and measures for managing the risk of flooding from all significant sources as part of the EC Floods Directive
- A Reservoir Safety Bill will be introduced
- Invest £1.2 billion over the ISNI period in our water and sewerage networks. This will allow us to maintain high standardsRegional Development Strategy of drinking water. It will address the challenges of effective waste water treatment necessary to meet the rising standardsRegional Development Strategy for river and bathing water quality, reduced leakage and our obligations under the Water Framework Directive

**\*A5/A8**

The Executive will consider the implications of the announcement by the Irish Government in relation to the A5/A8 road projects and will continue to engage with them during the consultation period. The final document will be updated to reflect the outcome of these engagements.

# Belfast City Council

## Belfast City Council Response to the Committee for Regional Development

### Written Evidence on the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and ISNI 2012 - 2022

#### Introduction

Belfast City Council welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the commitments outlined in both the Programme for Government (PfG) and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI).

Officers within the Council have carried out an initial review of both documents and we have prioritised a number of key points for the Committee for Regional Developments' consideration below. In addition to the four headings listed for consideration, the Council have also included comments under an additional heading of "Environmental Health" as roads are considered as one of the main contributory factors in both air and noise quality issues. A detailed commentary on each of the key issues is attached at Appendix 1 with a summary set out below for ease of reference by the Committee.

A more considered Council response to all of the commitments within the Programme for Government, the Economic Strategy and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland will be prepared by the Council for submission to OFMDFM, DETI and SIB in accordance with the consultation deadlines in February 2012.

#### Summary of Key Points

#### 1. Public Transport

- There is no commitment or detail in regards to implementing the rapid transit scheme within Belfast. Given the regional significance of Belfast, as recognised within the draft PfG and Investment Strategy, the Council would urge the NI Executive to include the delivery of the Belfast Rapid Transit Scheme as a key commitment within the PfG and allocate resources accordingly.
- The Council would request commitment from DRD to take forward the planning and design for the extension of the rapid transit network to ensure an equitable high quality public transport system is implemented throughout the city.
- It is important that provision is made for appropriate cross-city and orbital public transport routes from deprived residential areas to these major shared space attractors.
- The PfG identifies the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) as one of its Building Blocks, yet the RTS does not contain a list of transport schemes and projects, nor does it set out any costs or targets.
- The policy Prioritisation framework approach proposed in the RTS should be informed by the PfG. Accordingly key schemes, and the funding to be attached to them should be included in the PfG with appropriate milestones and outputs such as the proposed York Street Interchange.

#### 2. Rail and Road Infrastructure and investment

- The budget for roads infrastructure is approximately 10 times that of public transport, (£11960m v £196m 2011-2014). The Committee and the Department for Regional Development may wish to consider if this is an appropriate balance of resources. Previous experience shows that investment in the road infrastructure brings more cars onto the road, ultimately increases carbon dioxide emissions, and does not encourage a modal shift onto public transport.

- The Council would highlight the importance of developing the key arterial routes within Belfast as a means to improving the connectivity and vitality of local neighbourhoods. There is a need for a more interdepartmental approach to the future regeneration of these areas and this requirement should be reflected in the PfG and the ISNI.

### **3. Sustainable Transport**

- The Council welcome the commitment in the PfG to dedicate £500 million towards the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport. However there is no detail in the document as to how DRD will use this expenditure. The PfG / ISNI should set out clearly the different programmes which DRD will be taking forward to promote sustainable modes of transport and attach related milestones as appropriate.
- Priority 3 of the Programme for Government should emphasise the need to shift towards more Sustainable Transport provision in order to improve both ambient air and noise quality.
- There is no reference to DRD's commitment and funding of the pilot for electric vehicle infrastructure across NI, which will contribute to a reduction in the total carbon emissions from transport –although this is small it is significant as it a move away from fossil based fuel and creates new jobs and skills for the low carbon economy.
- Although not mentioned we would welcome the consideration of the introduction of a public bike hire scheme for Belfast city centre. The Council has already undertaken a joint piece of work with DRD to consider the viability of such a scheme within Belfast subject to the necessary funding.

### **4. Water and Waste Water**

- The Council would suggest that there is a need for co-operative working in terms of dealing with waste of all types. There are a number of European examples of where liquid waste – sewage etc - is treated alongside solid waste. Co-location of such facilities has the potential to bring about efficiencies in how we treat waste of all types while maintaining highest environmental standards. Land resources available within the Water Service estate could contribute to a more co-ordinated provision of waste treatment generally.

### **5. Environmental Health**

- The Council considers it imperative that air quality considerations are integrated fully within both the Regional Transportation Strategy and local transport plans such as the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP). In doing so, it will enable more effective progress towards the air quality standards and safeguard public health.
- There are no incremental targets for greenhouse gas emissions set out within the PfG
- The Council notes that a firm commitment towards achieving national and European health-based air quality standards, as set out within the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, has not been articulated within the draft Programme for Government.
- It is noted that within the Environment investment priorities, the general Environment has been assigned £38 million to cover the period 2011-2021, equating on average to £3.8 million per annum. The Committee may wish to consider if the level of funding allocated to this priority area is adequate.

# Belfast Healthy Cities



*Working together for a healthier Belfast*

## **Evidence submission to the Committee for Regional Development on draft Programme for Government 2011-15**

16 December 2011

Belfast Healthy Cities welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence in relation to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) to the Regional Development Committee. We would be happy to expand on any points made in this submission, should that be helpful.

The key points of this submission are:

- **There should be a stronger emphasis on sustainability and accessibility.** Despite making sustainability a stated cross cutting issue, there is limited specific action aimed at promoting this. It would also be helpful to emphasise accessibility, as distinct from mobility, as a focus of regional development.
- **Significant benefits can be achieved by exploring the full range of impacts action on sustainable transport can have.** Active travel and public transport have direct benefits for health and wellbeing, but also improve access to jobs and services and contribute to economic development and tackling disadvantage. For example, a high quality active travel and public transport network can help regenerate and revitalise a town; an example from Kuopio in Finland is presented. Accessible transport can also widen the relevant area for job search for people without a car, who often are among the most disadvantaged.
- **Greater clarity on the focal points of proposed sustainable transport actions would be very helpful.** It would be important to separately indicate what will be the focus – it is currently unclear how the action relates to initiatives such as Rapid Transit, active travel demonstration projects and strengthening public transport.
- **Greater clarity on whether proposed action and potential investment in active travel and public transport will consist of capital funding only or a mixture of capital and revenue would be particularly helpful.** Infrastructure development must be accompanied by ‘smarter choice’ measures in order to achieve sustained and substantial behaviour change; for example cost incentives for public transport, walking buses for schoolchildren and schemes to give pedestrians and cyclists more priority can be effective.
- **Road infrastructure development should be placed in the context of balanced and sustainable regional planning.** Developing areas from existing strengths may be as important as increasing mobility; the likelihood of increasingly volatile energy prices and the economic impact of this is a concern in relation to major road investment. Meanwhile, further detail on the implementation schedule around planning would be helpful to create certainty.
- **Focus should be on achieving outcomes.** Monitoring should prioritise this, in particular clarifying how specific actions contribute to the overall objective(s), and place less emphasis on process. Indicators chosen need to be based on evidence; new data may be required to gain effective knowledge.
- **More specific milestones and outputs would be helpful.** While it may be difficult to set exact targets, where possible milestones should be measurable to help monitor progress.

- **Cross Departmental and sectoral collaboration can significantly support effective delivery.** It is positive the draft PfG indicates this is intended, but an outline of concrete mechanisms would be helpful to strengthen this approach and provide incentives for it. The Active Travel Forum established by DRD may provide a helpful model for this. In relation to transport, funding arrangements for community transport could be an important area for collaboration that would significantly improve accessibility for people in rural areas.

### **Introduction**

Belfast Healthy Cities is a citywide partnership whose vision is of a healthy, equitable and vibrant city where all sectors provide individual and shared leadership, enabling citizens to achieve their full potential. Belfast is a leading World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy City, and the Belfast Healthy Cities' office provides a direct link to WHO. As the current secretariat of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, Belfast Healthy Cities also has direct links to over 90 other European Healthy Cities.

The role of the partnership is, through our leadership and innovation, to inspire and harness the collective and individual strengths of partners to *deliver the WHO European Healthy City* goals and requirements and maximise their impact on health and inequalities. The focus of the global Healthy Cities movement, including ours, is on the wider physical and social living conditions that shape health and wellbeing, and creating conditions that support health and tackle inequalities. Key partners of the Belfast Healthy Cities partnership include Belfast City Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, NIHE and Public Health Agency. Additional partners include Bryson Group, DSD, DRD, DOE Planning and Local Government Group, East Belfast Partnership, Queen's University of Belfast and University of Ulster.

Our key areas of work include Healthy Urban Environment, including climate change and health, and Health Equity in All Local Policies. Our work focuses on developing new programmes, piloting innovative concepts, capacity building and collating and sharing evidence. The Healthy Urban Environment programme aims to highlight how the physical environment shapes people's lives, and how action to create people friendly environments can achieve synergies between health, the environment and the economy. Key sub themes are active living and child friendly environments.

Belfast Healthy Cities was established in 1988 as the first partnership in the city. We have a track record of delivery and our work has influenced developments including the Investing for Health Strategy, the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the intersectoral Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership in Belfast. Belfast Healthy Cities has also supported the development of active travel policy within DRD, through the Active Travel Forum. The approach is also reflected in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to which Belfast Healthy Cities submitted evidence highlighting how land use plays a vital role in setting the context for health and wellbeing.

### **General comments on draft Programme for Government – focus on synergies**

Belfast Healthy Cities is pleased that the draft PfG contains a recognition that a healthy, well educated population is the foundation of a peaceful and prosperous society. This echoes the WHO standpoint, emphasised in the forthcoming Health 2020 policy, that investment in health and wellbeing is investment in social and economic development. It also indicates an understanding that health is shaped by a broad range of determinants, and provides a platform for promoting and developing cross Departmental policy and action, which is crucial for achieving outcomes effectively.

Belfast Healthy Cities is also pleased that the draft PfG incorporates actions on sustainable transport and enabling children to walk and cycle to school. Access to public transport and active travel options is key to enable and encourage behaviour change, while it also can improve access to jobs and services, particularly for the more disadvantaged groups who



need this the most. Enabling children to walk and cycle to school, in turn, is important to help them develop healthy and sustainable lifestyle preferences, as well as to reduce peak hour traffic.

However, it is concerning that the emphasis on sustainability and accessibility is not cross cutting throughout the draft PfG. Despite the stated focus on sustainability as an underlying principle, the draft programme contains limited actions aimed at strengthening this. It also appears to miss synergies across Departments that a genuine focus on sustainability can achieve.

Belfast Healthy Cities would strongly welcome strengthening a concrete focus on sustainability and a supportive, people friendly built environment. This is important in its own right. However, Belfast Healthy Cities believes that the benefits that can be achieved across sectors – from health and wellbeing to job creation and economic development – make a particularly compelling case for reviewing the focus on sustainability and accessibility in all its forms. Indeed, concerted action and investment in this area now can help strengthen Northern Ireland's long term economic stability and prosperity. Although studies at Northern Ireland level do not as yet exist, WHO Europe studies show that for example cross sectoral action to tackle childhood obesity cost less than €10,000 per disability adjusted life year gained, while obesity related illnesses cost a sum comparable to over one per cent of GDP<sup>1</sup>.

It may be helpful in this context to note the success achieved in other regions, which have identified a specific theme as a focus around which the area has developed. For example, Stockholm in Sweden has focused on sustainability, which has not only supported a greener environment and substantial modal switch to more sustainable transport, but also attracted considerable investment both in the local universities and in businesses built around these knowledge hubs. The Øresund region, stretching from Malmö in southwestern Sweden to Copenhagen in Denmark, has focused on high technology education with similar results. In Finland, high quality education through to third level, made available for free to all children, has long been a priority for successive governments across the political spectrum. This has supported a culture of aspiration among young people and also a culture of innovation, particularly in the high technology fields. More recently, increasing focus has been given to distributing technology knowledge hubs across the country, building on existing strengths and unique characteristics, to achieve better opportunities for equitable and balanced economic development.

Through the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, Belfast Healthy Cities has direct access to learning, experience and expertise from cities across Europe and indeed globally. Belfast Healthy Cities would be very happy to share this with the Committee and Departments, should that be helpful for further development of comments on the draft PfG or the PfG itself.

### **Active travel – benefits across sectors, gaps and potential action**

Active travel is a key example of an area which can underpin development across sectors. Good walking and cycling facilities offers people and communities improved access to jobs and services, which is important in particular to tackle inequalities. Walking and cycling for transport also offers a natural way to be physically active and meet people, with associated health benefits including mental wellbeing. As active travel is typically low cost – free in the case of walking - this also contributes effectively to tackling inequalities. These effects directly prevent ill health and can generate savings in the health budget. From an environmental perspective, active travel reduces emissions from car travel, which helps combat climate change and poor air quality, and also generates further health benefits.

On the other hand, walking and cycling means that more people are using streets. This may offer benefits for local businesses, not least because people on foot or bike move slower than cars and are more likely to stop by a shop. Evidence of such benefits has, in fact, been

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1 Draft Health 2020 policy document, WHO Europe, forthcoming.

documented in towns that have introduced pedestrian cores or improved priority given to non car users.

A travel hierarchy prioritising active travel can also act as a catalyst for wider city or regional development. For example, the transport planning model developed in Kuopio in Finland aims to support regeneration, and to increase attractiveness of the town centre compared to out of town development. This model, which was presented in Belfast in October 2011 at a seminar arranged by Belfast Healthy Cities, incorporates a pedestrian city centre, surrounded by a zone focused on public transport, linking to a wider area and car based transport. In short, the aim is to make it possible for people to come to the city by car, in order to support a viable city centre, but transport within the city centre is primarily active travel, and people living within a 5 mile radius are also able to rely on public transport to get around the city. This model, which has helped reinvigorate Kuopio and generated substantial modal switch while reducing problems of congestion and parking, has been gradually implemented from the 1990s and is increasingly a model adopted across Finland. It may be of interest to local decision makers, not only in relation to transport provision in Belfast, but also in relation to regional development more generally.

### **Gaps**

While Belfast Healthy Cities welcomes the proposed action to enable children to walk and cycle to school, it would be welcome to strengthen action to enable and encourage people of all ages to choose active travel. In particular, it would be helpful if the draft PfG indicated how environments can be made more supportive, as multiple options are available. For example, introducing or piloting 20mph zones in key locations such as near schools and in town centres could help create safer environments that encourage walking and cycling, and also can attract people to use local facilities. 'Retrofitting' existing environments by allocating increasing road space to active travel is another potential way to create enabling environments, particularly in areas where facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are limited. In previous policies, reference has been made to 'quality walking corridors', which can play a particularly strong role in connecting key locations in bigger towns.

It would be important that the PfG gives some indication as to how it links with key transport related policies, including the Regional Transportation Strategy, Regional Development Strategy and the draft Active Travel plan launched for consultation on 15 December. For example, the Active Travel plan proposes a demonstration project scheme, which is intended to explore approaches that can generate substantial and sustainable modal switch towards active travel. It would be important that the draft PfG at least indicates how this fits in, and how learning from these projects can be shared with a view to strengthening the existing toolkit for active travel promotion.

Greater clarity on whether proposed action and potential investment will consist of capital funding only or a mixture of capital and revenue would be particularly helpful. The current position is that DRD funding is primarily capital, which must be used for infrastructure and cannot be channelled to measures aimed at encouraging modal switch, such as travel planning, car pool schemes or incentives for using active travel. Clarity on a future position is highly important, since infrastructure development must be accompanied by 'smarter choice' measures in order to achieve sustained and substantial behaviour change; having well lit footpaths and cycle lanes is necessary, but not sufficient alone.

Belfast Healthy Cities would very much welcome a future funding mix that enables both measures to be developed concurrently, and would suggest there may be potential to explore cross Departmental approaches. Such an approach would also be helpful to cement cross Departmental collaboration on active and sustainable travel, which is important as active travel also plays a significant role in obesity prevention and tackling climate change. Cross Departmental work could also help bring in external partners with relevant expertise and experience, who can reach a wide range of target groups from grass roots and up and support implementation. The Active Travel Forum established by DRD to support the development of

the Active Travel plan is one example of such a wide partnership approach, and could provide a model to build on.

### **Public transport – benefits across sectors, gaps and potential action**

High quality public transport offers people and communities access to jobs and services, and can significantly extend the area relevant for job search. This is important for all, but in particular to tackle inequalities, as many people from more disadvantaged backgrounds do not have a car, or spend a substantial proportion of their budget on running a car. Walking to and from public transport also contributes naturally to physical activity, with associated health benefits. Indeed, some research indicates that increasing public transport usage can be more effective than any other intervention to increase physical activity.<sup>2</sup> These effects directly prevent ill health and can generate savings in the health budget. From an environmental perspective, like active travel public transport can reduce private car usage, with the benefits that brings. It is also worth noting that high quality public transport can for its part help tackle unemployment, by increasing the geographical area relevant for job search. This can have particular benefits for people in more disadvantaged areas who do not have a car, and therefore are limited in their ability to take up jobs some distance away from their home.

To enable modal switch and make Northern Ireland increasingly accessible, it is important that public transport services support this, in particular by linking desired destinations. The current focus on arterial services, particularly in bigger towns like Belfast, is an issue for many people, who do not need transport to the town centre, but cross city, on a radial axis. An example of this is older people who wish to access health care services or visit friends, or parents who need to combine school and child care trips with work journeys. Belfast Healthy Cities would welcome clarification in the PfG on how this is taken into account in the action to 'Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel'.

As noted above, infrastructure alone is not sufficient to encourage modal switch. Measures that incentivise behaviour change and tackle specific barriers are also needed. In some cases, these may be comparatively straightforward - for example, enforcement of bus lanes can help improve the reliability of journey times, increasing the attractiveness of public transport. Exploring the demand across the day and week – particularly evenings and weekends – can also significantly help design timetables that increase the attractiveness of the public transport option.

Meanwhile, the cost of public transport is another, more complex but significant key barrier. Belfast Healthy Cities would welcome clarification on how this may be addressed, and would note that lower fares can be viewed as an 'invest to save' scheme, particularly in the current climate where many people are concerned about the cost of running a car and may be willing to consider alternatives. Even relatively short term cost incentives may be sufficient to encourage behaviour change, provided that the experience is comfortable and reliable. Examples of such schemes might be reductions in monthly ticket prices, extension of validity periods, or within towns, single tickets that allow for transfers within an hour (or other set time). The latter have been used successfully elsewhere in Europe.

Overall, it would be helpful to get greater clarity on what the focus of the action 'Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel' is. For example, there is currently no indication of whether, and how, this links to the Rapid Transit proposals for Belfast, which have been consulted on very recently. This is a significant opportunity to increase public transport usage in the Belfast metropolitan area – and reduce the cost of congestion and pollution – and clarity on a committed timescale would be important to create certainty. However, it is important that the final routes agreed ensure equitable services for all potential

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2 Krizek, Forsyth & Baum, Walking and cycling: an international literature review, Department of Transport, Victoria, 2009. Available at [http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/DOI/DOIElect.nsf/\\$UNIDS+for+Web+Display/70D43560D1141D DFCA2575E800BA1EE/\\$FILE/WalkingCyclingLiteratureReview.pdf](http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/DOI/DOIElect.nsf/$UNIDS+for+Web+Display/70D43560D1141D DFCA2575E800BA1EE/$FILE/WalkingCyclingLiteratureReview.pdf)

users. In other words, Rapid Transit must be viewed as more than a commuter service, and utilised to improve accessibility for people living within the city as well.

Considering that much of Northern Ireland is rural, it is clear that regular public transport cannot fully meet all transport needs. Belfast Healthy Cities is aware that investment has been made in community transport schemes, which are aimed to provide a more flexible solution. However, concerns have been raised for some years about specific inflexibilities in the arrangements that reduce services to rural communities. In particular, the stipulation that community transport cannot be used to access health care can create difficulties, often for older people who have limited access to other transport options. Belfast Healthy Cities would be pleased to see this issue resolved as part of the new PfG, and its increasing focus on cross Departmental collaboration.

### **Road and rail infrastructure – general comments**

As noted above, Belfast Healthy Cities strongly supports strengthening public transport. As such, investment in rail infrastructure is to be welcomed as part of creating a high quality public transport network. In addition to the proposed upgrade of the Coleraine-Derry line, the feasibility of other schemes could potentially be explored in this PfG period. Examples of opportunities with potential strategic significance for the entire region include linking Belfast City and Belfast International airports directly to the rail network. In relation to the Belfast Rapid Transit scheme, it should be ensured that routes provide linkage to the railway network.

With regard to road investment, Belfast Healthy Cities believes that investment in public and active travel should take priority. A key reason for this is the issue of peak oil and increasingly volatile energy prices, which in the long term are likely to make car travel and road transport less attractive economically. In the short term, road widening and other schemes aimed at facilitating car use can encourage more private car use, which increases congestion and limits the efficacy of improvements made.

Belfast Healthy Cities has previously expressed concern regarding the draft Regional Development Strategy, which builds on road construction and increasing commuting. Our concern is not only with regard to the likely health and environmental impacts, but also with regard to the future economic stability and overall prosperity of Northern Ireland.

With the currently outlined approach, there is a risk of missing opportunities by homogenising the region. There is also a risk of inadvertently working against the stated aims of sustainability and equality, in particular if the approach serves to strengthen the existing trend of separating areas of employment growth from areas of residential growth.

This, in turn, can have negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland, for example through affecting obesity, people's opportunities to meet and build strong, cohesive communities, and access to local services. There can also be negative consequences for regional equity, as more disadvantaged people and households are less likely to be able to either afford transport or relocate to job growth areas. Over time, this may also create imbalances in the rates take base of different sub regional clusters.

As an example how a more targeted approach might work, it may be desirable to focus business development linked to agriculture in the western region. Professional services, which are less reliant on immediate access to logistics networks, could be directed towards key towns around Belfast where a high proportion of the professional population lives. Some of the northern or central clusters could also support professional services, while a concentration of creative activity already is developing organically in the North West.

Belfast Healthy Cities would strongly welcome an indication of how these issues have been considered, in relation to proposed road infrastructure investment, as part of the final PfG. The Kuopio model, outlined at the beginning of this submission, may offer some ideas for alternative, more sustainable transport investment options.

### **Planning – links to transport and potential action**

Land use planning is crucially linked to transport planning, since new development requires appropriate transport provision. For example, the recent growth in suburban development has been linked to a rise in private car use, as well as road provision. Conversely, land use policy built on private car use for the vast majority of trips is also linked to the rise in congestion, greenhouse gas emissions from transport and to some extent sedentary lifestyles. Belfast Healthy Cities would particularly welcome a clearer indication that this type of cross linkage is understood and taken into account when regional development decisions are made. As land use planning powers are to be devolved to local authorities, it is perhaps understandable that limited mention is made of land use planning. However, it would be very helpful to all stakeholders, including transport planning and regional development, if some reference was made to an implementation timetable. At minimum, it would create more clarity and certainty if a timescale was given for the subordinate legislation and planning policy required to implement the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. With its new emphasis on sustainable development and wellbeing as the purpose of planning, it gives scope for new approaches to land use planning, which will need to be tested and explored. Both current and future decision makers will also need capacity building in order to be able to discharge their duties effectively, and in ways that create sustainable and people friendly environments.

During the consultation process for the now withdrawn draft PPS24, a significant number of concerns were raised regarding an approach that prioritises economic considerations. For example, the potential long term cost – economic and social – of such an approach was highlighted, along with questions regarding the necessity of added emphasis on economic considerations. It is therefore disappointing that the draft PfG reintroduces a version of this (Ensure 90% of large scale investment planning decisions are made within 6 months and applications with job creation potential are given additional weight (DOE), Priority 1, emphasis added). As discussed above, Belfast Healthy Cities would emphasise that planning decisions have far reaching impacts on people's lives, and that benefits of solely economic developments can be outweighed by costs elsewhere. At minimum, it would be important that the intention of this action is clarified, and that it is explicitly stated that job creation is understood in the widest sense. It would be ideal if some reference also could be made to non monetary effects of planning, including improving access to services or improving amenity, which enhance wellbeing and can significantly support regeneration of a community.

Looking at the draft PfG overall, Belfast Healthy Cities notes with some concern that the overt focus of many actions is to invite external investment or external visitors (eg. Deliver at least 30 schemes to improve landscapes in public areas to promote private sector investment in towns and cities across Northern Ireland). While Belfast Healthy Cities appreciates that this plays a role for establishing economic stability, there is the risk that the needs of residents are overshadowed, and that the ultimate aim of what a PfG tries to achieve for local people is obscured. This is of concern, since it can undermine the confidence and mental wellbeing of local people, affecting social wellbeing of the region as a whole. Lower wellbeing directly affects people's hopes and aspirations for the future, and in extension, also affects productivity, creativity and willingness to engage positively in decision making. It would therefore be important that it is clearly established how different actions aim to support existing residents, and strengthen the civic society which underpins democratic and political decision making.

### **Comments on the milestones and outputs**

Due to the limited extent of proposed action on issues related to the environment, it is somewhat difficult to comment on the proposed milestones and outputs. As an overall comment, Belfast Healthy Cities notes that many milestones are quite general in nature and do not set SMART targets. There is also limited reference to the desired or intended outcomes, and actions range from the very specific (eg. introduce a levy on single use carrier bags from 2013) to the general (eg. protect and enhance our natural environment by working to halt the loss of biodiversity). It is therefore difficult to assess how these individual actions

come together to make a significant impact overall. While the high level nature of the PfG means that detailed action is not appropriate, it would be helpful if the very general actions were developed to include some detail. To the extent possible, milestones should also be SMART, in order to support monitoring and enable assessment of impact. This would also assist Departments and others tasked with delivery gain a clear understanding of the desired direction of travel and expectations placed on them.

Compared to the PfG 2008-11, it is encouraging to see that the number of objectives has been condensed, and that actions across Departments are grouped under the same objectives. This reflects a basic understanding of cross cutting issues, and offers a new platform for cross Departmental collaboration. However, to create stronger incentives for collaboration, shared targets would be helpful. In addition, it would be helpful if actions were clustered together in a way which indicates how Departments can work together to maximise impact.

Belfast Healthy Cities was established in 1988 as the first partnership in the city, and has extensive experience of facilitating intersectoral collaboration at strategic as well as operational level. For example, Belfast Healthy Cities facilitated the first cross sectoral City Health Development Plan for Belfast, published in 2002, and the partnership's work on a Healthy Ageing InterAction Plan was instrumental in shaping the current, intersectoral Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership in Belfast. Indeed, the core role of the partnership is to bring stakeholders together, and all of our work is delivered through partners. Belfast Healthy Cities would be happy to share learning from this experience, should that be helpful.

### **Monitoring**

Belfast Healthy Cities welcomes the Committee's focus on monitoring. While it is important not to overemphasise monitoring systems, having in place a framework for indicating progress is vital to make sure actions are going in the desired direction.

In relation to monitoring and the draft PfG, a gap is the lack of reference to the sustainability duty, and other assessment procedures such as sustainability appraisal or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Belfast Healthy Cities notes that strengthening the sustainability duty is an action under the Sustainable Development Action Plan, and understands that guidance on the sustainability duty is under development within OFMdFM. Similarly, Belfast Healthy Cities understands that work on wellbeing indicators is being developed by NISRA, and a reference to this would also be helpful, as wellbeing incorporates many aspects of people's life experience.

Belfast Healthy Cities believes that a monitoring framework put in place should be based on a review of evidence, designed to pinpoint what indicators help highlight issues of interest. This will include many currently used indicators, but may also identify new ones. A framework may also need to integrate indicators at different levels, to ensure an adequate picture. Key to remember when developing monitoring frameworks is that indicators are effectively signalling lights; they do not give verdicts, but help identify what requires closer attention. In other words, implementation should not be overshadowed by monitoring requirements, but can be much supported by a core set of well chosen indicators. These should, in addition, be built in from an early stage, so that a baseline position can be established and effective monitoring developed.

Belfast Healthy Cities, in partnership with NIHE, Belfast City Council, PHA, Belfast HSC Trust and the five Belfast Area Partnerships has developed a framework with indicators aimed at monitoring how regeneration affects health and especially inequalities in the target area. The Good for Regeneration, Good for Health, Good for Belfast indicator set, which is being presented as a basis for discussion, includes indicators under four headings including economy, social, environmental and access, and emphasises pairing traditional indicators with ones that highlight the impact on inequalities. This is a new area of work, both

locally and internationally, and is developed in line with international thinking about what needs to happen to address health inequalities. It is also focused on achieving synergies and highlighting how action that supports health also helps underpin successful regeneration, in turn maximising the return on investment. Next steps will include further piloting of the framework, and exploring ways of enhancing data available.

### **Conclusion**

Belfast Healthy Cities welcomes the draft PfG in terms of its signs of an emerging understanding of cross cutting issues, in particular how health and wellbeing underpins sustainable prosperity and social cohesion. However, there is significant scope for strengthening action on sustainability and the environment, in ways that support people, the environment and also the economy. Specific gaps relate to food, energy and the green economy, while there is also a need to strengthen milestones and outputs to ensure clarity and give stakeholders direction. Finally, an evidence based monitoring framework needs to be put in place to support effective delivery.

# Belfast International Airport

14 December 2011

## Belfast International Airport Submission to Assembly DRD Committee on Draft Programme for Government (PfG) and Draft Investment Strategy

### Background

As one of the main economic drivers in Northern Ireland, Belfast International Airport (BIA) welcomes the opportunity to formally submit its views on the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 and the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. The operation of the airport cannot be viewed in isolation; the inter-locking that exists with other parts of the infrastructure is a determining factor when it comes to maximising business opportunities; addressing peripherality; servicing to attract Foreign Direct investment (FDI); building the tourism sector and creating employment. Accepting the airport's pivotal position in the economic life of the region, and doing what is required to lift Northern Ireland out of the economic doldrums, are essential if, collectively, we are to progress and prosper.

### Belfast International Airport – The Facts

- Passenger numbers: 4.5 M (12,500 per day)
- No. of destinations: 80 domestic and international destinations (75,000 flights a-year)
- Cargo: 50,000 tonnes, plus 100,000 tonnes trans-shipped road freight through the facility
- No. Employees on site: 4,500
- Businesses operating on site: 250
- Salaries and wages: £250 million pa
- Tax bill (incl Rates): £105 million
- Infrastructure investment in past 5 years: £60 million
- £Multi-million planned investment over next five years

### General view

BIA views both the Draft PfG and the Draft Economic Strategy documents as timely and necessary in the over-arching effort to re-balance the regional economy. Paradoxically, BIA also considers them to be deficient in a number of areas. They fail to grasp the significance of the aviation sector, the capacity that it has to unlock impressive economic potential and the contribution BIA, in particular, could make towards the development of a even more vibrant tourism sector.

In the **Draft PfG**, BIA welcomes:

- The commitment to eliminate Air Passenger Duty (APD) on direct long-haul flights, and goals to:
- Increase visitor numbers to 3.6 million and tourist revenue to £625 million by 2013
- Host a significant international golf tournament
- Host the World Police and Fire Games in 2013
- Press for the devolution of Corporation Tax
- Increase the value of manufacturing exports by 15%



- Provide financial and other support across government to ensure the success of the Our Time Our Place Initiative in 2012 and the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture
- Progress the upgrade of key road projects
- Invest over £500 million to promote more sustainable modes of travel

In the **Draft Economic Strategy**, BIA welcomes:

- The vision to improve the economic competitiveness of the economy
- The important elaboration on APD, namely to **“agree with the UK Government on the proposals to devolve the powers to set APD for flights departing from NI Airports and seek to deploy this power to strengthen our international air access”**.
- The aim to attract more overseas tourism
- 5.113 on the need to provide “quick and easy access for international investors”
- 5.114 when it states: “NI’s ability to compete globally can be improved by developing new direct links with international long haul markets that will ultimately support increased inward investment, exporting and in-bound tourism. We will therefore work with the UK Government on the proposals to devolve the powers to set APD for flights departing from NI airports to ensure that we are able to improve our direct long haul connectivity”
- 2.29 which acknowledges the need to improve connections to key tourism sites
- The need to significantly increase our export focus if we are to achieve our economic goals
- The acknowledgements that there is “a close link between exports and FDI”.
- Under the heading of “Connecting to the Global Economy”, 3.11 which says that “successful regions/countries all have strong and growing connections to the global economy” is of particular note.
- The inclusion of “competing in the global economy” as one of the five strategic rebalancing themes of the Northern Ireland Executive
- The plan to promote over 7,500 new FDI jobs, and objectives to:
  - Establish Belfast as an internationally recognised city for financial services technologies
  - Support over 700 firms to enter export markets for the first time and over 1,500 companies to diversify into new markets
  - Increase the value of manufacturing exports by 15% by 2014/15

### **What’s missing**

There is an essential piece missing from these drafts, namely the contribution that could be made by a properly structured aviation sector guided by a comprehensive **Northern Ireland Aviation Strategy**. BIA is the only unconstrained airport in Northern Ireland capable of delivering the level of economic activity that would come with the achievement of these economic goals. It is the second largest employment centre in the region which already fulfils a central role in delivering exports to overseas markets. This strategically important facility has the capacity to grow to accommodate even the most demanding of targets set out in both documents.

BIA’s position isn’t recognised or acknowledged. The reality is that if Northern Ireland is to enjoy significant advances in tourism, business, FDI and exporting, it will require:

- A 24/7 airport facility with no operating constraints
- Space and facilities that handle vastly increased export volumes to international markets.

*“Northern Ireland’s future economic prosperity hinges on reaching beyond neighbouring economies, such as the UK and Ireland, towards high-potential emerging and established markets globally. A prerequisite for this is fast and reliable access to those markets, and this*

*new FedEx operation and flight will make a significant difference to exporting firms in this regard”.*

**Gerald P. Leary, President, FedEx Express Europe, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent & Africa, at the launch of the new FedEx operation in Northern Ireland.**

- Runway capacity (BIA is the only airport in the island with cross-runways)
- Sufficient land bank to accommodate at least a doubling of current economic activity
- Scope to more than double the number of passengers currently using the facility
- A strategy to open markets such as Canada, Germany and Scandinavian countries
- An all-out effort to attract new international carriers
- The establishment of a viable and properly financially resourced Air Network Development Scheme
- Acknowledgement that **direct** air access to Northern Ireland is the only way in which full benefit will be derived for the region
- A determination to compete with Dublin for overseas visitors and not allow Northern Ireland to become a ‘feeder region’ for the main Rol ‘gateway’.

## Public Transport

### Gaps in the PfG

It is our view that Public Transport to and from the airport broadly meets current needs. If the elements of the Draft PfG and the Draft Economic Strategy that deal with tourism, exporting and FDI are delivered, then it is safe to say that the present service would prove inadequate.

BIA has been consistently told that a railway ‘spur’ to the Terminal would be prohibitively expensive and couldn’t be justified for as long as passenger numbers were below 8 million. In the intervening years, other, possibly more affordable options have emerged and they deserve to be explored further. Additionally, a light rail/rapid transit system could serve neighbouring and growing communities in Crumlin and Glenavy and this could positively impact on any cost-benefit-analysis.

### What is the best way to monitor progress?

N/A

## Road and rail infrastructure and investment

### 1. Road

Developing surface access to key economic hubs ought to be a central priority. Yet, despite the irrefutable need that exists, no mention is made of, or priority afforded to, the undertaking of several road projects which BIA regards as essential.

They include:

- The dualling of the A26 from the Moira roundabout on the M1 to the airport
- The by-passing of Templepatrick
- Dualling of the A57 from the M2 near Templepatrick to the airport

These would be major capital projects capable of generating significant employment during the construction phase and delivering valuable work for the hard-pressed construction sector. In the absence of the A5 progressing, releasing some £400 million in NI funds over the life of

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the project, these smaller but nonetheless significant road schemes should be put back on the table for active consideration.

## **2. Rail/Rapid Transit**

At the very least, a feasibility study of a light, rapid transit service to and from the airport should be conducted. Various estimates have been given as to the cost of undertaking what would undoubtedly be an ambitious scheme, but advances in rapid transit systems mean that the time is now right to re-examine the option.

### **Comments on the milestones and outputs**

BIA views the absence of the above projects as a missed opportunity and a major gap in the Draft PfG and the accompanying Draft Economic Strategy.

Despite its strategic economic importance, BIA is the only airport in Northern Ireland that is not served by a dual-carriageway. Surface access owes more to the earlier part of the last century than the 21st century and is a poor visual statement for first-time visitors as they make their way to Belfast or north to Derry/Londonderry. Northern Ireland must present a modern and front-facing image to the world. Leaving one of the most modern airport Terminals in the country only to be confronted by narrow and occasionally poorly maintained roads must be addressed.

### **Sustainable transport**

- Gaps in the PfG
- Comments on the milestones and outputs
- What is the best way to monitor progress

## **Summary**

Even in this worrying downturn, there are ample opportunities to address the range of economic challenges. Some lateral thinking, sharper decision-making and reaction times are necessary. Alongside a greater willingness to build, sell and export must be a clear recognition of the need to put in place the 'building blocks' that will deliver that economic revival. We do ourselves a disservice by ignoring the assets that exist, and are waiting to be properly exploited, and by a myopia that fails to take full account of new and emerging markets and the exciting opportunities they present to a region that can offer so much.

## **Ends**

# Carrickfergus Council

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Carrickfergus Borough

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16 December 2011

Paul Carlisle  
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development  
Room 254  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Carlisle,

I refer to your recent call for comments on the draft Programme for Government 2011-15.

Members of Council have asked that the Executive be commended on developing the draft programme.

However I have also been asked to make the following comments on the draft.

It was suggested that a greater emphasis toward cooperative, joined up and equal partner working between local and central government, and the other sectors, might lead to better way of identifying and delivering services and outputs in the most efficient and effective manner.

I have been also been asked to draw your attention to two issues which affect Carrickfergus Borough directly. These issues touch on the public transport, road and rail infrastructure and sustainable transport issues.

The Council has for many years lobbied for upgrade of A2 Jordanstown to Carrickfergus road. Yet this scheme been constantly postponed whilst other schemes have gone ahead. Each day the traffic on the road backs up between Jordanstown and Carrickfergus almost to a stand still. Council has heard from potential investors who have stated that this traffic problem is a distinct disincentive to develop in the Borough. The Council appreciates that this document is intended to be strategic in nature, however, it would wish to see a prioritised list of road projects, with the A2 scheme at the top, rather than the general statement of intent on road schemes given on Page 33. A specific statement more akin to that on Page 44, relating to the upgrade of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway, is sought.

Somewhat associated with the A2 issue because of the displacement the construction period will cause, is the matter of the Larne- Belfast rail link. The Council recently met with representatives of Translink. The representatives indicated that the Belfast-Larne rail link was now running at capacities similar to those experienced in the 1960's and 1970's and was unable to take any further increase in traffic. Apparently the reason for the inability to accept

further traffic is the single track bridge over the River Lagan. It is felt that if rail transport is to be maximised, and with the proposed improvements to the North Coast line, consideration should be given to dealing with other 'nip' points which will limit further development and utilization of the railway system.

Finally, you enquire, inter alia, as to the best way to measure progress. Members felt that the very general nature of many of the outputs make progress difficult to track but that for each output a commonly and easily understood specific method of measurement should be identified so that both those contributing to the achievement of the output, and those subject to it, can appreciate the progress being made.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Johnston". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**STEPHEN J JOHNSTON**  
**Director of Building Services and Acting Chief Executive**

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# Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation



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Clerk of the Committee for Regional Development  
Room 254  
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Ballymiscaw  
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Belfast  
BT4 3XX

6<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Dear Mr Cariisle

**Re: Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and draft Investment Strategy for  
Northern Ireland 2011-21**

I refer to your letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 in which you invite CIHT to offer evidence to your Committee to inform their response to the documents mentioned above. Thank you for the opportunity to consider submitting our views, but in this instance the Northern Ireland branch of our organisation are responding to the consultation direct to the Northern Ireland Executive. This will be our official response so in this instance we will not be taking up your offer to feed our views into your committee.

Once again I would like to thank you for considering that CIHT members might have a view your committee would be interested to hear. We would be pleased to assist your committee in future calls for evidence.

Yours sincerely

Sue Percy  
Chief Executive

# Construction Employers Federation



## **Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government and the Draft Investment Strategy**

15 December 2011

The Construction Employers Federation (CEF) is the representative body for the construction industry in Northern Ireland. The organisation has over 1200 member companies. Member companies range from micro businesses employing a handful of people to the largest construction employers in Northern Ireland. In total, CEF members account for over 70% of construction output in the region.

Construction and civil engineering activities carried out by CEF member companies include:

- Buildings for health, educational and recreational purposes
- Social and private housing
- Transport infrastructure
- Utilities infrastructure
- Domestic minor works
- Repair and maintenance works
- Commercial, industrial and public sector buildings
- Development of public spaces

For more information on CEF please visit our website [www.cefni.co.uk](http://www.cefni.co.uk)

The Federation welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee for Regional Development in order to inform the Committee's response to the Draft Programme for Government and the Draft Investment Strategy.

## 1. Overview

Economic progress in Northern Ireland is being obstructed by a deficit that has resulted from 30 years of underinvestment in our infrastructure, including roads and water networks. CEF believes that the Draft Programme for Government and the Draft Investment Strategy fails to adequately address this issue.

High quality infrastructure is a critical factor in enabling private sector growth. Sustained investment in infrastructure has a proven track record of delivering economic growth in many countries around the world. The legacy of the underinvestment in Northern Ireland is that we now have infrastructure that is the 'poor relative' when compared to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

CEF welcomes the Executive's plans to direct millions of pounds into infrastructure over the next three years but the rest of the UK will at least be matching Northern Ireland in this regard. In fact in 2010, even when the NI Executive had more funds available, preliminary figures indicate that public construction output per capita in Northern Ireland was 16% below the UK average. With that approach to investment the Executive will only increase Northern Ireland's infrastructure shortfall rather than catch up on our neighbours.

It is worth noting that public construction output per capita in Scotland in 2010 was 16% above the UK average. This demonstrates that it is possible for a devolved region to increase infrastructure investment when the devolved government places infrastructure at the heart of its plans for economic renewal.

The two goals of draft Economic Strategy are to rebuild and rebalance the economy of Northern Ireland. To enable these goals to be achieved the Northern Ireland Executive must address the infrastructural deficit. Therefore the Draft Programme for Government and the Draft Investment Strategy should be refocused on delivering a radical increase in the funding available for investment in infrastructure. A good starting point would be the setting of a target that public construction output per capita in Northern Ireland should exceed the UK average for the duration of this budget period.

## 2. Road and rail infrastructure and investment

### (a) Investment Strategy

In general the draft Investment Strategy places a strong emphasis on heralding past achievements rather than fulfilling its primary purpose of setting the strategy for the future.

Whilst CEF appreciates that setting the scene is important, we believe that the strategy should be rebalanced to place greater emphasis on the future.

The Investment Strategy section on Networks covers the plans for investment in transport infrastructure.

As we highlight below, the plans are very vague, limited in scope and often non-committal. In our opinion monitoring the delivery of this strategy in any meaningful way would not be possible.

We are informed that:

#### **Work will continue on a range of projects including the A6 and the York street junction**

- What is this range of projects?
- What is the timeframe for their delivery?
- What is the likely cost?
- How will these projects be funded?

#### **A new Regional Transportation Strategy will be produced.**

- When will the new RTS be produced?
- How will the RTS fit with the ISNI?

#### **Roads Service will focus its structural maintenance investment on maintaining the condition of the motorway and trunk road network**

- How much will be spent on structural maintenance?
- What percentage of the structural maintenance budget will be spent on the motorway and trunk road network? How will this percentage compare to previous years?
- What is the plan for the maintenance of the other roads?

#### **There will be further upgrades on strategic roads**

- What and where will these further upgrades be?
- How much will they cost?
- When will they take place?



**The transport masterplan for Belfast city centre will be progressed**

- What progress will be made and by when?
- When will the masterplan be put in to action to deliver tangible benefits to the public?

**The Derry-Coleraine rail relay works will be completed in three phases.**

- The document clearly states that the first phase will start in July 2012, further work will be undertaken in 2015 and a full relay should be completed by 2012.
- CEF welcomes the fact that at least an approximate timeframe is attached to this project.
- How much will this investment cost?

**The timing of work on Knockmore to Lurgan rail line will be considered in future budget scenarios**

- When will the timing of the work be considered?
- Will the work itself take place within the 10 year investment period?
- How much will be spent on the project?

**The potential development of a new Integrated Transport Hub will be taken forward**

- Is there a commitment to develop a new Integrated Transport Hub?
- If so, when will the hub come into existence? What are the milestones in its development?
- How much will it cost?

The Investment Strategy will also need substantially revised following the decision by the Government of the Republic of Ireland to defer their contribution to the A5 project.

CEF believes that the final Investment Strategy should contain details of how the £400m funding, which had been allocated from the NI budget to the A5 project, will be redistributed. A plan should be prepared to ensure that alternative roads projects are brought forward to ensure this funding can be well spent within the constraints of the annual budgets.

**(b) Programme for Government**

Regarding road infrastructure investment there is one commitment given in the Draft Programme for Government which needs to be clarified:

**Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline.**

- Why a 2003 baseline?
- How much have journey times improved between 2003 and 2011?
- Does this refer to all key transport corridors?

**3. Water and Wastewater****(a) Investment Strategy**

CEF believes that the section of the Investment Strategy dealing with water and waste water is equally as vague, limited in scope and non-committal as the section dealing with transport infrastructure investment.

CEF would advocate a similar line of questioning as demonstrated in section 1.(a) of this paper relating to transport infrastructure investment.

**(b) Programme for Government**

Regarding road infrastructure investment, CEF has identified one commitment given in the Draft Programme for Government which needs to be clarified:

**Improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure**

- What is the current level of compliance?
- What are the targets for compliance improvement each year?

#### 4. Summary

CEF believes that the construction industry has a vital role to play in helping to rebuild and rebalance the economy in Northern Ireland. Every £1 invested in construction generates £2.84 in economic activity and every £1m invested in construction creates an average 28.5 jobs in the construction industry. Such investment is essential to help boost the local economy.

It is CEF's view that the draft Programme for Government and the draft Investment Strategy has failed to adequately address the serious level of the infrastructure deficit. High quality infrastructure is crucial to delivering economic growth in the private sector, which is a stated aim of the Executive.

The investment plans in both documents are far too vague. They are aspirational statements and do not give any specific details about what levels of investment will be committed, what specific projects will be funded and over what timescale.

All this is fundamental to ensuring a positive well targeted action plan for successfully rebalancing the local economy.

# Cookstown District Council

Dear Mr Carlisle

Thank you for your letter dated 1 December 2011 seeking evidence in order to help you formulate the Committee's response to the consultation documents Programme for Government 2011-2015 and the Draft Investment Strategy for NI 2011-21.

Council is preparing a corporate response to the Programme for Government and the Draft Investment Strategy reflecting the views of the departments and stakeholders.

Due to time commitments and lack of resources we are unable to respond to each individual Committee within the given time parameters.

Regards

**Adrian McCreesh**

Chief Executive (Acting)  
Cookstown District Council

Tel 00 44 28 8676 2205

# Craigavon Borough Council

## **Craigavon Borough Council – Draft Initial Response To Programme For Government**

Do you agree that the Programme for Government is designed and balanced in a way that is appropriate in enabling the delivery of its priorities?

The draft Programme for Government is the visible commitment by the Executive to work through the economic and social issues in Northern Ireland and to provide the groundwork for economic and social recovery.

The draft Programme for Government aims to highlight the actions the Executive will take to deliver the number one priority – a vibrant economy which can transform our society while dealing with the deprivation and poverty which has affected some of our communities for generations.

In order to achieve balance, the Programme for Government must be viewed as the overall strategy which sets the context of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Strategy (ISNI) and the draft Economic Strategy which are both at a consultation stage. These strategies aim to provide a platform for growing economic competitiveness, improving public service delivery and enhancing quality of life.

A strategic way of moving forward is welcomed by Craigavon Borough Council. The Council has also prioritised the economy within its Corporate Plan. The Council has identified that the most important challenge is facing up to the consequences of the global downturn and economic recession. We know we have to re-balance the economy and develop the environment and infrastructure in which the private sector can flourish. We will do our part to collaborate and work in partnership to bring the inward investment that can help stabilise communities, create new jobs and sustainable businesses.

We welcome the recognition of how the health of our economy and our communities are correlated.

By working collaboratively across all aspects of government including local authorities that are at the heart of the communities they serve, there will be a greater opportunity for the Programme for Government to be balanced in a way that is appropriate and enables the delivery of its priorities.

One of the key barriers to delivery will be restrictions on public sector spending. The Programme for Government can fulfill its objects through collaborative working but in addition, the resources have to be made available at all levels of government to add value to what is proposed and to achieve the ambitious objectives.

## **Do you agree that the Programme for Government sufficiently links the key commitments to plans for delivery?**

The Programme for Government is a strategic document and should be closely aligned to the economic strategy and the Infrastructure Investment Strategy and cannot be delivered in isolation. At this level, there is insufficient detail to ensure that the Programme for Government sufficiently links the key commitments to plans for delivery. Councils are uniquely placed to deliver services on the ground and have shown how we can take high level strategies and deliver much needed services to communities. We need to have access to these delivery opportunities to be able to communicate them and engage with communities.

Craigavon Borough is one of the best performing locations which is consistently ranked within the top 5 investment areas of Northern Ireland. We welcome the executive's draft Programme for Government and will be actively working to ensure that Craigavon gets its share in the target of 25,000 jobs and £300m investment from FDI.

**Do you agree that, in general, the key commitments contained within the document are appropriate to the successful achievement of priorities?**

The key commitments contained in the document are wholly appropriate to the successful achievement of priorities. The PfG however is a very high level and strategic document and the success of the priorities will depend on the detail and how it all works together. As a Local Authority Craigavon Borough Council is at the heart of the communities, businesses and town centres that it serves and is well placed to lead on the successful achievement of priorities.

***Priority 1 – Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future***

Craigavon BC is committed through its corporate plan to the principles of rebuilding and rebalancing the economy and working collaboratively across government, across borders and boundaries to grow the economy.

The area of Planning Appeals does not appear to be addressed within the document. This lengthy process needs to be streamlined to remove blockages and to facilitate appropriate development that creates jobs. Community planning and the power of well being are two opportunities that could be weaved within the document but appear to be gaps at present. Councils will also have the ability to raise finance for capital projects through the new Finance Bill and this is also an opportunity for central and local government to work together and pool resources for the betterment of the local economies.

We welcome investment in social enterprise growth to increase sustainability in the broad community sector. With the challenging funding climate, the capacity of sector needs increased to investigate new ways of generating income.

The commitment on 'Allocate an increasing % of the overall health budget to public health' – collaboration must take place between public health agency and the police at a regional **and** local level, plus with other partners, so that better information sharing takes place. This will enable better targeting of resources for crimes such as knife crime, underage drinking, domestic abuse/violence and alcohol and substance abuse and will assist the early intervention of these. These crimes are initially detected at A&E level but that information is not shared with other agencies.

Leisure has a real role in contributing to the development of the economy through the creation of leisure based tourism opportunities, social economy enterprises with a leisure theme, playing a role in developing the 'green' economy, contributing towards a healthier workforce and directly playing a part in developing skills for those who wish to gain employment in the leisure industry.

***Priority 2 – Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improve health and wellbeing***

We welcome investment into areas through SIF (Council will be making a response to the consultation).

However, local authorities need to be involved as key drivers at a local level look to examples of Neighbourhood Renewal, Peace III, Rural Development Programme.

Recognition needed that the systemic issues listed cannot be reached separately – there is a requirement to look at the way services/issues develop as a whole to ensure investment is targeted in the right way.

There are a number of strategies which are aimed at tackling poverty and disadvantage – it would be useful if these were looked at as a whole in a collaborative manner therefore, investment, resources and actions could be tackled more effectively. The document does suggest that collaborative working is required, however, the document does not contain a commitment to this or state how it will be achieved.

We welcome the package to tackle rural poverty and isolation. Given that many programmes addressing this issue are targeted at urban areas, the needs of our significant rural communities need to be taken into account.

Leisure has a real role to play in improving health and well being through provision of opportunities to participate in physical activity. The unique mix of highly skilled professional deliverers and facilities sets Councils in a strong position to be able to have an impact on the “ills” that blight the population and cost the NHS a fortune – but we will need to be empowered to fulfil this role and a much more effective and less wieldy system set in place with Health to allow this to happen.

Sport Arts Conservation and Leisure based activities have also proved to be effective in engaging with those sections of the community hardest to reach i.e. young people at risk of antisocial behaviour, BME groups etc and in bringing communities together to improve community cohesion and address community safety.

Whilst the investment in the SIF is welcome, the manner in which it will be distributed and the rationale on which it has been established is less than clear.

Over the lifetime of the document, Government will invest £7.2 million in programmes to tackle obesity and Councils’ leisure services and sports development units are well placed to provide the physical activity element of these programmes but this expertise and our willingness to get involved has been overlooked in the past and there is also an assumption from the “health” sector that councils will provide this free of charge.

### ***Priority 3 – Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities***

With regard to the commitment to ‘Reduce the level of serious crime’ – Whilst the Strategic Framework on Reducing Offending should help, the support mechanisms for perpetrators must be joined up so that complex issues can be dealt with effectively.

The commitment to ‘Tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures’ – we would be concerned that this commitment is specific to older and vulnerable people. The vast majority of communities believe that sentencing/justice system is too lenient on perpetrators.

The commitment to ‘Improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour’ – to note, it is very difficult to measure the perception of ASB. ASB perceptions in communities fluctuate from household to household, and day to day. Rather the commitment should aim to increase reporting/confident communities as this is key to establishing the extent of the problem. Councils have a key role to play in improving community safety.. through youth engagement programmes and working at a local community level through programmes like Midnight Street Soccer and the provision and use of multi-use games areas.

The proposed recycling rate of 41% for 2012-13 is considered unlikely to be met unless further funding is made available to Councils. The current ‘Rethnk Waste’ grant – although welcomed – is only for capital funding which takes time to realise an increase in recycling rates. Councils need to be able to access revenue funding to assist with implementation of recycling schemes and educative programmes. There should also be incentive schemes to encourage the public to recycle more.

Councils’ leisure services departments have a key role to play in improving health and well being (the relationship with exercise and positive mental health is well established) and in changing lifestyles and attitudes to health, a move to a more preventative culture.

Councils play a key role to play in delivering environmental programmes e.g. via the biodiversity strategy

#### **Priority 4 – Building a strong and shared community**

We would include the Community Support Programme as a building block given the aims of this programme.

The Community Development framework is referenced - Council has recently responded to this and would ask if it is still in draft form.

Council would urge that the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy be finalized in order for a coordinated and coherent approach to good relations to be undertaken

The Council is tasked with delivering:

- Community Support Programme
- Community Safety Plan
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- District Council Community Relations Programme
- Peace III Priority 1.1
- Rural Development Programme

Leisure activities also provide a potential engagement tool in working to improve community relations and community cohesion.

Therefore, many of the commitments contained within the Programme for Government are complimentary to the objectives of the work of Council and where possible, Council would emphasise its role in delivery or coordination of these commitments at a local level.

#### **Priority 5 – Delivering high quality and efficient public services**

Council particularly welcomes the relaunch of the reform of local government with the establishment of the new 11 council model by 2015. However, we stress again that there must be funding support from central government towards this reform if there is not to be significant impact on local government services.

#### **Do you agree the Programme for Government is appropriately balanced in terms of sub-regional recognition?**

The new Programme for Government is a fresh opportunity to look at the Executive's policies and programmes. There appears to be little detail on sub-regional recognition however the DRD's Regional Development Strategy highlights sub-regional economic locations which includes Craigavon. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Executive and the appropriate government departments to ensure that Craigavon is profiled for investment and job opportunities. Craigavon's strengths as an investment location are part of the reason why the Borough has been forecast to recover more quickly than other areas and at a faster rate than the Northern Ireland average.

Key commitments in terms of infrastructure and investment tend to be skewed to Belfast and the Northwest. As Craigavon is one of the sub regional economic centres within the Regional Development Strategy we would welcome a similar level of investment highlighted for Craigavon.

#### **Do you agree that the Programme for Government is appropriately balanced in terms of its recognition of major sectoral issues?**

The Programme for Government recognises all of the major sectoral issues, however this raises a question regarding the availability of resources as it may not be possible to cover all the issues and there may be a need to prioritise.

Craigavon Borough Council is actively pursuing the Life Sciences Sector, Food Production, Creative Sectors as major growth areas, The Council is encouraging a cluster led approach to development of these key sectors.

**Do you agree that the Programme for Government presents its priorities and commitments in a way that is fair and inclusive to all?**

The Programme for Government presents its priorities and commitments in a way that is fair and inclusive to all. Equality is an important issue for Council and we strive to eliminate inequalities where they exist. The financial constraints due to the substantial reduction in the block grants could be a threat to those most vulnerable and disadvantaged but the PfG takes cognisance of this.

As noted previously, not much has been said, however, on the rural agenda. Much of the Craigavon Borough is rural and many businesses are in rural locations. Issues such as access to rural broadband, rural housing and basic services need to be addressed and the PfG rural proofed to ensure that there are no inequalities for rural dwellers

**Are there any other issues in the Programme for Government that you wish to comment on?**

As a strategic document that maps out the way forward, the PfG is to be welcomed. It is acknowledged that partnership and collaboration is key to delivery and Local Authorities can play an active role in ensuring delivery of the priorities and objectives. Support at local level is essential to ensure all opportunities contained within the programme are maximized.

Council's ability to support and guide local communities is well established and in Craigavon the work undertaken in regard to DSD NR, Peace III, SOAR etc funding and capacity building at grass roots level should ensure that Council and its ratepayers are well placed to make good use of opportunities which may arise.

It should be noted however, that restrictions on public sector spending will mean tough challenges especially if we want to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged are not disadvantaged further.

Concern has been raised about the reliance of EU funding to achieve flagship projects such as The Titanic project. If EU funding is not forthcoming this puts pressure on the Executive to prioritise and reconfigure the plan.



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# Down District Council

## **Down District Council – Response to Committee for Regional Development**

***Aideen Brennan – 13 December 2011***

## **Item 9b, Council Meeting of 19 December 2011**

**Request for Evidence on Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21.**

### Draft Response

#### **Down District Council**

Down District Council welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence in order to inform the Committee for Regional Development's response to the consultation process on both the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 (PfG) and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21. In response to the questions raised in the request document, Down District Council makes the following comments:-

### Public Transport

#### **Gaps in Programme for Government**

With a population of 70,296 (NISRA's latest mid-year population estimates for 2009), Down is a relatively large and densely populated District. One in four of Down's resident employed (approximately 7,000-8,000) commute daily to Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn. The net out-commuting of public administration administrative & secretarial occupations is particularly high. Overall, Down's surrounding Travel to Work Area population is approximately 400,000.

A large number of the commuters from Down District currently travel on public transport on a daily basis. It is vital to these people that the public transport connections are adequate and are regularly upgraded and revised depending on the changing requirements of the residents.

Down District Council look forward to receiving further detail on the Executive's plans to improve the current public transport network and would like to see this included in the Executive's key commitments for 2011 – 2015.

The Council acknowledges the Executive's plans in the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland to progress the Transport Masterplan for Belfast City Centre as part of a scheme for the introduction of rapid transit in Belfast. As the Executive envisages significant changes to the road layout and traffic management arrangements, focusing on improved public transport services, better facilities for walking and cycling and a reduction in reliance on the private car, the Council are extremely interested to hear how this will impact on the travel to work population from Down District and the public transport networks of the towns surrounding Belfast city centre. The Council would wish the Committee to note that 60% of the population of Northern Ireland actually reside outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

#### **Comments on the Milestones and Outputs**

The Council recognises that the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21, in addition to the Draft Regional Development Strategy 2025 for Northern Ireland, are the overarching documents guiding and promoting regional and sub-regional development in Northern Ireland. However, the limited

coverage of sub-regional issues within these documents are of concern to the Council given its centrality to plans for socio-economic growth.

## Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment

### **Gaps in Programme for Government**

Down District Council understands that the primary purpose of Priority 1 of the Draft Programme for Government (Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future) is to achieve long term economic growth by improving competitiveness and building a larger and more export-driven private sector. To do this, it is important to rebuild the labour market in the wake of the global economic downturn and re-balance the economy to improve the wealth and living standards of everyone.

Similarly, it is understood that Priority 2 of the Draft Programme for Government, (Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing) seeks to address the challenges of disadvantage and inequality that afflict society. This priority is also aimed at addressing the relatively poor health and long-term shorter life expectancy of our population and its purpose is to stimulate interventions that break the cycle of deprivation and educational under-achievement, and to address health inequalities and poor health and wellbeing as well as economic disengagement.

It is documented that these priorities include enhancing the economic infrastructure, integrating the transport infrastructure and improving public transport and, given the rural nature of much of Down District, an improved transport infrastructure and public transport solutions are extremely important to the growth and prosperity of the District. Down District Council is encouraged by the Executive's commitment to balanced sub-regional growth and its aim to ensure all sub-regional centres are able to grow and prosper.

As Downpatrick has been identified as a key sub-regional centre in the Draft Regional Development Strategy 2025 for Northern Ireland, it has a significant role to play in achieving the Northern Ireland Executive's proposals to rebuild and re-balance the Northern Ireland economy. To jeopardise its options for investment in the roads infrastructure will have a very negative impact across the District, which is already experiencing a continued loss of jobs in both manufacturing and public sector jobs.

It is important to the District that this status of a key sub-regional centre is built upon and that the Executive enhances and invests in the existing road network across the District, ensuring that the linkages with the neighbouring cities of Belfast and Newry are improved. In relation to this, the Council is disappointed with the original iteration of the Regional Development Strategy 2025 as it did not consider the major infrastructural needs of the District beyond the main Belfast Road and secondary linkages to Newcastle.

Down District Council acknowledges the difficulties that other towns and regions are enduring during the current economic downturn and the need for an improved road and rail infrastructure across Northern Ireland, however, whilst progress has been made over the last decade and more, Down District cannot afford to lose access to any assistance that it can offer residents and businesses to address the ongoing and long-term challenge of creating a more productive, dynamic and competitive local economy in a broadly rural area.

The Council would expect that Down District would be included in all plans to progress the upgrade of key road projects and to improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015, journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% (against the 2003 baseline) as detailed in Priority 1.

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### **Comments on the Milestones and Outputs**

Down District Council would like to see more information on the planned schemes and the level of investment proposed for the District. This information has not been provided within the PfG and it would be encouraging to have assurances that key road projects within Down District will receive support from the Executive during this Programme for Government.

## Sustainable Transport

### **Gaps in Programme for Government**

Down District Council understands that Priority 3 (Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities) focuses on making real improvements to people's health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally, enhancing community safety, achieving improved safeguarding outcomes for children and adults most at risk of harm and protecting and improving the environment in which we live.

Given the widely rural nature of Down District, the more common and traditional methods of sustainable transport, such as walking, cycling and car sharing, may not be suitable for many residents. However, improved public transport networks and adequate park and ride or similar schemes may encourage the large travel to work population in Down District to move to more sustainable modes of travel.

### **Comments on the Milestones and Outputs**

It is encouraging to note that the Executive aims to get more people using sustainable modes of transport and plans to invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel, however, Down District Council would like to receive more information as to how this will be rolled out and how it will impact on the current roads network and public transport provision in Down District.

## Water and Wastewater

### **Gaps in Programme for Government**

Down District Council understands that the primary purpose of Priority 3 of the Draft Programme for Government (Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities) is to make real improvements to people's health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally, enhance community safety, achieve improved safeguarding outcomes for children and adults most at risk of harm and protect and improve the environment in which we live.

It is encouraging to note that within this Priority the Executive intends to improve water and sewerage services, maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure. However, Down District Council believes it would be valuable to have targets for developing use of 'grey' water systems as an alternative to using drinking water for non-food purposes and that this should be detailed in the Committee's response.

The Council also notes that there are no targets detailed in the documents for the provision of waste infrastructure as part of a Northern Ireland infrastructure development programme. The funding for waste infrastructure outlined in the Investment Strategy document is insufficient, and this is reflected in the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15. The Council notes the approach the UK government has taken to waste infrastructure in England within the National Infrastructure Plan, and would propose that a similar approach be taken here. Waste infrastructure is critical to regional infrastructure, and it is essential that this is reflected in government planning and policy documents.

Similarly, the provision of clean water and treatment of wastewater in Northern Ireland requires a huge amount of energy. NI Water is the largest user of energy in Northern Ireland, and there is no acknowledgement of this within the documents, either in the context of energy reduction, or to keep the costs of water and wastewater treatment down to assist in preventing the introduction of water rates.

In a local context within Down District, many areas are susceptible to flooding and drains are infiltrated to full capacity with excess water. Urbanisation increases surface run-off, by creating more impervious surfaces such as pavement and buildings, which do not allow the water down through the soil to the water table. This is especially true in the District when conditions are accompanied by high winter tides and southerly winds.

Therefore, whilst the Council believes Down District would greatly benefit from a new and updated road infrastructure, it is important to highlight that the necessary flood defences and wastewater infrastructure must be implemented at the same time.

Sewage treatment in the area is also especially important as Down District has a number of key tourist attraction beaches which make up a large part of the District's tourism strategy. With the increase in housing in Down District in recent years and a summer time population explosion, it is essential that wastewater and untreated sewage be dealt with accordingly and that the beaches are protected from raw effluent.

#### **Comments on the Milestones and Outputs**

Down District Council would expect the District to be included in all plans to progress the upgrade of current wastewater treatment plans and flood defences.

### **Summary**

In general terms Down District Council would like to see more attention given to the sustainability rationale with regard to public services, in particular the need to create a more balanced programme for development, allowing more people to access adequate public transport, sustainable transport and an improved roads infrastructure in Down District.

Council wishes the Committee to consider the following key issues;

- The need to reference the regional diversity of the local economic circumstances such as the relative critical sub-regional importance of, for example, tourism, rural business and services.
- The inadequacy of the existing Sub Regional Transportation strategy in a Co. Down context and how this will impact the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21.

# Fermanagh District Council



Brendan Hegarty  
B.S.Sc. F.C.A.  
Chief Executive



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15<sup>h</sup> November 2011

Paul Carlisle  
Clerk to the Committee for  
Regional Development  
Room 254  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Carlisle,

**Re: Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and draft  
Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21**

Further to your letter of 1<sup>st</sup> December inviting written evidence for  
The Committee for Regional Development , please find attached  
Fermanagh District Council's response which was agreed at  
Development Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further  
information.

Yours sincerely,

**Brendan Hegarty**  
Chief Executive

Robert Forde M.C.I.E.H. M.I.O.S.H. M.J.Mgt  
Director of Environmental Health

Robert Gibson B.Sc.  
Director of Leisure, Tourism & Arts

Brendan Hegarty B.S.Sc. F.C.A.  
Director of Finance & Information Technology

Gerry Knox B.A.  
Director of Technical Services

Desmond Reid F.R.I.C.S. D.M.S.  
Director of Building Control

**Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015  
Response from Fermanagh District Council**

Fermanagh District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21.

**1. Road infrastructure and investment**

Council welcomes the commitment in the draft Programme for Government to

“Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline (DRD)” ,supported by the Investment Strategy allocation of £1,190m between 2011/12 to 2014/15 and £1,281m between 2015/16 and 2020/2021.

Council highlights the link between improvements in transport provision and infrastructure and effective integration with land and spatial planning at a local and regional level. The Regional Development Strategy identified Enniskillen as a sub-regional centre with the South/West Gateway through Enniskillen to Sligo being identified as a Key Economic Corridor. The importance of the route from Enniskillen to Dublin via Cavan represents another significant Key Economic Corridor for this region. Some improvements have been made to the A4, between Ballygawley and Enniskillen (though no by-passes have been built and the road needs considerable investment in many other places too – basically for most of the journey from Augher to Enniskillen); however, the Enniskillen-Belcoo stretch of that road is of a particularly poor standard.

Enniskillen, which benefits from its ‘island town’ status in some respects, but suffers from that same issue, in terms of traffic flows. That is currently affecting Enniskillen as a locus for new job creation and the location of employment – road access was one of the issues raised in the Bain report, as a ‘negative’ for Enniskillen. The amount of inter-regional traffic funnelled through Enniskillen often leads to major delays which would be alleviated by the construction of the Enniskillen Southern By-pass which would also contribute to the strengthening of Enniskillen as an attractive urban tourism destination. No funding has yet been allocated for the project.

The new Acute Hospital in Enniskillen is due to open in June 2012. This is a facility, which will have 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and five theatres, with the potential to reduce waiting times to a level far below that in other regional hospitals. It will also be capable of serving patients from the Republic of Ireland. The existing roads network will become an impediment to its achieving its full potential, therefore it is essential that funding is allocated to a major

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refurbishment of the road network, particularly the A32 and the A4, to improve access times and journeys to the new hospital.

Transport links have major implications for the Economy, the Environment, Transport and Connectivity, and clearly indicate a requirement for investment in modern transport infrastructure in the area, provided on a cross-border basis. It is important that there is joined up working with the National Roads Authority in the Republic of Ireland. Whilst there is an understanding of the implications of the recession in relation to spending on the roads, it is also important that the improvements already achieved are consolidated and that plans continue to reflect longer term needs. In this regard, it is important that the work on the Cherrymount Link Road is completed including it's extension to the Dublin Road.

## **2. Public Transport**

Whilst Priority 2 in the draft Programme for Government articulates the need to provide "integrated transport infrastructure and improved public transport", it is not clear how this can be achieved or funded as there are no key commitments expressed under this Priority. Under Priority 3 there is a commitment to "Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line (DRD)" under Priority 3 and Council notes the total allocation of £476m for Public Transport in the Investment Strategy. Again there is a lack of clarity about how the cost of this project impacts on the availability of funding for other initiatives.

Council feels that there should be a specific commitment to

1. the introduction of a comprehensive information and communications service covering bus, community transport, taxis, demand responsive services (flexibly routed bus services); community lift giving schemes, community taxi buses, car pools, school transport, social services transport, non-emergency health transport, park and ride facilities and other transport initiatives available in the local area. This should be preferably be co-ordinated through one source using the most appropriate IT facilities;
2. the exploration of an integrated ticketing facility, including issues such as concessionary travel, across all public transport providers; and
3. an extension of the remit of community transport schemes to facilitate travel to hospital/medical appointments as well as actively encouraging investment in training and support to both identify and encourage volunteer drivers for such enhanced community transport schemes.

Council also stresses the need to provide adequate rural transport and roads network is essential. Innovative transport solutions must be developed which will boost the rural economy, build communities and improve the delivery of key services. Connectivity between rural areas and economic centres including market towns, larger towns and cities is essential to the long term sustainability of rural areas.

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### **3. Sustainable Transport**

Council welcomes the commitments in the draft Programme for Government to

“Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel (DRD)” and  
“By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils  
and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode  
of transport (DRD)”.

However, there is no identifiable link to a specific funding allocation in the  
Investment Strategy.

Council wishes to encourage a recognition of the key role which the Waterways  
can play, particularly in Fermanagh and bordering Counties, in relation to  
providing sustainable alternative transportation networks. Investment in their  
improvement would also lead to the potential for further developments alongside  
the waterways for tourist, hospitality and other service providers.

Council welcomes the installation of electric charge pints in Lisnaskea, Enniskillen,  
Belleek and Irvinestown. The draft Programme for Government needs to commit  
to promote the use and availability of electric vehicles at affordable prices in  
order to support the investment in the charging infrastructure which has already  
taken place.

Council recognises that, using the car is often the only practicable means of  
undertaking many journeys in rural areas, which will render the 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment  
more difficult to achieve within a largely rural community.

### **4. Water and Wastewater**

Council welcomes the commitments in the draft Programme for Government to

“Invest £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure” and notes that the  
Investment Strategy shows a commitment of £668m in 2011/12 – 2014/15 and a  
further £600m in 2015/16 – 2020/21, a total of £1,268m.

Council has strong concerns in relation to recent housing developments which  
were given planning permission subject to the Developer providing private  
sewage treatment plants until access could be granted to the public sewer system  
operated by Northern Ireland Water. In many cases these developments are  
partially occupied, but the Developer is no longer in business which raises the  
issue of responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the private sewage  
treatment plants.

Council would also welcome investment in improved ventilation at the points of  
storm overflows in order to deal with foul odours permeating areas around the  
storage tanks, with a consequential impact on air quality.



## **5. Monitoring.**

The success of the draft Programme for Government can only be measured by the extent to which it is implemented. This will require sufficient resources to be allocated to programmes of work, with clarity about the funding available to each commitment and to the particular elements within it, together with a robust monitoring and evaluation system that tracks progress and measures the real improvements that are being made. Council recommends that government policy should move beyond economies of scale arguments to identifying measures to consider the social and regional return on investment in terms of rural sensitive indicators.

Strategic buy-in from other government departments is also required. Although funding is available in some cases, it is widely dispersed amongst agencies departments. This hinders complementary working which, although improving, has some way to go.

# George Best Belfast City Airport



Our Ref: BA/em

15 December 2011

Mr J Spratt  
Chair of Committee for Regional Development  
C/o Paul Carlisle Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development  
Room 254, Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt

**GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT RESPONSE TO THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE'S  
REQUEST FOR EVIDENCE TO INFORM THE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT PROGRAMME  
FOR GOVERNMENT 2011-2015 AND THE DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
2011-2021**

George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee for Regional Development's request for evidence to inform the Committee's response to the consultation document on the aforementioned documents.

GBBCA is broadly supportive of the aims and objectives outlined in both documents and particularly welcomes the commitments of the Executive to increasing foreign direct investment and increasing the value of manufacturing exports. Equally, the commitments outlined in the draft Programme for Government with regard to growing visitor numbers, hosting the World Police and Fire Games and hosting a significant international golf tournament are strongly supported. Eliminating Air Passenger Duty on Long Haul flights will go some way to achieving these objectives, but there is still much work to be done to ensure that European and domestic opportunities are exploited from both a business and tourism perspective.

The Committee has requested views specifically on four key topics. GBBCA has provided comment on three of these areas below: public transport, road and rail infrastructure and investment, and sustainable transport.

***Public Transport***

Many of GBBCA's passengers rely on the public transport network in Northern Ireland to access our services and indeed, incoming passengers rely on these services to allow them to access Belfast and the wider Province.

(2)

As a 'strategic gateway' to the province, GBBCA has been closely involved in the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. Included within this plan are outline strategies to further encourage the use of public transport by those accessing Belfast along the North Down/A2 corridor. GBBCA has welcomed these proposals and is ready to engage with Translink and others to pursue these opportunities. We welcome the support outlined in the Strategic Investment Plan for the progression of initiatives to improve public transport and connectivity throughout the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area.

**Road and Rail Infrastructure**

GBBCA supports the commitment of the executive to upgrade strategic roads and improve access to ports and gateways.

We will support efforts to improve the connectivity between rail and air services and would welcome the opportunity to engage with Translink and DRD on access from GBBCA to the rail halt at Sydenham.

**Sustainable Transport**

We welcome the Executive's pledge to considering potential investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives and will welcome opportunities to align our objectives as a transportation hub with these plans. It's is GBBCA's policy that *"through its programme of sustainable development, George Best Belfast City Airport is committed to achieving a balance between the social and economic benefits of the airport's growth and its environmental impacts"*. As such, the commitment of the Executive to considering new sustainable transport initiatives is closely aligned with our own goals. We look forward to seeing achievable and measurable targets and goals outlined by the Executive in this regard.

We welcome this opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee and we would be happy to discuss the points presented above further.

Yours sincerely



BRIAN AMBROSE OBE  
Chief Executive

# Guide Dogs

## **Committee for Regional Development: Northern Ireland Executive: Consultation on Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2015**

Consultation Response From:  
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association N. Ireland

Date: 16 December 2011

## **Committee for Regional Development: Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2015: A response from The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Guide Dogs)**



### **Introduction**

Guide Dogs want a society in which blind and partially sighted people enjoy the same freedom of movement as everyone else.

We seek to work with others to create an inclusive environment and integrated transport network which enables the 47,000 blind and partially sighted people living in Northern Ireland to reach their full potential.

Guide Dogs welcomes the opportunity to respond to the invitation from the Committee for Regional Development to comment on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2015. We will be restricting our comments to one single issue: the provision of audio visual information to assist bus travel.

Unable to drive, many blind and partially sighted people rely on public transport to get out and about and live independent lives.

Guide Dogs have welcomed the improvements in the physical accessibility of buses over recent years and the change to the PSVAR (Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations) which seen the introduction of audio announcements on trains. We would like to see a further change to the PSVAR to include buses, and the phased introduction of audio visual information to assist bus travel.

### **General**

Research conducted for the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee [(DPTAC) – the UK Government’s statutory advisory committee on transport for disabled people] found that while disabled people travel a third less often than non-disabled people, they have a greater reliance on bus services. Within the disability community, blind and partially sighted people use buses significantly more than other disabled people, with 57% taking the bus at least once a month compared to 43% of disabled people as a whole.

The Department of Regional Development’s Review of Concessionary Fares in 2006 found that of the 212,118 Smart passes issued 1% were issued to people registered blind and 6% to those entitled to a half fare concession. It revealed that those registered blind made on average 64 journeys per year compared to 39 by all Smartpass holders

In Guide Dogs’ own research, “Functionality and the Needs of Blind and Partially-Sighted Adults in the UK “ which was published in July 2007, 32% of the blind and partially sighted people who use bus services have degree of difficulty and 10% found them very difficult to use. The most common difficulty with using buses was identifying the correct bus and where/when to get off. Additionally, 16% of people rated bus drivers as “unhelpful” making them amongst the lowest rated of service industry staff.

Between May and September 2005 focus groups and one to one interviews were conducted by Guide Dogs with a total of 60 people. Those interviewed included people using guide dogs and other mobility aids, deafblind people and people over 65 with low vision. The vast majority of participants felt very strongly that their ability to determine where to get off a bus with minimal or no reliance on fellow passengers or the bus driver was a fundamental right. Once on the bus, travel strategies included 'asking the driver and hoping he remembers', or 'positioning myself behind the driver' or 'walking up and down the bus to remain visible to the driver', or 'asking the person next to me' or, on more frequent routes, 'learning the modulations in the road ... bends in the road.' The evidence clearly suggests a significant level of stress and dependency on fellow passengers and drivers, for many of these passengers.

From 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2010 only 3% of all participants in Sport NI's Community Investment Programme were blind or partially sighted. As part of Sport NI's 'Awards for Sport' scheme, Guide Dogs are working closely with Disability Sport NI and Blind Sport NI to encourage more blind and partially sighted people to participate in sport and physical activity. One element of this is to encourage individuals to utilise public transport in getting to and from their local leisure centre or specialist activity. The provision of audio visual information on buses would enable the initial support to be withdrawn so that the individual could eventually travel to activities independently.

The proposed changes to Welfare Reform will help and support blind and partially sighted get back to work. Guide Dogs have held initial discussions with representatives from DEL regarding the implications of Welfare Reform on the Fares To Work scheme, and the potential to provide mobility training to enable blind and partially sighted individuals travel to and from work independently. The provision of audio visual information on buses would greatly assist with this.

The current consultation on Belfast Rapid Transit includes audio visual information as part of the proposed system. This confirms that a modern transport system, similar to those throughout Europe and elsewhere in the UK, should have an audio visual system not only to benefit those with impairments or disabilities, but also tourists or those not familiar with an area, and the wider general public. Guide Dogs believe that those able to benefit from audio visual information should not be restricted to users of Belfast Rapid Transit, but that it should be extended to others through a phased implementation programme.

The Department for Regional Development, supported by Translink and Guide Dogs, have just completed a pilot of audio visual information on Metro bus route 5a. The feedback from participants and fellow passengers is currently being analysed and an evaluation report will be presented to Minister DRD and to the Committee for Regional Development early in 2012.

### **Conclusion**

The provision of audio visual information on buses supports many of the aspirations contained within the Programme for Government:

- Priority 1: more people in work;
- Priority 2: impact of Welfare Reform, improving the participation of young people in education, employment and training; integrated transport infrastructure and improved public transport;
- Priority 3: improving health and well being;
- Priority 4: improving community and personal well being; increasing participation in sport and physical recreation

The introduction of audio-visual information has the potential to significantly improve the travel confidence of many disabled people enabling them to become more active citizens within society.

Guide Dogs are asking that the Executive as part of the Programme for Government implement a further change to the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (NI) to include buses, and the phased introduction of audio visual information to assist bus travel. Guide Dogs would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department for Regional Development on how best this could be achieved.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss this response in more detail, please contact:

**Andrew Murdock**

Public Policy Manager  
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association  
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18 Heron Road  
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Email: [andrew.murdock@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:andrew.murdock@guidedogs.org.uk)

# IMTAC



## **Written evidence from Imtac to the Committee for Regional Development on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy**

December 2011

This document is available in a range of alternative formats.

### **About us**

Imtac is a Committee of and for disabled people and older people and others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others on issues that affect the mobility of disabled people and older people. Our work is supported by the Department for Regional Development.

### **Transport and older people and disabled people**

It is now accepted that older people and disabled people are disadvantaged more than others in society because of a lack of access to suitable transport<sup>1</sup>. Poor access to transport means many disabled people and older people find it difficult to do everyday activities and access key services. Research shows that transport or lack of it is a major contributor to social exclusion in our community<sup>2</sup>.

Imtac recognises and welcomes the investment made in transport services by Government in Northern Ireland over the last decade aimed at improving access to transport services for disabled people and older people. However our analysis indicates that disabled people and older people still experience many barriers to travel<sup>3</sup>.

### **General Comments on the draft Programme for Government/Investment Strategy**

Imtac recognises and commends the progress made to date in improving access to transport services.

Imtac recognises the unprecedented economic circumstances that face the Executive at this time and appreciates that cuts in services may be inevitable.

The Committee commends the Executive for its commitment to seek to protect the most vulnerable in our society from these cuts. Imtac also commends the overall commitment towards reducing inequality in our society.

Many of the commitments contained in the PfG have the potential to make things better for disabled people and older people. However the generic nature of commitments and the lack of overall detail make it difficult to provide a more fulsome endorsement of the PfG. The Executive has yet to provide an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals. An EQIA would have helped the Committee make a more informed response on the commitments in the PfG.

### **Comments on the transport elements of the PfG/Investment Strategy**

The Regional Development Committee has asked Imtac to comment specifically on the public and sustainable transport elements of the PfG/Investment Strategy. Imtac welcomes the commitment to spend £500 million over the period on sustainable transport measures.

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- 1 Detailed analysis of these issues are contained in the Accessible Transport Strategy produced by the DRD in 2005.
  - 2 The best analysis of the linkage between transport and social exclusion is contained in Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion (SIU 2003).
  - 3 This assessment is based on our discussions with disabled people and older people and their organisations as well as an analysis of statistical evidence including the Policy Review of the Concessionary Fares Scheme and the Report on Promoting Social Inclusion Group on Disability.

Looking at proposals for how this resource is to allocated<sup>4</sup> we welcome further capital investment in better and more accessible bus and rail services in Northern Ireland.

Imtac is concerned about proposals to reduce revenue support for public transport services over the same period<sup>5</sup>. Reductions in subsidy provided by DRD as well as reductions in the transport services provided by both Education and Health will inevitably lead to reductions in public transport service levels over the next few years particularly in rural areas of Northern Ireland. It will also place an unrealistic burden on services such as Door2door transport and rural Dial-a-lift.

Based on a simple analysis of the public transport elements of the PfG Imtac believes that reductions in service levels will significantly reduce the ability of many in our society to travel and consequently access everyday essential activities and services. This will have a significant impact on the broader commitments in the draft PfG around tackling inequality and impact on a number of specific commitments in the Programme aimed at tackling this issue<sup>6</sup>.

### **Our recommendations**

Imtac fully acknowledges that additional resources are not available and some reductions service levels are inevitable. However transport is essential for the majority of activities and services the Executive wants to promote and enhance. We believe there is an overwhelming argument for Government Departments, transport providers and other stakeholders (including the community and voluntary sector) to co-operate to ensure we develop integrated transport solutions that maximise the resources available to us.

Imtac has considered some specific ways this could be done to ensure better access to transport and services for disabled people and older people. These include:

- A cross departmental Demand Responsive Transport Forum to investigate the potential of developing more flexible transport solutions within current resources
- A cross departmental Travel Training Forum to investigate how existing resources could be used to extend the support services to enable more people to use existing transport services
- Improved and better co-ordinated information about travel services

Imtac would also like to see a further commitment included in the draft Programme for Government that would improve access to public transport services for many older people and disabled people. The DRD recently completed a pilot of an audiovisual information system on a bus route in Belfast. Whilst we acknowledge that it is likely that resources will not be available to extend this pilot we do believe that Government here could legislate to

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4 Ministerial response to written assembly question AQW 5048/11-15

5 Contained DRD Savings Plan published earlier this year

6 Commitments include:

- provide £40 million to address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas through the Social Investment Fund;
- invest £40 million to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation and increase community services through the Social Investment Fund;
- implement a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare;
- deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion;
- ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it;
- ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes and substantially increase the number of schools sharing facilities;
- reform and modernise the delivery of Health and Social care to improve the provision and quality of services;
- reconfigure our network of health and social care services to improve patient outcomes and access to new treatments;
- bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and isolation in the next 3 years
- upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications;
- support people (with an emphasis on young people) into employment by providing skills and training



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amend the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations to ensure that all new buses introduced in Northern Ireland in the future include this facility.

One final issue we would like the Executive to consider is the issue of free travel for disabled people on public transport. Imtac recognises that resources currently make introducing such a measure impossible as transport operators continue to be reimbursed for actual usage of smartpasses. However the DRD Savings Plan indicates that the DRD may reduce this level of subsidy in the future regardless of the number of passengers using the pass. If this proposal is progressed we would like the Executive to consider making travel on public transport free for eligible disabled people who currently have half-fare concessions<sup>7</sup>.

Imtac believes that the measures outlined above could help offset the disproportionate impact of transport service reductions on older people and disabled people. The measures will also assist the Executive to meet many of the commitments around reducing inequality in our society.

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<sup>7</sup> The DRD has accepted that anomaly exists between concessions for disabled here and other parts of these islands where free travel is available. A lack of resource has prevented this anomaly being addressed. If the funding mechanism for concessionary fares is altered resources may not be an issue. The ATS identified the cost of travel as one of the barriers that prevent disabled people from travelling.

# Institute of Public Health in Ireland



16th December 2011

Mr Paul Carlisle  
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development  
Room 254 Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

**Re: Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021**

Dear Mr Carlisle

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) welcomes the opportunity to support the Committee's work in relation to commenting on the draft Programme for Government. The remit of IPH is to promote cooperation for public health between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the areas of research and information, capacity building and policy advice. Our approach is to support Departments of Health and their agencies in both jurisdictions, and maximise the benefits of all-island cooperation to achieve practical benefits for people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

It is well recognised that the spatial planning of human urban activity impacts on quality of life, health and wellbeing. IPH has produced two reports on the connection between these areas in recent years.<sup>1, 2</sup> Responding to the Committee's request for information, we focus specifically on transport and make the following key points.

- There is growing recognition that the leading causes of illness and death, including heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, chronic lower respiratory diseases and injuries, may be exacerbated by elements within the environment which contribute to sedentary lifestyles. IPH would welcome a greater acknowledgement of the links between regional development and health throughout the Programme for Government.
- Health inequalities are the preventable and unjust differences in health status experienced by certain population groups. Regional Development can support tackling health inequalities by ensuring that modal shifts in transport accommodate disadvantaged sections of the populations.
- The Investing for Health strategy set out the requirement for all government departments to take into account the health impacts of their work.<sup>3</sup> The Department for Regional Development supported by the Assembly Committee has a key role to play in showing leadership for improved health through the delivery of the Regional Development Strategy and Regional Transportation Strategy.

**Gaps in the draft Programme for Government**

We support the overall approach taken by Government in striving for balanced sub-regional growth and particularly welcome the recognition by Government of the importance of tackling disadvantage and improving health and wellbeing. However while the need to work across sectors is articulated in the introductory material it is important to follow this up with specifics which would make this aspiration realisable.

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1 Lavin, T, Higgins, C, Metcalfe, O & Jordan, A (2006) Health Impacts of the Built Environment: A Review  
2 Lavin, T, Metcalfe, O & Higgins, C (2011) Active Travel: Healthy Lives  
3 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2002) Investing for Health

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We recognise the importance of building the economy. However in striving for economic prosperity we must be cognisant of the requirement for this growth to benefit all within society. This point is made in recent work by the New Economic Foundation and the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities.<sup>4, 5</sup> Allied to this is the requirement that development in urban areas does not exacerbate inequalities for those living in rural communities.

The physical and social characteristics of communities and the degree to which they enable and promote healthy behaviours all make a contribution to social inequalities in health. There is a clear social gradient in healthy community characteristics. IPH call for a stronger recognition for development initiatives to target people who live in the 10% most deprived communities and set in place clear indicators to measure this action.

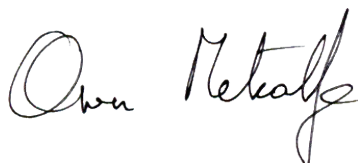
There should be a more integrated approach to transport policy across roads, rail and bus and the development of walking and cycling networks with the emphasis being on promoting sustainable transport choices where possible, including for rural dwellers.

Climate change has been identified as one of the biggest issues facing public health in the 21st Century. IPH considers that the Regional Development Committee has a significant role to play in tackling climate change and developing more energy efficient environments. For example, transport is the biggest contributor to Greenhouse Gas emissions in Northern Ireland and this needs to be addressed by providing alternative options to private transport and more efficient movement of goods and services. Climate change and health share the same agenda and measures taken to improve the quality of the environment support a drive for healthier communities.

***Comments on the milestones and outputs and suggestions for monitoring progress***

We welcome the inclusion of milestones and outputs and emphasise that performance measures used for monitoring must be quantifiable, valid and useful.

IPH welcome the opportunity to discuss the above issues in further detail with the Committee should that be required.



**Owen Metcalfe**

Director

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4 New Economics Foundation (2009) The new economics, a bigger picture

5 Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010 (Marmot Review)

## Cyclists Touring Club

1. The CTC thanks the Committee for the invitation to provide written evidence to inform the Committee's response to the Draft Programme for Government 2011 -15 and draft Investment Strategy 2011 -2017.
2. The CTC formed in 1878 has over 70,000 members in the UK and Ireland and works to support cyclists and cycling.
3. Travelling by bicycle is the most efficient, economical, healthy, non polluting, congestion busting, equitable and socially inclusive mode of transport particularly for journeys of 5 miles or less.
4. Research has shown that 98% of NI rural households live within 5 miles of local amenities<sup>1</sup>
5. The draft Programme for Government commits a disproportionate amount to providing further new road capacity while spending only 6% of the Road budget on Local Transport Safety Measures.<sup>2</sup>
6. The principal cause of death for 5 to 16 year olds is transport collisions<sup>3</sup>
7. Children living in deprived households in Northern Ireland are 5 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a road traffic collision than those living in a wealthy household<sup>4</sup>
8. The N I Cycling Strategy<sup>5</sup> published in 2000 at section 6 Planned Action - Improving cyclists safety outlines measures to reduce traffic speed and implement 20 mph zones - no significant 20 mph zones have been introduced over the last 11 years.
9. A recent report commissioned by the Department of Transport shows the strongest evidence of measures to promote road safety for vulnerable non motorised road users are reduced traffic speeds.<sup>6</sup>
10. One of the key PfG commitments is to reduce journey time by 2.5% on key transport corridors. Commuting journeys account for 21% of distance traveled per person annually with a journey length of 8.6 miles. Business journeys account for only 4% per person annually with an average length of 15.6 miles<sup>7</sup>. A 2.5% time saving on a 15.6 mile journey assuming average speed of 40 mph is less than 40 seconds. The documents concentrate on vehicle mobility while ignoring personal accessibility. There is no commitment in either document to reduce the need to travel through better spatial planning and modal transport shift. Instead the target is to increase road capacity which induces traffic growth without constraint while not addressing transport inequalities or fairness
11. Research by the Sustainable Development Commission shows the richest 10 percent of the population effectively receive four times as much transport spending as the poorest 10 percent<sup>8</sup>
12. Transport poverty is not mentioned in either of the documents.

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1 Friends of the Earth NI/ QUB Planning Department

2 DRD Budget April 2011

3 DHSSPS

4 Dept of Environment Road Safety Branch

5 DRD Published June 2000 with a forward signed by Mr Peter Robinson

6 Infrastructure and cyclists safety dft

7 NI Travel Survey 2008-2010

8 Fairness in a car dependent society SDC April 2011

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13. The CTC welcomes the commitment to increase cycling and walking to school. Daily integrated physical activity through active travel is a major benefit to health for all. Increased rates of walking and cycling should focus on all age groups.
  14. Cycle more often 2 cool down the planet<sup>9</sup> commissioned by the ECF shows that if levels of cycling in the EU-27 were equivalent to those found in Denmark, bicycle use would help achieve 12 to 26% of the 2050 target reduction set for the transport sector, depending on which transport mode the bicycle replaces. In NI if car mode was replaced by cycling for 25% of journeys it is likely the percentage saving would be greater
  15. Spending on cycling infrastructure creates more jobs than spending on roads<sup>10</sup>
  16. The best ways to monitor progress are to – i) measure the reduced emissions from transport following a shift to sustainable transport, ii) vulnerable road users reporting a reduction in the perceived fear of traffic, iii) more older women than men cycling (as presently reported in the Netherlands) iv) rates of walking and cycling increase as KSI rates decrease.

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9 Cycle more often 2 cool down the planet [www.ECF.com](http://www.ECF.com)

10 [http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published\\_study/PERI\\_ABikes\\_June2011.pdf](http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published_study/PERI_ABikes_June2011.pdf)

# Environment Link



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12 December 2011

**Re: DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT**

Dear Paul,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Programme for Government. We heartily welcome your detailed investigation into the document and would like to provide some comments at this point which we will be happy to expand upon if the Committee so desires.

## **1. Gaps**

### ***General Comments***

The PfG misses the opportunity to address the many challenges facing Northern Ireland, and the world, at this time and accordingly to set a visionary programme for future development. Essentially the Programme is based on existing targets and commitments and lacks serious ambition. In the current global situation such a conservative approach will not place Northern Ireland at the forefront of Europe; now is not the time for an extension of 'business as usual' – a proactive and creative approach is required with the Assembly leading business, local government and the public in ways which maximise Northern Ireland's opportunities in a changing and threatening world.

Significant action is required in three particular areas if we are to continue to transform Northern Ireland:

- Developing a resilient low carbon economy,
- Addressing energy security and climate change, and
- Working within ecological limits through using all resources efficiently.

These cross-cutting themes are mutually supportive. For example, dealing with Northern Ireland's reliance on imported fossil fuels to address energy price and supply issues will also address climate change targets and fuel poverty. Recognising the need to deliver improved services while reducing our use of expensive and limited resources can put us at the forefront of renewable energy development and delivery. However, other countries are actively addressing these issues and the opportunity to lead, with its attendant economic and social benefits, will rapidly be lost to other countries who are willing to make these commitments. The need for a healthy, well-protected environment is critical to the health of our people and economy, to attracting and keeping business and to reaching our challenging tourism targets.

A significant problem with the delivery of high level government targets is dealing with major issues in a piecemeal fashion, partitioning single broad problems among several Departments. While the PfG attempts to address this through identifying five Commitment areas which are cross-cutting, delivery is still by Department, with the result that the opportunity of delivering larger, cost effective, integrative solutions is lost. Recent approaches through Interdepartmental Steering

Groups are a vital step, but much more needs to be done to ensure that major issues such as fuel poverty, renewable energy, public health, environmental protection and food security are dealt with effectively, ensuring that policies of one Department are not thwarting the ambitions of others or of government as a whole. We are very concerned that the individual Departmental targets will not be able to significantly impact on the achievement of the overall commitments due to their limited scale and focus.

In general there is much to be welcomed in the individual commitments within the PFG; it is the lack of ambition and often lack of detail within the targets and the lack of integration across Departments that are most worrying. We would suggest a series of major inter-departmental programmes to address groups of individual commitments and overcome bureaucratic barriers.

- A **Low Carbon Economy** programme to address energy price and security issues, reduce energy wastage and address fuel poverty, develop renewable energy and build an internationally recognised and competitive low-carbon industry. A Climate Change Act is a fundamental driver for this, as are statutory interim and sectoral targets.
- A reform of **management of all of government property and procurement** to prioritise resource and energy efficiency and act as a lead and a driver for Northern Ireland investment and products, with early particular emphasis on energy, food and transport.
- An integrated approach to land and sea management based on the **ecosystem services approach** to deliver a range of outputs including food, energy, clean water, tourism assets, rural livelihoods and biodiversity.

#### ***Regional Development Committee Focus***

Specifically within the direct remit of the Regional Development Committee, we welcome the inclusion of the following commitments:

- Investment of over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel.
- By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport.
- Maintaining a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure. An additional way to meet these targets would be to ensure the Executive provides sufficient resources to ensure that all our water bodies achieve Good Ecological Status by 2015 as required by the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD creates the opportunity to significantly influence and change the approach to river basin management in Northern Ireland to positively impact water quality, water efficiency and water dependent habitats. Potential economic benefits from improved water quality arise in the form of reduced costs of water treatment, increased revenue from tourism and a more cost efficient supply chain for food production.

We would however like to make the following comments:

- NIEL would like to see a specific commitment within the PFG to ensure that at least 50% of Government investment in transport supports sustainable transport measures.

Decisions made today will determine our transport infrastructure for the next 50 years. Unfortunately most of those made so far commit us to continue spending on an unsustainable roads system that is excessively reliant on fossil fuel.

Domestic transport emissions in Northern Ireland now account for 25% of our total greenhouse gas emissions. A move away from reliance on personal hydrocarbon-fuelled cars may soon become an economic as well as an environmental necessity. Transport is the only sector that is utterly reliant on a single source of primary energy. The emission reductions required can only be achieved by promoting active transport, investing in public transport and in the longer term through major co-ordinated changes to land-use policies.

Despite policy commitments to sustainable transport, the previous PfG allocated 80% of the transport spend to roads-based measures. Investment in public transport on a per capita basis in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland is at least twice that of Northern Ireland. While domestic transport emissions in the UK increased by 9% from 1990 to 2006, in Northern Ireland they increased by a staggering 51%. The transport sector now accounts for 25% of Northern Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Although recent investment in public transport has produced encouraging results, much more can be done. Travelwise reports that a 10% increase in the number of frequent cyclists would result in a cost saving of £200 million per year for the NHS, while the introduction of a default 20mph speed limit in all residential areas would help to improve road safety, encourage walking, cycling and public transport use, reduce fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and decrease noise.

Continued over-reliance on the private car will have an increasingly negative impact on Northern Ireland's economic, societal and environmental well-being. The new PfG must include provision for at least 50% of Government investment in transport to be spent on sustainable transport measures.

- The current proposal within the draft PfG to *ensure no additional water charges during this programme for Government.*

We would question this proposal. Given the severity of the current economic climate, it is vital that mechanisms to bring in additional funds are considered. Although potentially unpopular, the possibility of water charging must be reconsidered. The degree to which they are acceptable is likely to be closely related to the services people see as necessary for government to deliver. This is particularly so given the graphic demonstration of the impacts of the lack of investment in the water infrastructure during the Christmas 2010 period. It is of course necessary that they be introduced in a way which safeguards the services needed by those on low incomes, and that they are introduced in the most cost effective way possible; perhaps by being added to the rates as a separate line rather than through a costly separate billing system in the first instance. A more fair and equitable system based on usage would be vital in the longer term through water meters. Charging has the added benefit of helping people to recognise the importance of not wasting water and decreasing usage, but only if the charges are introduced sensitively and with clarity.

## **2. Milestones and Outputs**

Throughout there is a lack of 'SMART' targets, leading to difficulties in understanding what exactly the milestones and outputs are; where targets do exist they are often general and merely restate



commitments already made. There is an important opportunity to use targets/milestones to drive progress, but the vague and unambitious nature of many of those in the draft PfG mean that this opportunity may not be embraced. SMART targets need to be established for each commitment for each year which will allow monitoring and reporting. These targets should be sufficiently high level to actually measure progress on the commitment, not simply be a 'box ticking' exercise of achieving an administrative output (e.g. annual percentage reductions in GHG, not 'production of a document about').

### **3. Monitoring Progress**

Without a clear monitoring mechanism it is not possible for the PfG to meet even its modest targets. A clear monitoring mechanism, including both public and Assembly reporting on achievement of targets on at least an annual basis is absolutely required (some monitoring should take place on a six-monthly basis but many data are collected annually so intermediate reports would likely be just 'on target' rather than actual figures; to what extent this is useful is debatable). Although it is subject to misuse, a simple 'traffic light' system for progress to meeting SMART targets (which need to be established for each commitment) has merit, but an 'explanatory column' is also required. Fragmentation of a system (amber green, red amber....) is not particularly useful and can easily lead to confusion. If the targets are sufficiently clear it should be possible to assign them to one of three categories (achieved, not achieved but significant progress, not achieved) with a clear statement accompanying all non-green categories as to reasons for lack of progress and action to be taken.

Monitoring should be reported to the Minister, the relevant Committee or Committees and the Assembly as a whole. The results should be made public.

We thank you for the opportunity to make these comments and would welcome the opportunity to discuss them more fully with the Committee in January.

Yours sincerely,



Sue Christie  
Chief Executive

## NILGA PFG



### Draft Programme for Government (PfG)

Initial **DRAFT** Response

#### AN Integrated Delivery Framework FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The draft Programme for Government 2011-15 presents a huge challenge for Northern Ireland. This is a valuable opportunity to redesign the way we work, to break through silos, and to create a new, efficient, collaborative society, that the citizens we serve will understand and readily support. We would encourage the NI Executive to be bold and innovative in its approach, and for this to be the first step in a much longer term strategic planning exercise.

This is an opportunity for everyone to play their part, in a new, rebalanced economy, cohesive society and valued environment. Local government is ready to 'step up to the plate' as an active partner in the re-design, re-invigoration, reform and implementation of public sector service delivery in Northern Ireland, and to be a key part of the enterprise solution required to address the current challenging economic climate.

**The draft Programme for Government (PfG) can offer strategic partnership between the Executive and Local Government, and provides the groundwork for a balanced, mature, contemporary, two tier government approach, which can play a significant part in economic and social recovery.**

It offers the opportunity for Local Government to become a central 'building block' to energise communities and local economies in partnership with the Executive to mitigate the worst impacts of imposed budget cuts, and to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society are protected.

There are however, a number of critical 'gaps' that have been identified within the PfG and its associated documentation, which it is essential to highlight to ensure that the eventual, agreed Programme is the most effective we can collectively produce as a region.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- highlight the strategic benefits that could be provided by Local Government in three-dimensional contract partnership with the Executive delivering key tenets of the PfG, with adequate resources in place.
- highlight the gaps in the draft PfG, from a local government perspective, and make proposals as to how these gaps could be addressed

A definitive response must be formulated by NILGA's Executive, during January 2012, in consultation with SOLACE and local councils.

### Key Issues

The priorities outlined in the PfG are broadly welcomed, and it is recognised that there is a link to the three pillars of sustainable development within the document, which is also to be welcomed. The following section of this response focuses firstly on overarching issues, then specifically at the five priorities, followed by comments on programme management and monitoring.

### **Overarching, strategic benefits offered by local government**

The drafting of a new Programme for Government presents a clear opportunity for innovation in strategic planning for Northern Ireland, even within limited resources. In the current unstable economic climate, there has never been a greater need for an integrated approach to government working, for 'joined-up thinking' and to make best use of resources across the public sector, to assist in rebalancing the economy. This is also clearly identified in the Investment Strategy for NI.

NILGA required local government to be a 'key player' in ensuring the PfG is a success. Councils are visible, 'on the ground' governmental partners, helping to deliver the desired outcomes on many of the issues contained within the identified priorities and acting as a signposting service on others. As a key implementer of policy and strategy, strengthening delivery relationships, it is the NILGA view that local government should also be a key partner of the NI Executive within the policy and strategy development process.

### **Overarching gaps, from a local government perspective**

#### ***Reform, Planning And Timing***

##### **Reform**

NILGA must constructively criticise the draft PfG, in as much as the Review of Public Administration which is presently espoused in Priority 5 offers rationalisation not reform; has no definitive costs put forward in order to determine its sustainable value; offers recognition of Councils only so far as their numbers are to be reduced and services added, yet does not (as was the case in Scotland) get down to business in terms of **clearly and objectively defining**:

1. **Cost and Benefits** confirmed and followed by
2. **Legislation and financial / human resource provision** determined by properly designed transfers of functions tailored around local need and community development followed by
3. (Task and finish, multi strand, political and strategic) **Preparation** followed by
4. (Task and finish, multi strand, political and strategic) **Implementation**.

If the Secretary of State indicates that this approach was required in England, if the Scottish Parliament took this approach in Scotland, and if the Secretary of State emphasised that this would also be the sequence required before Corporation Tax would be potentially modified (30th November 2011), then RPA should **not** be proposed, on **any other platform but the above**.

##### **Planning**

The PfG has a large number of extremely laudable commitments, focused on regeneration, the public landscape, accelerated planning decisions, delivery of social and affordable housing, and a few very specific plans. To date, however, less than half of Northern Ireland has up-to-date draft or adopted development plans. This is likely to reach zero coverage by the end of this Assembly mandate.

There is a gap evident, regarding a commitment to ensure the development of appropriate spatial, development and community plans for Northern Ireland, which can only be achieved in partnership with local authorities. This gap is noted as **critical** to **ALL** Priorities.

##### **Timing**

Clearly there is a timing difficulty, with work only re-commencing on local government reform legislation in 2012, however the lack of plan coverage is likely to impact on the ability to spend allocated monies e.g. through the Social Investment Fund, during this Assembly mandate. This emphasises the concern that the focus on local government reform within

the Programme is purely structural, and that the opportunity to prepare for a new post-2015 system has not been taken within the document.

### **Policy Integration on Strategic Issues**

On reading the PfG, it would seem that policy integration at strategic level is not as full as it could be. Whilst it is acknowledged that to split an overall piece into priorities automatically places work into silos, it would be valuable if greater thought could be given to integration of commitments, e.g.:

- Integration of skills development with desired economic and industrial development
- Integration of waste (resource) management with R&D and economic development
- Integration of energy policy with water policy
- Integration of food security across the piece

#### **NILGA will:**

Work to ensure that a robust and relevant partnership arrangement is developed with the NI Executive.

Work to ensure that local government is a key player in delivering a successful Programme for Government.

Work to ensure that over the period of this Programme for Government and beyond, appropriate, integrated, focussed policy and strategy is developed and implemented in the best interests of our citizens, our economy and our environment.

## **PfG – Priorities**

### **1. Economy**

This priority focuses on achieving long-term economic growth by improving competitiveness and building a larger and more export – driven private sector. To do this the labour force and consumer market must be rebuilt, and the economy rebalanced to improve the wealth and living standards of everyone. Central to PfG proposals is the creation of sustainable jobs and private sector growth.

#### **Benefits offered by Local Government**

- **Local economic development** – Councils offer the experience and local frameworks to develop long-term economic investment, and job creation based upon local SME knowledge and needs. Councils are ideally placed to identify and develop sub-regional infrastructure projects. Councils offer strengthening **‘home market’** SME development and growth through developing local businesses, cluster development, signposting and networking - in doing so encouraging SME innovation/ R&D transition to export markets. Councils are in the prime position to develop in partnership sector industry clusters within Northern Ireland and outside, through spatial planning.
- **Supporting foreign direct investment** – Councils offer local support and advice to foreign businesses, e.g. on labour relations, wages, R&D, and sustaining NI investment locations, ‘aftercare’.
- **Seeking out wider EU investment opportunities**– Councils through NILGA's EU Knowledge Bank offer the opportunity to seek out new, wider EU investment opportunities to maximise the benefit of regional EU financial mechanisms, and explore the possibility of

developing in partnership with the NI Executive, a local government capital investment holding fund/ bank.

- **Strengthening local skills** – Councils in partnership with FE/ Universities offer knowledge and the ability to link local skills development with areas of industry growth - including skills development for the creative and tourist industries.
- **Integration of local R&D/new technology** – Councils offer local integration of government policy to develop new markets through use of environmental management and new technology, e.g. waste management and renewables.
- **Community and civic leadership** – improving the environment, supporting the economy.

#### **Gap analysis**

- Although the link between STEM skills and R&D funding is welcomed, there seems to be a gap between the skills identified as requiring development, and the industries identified as priority e.g. skills required for the creative and tourism industries.

## **2. Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Well-being**

This priority seeks to address the challenges of societal challenges of disadvantage and inequalities, and address poor health. Priority 2 seeks to break the cycle of deprivation, education under-achievement, and to address health inequalities and poor health and wellbeing as well as economic disengagement.

#### **Benefits offered by Local Government**

- **Delivery of local community provision and support** – Councils offer local level skills development, anti-poverty work, advice provision, integrated health and social care provision, food security at local level (e.g. local food markets, allotments), and rural isolation work Delivery of the Power of Well-being and Community Planning powers will be critical to the success of these governmental aims., as councils are already fully involved in increasing the sustainability and resilience of communities.
- **Integration of Council leisure and public health services** - Councils play a key role in addressing some of the societal issues highlighted under this priority through the development of closer integration and delivery between council leisure and public health service.

## **3. Protecting our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities**

This priority focuses on making practical improvements to people's health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally, enhancing community safety, achieving improved safeguarding outcomes for children and adults most at risk and protecting and improving the environment in which we live.

#### **Benefits offered by Local Government**

- **Delivery of EU policy 'early warning' system** – Councils through NILGA's EU Knowledge Bank offer 'future proofing' of EU policy and strategy coming down to the UK/ the region, and in doing so seek to limit negative impacts.
- **Policy and strategy integration** – Councils offer local integration and implementation for the PfG, and NI Departmental strategies and policy, recognising the inter-relationships that exist between PfG priorities. For example, the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership, hosted by NILGA, aims to support the regional economic skills needs and protect the welfare rights of migrants living in our community.
- **Delivery of local environmental guidance and investment opportunities** – Councils offer a key role in the implementation and creation of new investment (alongside potential cost savings) through practical experience, building on the integration of waste, recycling, greenhouse gas and biodiversity objectives. Councils are ideally placed to explore, with

the NI Executive and with sister UK/ RoI local government associations, the potential for accessing wider infrastructure investment from diverse financial institutions.

- **Delivery of local community safety schemes** - Councils, through the PCSPs and youth activity programmes can offer a key role in reducing crime, and the delivery of targeted local road safety schemes.
- **Delivery of provision of a food and energy security strategy for NI** - Councils could play a significant part in the development and implementation of local food and energy security strategies to complement and add value to an overarching regional strategy.
- **Delivery of sustainable local transport infrastructure** - Councils can and do offer knowledge and practical assistance on local/sub-regional active travel and community transport needs and sustainable alternatives.

#### **Gap Analysis**

- There are no incremental targets for greenhouse gas emissions, in direct contrast to the incremental targets for recycling. With regard to greenhouse gases, Northern Ireland is currently at 21% reduction, with all the 'quick wins' having been made. It would therefore be helpful to focus on interim work and potential targets to assist in meeting the 2025 target.
- The incremental targets for recycling of household waste are challenging, but are in line with the EU Waste Framework Directive, which states that the UK must recycle 50% of household waste by 2020. This figure is higher than that stated in the current NI Waste Strategy.
- There are no targets (incremental or otherwise) in the Programme for other types of waste. It is suggested that the Strategy targets for Commercial and Industrial, and Construction, Demolition and Excavation Wastes be factored in.
- There are no targets for the provision of waste infrastructure as part of a Northern Ireland infrastructure development programme. The funding for waste infrastructure outlined in the Investment Strategy document is insufficient, and this is reflected in the PfG. NILGA notes the approach the UK government has taken to waste infrastructure in England within the National Infrastructure Plan, and would propose that a similar approach be taken here. Waste infrastructure is critical regional infrastructure, and it is essential that this is reflected in government planning and policy documents.
- Similarly, the commitments outlined do not include a commitment to improve rail links to our airports. NILGA believes this is a vital investment due to the positive economic impact it would have.
- At this point in time, Northern Ireland does not have a food security policy, which is deeply worrying. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.
- Provision of clean water and treatment of wastewater in Northern Ireland requires a huge amount of energy. NIWater is the largest user of energy in Northern Ireland, and there is no acknowledgement of this within the document, either in the context of energy reduction, or to keep the costs of water and wastewater treatment down to assist in preventing the introduction of water rates.
- In a similar vein, it would be valuable to have targets for developing use of 'grey' water systems as an alternative to using drinking water for non-food purposes.
- The time target for biodiversity has not been carried forward from the last PfG

#### **4. Building a Strong and Shared Community**

This priority focuses on building relationships between communities, encouraging active citizenship reducing the incidences, and impacts, of domestic violence and abuse, elder abuse and harm directed to other vulnerable groups. Additionally, it seeks to encourage

greater involvement in sporting and pastoral activities to advance social cohesion and integration.

#### **Benefits offered by Local Government**

- **Councils as ‘civic leaders’** – Councils offer the local level leadership role in promoting volunteering, good relations, shared spaces and well-being, as the ‘hub’ of their local communities.
- **Building on the legacy of Olympics** – Councils can and do play an important part in the development of sub-regional/ regional sports tourism and leisure provision.
- **Community planning** – Councils can offer leadership in collaborative working at local level through community planning.

#### **Gap Analysis**

Public landscape schemes are proposed but with development plans not in place, success may be limited. There is an important role for councils in co-operation on shared community education facilities

### **5. Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services**

Priority 5 focuses on the delivery of high quality and efficient public services, including reformed local government with enhanced powers.

#### **Benefits Offered By Local Government**

- **More effective local public services** – Councils are keen to work with the NI Executive, the Department of the Environment and key stakeholders, to redesign and reshape public services around the needs of local places and local people.
- **More flexibility for local public service providers** – Councils can offer to assist in providing tailored action, appropriate to the challenges of their communities through community planning.
- **Building capacity of local people and communities** – Councils can offer capacity building to local communities to be able to make judgements and choices about local services and to challenge those who provide public services on their behalf.
- **The development of local partnership working** – Local councils can offer to provide more responsive, more efficient and more innovative public services in an environment of tighter public finance, through strengthening working relationships with key social/ private/ public partners.
- **Voluntary collaboration to achieve savings, efficiencies and strengthen service delivery** – Councils, through the Reform programme and the ICE programme, can offer the opportunity for local authorities and other partners to work together to deliver improved services, at less cost to the rate payer.
- **Service Information** – Councils, can facilitate and sign-post local level information sharing services and investment opportunities, based upon local knowledge and experience.
- **Councils as ‘civic leaders’** – Councils will offer the opportunity for elected members to continue to provide leadership at the centre of the new governance arrangements.
- **Through the Power of Well-being**, Councils will be able to address emerging needs of local communities at a local level, where resources permit.

## Programme Arrangements and Delivery framework

### Monitoring

Local government should factor as a partner in the programme arrangements and delivery framework, and the approach outlined is broadly welcomed.

## Conclusion and Summary

### Overall PfG Partnership benefits offered by Local Government

- **Equal partnership in government** – Councils offer the strength of an integrated two tier government PfG delivery mechanism, which inverts the pyramid of influence and enshrines the ethos of Localism, local self-government and self determination, decentralised civic life, subsidiarity, the NI Regional Development Strategy, Europe 2020 and other strategic / corporate / regional drivers of reform and delivery.
- **Community mapping and planning** – Councils offer the experience and networks to deliver community analyses and planning, based on micro-regional expertise in public/ social/ private sector service delivery and knowledge.
- **Delivery of sub-regional economic development and growth** – Councils offer practical experience in developing and delivering local economic development. Councils bring local knowledge, innovation and a long term approach to sustainable spatial growth. They are critical to town, village and local economy restoration.
- **Delivery of stronger and shared communities** – Councils offer experience of delivering better local relations between communities, improving community and personal wellbeing, unlocking cultural potential, and increasing participation in sports to promote healthy living and save on health bills.
- **Delivery of high quality and efficient public services** – Councils will, through self-determined, business-like, resource and cost management, underpinned by PfG and RPA, offer a joined up approach which strengthens quality and affordable public services and empowers citizens as well. An involved ratepayer / taxpayer and a knowledgeable one, is more likely to vote, more likely to invest in and more likely to give back to society. Councils offer this key to social cohesion and sustainable communities.
- **Policy and strategy integration** – Councils offer local integration and implementation for the PfG, and NI Departmental strategies and policy – recognising the inter-relationships that exist between PfG priorities.
- **Democratic governance and subsidiarity** – Councils offer a democratic ‘local development’ approach to the delivery of the PfG priorities based on commitment to giving localities and communities greater control and greater influence over programmes and services delivered in their areas – in order that local people and businesses can influence the shape of future growth and see local level investment returns – local does not mean duplication or high cost if services are engineered around cost, quality and local identity, yet delivered - through critical mass procurement and related methods - collaboratively.



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# NILGA Investment Strategy NI 2011

## **Draft NILGA response to the Investment Strategy NI 2011-2021**

16th December 2011

### Introduction

NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, is the representative body for district councils in Northern Ireland. NILGA represents and promotes the interests of local authorities and is supported by all the main political parties.

The Draft Programme for Government and associated Investment Strategy provide a real opportunity for refocussing public expenditure in Northern Ireland. It is therefore essential that the local government sector's views are taken on board within this consultation process.

NILGA would broadly welcome the proposals contained within the new Programme for Government and ISNI. NILGA welcomes the opportunity to forge a new partnership relationship with the Executive and Committees over the next four years and beyond, to ensure the delivery of better services to the public in Northern Ireland

For further information regarding this response, please contact Karen Smyth, Head of Policy at NILGA on (028) 9079 8972 or at [k.smyth@nilga.org](mailto:k.smyth@nilga.org)

### Background

The Investment Strategy is one of a suite of three key strategic documents under the broad Programme for Government (PfG) process, published by the Executive, and continues to develop the strategic themes outlined in the similar consultation exercise undertaken on the budget at the end of last year. The Investment Strategy and the Economic Strategy are designed to complement the (PfG), and as such, must also be taken into consideration when considering the overarching strategic planning and priorities for Northern Ireland up to 2015. An initial review of the PfG documents would seem to indicate that, disappointingly, the Executive has not used this opportunity to take on board the concerns of local government to the critical issues that were comprehensively set out in our responses in February.

NILGA is currently in the process of developing responses to all three of these recent documents, to highlight the partnership role that local government can and importantly should play in strategic government planning and implementation for Northern Ireland. We would urge the Executive to take this opportunity to engage more meaningfully in order that, together, our combined resources can be seen to be working more effectively towards "building a better future", the key theme of the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15.

The following document is comprised of initial thoughts on the Investment Strategy.

Comments made are precursors to the corporate views determined by the NILGA Executive during January 2012.

### Context

The Investment Strategy identifies priority areas for infrastructure investment in the years ahead, and is designed to help stakeholders - public, private and voluntary sector partners - plan for the challenge of delivering the infrastructure programme.

NILGA welcomes the fact that the Investment Strategy, produced to indicate government priorities over the coming decade, is consistent with the current Programme for Government and should assist with planning. NILGA would support this initiative but would support the need, highlighted in the document, for effective joined up delivery mechanisms to ensure its success. NILGA can and will play a key part in this integrated effort.

## Key Issues

### **Partnership Approach**

NILGA would note the financial challenges facing Northern Ireland and the desire of the Executive to ensure services are better delivered to the citizen. NILGA would strongly suggest that cognisance should be taken of the partnership role that local government can play, as outlined in our response to the Programme for Government, in the delivery of services and implementation of policy and strategy at local level. Many of the services of local councils are commonly provided across the 26 district council areas, and are therefore suited to consideration in a Northern Ireland strategic context, in collaboration with the Executive.

The proposals to join up and co-locate various services are broadly welcomed. Councils have been ahead of the game on this in many respects, in working with other agencies to develop a 'one-stop-shop' approach to service provision such as the Grove Health and Well-being Centre.

### **Waste Management Infrastructure**

It is noted that the ISNI 2011-2021 document will be most useful in planning for long term projects such as those in the waste management field. It is noted however, that there is a huge financial disparity between this iteration of the Investment Strategy and the 2008-11 document. The shifting policy on and resourcing of waste management infrastructure is having a negative impact on the confidence of private sector investors and on the waste programme generally. There is an urgent need for a greater partnership working, policy stability and funding to ensure the waste programme fully meets legislative requirements. The Executive needs to show strong leadership and commitment to supporting local government in the delivery of critical waste infrastructure in terms of the highest level of political, policy and strategic planning support, and, crucially, by committing adequate levels of funding support. To achieve the aims set out for Northern Ireland, local government needs as much certainty and stability as possible in the long term financial commitment from government.

It is noted on p13 of the ISNI document that EU legislation is a driver for investment, but unfortunately investment in waste infrastructure has seen an exponential decline in financial commitment from government, sitting at only around 1% of the allocation in the last ISNI document.

Councils in Northern Ireland need more than sporadic project support on waste management, which must be viewed as critical regional infrastructure by government, in the same vein as transport or water and sewage infrastructure. NILGA would highlight the approach to waste infrastructure taken by the English government in their national Infrastructure plan, and would suggest that it is appropriate to give waste infrastructure similar consideration in Northern Ireland.

The potential implications of the current level of investment are dramatic in that they present a real risk of, at best, delay and, at worst, default in the delivery of the waste infrastructure depending on the outcome.

The removal of a substantial element of SWIF capital support, down from £200m in the last CSR to £2m in this CSR, at a time when the three waste management groups were entering into the final stages of their procurements, has proved to be particularly difficult, putting the prospect of successful delivery at an even greater risk of failure. It has been widely recognised that the development of major waste infrastructure to meet the long term needs

of Northern Ireland, and comply with the stringent EU Regulations, is beyond the financial capacity of local government. Whilst local government appreciates the financial difficulties with which the Executive is also faced, **to remove 99% of funding support in one fell swoop** sends out the wrong signal to councils, the three waste management groups, the Residual Waste Treatment bidders and their funders.

At the time of dialogue with the Department on the preparation of the original Departmental Strategic Business Case the funding support was agreed for pre-procurement, procurement, and operational phases of the waste infrastructure programme. In the last CSR, this resulted in agreement that pre-procurement activities would be supported 50% DOE and 50% SIB and that the capital element of procurement and the infrastructure itself would be at a rate of 50% of capital cost up to a limit of £200m. At the time there was an understanding that, because of the shortfall in short-term funding for procurement and land assembly, a greater fraction of this £200m support package could be applied in the early years subject to the ultimate total not exceeding this limit in recognition of the structure of the three Waste Management Groups and other pressures on council budgets. This included the Landfill Tax Escalator, collection and the micro-infrastructure costs.

- At least one of the local government Waste Management Groups is contemplating the acquisition of new sites arising from a site selection process on which the critical infrastructure will be located subject to the outcome of the tendering process. The negotiations with vendors have been subject to this funding continuing, and its removal on the cusp of conditional contracts for sale being finalised, will present considerable difficulties for the continuity of the programme.
- The largest element of the SWIF funding was contemplated to be used to abate the capital cost of the critical infrastructure. This was secured by the Department of Environment at the behest of local government through the Waste Infrastructure Taskforce, in recognition of the need to mitigate the ultimate uplift on rates presented by the delivery of this infrastructure, in terms of the proliferation of pressures on the rate payers. It was recognised that compliance with EU directives could not be achieved without some support to local authorities.

Local government believes that this support was **wholly appropriate and necessary** to abate the step increase in waste management costs which will arise through the new infrastructure regime.

In addition, the financial support was seen as an incentive for councils / waste management groups to view infrastructure in the context of Northern Ireland Plc over a 20-25 year time horizon as contemplated by the Waste Management Strategy in the context of delivering an integrated network of infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland.

NILGA has concerns, and there is already evidence to suggest, that its removal may erode the incentive for councils to continue to work together to look at the long-term macro-infrastructure needs for Northern Ireland as dictated in policy terms. Given the current financial constraints in local government and, in particular, the continuation of the additional landfill tax burden, currently £56 per tonne but escalating at £8 per tonne per annum up to £80 per tonne during the period of this PfG, there is a greater financial incentive for councils to militate towards a preference for more short-term solutions for which we consider Northern Ireland will not ultimately have the capacity. We feel that this could also have a detrimental impact on the cohesion of the groups, and lead to a wholly unsustainable situation for the region.

In addition, NILGA would also encourage the Executive to support local government through better use of the landfill tax monies returning to Northern Ireland from HM Treasury. As a result of the aforementioned landfill tax escalator, in the last five years local government has paid out around £130m of landfill tax and, in the next three years, anticipates paying out a similar sum. The objective of the tax is to encourage waste producers to produce less waste, recover more value from waste and to use more economical and environmentally friendly

methods of waste disposal. It is the NILGA view that the money returning to Northern Ireland should be hypothecated for this purpose.

In terms of waste management, particularly the provision of waste infrastructure, the Executive needs to adopt a more imaginative approach to providing long term funding support, to create greater certainty around the planning of financial resources in the long term. It is critical for the Executive to fully and financially support the objectives of the Waste Strategy, as had been identified in ISNI2, but which has been overlooked to a great extent in ISNI3. The Executive is urged to rethink this approach and reinstate a substantial funding package in support of the successful delivery of the waste infrastructure. It cannot be overemphasised how important policy and funding stability are to the successful implementation of this programme.

### ***Single Electricity Market and its implications for waste infrastructure***

As the proposals for waste infrastructure from the tenderers are now developed to a more detailed stage, a key issue involves the ability of the facilities to have access to markets for the sale of their renewable energy outputs. The waste management groups have been engaged in lengthy consultations with the responsible bodies, the Regulator and Central Government Departments, to ensure that the heat and electricity generated by the proposed facilities are taken into account in the wider energy market reforms. This exercise has been a struggle for local government and requires a commitment from the Executive to ensure that the interests of waste management infrastructure are properly taken into account in the emerging SEM market regulatory framework.

### ***Planning and Permitting***

The waste infrastructure projects are expected to complete their procurement processes during this CSR period and the next critical stage will involve planning and permitting. Again, given the history of planning and permitting, the Executive must ensure that the needs of local government waste infrastructure are comprehensively understood and, where possible, given priority to promote investment.

### ***Local Government Reform***

The Executive will be aware that local government is currently awaiting the finalisation of the commitments within the Programme for Government regarding reform, but that work is continuing within the sector to determine shared services and contemporary integrated planning through local government's Improvement Collaboration and Efficiency programme.

NILGA is disappointed to note therefore, in light of the dynamic nature of this work, and the commitments outlined in the draft PfG, that there is no mention within the PfG or ISNI of provision of a RPA Implementation/Modernisation fund, given that all the evidence underpins the need to adequately resource any major change management process. NILGA requests that this issue is dealt with urgently to avoid compromising the forthcoming reform process, and that this, too, is done in partnership.

It is already clear, from the detailed work done to date, that any modernisation programme is likely to require substantial resources. It is widely accepted that change and reform do have "upfront costs", with efficiency savings being delivered over time. It is likely, therefore, that a proportion of the costs associated with the modernisation of local government may have to be borne by central government. However, any funding programme must be designed in such a way as to maximise the development of co-operative and collaborative ventures across councils. NILGA would support the creation of a Challenge Fund administered by DOE, from which monies could be made available to councils to undertake modernisation schemes. Resources will be required to make the Challenge Fund a reality, as a tangible way to deliver professional change.

The overall local government reform programme is a significant undertaking, and for it to succeed **the modernisation programme which has now commenced must be resourced to an appropriate level.** In terms of modernisation alone, notwithstanding the wider re-structuring and transfer of functions proposals, there is a considerable task ahead to improve efficiency and service delivery in the local government sector and the wider public sector. Included in this reform programme must be the cost of a significant capacity building programme.

Given the position from which local government is starting, it is unreasonable to expect the sector to fully finance its modernisation programme from existing revenue streams. Whilst there are short/medium and longer term efficiencies which will be realised from modernisation, there will be significant associated investment in the initial period, as is the case in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

NILGA trusts that the Executive will give this modernisation and capacity building programme its full support. We would also be keen to discuss potential new mechanisms to enable local government to collectively work on 'invest to save' initiatives.

NILGA invites NI Executive representatives to feed into, as associates, its Modernisation, Communication and Reform Working Group, which has Chief Executive and cross-party representation from the sector.

### **Investment by Key Sectors**

#### **Networks:**

NILGA welcomes the recognition in the ISNI document of the challenges posed by fuel security issues, and our societal, particularly rural reliance on oil, and the renewed focus on sustainable transport initiatives.

We would encourage the Executive to also examine the need to improve food security and to plan for the impact increasing fuel prices will have on our food supply networks.

In the context of rebalancing the economy, NILGA would encourage SIB and the Executive to examine the potential for involving the private sector more effectively in its road-building programme e.g. investigate the potential for the introduction of toll roads.

#### **Skills:**

Councils are keen to work with DENI on integrated service provision and collocation of services.

It is noted that future schools provision is reliant on DENI area plans, which are not currently linked to development plans. Addressing the development plan deficit must be a priority over the coming four years, with appropriate resourcing attached.

#### **Health:**

NILGA welcomes the renewed emphasis on community health care service provision, and would emphasise the role that councils can have, working with the healthcare sector, in developing a 'one stop shop' approach to healthcare and community service provision in a wider context. Examples such as the Grove Centre should not be 'one-offs', but as always these need to be properly costed, resourced in partnership and made sustainable.

#### **Social:**

The council role in developing community well-being, tackling disadvantage, job creation through local economic development and creating economic vitality through urban and rural regeneration cannot be underestimated and should be supported by the NI Executive.

The priorities for investment, particularly those focused on development of economic development sites, good quality housing stock and sport and leisure facilities are welcomed.

We are concerned that the desired job creation arising from regeneration projects could be limited by lack of plans and the current dysfunctional planning system.

**Environment:**

In addition to our comments above relating to waste infrastructure, the following is also noted:

- The attention to the potential for flooding in Northern Ireland, and investment on works to alleviate flooding is welcomed, as is the investment in the water system. It is highlighted, however, that severe weather can have outcomes other than flooding e.g. the periods of extreme cold experienced in recent winters. Discussions should take place between SIB, DRD Roads Service, Power NI and NI Water regarding the resultant impact on our infrastructure, and investment required as a result of climate change and severe weather events.
- PCSPs need to be supported financially
- Welcome the commitment to track delivery of projects
- Govt procurement needs to start local – Chancellor’s autumn statement supports this

**Productive:**

The investment identified for the signature tourism projects is welcomed, as is the focus on development of sustainable rural communities and economies.

NILGA is extremely keen to discuss with SIB and the NI Executive, including the Department of Environment, the potential for developing invest to save initiatives within local government. At present, limitations are presented due to the governance arrangements and issues arising from 26 individually constituted bodies attempting to work in collaboration to save money. Early discussions to develop innovative models for pooling monies saved, to invest back into the sector would be immensely valuable.

**Justice:**

NILGA would welcome an ongoing, long term funding commitment from government towards the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, in as much as this shared initiative between local and regional government should be designed and delivered through shared investment.

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# Omagh District Council



DANIEL MCSORLEY Chief Executive



Your Ref:  
 Our Ref: MISC/1  
 Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
 Being dealt with by: Chief Executive's Dept  
 Email: [daniel.mcsorley@omagh.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.mcsorley@omagh.gov.uk)

Mr Paul Carlisle  
 Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development  
 NI Assembly Committee for Regional Development  
 Room 254  
 Parliament Buildings  
 Ballymiscaw  
 Stormont  
 BELFAST BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Carlisle

**RE: Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and draft Investment Strategy for NI 2011-21**

**Introduction**

I am writing on behalf of Omagh District Council in response to your request to provide evidence to inform the Committee's response to the consultation process on the draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and the draft Investment Strategy for NI 2011-21.

The Council would also like to take this opportunity to thank those members of the Committee for Regional Development who took time out of a very busy schedule in Dublin to meet with the delegation representing cross border groups and Councils, regarding the A5/N2 developments in Dublin on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011. Your co-operation in organising the meeting is greatly appreciated by all involved.

The Council welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to inform your response to this major planning for the future by the Northern Ireland Executive. The full consultation which closes in February 2012 presents a significant opportunity given genuine consideration to issues of regional disparity and equality for all. This Council has always advocated that 'one size does not fit all' and that recognition must be given in any strategic planning process to the particular challenges faced by large geographical but primarily rural areas, and that priorities must be identified according to the needs of such areas and resources skewed toward them to ensure equality and opportunities on a par with the rest of the province. The Council would therefore recommend that the final Programme for Government takes a sub-regional approach to the delivery of its objectives. The opportunity for economic growth and wealth generation must be delivered across Northern Ireland in a manner which is balanced and sustainable. Consideration must be given to

innovative approaches that will address existing patterns of social disadvantage, and will appropriately target resources and efforts towards those in greatest need. All such issues must be addressed in the final Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.

The Council notes the correlation of the 5 priorities set out in the Programme for Government and the various strategies and processes defined as building blocks associated with the delivery of the priorities. Given the number of building blocks identified, it is very important that the Programme for Government and associated Investment Strategy is closely aligned to the other major regional strategies such as the Regional Transportation Strategy including the retention of the A5 project, the new Economic Development Strategy, the Tourism Strategy and the Rural White Paper to name but a few, so that the best use of resources and appropriate regional planning can be realised.

The Council will be submitting a substantive response to each of the consultations by the closing dates in February 2012, however, with regard to the four main topics outlined in your correspondence the following points and comments comprise the Council's response.

#### **Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Investment Strategy 2011-21**

- The Council notes the 76 commitments outlined by the Northern Ireland Executive which it considers are ambitious and in some cases aspirational.
- It concurs with the Executive's intentions to build upon the achievements of the previous Programme for Government 2008-11. In particular, the significant improvement made by dualling the A4 Dungannon to Ballygawley should be a catalyst for continuing during this Programme for Government to deliver the dualling of the A5, so that the transportation network can be capitalised upon to ensure a seamless, efficient and safe route across the whole of the island of Ireland. The fall in the number of road deaths in 2010 to the lowest since records began, is testament to the benefit of having a safe and appropriate roads infrastructure in place.
- The 'Regional Transportation Strategy 2011 - A Sustainable Transport Future', recognised that the transport network *"is not about moving vehicles but about making sure that people and businesses can access the places and services they need in a sustainable way"*. Transportation impacts on the daily lives of everyone and therefore it should be a priority issue for *all* government departments. The Council would like to see interdepartmental input, actions and funding to the delivery of key commitments highlighted within the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy relating to transportation across the region.



## Public Transport

- Whilst the Council recognises the financial restraints the current economic climate places on the Northern Ireland Executive, it nonetheless believes innovative means of securing finances over the next 20 years needs to be investigated and implemented to ensure the provision of a first class public transport system across the province and to connect the whole of the island of Ireland. It is only in doing so that the targets for environmental sustainability, for tourism, for inward investment and for health can be achieved. The current public transport system is inadequate with the exception of the cities, with rural areas poorly serviced by public transport particularly in relation to connectivity for those travelling to and from work or to access key services such as hospitals. Currently people in the rural west are heavily reliant on private transport due to the inadequacy of bus timetables and the lack of rail transport. In the absence of an adequate public transport system, it is essential that the roads network in the West meets *all* needs in terms of connectivity, journey times, location, accessibility etc and it is for this reason that it is imperative to proceed with the new A5 dual carriageway as a matter of priority and this must be highlighted as a key commitment in the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.
- The combination of a good roads infrastructure and a fast, reliable, safe and cost effective public transport system in the rural area is the means to encouraging the modal shift required from the private car.
- The Council believes people would be encouraged to use public transport if there was a greater integration and more joined-up thinking between the bus, rail, airports and ports to ensure that people can move seamlessly from one place to another within a reliable timetable.
- Tourism has been identified in the Programme for Government as a key contributor to economic recovery. Connectivity to key tourism sites is essential to building tourism potential. The Ulster American Folk Park which is one of Northern Ireland's key tourism sites is located on the A5 arterial route on the outskirts of Omagh. The need to improve the public transport connectivity and transportation infrastructure to this major attraction is apparent. Visitors leaving the airports and ports wish to maximise their holiday time by planning out the most convenient and time saving routes. The lack of timely public transport often means visitors either hire a car or decide to miss out on the attraction in favour of more convenient and accessible tourism sites. The need to align transport requirements with the tourism strategy is therefore imperative.

## Road and rail infrastructure and investment

- The Council recognises that the planned investment in roads infrastructure is starting from a low base with the history of under-investment in the transport infrastructure over the past 30 years particularly in the West.

- The Council believes greater investment should be made in the transport infrastructure given its significance to our economic wellbeing, its provision of connectivity, improved journey times, improved safety, increased accessibility and a reduction in congestion, all of which significantly impact on our competitiveness. Equally the access to markets, to labour supply, accommodation and transport links are key factors to decisions taken on business location. The transport network in the West is heavily reliant on the movement of people and goods by private transport due to the lack of public transport infrastructure. It is for this reason and to ensure true balanced sub-regional growth that it is imperative that the Programme for Government includes the A5 as a key commitment and retains the £400m funding allocated to its development.
- The North West is notably deficient in dual carriageway and motorway provision. Derry/Londonderry is the North's second largest city and fourth on the island of Ireland yet it is not served by a motorway link. The highest claimant count levels in Northern Ireland in October 2011 were in L'Derry, Strabane and Limavady. It cannot be a coincidence that these patterns align with the deficit in roads connectivity which has been a long-term barrier to attracting investment in the area. In addition, communities living in the North West have greater distances to travel to access key services and this is exacerbated by the poor roads network and lack of public transport. It is therefore imperative that the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy includes as a key commitment the development of the A5 dual carriageway and that the Investment Strategy commits the £400m funding required to commence the project. It is also incumbent on the Northern Ireland Executive to emphasise to the Southern Government its need to honour its financial pledge to the development of this key transport corridor.
- The Council notes the commitment given to the upgrade of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line, and whilst it accepts this is arguable in light of the City of Culture programme, it is dismayed that a proportion of the budget to fund this project has been taken from the allocation of funding for the new A5 dualling project. The Council would ask that the Programme for Government redress this decision.
- The Council notes the key commitment to the upgrading of key road projects and improvements to the overall road network which will contribute to a reduction in journey times by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline. Again the Council believes the A5 project must be included in the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy, with definitive timescales, if this target is to be met across the province. On exiting the new dual carriageway at Ballygawley, the main arterial route across the North West is slow and dangerous with 2+1s in place in a number of sections, which are no longer accepted as a safe solution in road design terms, and which has been a considerable draw back over the years to attracting potential investment opportunities in the area and has witnessed some of the worst road traffic accidents resulting in fatalities and serious injuries.

- The Council would point out that transport challenges in the rural areas are different to the urban areas, yet regional strategies such as the Programme for Government and other related regional strategies most often take a 'one size fits all' approach which has led over the years to inequalities for the rural communities. It is important that the key commitments given to transport issues ensure equity, address disparity and ensure that the transport network is a seamless and fit for purpose resource.

### **Sustainable Transport**

- With regard to sustainable transport, the Council welcomes the commitment to invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel, and it is all too aware of the need for people to change their behaviour of travel from private car to public transport or alternatively to walking or cycling particularly for short journeys. However, the Council believes that in reality, this behavioural change will not happen without the appropriate infrastructure in place and a major educational awareness programme being implemented across the region. This Council has been actively working towards the development of the Omagh Riverside Walk and Cycle path which when completed would link at various points along the National Cycling Network and provide a continuous 5 mile round and across town cycle and path way but efforts to complete it continue to be hampered by lack of central government funding, hence its development has been slow and piecemeal. Without central government commitment and financial support, towards putting the appropriate sustainable transport infrastructure in place, it will continue to be impossible to change the mindset or to encourage people to leave the car at home and walk or cycle safely. The Council would therefore like to see within the Programme for Government a firm commitment to and appropriate budget provision allocated to putting the necessary infrastructure in place particularly in the rural areas where car dependency is so prevalent.
- The current economic climate undoubtedly limits the amount of new build for the foreseeable future. The Council would therefore recommend that the Programme for Government gives priority to key arterial transport routes such as the A5 and to the sustainable transportation infrastructure to support walking and cycling in times of less money, so that mobility and accessibility can be maintained at a reasonable level into the future. Concurrently, central government must proactively pursue other funding such as through Europe and other innovative means to address the transportation deficits that currently exist.

### **Water and Wastewater**

- The Council welcomes the proposal to ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government. This Council has always been opposed to the introduction of water and sewerage charges particularly as it viewed any proposed introduction of such charges as being the result of previous Governments neglect and poor investment in water and sewerage systems over the years.

- The Council welcomes the proposal to invest some £600m in the water and sewerage infrastructure and to maintain a high quality of drinking water and to improve compliance with waste water standards. The Council also notes the investment of over £1bn in improvements to water infrastructure during the term of the previous Executive. There is a real need for government to build on this infrastructural investment in water and sewerage to bring services up to an appropriate level across the region as a whole.
- The bad weather over recent years has increased the risk of flooding in many places and unfortunately it has resulted in flooding of homes for many people in this district council area. The Council notes the completion of the Belfast Sewers Project which resulted in improvements to water quality and the reduction of the risk of flooding. Such investment in infrastructure must now be undertaken in other areas to minimise risks in the future.
- The Council believes some contribution to the cost of ensuring the appropriate infrastructure is in place or is upgraded to meet new requirements in the future could come from developers for infrastructure associated with new development, however, this should not take away from or replace the government's responsibility to ensure the appropriate infrastructure is in place which meets the standards required by European legislation.

#### **Gaps in the Programme for Government**

- The Council believes the 76 commitments made in the Programme for Government are commendable but lack the detail required to ensure that they are realistic rather than aspirational.
- The Programme for Government is a 'one size fits all' strategy which does not give recognition to the particular challenges faced by large geographical but primarily rural areas within the region. It does not therefore prioritise according to the needs of such areas to ensure equality and opportunities on a par with the rest of the province.
- The document outlines against each priority the strategies and policies in place which will act as building blocks for the Programme of Government which is commendable, however government must ensure that these are integral to the completion of the Programme for Government and inform its development rather than as reference documents. The need for joined up interdepartmental thinking and action planning is critical to the successful achievement of the 76 commitments outlined.

#### **Comments on the Milestones/Outputs**

- The milestones/outputs provide a timeframe within which the commitments should be commenced or completed which is commendable, however again there is a tendency to be vague in the outputs and no distinction can be made as to how it will ensure equity across the region. Many are generic

and lack substance. There is a need for detailed action planning which sets out SMART objectives and identifies outcomes rather than outputs.

### Monitoring of Progress

- In the event that detailed action planning is undertaken, the objectives and targets set should be identifiable on a sub-regional basis so that clear indications can be given as to how the commitments and investment will be fairly and equitably shared and progressed across the province according to need.
- Local government must be an active partner in the decision making process and not just a consultee. The Community Planning process is an ideal process for ensuring regional and local decision-making are joined up and complementary. It is also a means of monitoring progress on a sub-regional basis
- The monitoring of the action plans must also be undertaken on a cross departmental/local government basis and should be annually reviewed.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council recognises and values the work and effort put into developing the Programme for Government, the Investment Strategy, and other associated strategies. Omagh District Council generally welcomes the fact that a draft Programme for Government has been developed but there is a need to ensure more clarity in the final Programme and a formal commitment in the final Programme to the retention of the £400m funding to the A5 project.

It also believes that several of the commitments outlined will remain aspirational unless there is a more focussed and integrated approach across central government departments to addressing the current deficits and future needs of supporting the economy and enhancing quality of live for all. Equally local government must be an active partner in the decision making process and not just a consultee. As previously mentioned the Community Planning process is an ideal process for ensuring regional and local decision making is joined up and harmonised.

On behalf of the Council, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on this matter, and we await the outcome of the overall consultation process.

Yours sincerely



**D McSORLEY**  
Chief Executive

# Rural Community Network

## **Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021**

Evidence Paper to Committee for Regional Development



For further information contact:

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December 2011

### **Background to RCN**

Rural Community Network (RCN) is a regional voluntary organisation established in 1991 by local community organisations to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage, equality, social exclusion and community development. Our vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland contributing to a prosperous, equitable, peaceful and stable society. Our mission is to provide an effective voice for and support to rural communities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

RCN has 400 members across Northern Ireland. Its Board is representative of its membership base with more than half of its representatives (12) elected democratically from the community. The remaining representatives are a mix of organisations that provide support or have a sectoral interest within rural communities. RCN's aims are:

- to empower the voice of rural communities
- to champion excellence in rural community development practice
- to develop civic leadership in rural communities
- to actively work towards an equitable and peaceful society
- to promote the sustainable development of rural communities.

Rural communities make up 35% of the population of Northern Ireland

### **Rural Poverty**

Rural Poverty manifests very differently from poverty in urban areas:

- It is not spatially concentrated and is therefore more difficult to identify. Rural poverty is clearly associated with the remote rural regions although obviously not confined to them, The New Policy Institute<sup>1</sup> found, for example, that disadvantage was more prevalent in western districts of Northern Ireland.
- There is also a strong presence of 'rural' in the top 20% of deprived wards as defined by multiple deprivation indicators with the average gross weekly earnings of people in rural areas in Northern Ireland from 2001 to 2006 consistently below those living in urban, with the lowest rate of growth occurring in 'less accessible rural' areas where, according to the local government based definition of rural, 32% of the Northern Ireland population live.
- Rural poverty exists amongst relative affluence

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1 New Policy Institute (2009) Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2009

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- People in rural communities are less likely to identify they are in poverty and there is a culture of making do

In 2007-08 in Northern Ireland, of those who earned 50% below the United Kingdom (UK) Mean Income Before Housing Costs, almost half (46% of individuals) lived in rural areas<sup>2</sup>

54% of households living in rural areas were in Fuel Poverty.<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

RCN welcomes the opportunity to forward evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021. In forwarding evidence in the time-frame allowed RCN wishes to make the Committee aware that the organisation will be making a much more detailed response to the Programme for Government after more extensive consultation with rural communities across Northern Ireland.

### Our Rural Manifesto

In our Rural Manifesto 2010 “A declaration of rural issues and potential solutions for consideration by political parties leading up to and beyond the 2010 General Election” RCN highlighted a number of the key issues which were and continue to be of importance to rural communities. One of these issues which is relevant to the evidence gathering process of the Committee is that of transport and road safety.

In this section RCN stated that “Rural transport is often a highly charged issue in many rural areas, whether it’s about road safety and the numbers killed or injured on rural roads, the impact of rising fuel costs, un-gritted roads, poor quality roads, or the lack of public transport.

Mobility is an essential requirement in modern life. However, the issues and challenges for those rural dwellers that own or have access to a car are very different to the 20.5% rural dwellers that don’t<sup>4</sup>. If you own a car, rural transport challenges are around keeping mobile which might include the price of running a car, the price of fuel and safety on the roads. If you don’t own a car, rural transport is about how to access employment and/or vital and often-disappearing services. The problems of the immobile socially excluded should not be analyzed in isolation from the mobile included<sup>5</sup> as there is often a vicious cycle in operation across rural communities between increased car ownership, greater commuting distances and a decline in services for those who don’t have access to a car, such as those on low income, young people and older people.

If transport is to contribute to sustainable and balanced regional development in Northern Ireland then it will be necessary to improve the sustainability of rural transport by reducing the amount of individual vehicle kilometres driven while improving mobility and accessibility to services.”<sup>6</sup> Viable economic and social activities must be located within rural communities, challenging the tendency towards centralization, and affordable, appropriate and safe transport must be provided for those activities and services that are located elsewhere.”

2 Source Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report Northern Ireland 2007-2008 (DSDNI)

3 2009 Northern Ireland House Condition Survey Statistical Annex NIHE

4 2001 Census

5 Preston, J.M., Ragie, F., (2007) Accessibility, Mobility and Transport Related Social Exclusion, Journal of Transport Geography, 15(3), 151-160 – As quoted in Irish Rural Link Report (2009)

6 Comhar SDC (2008) Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan: Response to Public Consultation, Dublin: Comhar SDC, available at [http://www.comharsdc.ie/\\_files/Comhar%20STAP%20report.pdf](http://www.comharsdc.ie/_files/Comhar%20STAP%20report.pdf)

## The Draft Programme for Government For Government and the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland:

### **Priority 1: Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline**

**RCN Response:** Whilst this is a commendable commitment RCN is concerned that the DRD focus will be on the key transport corridors and that rural roads will continue to experience minimum repairs and upgrades to make them safer for people and traffic to travel on. Such work is imperative if commitment in Priority 1 is to be met.

Given the continual delays experienced by motorists along the M1 and M2 despite the improvements made RCN would recommend that DRD consider additional programmes to reduce the overall amount of traffic on our key transport corridors rather than upgrades to roads which further reduce the incentives of getting out of cars.

### **Priority 3: Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel**

**RCN Response:** RCN welcomes this commitment but would be concerned that much of this will be directed towards a new travel system for Belfast. In rural areas for many people the only mode of transport that is sustainable in maintaining everyday living and working is the car. To reduce car usage in rural communities DRD need to examine what are the alternatives to the car which is sustainable, gives rural people quality access to vital services and employment and which offers the Northern Ireland Executive an enhanced return on the use of all its available transport estate.

Given that the possibility of a major re-allocation of public sector jobs out of Belfast is not contained within the Draft PFG, RCN contends that DRD need to examine what other measures can be taken to entice people from car usage when travelling to and from urban areas. RCN has called for a greater provision of the Park and Ride or Park and Share schemes with increased car-parking facilities and a cheaper fare rate than currently operating. RCN also calls for an increased all day Park and Ride service which can facilitate both business and recreational usage allowing access to and from centres at regular intervals.

### **Priority 3: By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as the main mode of transport**

**RCN Response:** This is again a commendable commitment from the Department but one that in rural communities will be difficult to achieve if road improvements of the highest quality are not made. Many rural roads have poor surfaces, have no footpaths, limited or non-existent lighting and poor sight lines and are used by a range of vehicles many of which are unique to a rural environment. All of these contribute to increased dangers for pedestrians and for cyclists and whilst it would be highly desirable for rural roads to have dedicated cycle/ pedestrian pathways RCN acknowledge that this is not practical within the current operating environment. RCN would be concerned that the headline figures within this commitment could be met by focusing solely on urban areas. We would ask the Committee to consider that these figures are further disaggregated into both rural and urban targets

### **Priority 2: Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government**

**RCN Response:** RCN would accept that this is yet another commendable commitment from DRD within the Draft Programme for Government. However for some rural dwellers the issue is not about water charges but quite simply having a water supply. Having engaged with DRD officials in January/February of this year in their consultation on the Review of Financial Assistance for Domestic Properties not Served by a Water Main, RCN would have wished to see a commitment which necessitates the Department to ensure that in the timeframe of the PFG that all households will be connected to either a Water Main or have access to a water supply through private bore holes.



# SUSTRANS Written Submission Sustainable Transport

## The Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy Comments for the Assembly Regional Development Committee from Sustrans

### Executive Summary

This paper outlines our views on both the strengths and weaknesses of the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 and the Executive's accompanying Draft Investment Strategy. We make the following recommendations:

- The Executive should commit to trebling the current annual school travel budget to £2m in order to ensure that the active school travel target in the Draft PfG can be met.
- The PfG should include specific targets for significantly increasing the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport, and for reducing the proportion of journeys made by car / vans.
- The Investment Strategy should highlight the Active Travel Demonstration Towns project and commit to doubling the current level of investment to £6.4m, with a 50/50 capital/revenue split in the funding allocation. The PfG should commit to increasing the funding allocated to the maintenance of local roads and footpaths.
- The PfG and Investment Strategy should commit to significantly redress the current imbalance of spend between investment in road construction and investment on sustainable transport.
- The PfG should contain a specific interim target for a reduction in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions on 2009 levels by 2015. The Executive should also consider the inclusion of a more general specific interim target for an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.

### Introduction

Sustrans is a UK-wide sustainable transport charity which works with a range of government agencies, schools, employers, community groups and individuals to enable people to make sustainable travel choices. It has worked on a range of active and sustainable travel projects in Northern Ireland for the past 15 years.

### Strengths of the Draft PfG and Investment Strategy

We believe that the establishment of modal shift targets is a key element in persuading people to become less car-dependent and to use more sustainable modes of transport. We therefore greatly welcome the inclusion of the following target in the Draft PfG:

*"by 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport"<sup>1</sup>*

In Great Britain, there has been a concerted government drive to persuade pupils to walk or cycle to school; 88% of schools in England now have a school travel plan aimed at effecting modal shift, whereas only a handful in schools in Northern Ireland have followed suit.<sup>2</sup> And,

1 Draft Programme for Government 2011-15, p. 9.

2 See W. S. Atkins (2010) An Evaluation of the 'Travelling to School' Initiative, Table c.3 – Q7, p. 4. This figure is based on responses from 576 schools across England surveyed by Atkins. The estimate reflects the fact that 88% of schools which responded had school travel plans.

in the Republic of Ireland, 650 schools have been involved in the Irish government's ongoing Green-School Travel programme, which has succeeded in cutting car use at participating schools by 27%.

There is now a considerable disparity in the levels of active school travel in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, school travel is mostly inactive:

- more than half (52%) of all primary school pupils in Northern Ireland travel to school by car.<sup>3</sup>
- only a third of primary school pupils (32%) use an active mode of travel such as walking or cycling.<sup>4</sup>
- once children reach secondary school, the proportion walking or cycling drops to approximately 1 in 5 pupils (21%).<sup>5</sup>

The figures are in stark contrast to Great Britain where:

- 42% travel of primary school children travel to school by car
- half of all primary school children (50%) walk or cycle to school
- two fifths of secondary school pupils (42%) walk or cycle to school – twice the proportion in Northern Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible to have a major impact on school travel patterns by working with schools on an intensive basis to help create an active travel culture, and by installing the necessary infrastructure to facilitate safe cycling and walking. The value of this approach is demonstrated by Sustrans' recent successful Rural Safe Routes to Schools pilot programme which incorporated this dual strategy.

The project, which involved a 21-month programme of intensive work at 18 rural schools in Northern Ireland, including the production of school travel plans, produced the following outcomes:

- a fall in the number of children travelling to school by car – down from 64% to 50%
- an increase in the number of children cycling to school – up from 5% to 10%
- a rise in the number of children walking to school – up from 20% to 28%<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the above outcomes relate to the patterns of travel nearly two years after the project was completed, demonstrating that the combination of 'hard' and 'soft' measures produced lasting shifts in travel behaviour. The fall in the number of children travelling by car took place during the programme and was sustained thereafter.

However, while we greatly welcome the Executive's commitment to increasing the level of active school travel in Northern Ireland, we are anxious that the Executive should now commit sufficient investment to ensure that the target can be met. Based on our own experience of the delivery of school travel programmes, we believe that the current level of annual DRD

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3 DRD Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2005-2007. The figures represent the main mode of travel for each child. More recent figures are not currently available.

4 Ibid. No separate figures are kept for cycling. However, 31% walk and 1% use 'other' modes of transport which excludes bus but includes cycling, rail and motor-cycle. However, it is assumed very few primary school pupils would use the train as their main mode of transport, and obviously none would use a motor-cycle.

5 Ibid. 19% walk to school and 3% use 'other' modes of transport. It is assumed 1% use rail or motor-cycle and 2% cycle.

6 DfT National Travel Survey 2008/09, Table NTS0614. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/age-school/nts0614.xls>

7 Figures from an independent evaluation, commissioned by DARD and undertaken by Cogent Management Consulting, of Sustrans' Safe Routes to Schools projects in 18 rural schools in Northern Ireland in 2007-08. The baseline figures were measured in May 2007, prior to the commencement of the project. The outcome figures refer to the main mode of travel used by each pupil two years after the completion of the project. The figures therefore represent the longer-term impact of the project, rather than merely the immediate impact. All data was based on pupil surveys.

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investment in school travel of approximately £640,000 needs to be trebled to approximately £2m in order to ensure that the target is met.

**Recommendation 1: The Executive should commit to trebling the current annual school travel budget to £2m in order to ensure that the active school travel target in the Draft PfG can be met.**

## Weaknesses of the Draft PfG and Investment Strategy

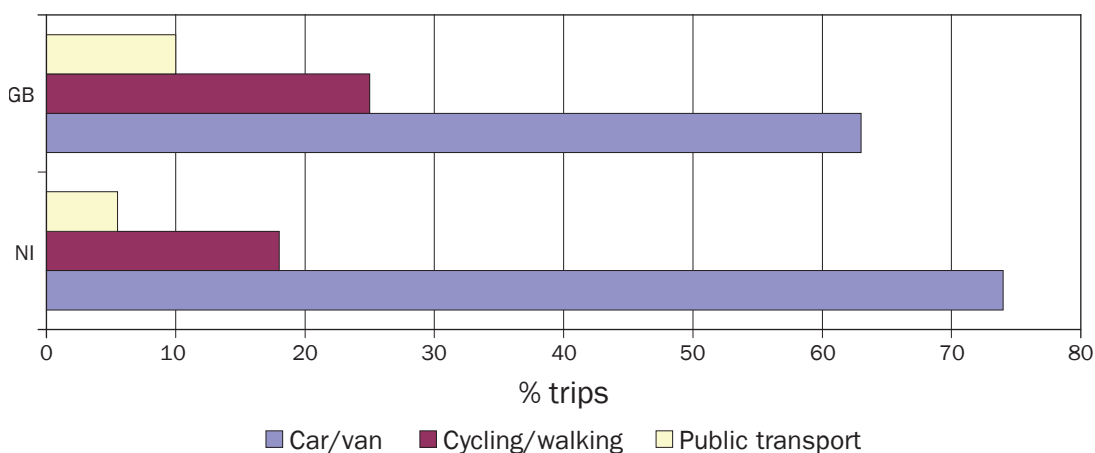
We have identified four key weaknesses in the above documents – the lack of an overarching modal shift target, the relatively low proportion of investment allocated to sustainable transport, an insufficient focus on local travel, and the lack of any specific target for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

### Modal shift target

While we greatly welcome the inclusion in the Draft PfG of a modal shift target for active school travel, we believe that it should also include broader targets for a modal shift towards cycling, walking and public transport, and away from the car. Where transport policy is guided by targets, they bring a strategic focus to transport investment, helping to ensure that investment is used in the most cost-effective way possible.

There is a clear need to reduce the extent of car dependency in Northern Ireland. As Chart 1 shows, people in Northern Ireland are considerably more car-dependent than their counterparts in Great Britain; 74% of trips in Northern Ireland are made by car or van, compared to 63% in Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, a much lower proportion of trips are made by public transport, cycling or walking.

**Chart 1: modal share devolved administrations**



It could be argued that this difference can be at least partially explained by Great Britain's higher population density, relative to Northern Ireland. However, as Chart 2 overleaf shows, neither Wales nor Scotland exhibit this level of car dependency, despite the fact that

<sup>8</sup> The relevant figures are taken from the DRD Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2007-2009, Table 3.2, and the National Travel Survey 2009, Table NTS0301. The latter table is available at: <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/how-mode/nts0301.xls>

Scotland's population density is much lower, while the population density of Wales is similar to Northern Ireland's.<sup>9 10</sup>

Northern Ireland's high level of car-dependency is a major factor behind congestion problems and the growing problem of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. It has been estimated that congestion is costing the Northern Ireland economy £250 million a year or 1.5% of total productivity.<sup>11</sup>

A study commissioned by the Department for Transport estimated that every £1 spent on well-designed measures to encourage sustainable methods of travel, such as cycling, could bring a £10 benefit in reduced congestion, and an even greater benefit than this in the most congested conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, transport accounts for a higher proportion of greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector, except agriculture, and is the only sector where greenhouse gas emissions are still growing.<sup>13</sup>

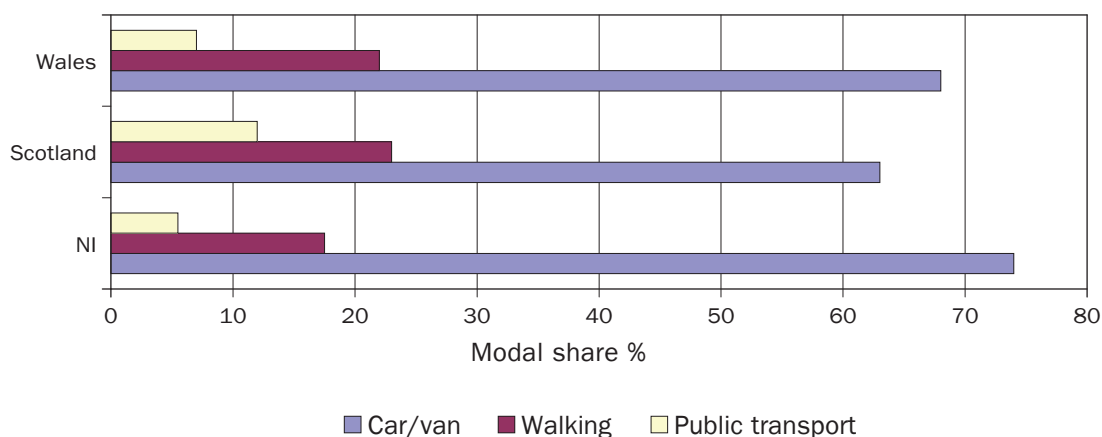
Modal shift targets would help to reduce the problems of congestion and transport-related emissions, and to speed up journey times by ensuring that our road space was used more efficiently.

It must not be forgotten that many lower-income households do not have a car; no less than one quarter (25%) of households across Northern Ireland and two-fifths (40%) of all households in Belfast have no car.<sup>14</sup> Even where households have a car, not all adult members may have regular access to it. Indeed, only 66% of women have a driving licence, compared to 81% of men.<sup>15</sup> Those in the youngest and oldest age groups are also much less likely to have a licence.

Many people also have limited access to good public transport. Only 15% of people in Northern Ireland say they can get a bus at least once every 15 minutes from their nearest bus stop.<sup>16</sup>

The establishment of modal shift targets and subsequent shift towards a more sustainable transport policy would help to improve access to employment and leisure opportunities for those groups with limited or no access to cars and/or public transport. It would also provide a greater range of quality travel choices for ordinary people, businesspeople and tourists. Finally, a higher rate of active travel (cycling and walking) would have significant health and quality of life benefits, and would help to combat the growing problem of obesity.

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- 9 Scotland's population density is estimated by the Scottish Government to be 67 people per sq. km. See Scottish Transport Statistics No. 29. 2010 Edition, para. 2.1: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/17120002/193> The population density of Wales is estimated by the Welsh Government to be 145 people per sq. km. See: [http://www.wales.com/en/content/cms/english/about\\_wales/wales\\_fact\\_file/wales\\_fact\\_file.aspx](http://www.wales.com/en/content/cms/english/about_wales/wales_fact_file/wales_fact_file.aspx) The population density of Northern Ireland is estimated by NISRA to be 132.5 people per sq. km. See: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp3.htm>
- 10 The figures for Scotland and Wales are taken from the National Travel Survey 2009/10, Table NTS9903. The figures for Northern Ireland are taken from the Northern Ireland Travel Survey In-depth Report 2007-09, Table 3.2. These figures exclude cycling as a separate modal share figure for cycling was not available for Scotland or Wales.
- 11 'Northern Ireland economy burns £250 million a year in roads 'slow lane''. PA Consulting, May 2008. Available at: <http://www.paconsulting.com/introducing-pas-media-site/releases/northern-ireland-economy-burns-250-million-a-year-in-roads-slow-lane-23-may-2008/>
- 12 Cairns, S. et al. (2004) Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel (London: DfT), p. 367.
- 13 AEA, Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 1990-2009, September 2011, Table ES2.4.3.
- 14 DRD Travel Survey 2007 – 2009, Table 2.2.
- 15 DRD Travel Survey 2007 – 2009, Table 2.3.
- 16 DRD Travel Survey 2007 – 2009, Table 5.5.
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**Chart 2: Modal share in devolved territories**

We therefore recommend that the Draft Programme for Government includes a modest, achievable overall target for modal shift. We believe the most realistic strategy is to focus on achieving a modest increase in the proportions of trips made by walking and cycling, and using public transport.

**Recommendation 2: The PfG should include specific targets for significantly increasing the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport, and for reducing the proportion of journeys made by car / vans.**

## The significance of local travel

We are also concerned by the emphasis in both the Draft PfG and the Investment Strategy on what is termed the ‘key transport corridors’ i.e. on longer inter-urban journeys. The Draft PfG even contains a target for the reduction of journeys times on the ‘key transport corridors’ although it is not evident whether this includes rail travel.<sup>17</sup>

However, the reality of everyday travel for many people is that it is restricted to their local area:

- nearly two-thirds (63%) of all journeys in Northern Ireland are under five miles in length.
- just over a third (34%) of journeys are under two miles in length – a distance which can easily be walked or cycled. Yet, half of these journeys are being undertaken by car.
- 17% of journeys are under one mile in length – yet a third of these journeys are being driven.

These figures demonstrate the clear potential for achieving modal shift by targeting the shortest journeys and persuading the public to choose cycling or walking for a higher proportion of those shortest trips. One of the most effective ways of generating modal shift for local journeys was piloted in England through a pilot programme called the Sustainable Travel Towns.

In 2004, the Department for Transport invested £10m in transforming three medium-sized towns into ‘Sustainable Travel Towns’. A further £5.6m was invested in the schemes from other sources. The total annual investment was an average of £11 per resident.<sup>18</sup>

The five year programme focused on a mix of personal travel planning guidance and other behaviour change programmes, together with infrastructural improvements in public transport, and walking and cycling facilities. The programmes resulted in a significant shift away from

<sup>17</sup> See Draft Programme for Government 2011-15, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> The results of the projects are summarised in Sloman L. et al. The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report. Report to Department for Transport, February 2010.

car use and towards sustainable transport modes, and a considerable reduction in town centre congestion.

- car driver trips by residents fell by 9% per person
- bus trips per person grew by between 10% and 22%
- cycle trips rose substantially by between 26% and 30%
- the number of walking trips grew by between 10% and 13%
- traffic volumes in each of the towns fell by 2% and by 7-8% in inner areas, prior to the economic downturn

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Regional Development is investing £3.2m in a similar pilot programme which will be called the Active Travel Demonstration Towns project. However, the Department has ring-fenced the available funding for capital investment only. This means that no funding has been allocated for the personalised travel programmes and other 'persuasive' measures which formed such an important part of the English scheme. We are further concerned that the level of funding currently allocated is insufficient to permit a large 'whole town' scheme to operate.

We would like the Investment Strategy to highlight the Active Travel Demonstration Towns project and to commit to doubling the current level of investment to £6.4m, with a 50/50 capital/revenue split in the funding allocation. We would also like more funding to be allocated to investment in maintaining local roads and footpaths, many of which are in a poor state of repair.

**Recommendation 3: The PfG and Investment Strategy should commit to significantly redress the current imbalance of spend between investment in road construction and investment on sustainable transport.**

## Investment in sustainable transport

The Draft PfG promises that the Executive will invest "over £500m to promote more sustainable methods of travel".<sup>19</sup> However, this figure simply represents the capital and revenue expenditure for public transport, cycling and walking which had already been earmarked in the Executive's Budget 2011-15.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, despite highlighting public transport investment plans, the Draft Investment Strategy states that just £196m of capital investment is allocated to public transport between 2011-15, while nearly £1.2bn (£1,190,000) is being spent on roads.

If one also includes measures to promote cycling and walking under 'sustainable transport' measures, Northern Ireland compares very poorly to Wales;

- more than half (54%) of capital investment in transport in Wales is earmarked for sustainable transport over the next three years, while 46% is being spent on roads<sup>21</sup>

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19 Draft Programme for Government 2011-15, p.9.

20 This calculation is based on expenditure details provided to Sustrans by the DRD in April 2011, a copy of which has been appended to this submission as a separate document. A total of £593m was allocated towards non-roads capital and investment expenditure, and relevant roads expenditure (see footnote 22) for the four years 2011/12 to 2014/15.

21 Wales Government Budget 2012-13. The totals include indicative plans for expenditure in 2013-14 and 14-15.

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- in stark contrast, just 19% of transport capital investment in Northern Ireland is allocated for sustainable transport during the current four-year Budget period, while 81% is being spent on roads<sup>22</sup>

Almost half (£675m) of the DRD's four-year capital allocation for transport was earmarked for the A5 upgrade. Part of this total was to have been provided by the Irish Government which recently withdrew most of its funding for the scheme during the current four-year Budgetary cycle. It now appears likely that the Executive will postpone this scheme and, in the meantime, invest the £400m it was to have contributed in other capital projects, including transport schemes.

If the A5 upgrade is now postponed, we would urge the Executive to use the opportunity to redress the current imbalance in planned capital expenditure, and to invest a significant proportion of those funds in public transport and active travel programmes. However, we believe the case for a significant shift in the current balance between capital investment in roads and in sustainable transport is compelling, regardless of whether or not additional funds are now available.

**Recommendation 4: The PfG and Investment Strategy should commit to significantly redress the current imbalance of spend between investment in road construction and investment on sustainable transport.**

## Target for transport-related greenhouse gases

Given the level of car dependency and roads-focused capital investment in Northern Ireland, it will come as no surprise that the proportion of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions is increasing:

- in Great Britain, transport-related greenhouse gas emissions have fallen slightly on 1990 levels
- in Northern Ireland, these emissions have grown by 30% since 1990<sup>23</sup>

As noted previously, the significance of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland is considerable:

- transport produces more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector in Northern Ireland, except agriculture
- transport is the only sector where greenhouse gas emissions are growing

We greatly welcome the fact that the Executive is proposing to increase its longer-term target for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 25% (the target in the previous Programme for Government) to 35% on 1990 levels by 2025.

However, we do not believe that the Executive will succeed in achieving this important target unless it takes this opportunity to set one or more specific interim targets which will help to ensure that the longer-term target is met. Although Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are currently 20% lower than in 1990, the rise in transport-related emissions could prevent this goal being achieved if an interim target for a reduction in transport-related emissions is not put in place.

22 This calculation is based on expenditure details provided to Sustrans by the DRD in April 2011, a copy of which has been appended to this submission as a separate document. It should be noted that, in relation to the DRD transport capital investment budget, we have included funds allocated for 'Local transport and safety measures and other major works' which is categorised as roads expenditure by the DRD, but which does include investment in road safety, cycling and walking infrastructure.

23 AEA, Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 1990-2009, September 2011, Tables ES2.1.3; ES2.2.3; ES3.2.3 and ES 2.4.3.

Almost all (99%) of transport-related emissions in Northern Ireland are carbon dioxide, and road transport accounts for 98% of carbon dioxide emissions in the transport sector.<sup>24</sup> This means that the Executive can utilise the strategic approach to transport which we have advocated above to help reduce transport-related emissions.

We would therefore urge the Executive to set a specific target of reducing transport-related greenhouse gas emissions as a first, realistic step towards ensuring that the 2025 target is met, and to consider the inclusion of a more specific, general interim target for an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.

**Recommendation 5: The PfG should contain a specific interim target for a reduction in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions on 2009 levels by 2015. The Executive should also consider the inclusion of a more general specific interim target for an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.**

## Milestones and outputs

We believe the proposed milestone measurements for the active school travel target in the Draft PfG represent realistic, achievable short-term targets.

## Monitoring progress

With regard to the active school travel target, progress on the achievement of this target can be measured using the annual Northern Ireland Travel Survey. Any additional broader modal shift target can be measured in the same way. In addition, the results of intensive active school travel programmes can be monitored at an individual school level.

With regard to transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, the Department of the Environment regularly collates and analyses detailed data on all greenhouse gas emissions.

## Conclusion

Sustrans greatly welcomes the establishment of an active school travel target, and the commitment to a more ambitious long-term target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Draft PfG. However, we believe the Draft PfG and its associated Investment Strategy could go much further in addressing the growing and significant problem of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, and in redressing the imbalance in both current modal split and in investment priorities in transport.

**Appendix** (correspondence from DRD to Sustrans which has been appended as a separate document)

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24 op. cit., p. 66.



# SUSTRANS Departmental Correspondence

## Sustainable Transport

RECEIVED - 4 MAY 2011



Department for  
**Regional  
Development**  
[www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk)

AS RONA  
**Forbartha Réigiúnaí**  
VÁNNYSTIAC FUP  
**Kintra Pairs Fordlèrin**

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Mr Steven Patterson  
Regional Director  
Sustrans Northern Ireland  
Ground Floor  
Premier Business Centres  
20 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GB

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: **DRD/COR/290/2011**  
Date: 27 April 2011

*Dear Mr Patterson*

Thank you for your email of 6 April seeking details on the Department's Final Budget plans. The Minister has read your e-mail and asked me to reply.

The attached tables provide the Department's Final Budget Resource and Capital allocations to transport broken down by mode of travel.

In addition, I would refer you to the Department's website where there is a link to DRD's Budget 2011-15 Spending and Saving Allocations, which was published on 13 April. The address is as below:

<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=7033>

I hope this information is helpful

*yours sincerely*

*pp Ann Marie Hagan*

**LYNNE McELHINNEY**  
Private Secretary to Conor Murphy MP

Clarence Court, 10-18 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8GB  
Cúirt Clarence, 10 18 Sráid Adelaide. Béal Feirste BT2 8GB

CLARCORE QDD INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE  
APR/KP

## Resource Allocations

Programme	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Roads Service Admin	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4
Structural Maintenance	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5
Operations and Maintenance	32.8	33.4	32.7	31.6
PPP Payments	42.2	42.2	42.2	42.2
Roads Depreciation	49.1	49.1	49.1	49.1
Roads Other Programmes	20.7	19.7	18.7	18.7
Roads Service Income	(20.7)	(26.1)	(31.2)	(32.5)
<b>Total Roads</b>	<b>210.0</b>	<b>204.2</b>	<b>197.4</b>	<b>195.0</b>
Policy and Admin	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4
Railway Public Service Obligation	25.3	24.5	25.2	21.3
Bus / Rail - Fare Concessions	31.1	33.1	31.0	31.1
Rural Transport	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Bus - Fuel Duty Rebate	10.9	10.9	9.9	10.9
Bus - Park and Ride	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4
Transport Programme for People with Disabilities	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6
NITHC Pensions	3.4	3.4	0.6	0.6
Rapid Transit	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Rathlin Ferry / Donaghadee Harbour	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Public Transport Reform	0.4	1.8	1.8	1.8
Other Programmes	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Belfast Port	-	-	(20.0)	(20.0)
<b>Total Transport</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>96.6</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>68.6</b>

### Capital Allocations

Capital	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Structural Maintenance	67.5	25.5	29.4	55.0
Local Transport & Safety Measures and Other Major Works	26.1	6.9	9.8	18.8
A5 Derry to Aughnacloy	15.0	165.0	285.0	210.0
A8 Belfast to Larne	3.4	46.0	51.0	12.0
A6 improvements	-	-	-	63.0
A32 improvements including Cherrymount	9.0	3.0	-	-
Other Strategic Road Improvements	24.9	8.1	7.2	4.8
Street Lighting, Plant and Equipment	10.0	3.0	3.0	15.6
<b>Total Roads</b>	<b>155.9</b>	<b>257.5</b>	<b>385.4</b>	<b>379.2</b>
Rail - New Trains Two Programme	75.7	3.3	0.1	-
Rail - Coleraine to Derry Track Relay	2.2	-	-	20.0
Rail - Other Infrastructure	14.1	15.3	11.2	10.4
Bus	13.4	2.8	0.1	1.4
Rapid Transit	0.1	0.8	1.5	10.0
Sustainable Transport	2.0	3.5	0.5	11.8
<b>Total Transport</b>	<b>107.5</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>53.6</b>

## Sustrans

Our ref: SP5843

Mr Paul Carlisle  
Clerk  
Committee for Regional Development  
Room 254  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw, Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

16 December 2011

Dear Paul

**Re: Draft Programme for Government and Draft Investment Strategy – Cost Benefit Analysis**

On behalf of Sustrans, I would like to thank the Committee very warmly for being good enough to invite us to brief the Committee on Monday with our comments on the Draft Programme for Government and Draft Investment Strategy.

We wished to follow up our presentation by offering the Committee more specific information with regard to one question we were asked at the briefing. We would be grateful if a copy of this letter could be circulated to Committee members for their information.

Cathal Ó hOisín asked us what the cost benefit analysis (COBA) was for local transport. On reflection the response we gave did not adequately answer the question.

Obviously, the benefit to cost ratio for any particular scheme will vary. The actual methodology used is also important. The DRD follows guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT). While we appreciate that the DfT's COBA guidance on cycling and walking schemes now factors in the health benefits of such schemes for adults, it does not include the health benefits for children. Moreover, the DfT's COBA analysis for road schemes does not factor in the negative health impacts of road schemes (through the encouragement of sedentary travel), beyond the likely impact on accident rates.

However, even using conventional COBA analysis, local and sustainable transport schemes can compare favourably with road schemes as Table 1 overleaf shows. The selection of proposed road schemes included in the table was guided merely by the ease with which we could access the results of the COBA analysis for each respective scheme via the web. We do not wish to suggest that these figures are representative of all road schemes nor of all sustainable transport schemes. However, we note that cost benefit analyses are routinely carried out by DRD for road schemes which are at the early stages of planning. We would like the DRD to initiate a similar planning and assessment programme for sustainable transport schemes.

We hope this information is of value to Committee members and look forward to meeting them again in the New Year. May we take this opportunity to wish the Committee a very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely



**Steven Patterson**

Director for Northern Ireland  
Enc.

**Table 1: cost benefit analyses for sustainable transport schemes and proposed Northern Ireland road schemes**

<b>Sustainable transport schemes</b>	<b>Benefit to cost ratio, using DfT COBA or similar</b>	<b>Proposed NI road schemes</b>	<b>Benefit to cost ratio, using DRD COBA</b>
Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns (English pilot projects)	4.5 -9:1 approx. <sup>i</sup>	A2 Ballykelly bypass	3.2:1 - 4.2:1 <sup>ii</sup>
Sustrans' TravelSmart personalised travel planning projects in the UK in 2009	8:1 <sup>iii</sup>	York Street Interchange	2.4:1 - 4.4:1 <sup>iv</sup>
Cycling Demonstration Towns (English pilot projects)	2.6:1 - 3.5:1 <sup>v</sup>	Sydenham Bypass Improvement	4.3:1 <sup>vi</sup>

- i The Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns project involved an intensive programme of investment in sustainable transport infrastructure, personalised travel planning and marketing measures which was piloted in three towns in England. Details are included in the paper we submitted to the Committee on draft PfG. The benefit to cost ratio was calculated as part of an evaluation of the scheme, commissioned by the Department for Transport. See Sloman, L. et al. (2010) The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes on the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report, p. 8. The higher estimated ratio was based on a DfT COBA which takes into account health and environmental benefits. The authors estimated that the benefit to cost ratio, using more conventional COBA would be 4.5.
- ii DRD (2010) A2 Ballykelly bypass Stage 1 SAR addendum, Table 4, p. 24. The two estimates in the table represent the estimates for each of two different proposed routes. Available at: [http://www.drdni.gov.uk/stage\\_1\\_sar\\_addendum.pdf](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/stage_1_sar_addendum.pdf)
- iii Sustrans (2009) Moving Forward: a year of delivering smarter travel choice, p.3. Estimate calculated using DfT COBA guidance. Available at:  
<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/rmu/Moving%20forward%20Sustrans%20Monitoring%20Report%20to%20end%202009%20September%202010.pdf>
- iv DRD (2009) York Street Interchange Preliminary Options Report Vol. 2, Section 1 Assessment Summary Tables. The different estimates represent the highest and lowest estimates, based on a 'low growth' scenario for a range of different options for the proposed Interchange. (The low growth scenario seems the most realistic in the current economic climate).  
  
Available at:  
[http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/roadimprovements/schemes/york\\_street\\_interchange/york\\_street\\_interchange\\_preliminary\\_report\\_2.htm](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/roadimprovements/schemes/york_street_interchange/york_street_interchange_preliminary_report_2.htm)
- v Department for Transport (2010) Cycling Demonstration Towns: Development of Benefit-Cost Ratios
- vi DRD (2009) A2 Sydenham Bypass Improvement, Preferred Options Report , p. 62, Table 10.5. This is referred to as the 'economic assessment' and it is not clear if other factors, such as environmental impact, have been taken into account in arriving at this estimate. Available at: [http://www.drdni.gov.uk/stage\\_2\\_report-a2\\_sydenham\\_bypass\\_final.pdf](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/stage_2_report-a2_sydenham_bypass_final.pdf)





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 4

# Oral Evidence





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# Oral Evidence

**Discussion 1: Public Transport**

- Department of Regional Development
- Translink
- Community Transport Association
- Consumer Council

**Discussion 2: Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment**

- Department of Regional Development
- Translink
- Quarry Products Association

**Discussion 3: Sustainable Transport**

- Department of Regional Development
- Sustrans
- Energy Saving Trust
- Friends of the Earth

**Discussion 4: Water and Wastewater**

- Department of Regional Development
- Northern Ireland Water
- Utility Regulator
- Consumer Council

# DRD Presentation Public Transport

## *Regional Development Committee Seminar on draft PfG and draft ISNI*

### Public Transport



## **Public Transport Commitments in draft PfG**

### **Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel:**

Over the budget period 2011/12 to 2014/15 this includes

- Capital Investment of £174m (including an additional £22m towards the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay) to improve the railways network with £17.6m allocated to bus related projects.
- The figure also includes in excess of £318m revenue funding for ongoing commitments to funding schemes and grants for delivery of Public Transport services mostly Translink



## **Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line**

- The Coleraine to Londonderry Re-lay project has been brought forward to start in July 2012.
- It will be completed in three phases.
- The first two phases will be funded during the budget period up to 2015 with costs of almost £47m.



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Public Transport – what can be delivered?**

- Capital
  - Procurement of 20 new trains
  - Platform extensions and train care facility at Adelaide
  - Coleraine to Londonderry Re-lay
  - Commencement of Rapid Transit project
  - Bus replacement
- Revenue
  - Concessionary fares scheme
  - Public Service Obligation for the Northern Ireland Railways network
  - Fuel Duty Rebate
  - Grants relating to delivery of transport services for people with disabilities and people in rural areas



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Public Transport – what can not be delivered?**

- Major pressures in the ISNI 3 period in relation to bus and rail network maintenance and for bus replacement if we are to continue to maintain safety and deliver on targets for fleet age and accessibility.
- Subject to securing the required funding, projects such as the train replacement programme, the third phase of the relay of the Coleraine to Derry line, the upgrade of the Knockmore to Lurgan line and a new bus and rail Transport Hub for Belfast could be taken forward.
- Projects such as electrification or expansion of the railways network would require a major increase in investment allocation.



# Translink Public Transport

## Regional Development Committee

Programme for Government Seminar 12th December 2011

Translink (David Brown, Commercial & Services Director and Ciarán Rogan, Marketing Executive)

Re: Public Transport and Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment

## Context

Investment to date in bus and rail services has been successful and clearly delivered benefits to the economy; our overarching view is that excellent public transport is at the heart of sustainable development for NI.

- The Budget for NI 2011/12 – 2014/15 and Programme for Government (PfG) restricts funding for passenger transport (PT) presenting very challenging public expenditure constraints in NI for next 4 years
- To grow passenger transport usage not only is capital investment necessary along with ongoing revenue financial support but also supportive policy structures, importantly in relation to both planning and parking policy.
- For immediate benefit to passenger transport and at relatively low cost, improvements in park & ride provision and priority for buses are very effective. The latter point is crucial given the ongoing deterioration in average bus speeds in Belfast.
- Translink has been very successful in recent years in growing usage of bus and rail services against a difficult economic backdrop. Notably a ‘freeze’ in fares levels from mid-2010 has proved effective.
- The PfG refers to £500million to support sustainable transport; we understand this represents a totalling of existing funding and programmes already in place. The budget for the 4 years from 2011/12 delivers a significant reduction in levels of support for bus and rail services. For example;
  - of DRD’s total capital spend on transport 14% is for PT (the RTS budgeted 35% although only 20% was delivered)
  - funding for bus services will reduce in real terms by one third by year 3 of the programme
  - ‘steady state’ investment for maintenance of the rail network is of the order of £40 – 50 million; the PfG allocates ca. £11million p.a.by year 3
  - For the Translink bus fleet to ‘stand still’ in average age terms approximately 95 buses per year need to be replaced at a cost of c£15million; in 2013/14 ca. £58,000 is allocated
- In addition there is uncertainty in the area of school transport

## PfG headlines built into Translink’s Corporate Plan; Targets and Budgets

- Target of 77 million journeys in 2011/12 (same as 2010/11 outturn) – a very challenging / stretching target!
- In order to grow passenger numbers - no ‘fares rises’ will be put through before 2012 – there has been no general fares increase since June 2010 despite sharply rising costs. This will be reviewed thereafter given cost pressures and funding reductions. Services will also need to be reviewed within this context.
- Efficiencies are built in to all budgets through a focus on on-going cost reduction and efficient contract management

### **Review of Network**

- The bus and rail networks will be reviewed over the next years within the cost and funding context above.
- Opportunities to integrate bus and rail services will be sought to reduce duplication.
- Where appropriate, services carrying very low numbers may be optimised, although we will seek to maintain the geographical scope of the network.
- Those parts of the network e.g. Goldline which continue to perform well; opportunities for growth will be targeted

### **NI Railways**

- The 'New Trains Two programme continues as scheduled; 20 new trains (5 already in service), a new train maintenance facility at Adelaide and platform extensions.
- Deployment of the first new train began autumn 2011 with completion in 2012; priority will be to replace all class 450 rolling stock on the Larne line
- Coleraine to Londonderry track relay to commence June 2012, the line to be reopened in April 2013. A completion of the relay programme will be completed after the 2013 year of culture
- Services to Derry will be 8 return trains from April 2013
- New hourly rail services will run between Coleraine and Belfast

### **Goldline**

- Goldline will be relaunched.
- Timetable enhancements will be put in place for autumn 2012; this includes frequency / service increases where there is potential
- 35 new vehicles will be purchased and 25 of the existing fleet will be refurbished.

### **Metro**

- Additional bus priority in Belfast is necessary to address falling average bus speeds.

### **Capital investment; highlights included in CP**

Additional key initiatives include:

- Antrim station upgrade
- Portadown station upgrade
- Ballymoney station footbridge and cycleway
- Moira station footbridge
- P&R Extensions – Ballymoney, Coleraine & Antrim and completion of feasibility studies for Moira Phase 3 and Lisburn West
- Customer Information System and Journey Planner
- Introduction of wi-fi on some services
- 35 new buses for Goldline and 44 new buses for Metro
- Ticketing innovations; further integration (i link)and mobile (m link)

# CTA Public Transport

Written briefing by CTA to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 - 2021

December 2011



**Community  
Transport  
Association**

## Contents

About CTA

CTA Written Evidence

Contact Details

Summary Draft Programme for Government

Summary Investment Strategy for NI

Gaps in the Programme for Government

Comments on Milestones and Outputs

What is the best way to monitor?

## 1. About CTA

CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA member organisations are involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services. Our membership consists of 1400 organisations.

## 2. CTA's Written Evidence

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to provide both written and oral evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 – 2021.

The following written evidence forms the basis of the oral evidence that will be provided by Kellie Armstrong, Director for NI on Monday 12th December 2011.

### 3. Contact Details

Any queries regarding this response should be directed to:

**Kellie Armstrong**

Director for Northern Ireland  
CTA  
Room 109, CityEast  
68-72 Newtownards Road  
Belfast BT4 1GW

Tel: 028 9094 1661

Email: [kellie@ctauk.org](mailto:kellie@ctauk.org)

### 4. Introduction

- 4.1. The CTA welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and the Draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland 2011-2021.
- 4.2. The following document provides in detail the items that will be covered in oral evidence by the CTA on Monday 12th December 2011.
- 4.3. In sections 5 and 6 below CTA provides a synopsis of both the Draft Programme for Government (section 5) and the Draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (section 6). The evidence then provides the CTA's response to the questions posed regarding any gaps in the PfG/ISNI, considerations on the milestones and outputs and suggests how the PfG can be monitored.

### 5. Summary Draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015

- 5.1. The CTA acknowledges the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 (PfG) contains high level strategic aims that go towards the stated goal of 'a shared and better future for all'. However it is disappointing that Section 3 'Our Approach' is quite muddled in terms of the goals, aims and challenges and principles – terms which are used almost interchangeably. This makes it unclear exactly what the PfG is trying to achieve.
- 5.2. The Priorities identified in the PfG raise questions as to how they could be achieved within the timescale, current budget framework and in the changing NICS environment
- 5.3. The CTA appreciates the commitment given in Section 1 'Commitments' to the development of effective partnership working with the Voluntary and Community sector to deliver tangible outcomes. This approach is more positive and proactive than previous PfG.
- 5.4. The CTA welcomes the commitment to invest in social enterprise and for the inclusion of social clauses in public procurement contracts.
- 5.5. The PfG aims to take a fresh look at the Executive's policies and programmes. However the document has been written after the NI Budget 2011 – 2015 has been set. While the Departmental Spending plans have been put in place following the NI Budget 2011-2015 the detail of these spending plans are not published and therefore it is not possible to link resource allocations to the actions which will deliver the strategic aims of the PfG.
- 5.6. Responding to the PfG is difficult as all the Building Blocks (policy and strategy documents) are not located in one central area and therefore difficult to access.
- 5.7. The milestones/outputs provided are very strategic and therefore more akin to outcomes than measurable targets or outputs.



## 6. Summary Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 – 2021

- 6.1. The draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI) updates the Executive's 2008 programme. It continues on the same strategic direction as before.
- 6.2. The CTA commends the ISNI aim to coordinate investment plans and to develop collaborative working. There are however no tangible targets to task proactive cross departmental working in order to achieve aims.
- 6.3. The ISNI highlights the need for improved infrastructure through good transport and telecoms links. The benefits are cohesions, sharing and integration at all levels and further a united community.
- 6.4. However the ISNI confirms the ratio of investment for road building compared to public transport services for 2011/12 -14/15 will be 6:1 (£1190m: £196m) and proposes for the period 2015/16 - 2020/2021 it may be 4.5:1 (£1281m<sup>1</sup>: £280m). This indicates a continued preference to develop and create new roads rather than invest in sustainable transport. This appears contrary to the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy 'Strategic Objective 2: Use road space and railways more efficiently' which seeks to achieve modal switch.
- 6.5. In the 'Networks' section the ISNI recognises the need for improved public transport links yet proposes further development of the road network enabling more vehicular movement. While there is demand for road maintenance and improvements required to the existing road network, there is a growing requirement to address movement of people through sustainable transport options. The continued emphasis on road building moves the limited budget away from the development of a sustainable and effective public transport system. This is not in line with the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy that places importance on moving people rather than vehicles.
- 6.6. The ISNI will be monitored through reports provided on the [www.isni.gov.uk](http://www.isni.gov.uk) website.

## 7. Gaps in the Programme for Government

- 7.1. Transport impacts all areas of life in Northern Ireland. Transport takes us to work, to school, to the local GP surgery, to hospital, to church, to shops, to our recreation of choice and provides access to the South and across to GB. Transport delivers goods to shops; it takes our waste away and is a major component of the construction, agriculture, tourism and leisure industries. Access to services depends on transport. Transport is an integral part of everyday life in Northern Ireland.
- 7.2. The need for car use will remain for a large number of households across Northern Ireland. However due to rising fuel costs the populous need to be able to access a more affordable method of travel. In 2009 up to 9.75%<sup>2</sup> of the household budget was spent on transport costs. Due to the rapid increase in fuel it is expected that percentage for 2010 will be over 10% and for 2011 closer to 11%. For every £1 earned around 10p is spent on car fuel. The time has never been more right for the Executive to concentrate efforts in achieving a modal shift from car to public transport.
- 7.3. The PfG aims to achieve a more sustainable transport system for Northern Ireland. The content of the document therefore supports the aims of the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy. Sustainable transport provides a real and measurable way of creating a cleaner, greener environment. It takes time to achieve but by targeting a modal switch from car to public transport there is an opportunity to meet environmental targets and reduce congestion in larger towns and cities.

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1 Dependent on outcome of A5/A8 road project changes.

2 NISRA NI Housing Statistics 2010-2011 (average household expenditure on transport costs based on 2009 figures)

- 7.4. There is no Strategic Transport Plan for NI: this role was fulfilled by the previous Regional transportation Strategy (2002-2012) but the proposed Draft Regional Transportation Strategy will be no more than a statement of objectives. The current 2011-2015 budget is already skewed towards road building making it easier to move vehicles and little to promote use of public transport. The Public Transport Agency, envisaged under the Public Transport Reform, is yet to be realised. Therefore there is a planning vacuum in transport. Translink as the prime public transport provider is left to deliver cost-effective solutions focusing on commuter and school children and whatever resources it can spare for socially necessary rural service and inter-peak services.
- 7.4..1. The cut to Translink's budget reduces its capacity for innovative public transport delivery and communication systems to support a modal shift/switch.
- 7.4..2. Support for the Community Transport Sector has been reduced and is now restricted to a small number of CT organisations that can access the DRD's Rural Transport Fund. This means the majority of Community Transport providers receive no support and therefore their capacity to develop as social enterprises or to meet PFG aims are removed.
- 7.4..3. The CTA receives a DRD grant through the Rural Transport Fund that limits support to only those CT operators who can access the RTF funding stream. CTA's ability to develop the majority of the CT sector is therefore reduced in Northern Ireland. This means the capacity and best use of resources available from within the Community is not being considered.
- 7.4..4. The Rural Transport Fund's priorities are effective in that the 'Dial a Lift' service does provide access for older people and people with disabilities living in rural areas who are unable to access conventional transport options (a private car, taxi, public or private transport) to local services. The Rural Transport Fund was not cut as part of DRD's Departmental Savings Plans. The CTA thanks the Committee for Regional Development for their input to the review of the Departmental Savings Plan that resulted in the RTF being protected<sup>3</sup>. However the DRD's Rural Transport Fund and those few CT operators who access that fund are being pressurised to deliver non-emergency Health transport without any investment or consideration from DHSSPS.
- 7.4..5. DRD officials have approached DHSSPS to support the provision of Health related transport; there has been no evidence of an open approach to partnership working. Outside DRD other Departments take the approach that transport 'is not in our statutory remit'. PFG should include clear targets to ensure partnership working to address transport issues between Departments.
- 7.5. The indicative funding figures in the ISNI show that there will be a continued lack of appropriate consideration for public transport until after 2021. Given the social context of an ageing population and lack of rural proofing the ISNI does not address the gap between older people and active citizenship and rural / urban access to services. This gap in terms of a Strategic Transport Plan for Northern Ireland which includes cost allocations by mode of transport and area puts at risk the coherent planning and delivery of public transport over the PFG period to 2015 and potentially the ISNI period to 2021.
- 7.6. The exclusion of consideration for transport access to services in the investment strategy and PFG, (other than 'Networks in the ISNI) is a fundamental flaw. The lack of a coordinated approach will lead to further costs rather than savings. There is a need for the Executive to consider how people will be able to get to Education, Employment and Health. Without 'transport accessibility planning' as forms the basis of the Local Transport Plan process in England, Northern Ireland will continue to deliver a fragmented transport system provided through silo Departmental expenditure. This approach will continue to see Education's

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3 The CTA has received email correspondence outlining the verbal confirmation from the Executive of the removal of proposed cuts to the RTF. The CTA anticipate the publication of a final DRD Work or Budget Expenditure Programme where it will confirm the amount available for the RTF and TPPD for 2011-2015

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'Yellow Buses' underutilised for part of every day and maintain Health's provision of exclusive transport services. The population must be encouraged to make use of the exiting public transport network and not depend on Departmental specific transport services. Transport is a cross-cutting theme that needs to be planned horizontally across Departments to create efficient use of resources and budgets.

- 7.7. The investment priorities for the ISNI excludes investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector in the current plan and forecast budgets. The CTA is concerned the ISNI will not realise the aim of working in partnership with the Sector if there is no targeted commitment or consideration of financial support. In this respect there appears to be no explicit 'follow through' on the PfG commitment to the development of effective partnership working with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 7.8. There is no plan to review the public procurement system: transport is a cross-cutting theme yet there is no Strategic Transport Plan for Northern Ireland to ensure all Department's transport expenditure and needs are holistically considered. By integrating budgets and pooling transport resources the Executive has an opportunity to improve utilisation of vehicles and staff, improve quality and standards and reduce costs. Through appropriate strategic planning of transport services the Executive can create partnership opportunities, deliver effective services for the benefit of everyone, create sustainable transport solutions and improve the economy.
- 7.9. In its 'Productive' section the ISNI varies from the PfG in that social enterprise and social clauses are mentioned in passing with no tangible evidence of commitment to progress either. There is no framework to consider review of the procurement system to enable effective social clauses to be included. A review of the procurement system would reveal that the only way the Voluntary and Community sector can deliver contracts is through application as a commercial profit making enterprise. Transport procurement is the one area in NI that excludes any entry by the Voluntary and Community Sector to contracts (by not allowing the S10b CT minibus operating permit or volunteer car schemes to be included and forcing CT to move to being fully commercial transport provider before being able to make application). This is contrary to the DSD Volunteering Strategy and PfG's proposal to work in partnership with the Sector.
- 7.10. The PfG mentions a commitment to social enterprise however there are no commitments to deliver opportunities for the Sector. The only Key Commitments are
- At page 31, 'to invest in social enterprise growth to increase sustainability in the broad community sector' but with no specific measurable outputs;
  - At page 52, 'to include social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction' but with no specific measurable outputs.
  - Clearly there needs to be appropriate infrastructure development for transport social enterprises.
- 7.11. Proposed Actions:
- 7.11.1. CPD should work with DRD, DOE and CTA to identify the barriers which currently block transport social enterprises from tendering for contracts.
- 7.11.2. CDP to review the number of social enterprises that made application and how many were successful in their applications for public tenders and contracts. At a previous CPD conference the Welsh equivalent provided evidence that by removing barriers WAG was able to increase the number of social enterprises delivering contracts from 4% to over 30%. The positive impact created investment in local jobs and development of sustainable community businesses (this was important as it helped create and improve local employment in rural areas).
- 7.11.3. CDP to standardise transport procurement across all Departments (and Departmental procurement agencies) to ensure value for money and quality of delivery

- 7.11.4. DETI and CPD should work with CTA to establish a transport social enterprise development framework that will deliver a number of community transport suppliers who are able to access procurement opportunities. A targeted approach would meet the PfG strategic aim of developing social enterprise. A similar programme has been adopted through the CTA's Rural Social Enterprise Initiative in England which is funded through the DfT and other partners. That programme has developed social enterprise activities of CT operations creating more sustainable rural businesses while retaining a focus on re-investment within the local community.
- 7.12. There are no targets to ensure partnership working becomes reality: In order to be an active partner CTA and the CT sector need financial and partnership commitments from DRD and other Departments. The DSD Concordat between Government and the Voluntary & Community sector confirms a commitment to effective partnership working. The PfG should include an output target for each Department to work in partnership with each other, the private sector and the Voluntary & Community sector to achieve its Priorities.
- 7.13. The Benefits of Working in Partnership with the Community Transport Sector:
- 7.13.1. The Community Transport sector is perfectly positioned to provide an effective partner to work with each Department or with a 'Transport Cross-Departmental team' to provide access to services for older people, people with disabilities and people living in isolation (either because of location or limited mobility). CTA and the CT sector have already proved to be an effective partner:
- 7.13.2. Over the past 12 years Community Transport has delivered locally led transport solutions and helped to achieve DRD's rolling aim to reduce social and rural isolation through the continued investment into the Rural Transport Fund.
- 7.13.3. Community Transport has enabled DARD's Assisted Rural Travel Scheme to be delivered across NI. This enables SmartPass holders' to use that benefit on a mode of transport that is suitable to need and is available in the local rural community.
- 7.13.4. Community Transport helps to increase the number of Translink passengers by providing a link from the home to the local bus stop or depot (we would welcome future support to develop this approach).
- 7.13.5. Community Transport maintains access to services in the 'rural to rural' context by providing transport to local employment, health, education, to local shops and businesses (therefore ensuring the sustainability of some local retailers).

## 8. Comments on the Milestones and Outputs

- 8.1. The milestones or outputs are high level strategic outcomes rather than time-specific measurable actions.
- 8.2. The CTA suggests Outputs should be more tangible and specific – how else can performance be measured?
- 8.3. The milestones are set against an annual timescale that excludes year one of the PfG.
- 8.4. In order to achieve progression the CTA suggests milestones should be considered relative to the timescales of each Key Commitment and Departmental work programme.
- 8.5. An update report should be provided by the Programme Board annually. There are no milestones set for the PfG to provide review or update on the progress of the programme
- 8.6. Each Key Commitment is linked to only one Government Department. While that Department has the lead Operational responsibility it is disappointing the PfG does not consider listing areas where other Departments should be considered and included.

- E.g. Under Priority Two: Implement an Integrated and Affordable Childcare Strategy (OFMDFM). Access to childcare is often dependent on transport. Education Transport is not permitted to deliver a child to a different address on the return journey (to childcare including Kinship care or community/private child care). This has an impact on working mothers, families and sustainability of the Childcare sector. The new Childcare Strategy should consider transport and access. Potential partners for OFMDFM include DE, DEL, Community Transport, Translink and DSD. It should not be assumed other Departments will respond to consultation or be proactively engaged in another Department's Key Commitment.

## 9. What is the best way to monitor progress?

- 9.1. The PfG Programme Board should present an annual update report to the Executive to confirm progress to date and achievements against targets.
- 9.2. The Delivery level must ensure updates/reports are provided to the Programme Board stating the progress to date and confirm when targets have been met and the progress on any outstanding items.
- 9.3. Where a Department is not achieving its Operational objectives the relevant Minister should be tasked with providing an explanation to the Executive.
- 9.4. Each Department should be tasked with evidencing how they are working in partnership with other Departments, private and Voluntary & Community sector. This report should be produced in February of each year. This will allow time for the relevant Departments to amend operations for the following year to ensure appropriate and effective partnership working is taking place.
- 9.5. The CTA encourages that cross-Departmental work should start on the issue of transport in the first year of the PfG (2011-2012). There is a strong case for an immediate audit of transport expenditure for DHSSPS, Education, Employment and Learning, Regional Development and Agriculture and Rural Development. By identifying the cost savings that could be made through better integration of budgets the PfG could actually save the Northern Ireland budget rather than continue needless 'silo' expenditure.
- 9.6. In the economic climate the people of Northern Ireland will be the most affected. In order to monitor progress it is vital the views of the public are known. The Programme Board should adopt an open and transparent dialogue with the people of Northern Ireland to ascertain if the Priorities are actually effective and delivering benefit across our communities. The CTA propose a rolling workshop of outreach clinics across Northern Ireland where the public can comment on how their lives are being improved, made more difficult or where Priorities are not being realised. This proactive framework will help in the future planning of the next NI PfG.
- 9.7. The next NI PfG must be written in advance of the next Northern Ireland Budget. This will ensure Departmental budgets are focused on the best programme for Northern Ireland and not on the best way to spend what budget is available.

# Consumer Council Public Transport



## **A Consumer Council Briefing on the Northern Ireland Executive Draft Programme for Government 2011-15**

Public Transport

December 2011

The Consumer Council

## Introduction

**The Consumer Council** is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland (NI) consumers. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count.

We have a statutory remit to *promote and safeguard the interests* of consumers in NI and we have specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport and food<sup>1</sup>. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research and educating and informing consumers<sup>2</sup>.

The Consumer Council is also a designated body for the purposes of supercomplaints<sup>3</sup>, which means that we can refer any consumer affairs goods and services issue to the Office of Fair Trading<sup>4</sup>, where we feel that the market may be harming consumers' best interests.

In taking forward our broad statutory remit we are informed by and representative of consumers in NI. We work to bring about change to benefit consumers by making their voice heard and making it count. To represent consumers in the best way we can, we listen to them and produce robust evidence to put their priorities at the heart of all we do.

This paper provides the view of the Consumer Council of the Draft Programme for Government 2011- 15 and the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21. The evidence raised in this document is specifically in relation to Public Transport as requested by the Committee for Regional Development.

There are 4 specific key commitments in the Programme for Government that relate to public transport.

### **1. Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline (DRD)**

#### **Gaps in dPFG**

The Consumer Council raised concerns in our response to the DRD budget regarding the spending split between roads and public transport, including the fact that the budget moved

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1 The Consumer Council undertakes its specific functions in relation to food recognising the role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA has responsibility for the development of food policy and for the provision of advice, information and assistance, in respect to food safety or other interests of consumers in relation to food. Therefore, to ensure good value and use of public money, the Consumer Council and FSA have a memorandum of understanding and the Council's strategic focus on food is primarily in relation to food prices and customer experience.

2 The General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, 1984 No. 1822 (N.I. 12), <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1984/1822/contents>

3 The Enterprise Act 2002 (Part 9 Restrictions on Disclosure of Information) (Amendment and Specification) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1400/schedules/made>

4 The OFT is the UK's consumer and competition authority. Its mission is to make markets work well for consumers. It is a non-ministerial government department established by statute in 1973 <http://oft.gov.uk/about-the-oft/>

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further away from the 65:35 funding split between roads and public transport as set out in the Regional Transportation Strategy 2002.

The fact that the draft programme for government has a target for improving journey times on key transport corridors by upgrading key roads but no specific target for improving public transport services indicates that the priority for the Executive continues to be road building.

### **Comments on Milestones and outputs**

The key commitment and the milestone/outputs give no indication about what schemes are to be developed and implemented and give no indication of the role public transport could play in improving traffic flow by increasing modal shift and taking more vehicles off the road. Developing road infrastructure should include a focus on public transport priority measures such as bus lanes and park and ride facilities which should also improve journey times on public transport.

### **What is the best way to monitor progress?**

The draft Investment Strategy 2011-21 states 'investment in public transport links people to employment and education opportunities in a sustainable way, encouraging modal shift from the car.'

Whilst we recognise that the Programme for Government is intended to be a high level document more information is needed to clarify what improvements there will be to public transport services in line with road improvements to identify if public transport measures are being given appropriate investment.

The Consumer Council believes any improvements in key road projects should contain a focus on how public transport can also be improved with priority measures. Our view on whether significant inroads will be made into modal shift as committed to in these documents, as well as the Regional Transportation Strategy and Regional Development Strategy, will depend on the delivery of these plans which is not outlined in the draft programme for government.

## **2. Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel (DRD)**

### **Gaps in dPFG**

It is unclear whether any of this investment is in addition to schemes or plans that have already commenced or been publicised. Translink's funding alone over the 4 year period is approximately £400 million (Revenue - £226.55m Capital - £170.364m).

There is a commitment within the Economic Strategy which seeks to 'invest to improve our transport infrastructure and to do so in a smarter and more sustainable way.' The Consumer Council supports this commitment; however, when considered against the budgets we know have been allocated to Translink, the investment figure of £500 million does not appear to have much scope for improving investment.

The Economic Strategy confirms that over £500 million will be invested in a programme of measures to secure more sustainable modes of travel and achieve an annual average of 77 million journeys by public transport.

This target of 77 million journeys has been in place since at least 2008 and was contained in the Public Service Agreement 2008-11 between DRD and Translink.

Translink have been achieving this target since 2007/08. Therefore, the investment of £500 million is merely to keep pace with what has been happening since at least 2008 and it could be argued that the investment will not 'secure MORE sustainable modes', at best it will simply maintain the status quo. It will not improve investment in public transport and the fact that the target for public transport passenger journeys will be the same in 2015 as it was in

2008 confirms that there is no expectation to improve modal shift which has been a key aim of the Regional Transportation Strategy since 2002.

#### **Comments on Milestones and outputs**

The milestones that have been set out simply outline how much money will be spent cumulatively over the budget period.

#### **What is the best way to monitor progress?**

The Consumer Council agrees with the Regional Development Committee's briefing paper published on 8th August 2011 which concluded:

- Car dependency in Northern Ireland is escalating, despite its reduction being targeted by policy over the last ten years;
- Although the rhetoric from government has been all about sustainable transport, the reality is that transport is the only sector whose emissions have increased in the last ten years;
- The latest budget has served to highlight that despite the sustainability rhetoric, road building is a greater priority than reducing traffic;
- Managing car dependency is one of key issues facing the DRD and as such requires an adequate policy response. The revised RTS, currently out for consultation provides this, however, two elements are crucial to its success:
  - Securing sufficient funding; and
  - Encouraging/facilitating a huge cultural shift.

The Consumer Council believes it would be more beneficial to see a list of agreed investments to improve public transport over the budget period which aim to address the points raised above with targets for what improvements will be made as opposed to how much money will be spent.

### **3. By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport**

#### **Gaps in dPFG**

The Consumer Council welcomes this announcement but feel that more could be done across a range of journey types such as the commute to work. This should also include the role of public transport and CCNI believes that in addition to this commitment all government departments should develop travel plans to educate their staff about more sustainable options for undertaking work related journeys.

The school journey and work journey are often linked and therefore it would require a comprehensive response to consider these issues together rather than in isolation.

This would support our call for a high level, joined up approach to the provision of transport that links in with planning, education, health and other sectors to ensure that consumers have the option to use more sustainable forms of transport to undertake essential journeys and make the most efficient use of resources.

#### **Comments on Milestones and outputs**

The Consumer Council welcomes the fact that the milestones have been clearly outlined in terms of what shift is to be achieved. However, it is not possible to comment on whether this is a realistic or challenging target without publicising what the current position is.

In addition to this we also believe that the milestones should consider improvements in other journey types, not just school journeys.



**What is the best way to monitor progress?**

A more effective way of measuring success would be to identify the targeted increase the Executive is aiming for by outlining what the current position is, what the targeted increase is and how this will be achieved.

**4. Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/ Londonderry railway line (DRD)****Gaps in dPFG**

The Consumer Council supports the decision to bring forward the upgrade of the Derry/ Londonderry line and is pleased to see the commitment in the draft Programme for Government.

However, the document makes no further comment in relation to any developments or improvements to the rest of the rail network. The draft Investment Strategy outlines on page 21 a range of programmes that will be taken forward. However it indicates that some of the improvements will only be 'considered and taken forward' such as the work on the Knockmore to Lurgan railway line, the 'potential' development of an integrated transport hub and interchange and 'potential' investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives.

The Consumer Council believes that a number of public transport projects could improve access to key services for consumers, such as bus priority measures, park and ride sites and improvements to the accessibility of bus and rail stations.

**Comments on Milestones and outputs**

None – the milestones are operational commitments that CCNI assume have been agreed with Translink

**What is the best way to monitor progress?**

The focus should be on improving the rail network, of which, the Derry/Londonderry line is part.

**Conclusion**

The provision of effective integrated public transport services would contribute to the Executives commitment to growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future; tackling disadvantage; improving health and wellbeing; protecting our people and the environment; building a strong and shared community and; delivering high quality services.

The Consumer Council believes that this draft Programme for Government will not deliver on these aims with regard to public transport

**For further information contact Scott Kennerley, Head of Policy (Transport) at the Consumer Council on 028 9067 4818 or e-mail [skennerley@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:skennerley@consumercouncil.org.uk)**


# DRD Presentation Roads and Rail Infrastructure


## *Regional Development Committee Seminar on draft Pfg and draft ISNI*

### Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment



Capital Budget 2011/12 to 2014/15	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total 2011/15
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Strategic Road Improvements	52.3	222.1	343.2	289.7	907.3
Capital Improvements	26.1	6.9	9.8	18.8	61.6
Street Lighting Renewal	6	3	3	10	22
Structural Maintenance	67.5	25.5	29.4	55	157.4
Other Capital	4			5.7	9.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>155.9</b>	<b>257.5</b>	<b>385.4</b>	<b>379.2</b>	<b>1158</b>
Original ROI Contribution £m	14		10	250	274
Revised ROI Contribution £m				25	25



- North South Ministerial Council Plenary Meeting held on Friday 18 November 2011.
  - Irish Government advised that the progression of the A5 and A8 projects is being deferred.
  - Irish Government will provide £25 million per annum in 2015 and 2016 towards the project.
  - Relevant Departments will prepare a new funding and implementation plan for the projects.
  - This is to be agreed at the next NSMC Transport meeting, with endorsement at the next NSMC Plenary meeting.
- 

- The indicative allocation for Roads over the 2015-21 period is around £200m per annum.
- This will enable Roads Service to take forward:
  - A significant programme of structural maintenance, targeted primarily at the strategic road network;
  - A programme of minor capital works; and
  - A £100 million per annum programme of strategic road improvements.



## **Railways to 2015**

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Coleraine to L/Derry track relay
- Completion New Trains Programme
- User Worked Crossings programme
- Train overhauls
- Limited Park and Ride developments



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment – what can be delivered?**

- Uncertainty about levels of funding for Rail investments 2015-2017(Rapid Transit)
- Minimum levels of investment required of £10-£15m per annum to maintain network.



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment – what can not be delivered?**

- Uncertainty about GVS Hub project
- Knockmore to Lurgan
- Belfast to Dublin 90 minutes
- Expanded Network in NI
- New Trains 3?



# RDC Translink

## **Regional Development Committee**

Programme for Government Seminar 12th December 2011

Translink (David Brown, Commercial & Services Director and Ciarán Rogan, Marketing Executive)

Re: Public Transport and Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment

## **Context**

Investment to date in bus and rail services has been successful and clearly delivered benefits to the economy; our overarching view is that excellent public transport is at the heart of sustainable development for NI.

- The Budget for NI 2011/12 – 2014/15 and Programme for Government (PfG) restricts funding for passenger transport (PT) presenting very challenging public expenditure constraints in NI for next 4 years
- To grow passenger transport usage not only is capital investment necessary along with ongoing revenue financial support but also supportive policy structures, importantly in relation to both planning and parking policy.
- For immediate benefit to passenger transport and at relatively low cost, improvements in park & ride provision and priority for buses are very effective. The latter point is crucial given the ongoing deterioration in average bus speeds in Belfast.
- Translink has been very successful in recent years in growing usage of bus and rail services against a difficult economic backdrop. Notably a ‘freeze’ in fares levels from mid-2010 has proved effective.
- The PfG refers to £500million to support sustainable transport; we understand this represents a totalling of existing funding and programmes already in place. The budget for the 4 years from 2011/12 delivers a significant reduction in levels of support for bus and rail services. For example;
  - of DRD’s total capital spend on transport 14% is for PT (the RTS budgeted 35% although only 20% was delivered)
  - funding for bus services will reduce in real terms by one third by year 3 of the programme
  - ‘steady state’ investment for maintenance of the rail network is of the order of £40 – 50 million; the PfG allocates ca. £11million p.a.by year 3
  - For the Translink bus fleet to ‘stand still’ in average age terms approximately 95 buses per year need to be replaced at a cost of c£15million; in 2013/14 ca. £58,000 is allocated
- In addition there is uncertainty in the area of school transport

## **PfG headlines built into Translink’s Corporate Plan; Targets and Budgets**

- Target of 77 million journeys in 2011/12 (same as 2010/11 outturn) – a very challenging / stretching target!
- In order to grow passenger numbers - no ‘fares rises’ will be put through before 2012 – there has been no general fares increase since June 2010 despite sharply rising costs. This will be reviewed thereafter given cost pressures and funding reductions. Services will also need to be reviewed within this context.
- Efficiencies are built in to all budgets through a focus on on-going cost reduction and efficient contract management

### **Review of Network**

- The bus and rail networks will be reviewed over the next years within the cost and funding context above.
- Opportunities to integrate bus and rail services will be sought to reduce duplication.
- Where appropriate, services carrying very low numbers may be optimised, although we will seek to maintain the geographical scope of the network.
- Those parts of the network e.g. Goldline which continue to perform well; opportunities for growth will be targeted

### **NI Railways**

- The 'New Trains Two programme continues as scheduled; 20 new trains (5 already in service), a new train maintenance facility at Adelaide and platform extensions.
- Deployment of the first new train began autumn 2011 with completion in 2012; priority will be to replace all class 450 rolling stock on the Larne line
- Coleraine to Londonderry track relay to commence June 2012, the line to be reopened in April 2013. A completion of the relay programme will be completed after the 2013 year of culture
- Services to Derry will be 8 return trains from April 2013
- New hourly rail services will run between Coleraine and Belfast

### **Goldline**

- Goldline will be relaunched.
- Timetable enhancements will be put in place for autumn 2012; this includes frequency / service increases where there is potential
- 35 new vehicles will be purchased and 25 of the existing fleet will be refurbished.

### **Metro**

- Additional bus priority in Belfast is necessary to address falling average bus speeds.

### **Capital investment; highlights included in CP**

Additional key initiatives include:

- Antrim station upgrade
- Portadown station upgrade
- Ballymoney station footbridge and cycleway
- Moira station footbridge
- P&R Extensions – Ballymoney, Coleraine & Antrim and completion of feasibility studies for Moira Phase 3 and Lisburn West
- Customer Information System and Journey Planner
- Introduction of wi-fi on some services
- 35 new buses for Goldline and 44 new buses for Metro
- Ticketing innovations; further integration (i link)and mobile (m link)

# QPANI Road and Rail infrastructure



## Oral Briefing to the Regional Development Committee on the Draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015 and Investment Strategy 2011 - 2021

December 2011

This submission represents the views of the members of the Quarry Products Association NI towards the draft Programme for Government 2011 -2015 and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 - 2021.

The QPANI is the principal trade association representing the Northern Ireland aggregates and quarrying industry. Our members produce over 95% of aggregates, sand and gravel quarried in Northern Ireland. They also produce agricultural and industrial lime, silica sand and marine dredged sand and gravel, as well as secondary and recycled aggregates, ready mixed concrete and asphalt products for roads.

### Background

QPANI recognise that the current economic situation has placed significant budgetary constraints on the NI Executive and that the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy has to be considered and judged on that basis. The 2010 comprehensive spending review resulted in an 8% reduction in current spending and a massive 37% reduction in capital spending. Given Northern Ireland's legacy of massive under-funding of infrastructure the current spending plans will result in the Northern Ireland economy starting behind our neighbours once a recovery in the national and world economies begin. Recognising these financial constraints it is therefore even more important to ensure that we extract the maximum value out of every penny of tax payers money we spend. The Executive must also investigate all possible additional funding and revenue streams to complement the block budget while protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

### Comments

#### **The Programme for Government**

QPANI recognise the progress the Executive has already made but we believe much more could have been achieved. We would highlight;

- The failure of implementing the Review of Public Administration.
- The money wasted on the failed National Stadium project.
- Slow speed of much needed changes to the planning process.
- Our roads infrastructure spending still falls way behind that of our nearest competitors.
- We also believe the length of consultation period is too long given the urgent need for decision making in the face of the current economic problems.
- Failure to rebalance the economy during the “good economic times” a few years back.

In terms of progress

- We welcome the significant progress in reducing road deaths in Northern Ireland to their lowest levels since records began in 1931.



- We welcome the significant investment of £492 million in the schools estate.
- We welcome the investment of more than £1 billion in water and sewage infrastructure.
- We welcome the completion of a number of key road infrastructure projects.
- We welcome a significant investment in the quality of the health estate.

In terms of this Programme for Government QPANI welcome the commitments by the Executive in particular those relating to facilitating infrastructure investment such as;

- £50 million loan fund to improve liquidity of small and medium sized businesses
- 90% of large scale investment planning decisions made within 6 months and applications with a strong job creation potential given additional weighting.
- Delivery of 8000 social and affordable homes.
- Improving the thermal efficiency of the Housing Executive housing stock.
- Upgrade of the Derry / Londonderry to Coleraine railway line.
- Investment of £600 million in water and sewage infrastructure.
- Upgrade of key road projects and improving the quality of our overall road network.
- £500 million to promote sustainable modes of travel.
- The construction of the Police, Prison and Fire Service Training Centre
- Welcome the commitment to integrated public transport system.
- Welcome the commitment to designate 15 areas of special scientific interest on the condition that these designations are made on strict scientific criteria not just a tick box exercise.
- We also warmly welcome the clearly defined lines of accountability that are supported by effective monitoring and reporting.

### **In particular**

#### **Road Infrastructure**

We must recognise that investment in transport infrastructure has a massive economic ripple effect both in the short and long term.

The Executives last Programme for Government stated,

*“Growing the economy will be our top priority over the lifetime of this Programme for Government.”*

In this programme for Government one of the priorities is

*“Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future”.*

The quality of our transportation system has a key role to play in the competitiveness of our economy and achieving the wider sustainable development objectives. It is vitally important that investment is made where it will be of most benefit and deliver measurable economic success both to the local area and Northern Ireland as a whole. Roads should be viewed as “economic corridors” and should be planned with other public transport infrastructure in consultation with local business and other relevant Government Departments such as Planning Service, Invest NI and Department of Finance.

Lack of transport infrastructure has an adverse impact on the business community. A fit for purpose and well maintained infrastructure is needed because

- In Northern Ireland we transport all our freight by road not only in terms of imported goods but also delivery of products to our ports for export.

- The growth of our tourist industry depends on it.
- The safety of the travelling public depends on it.
- Inward investors see it as a key aspect in their decision to come to Northern Ireland.
- It makes good long term financial sense and delivers value for money.

Recent figures show that in Northern Ireland we invest 32% less per head of population in infrastructure construction than Scotland and 16% less than in England. This shows that our existing infrastructure deficit is set to grow.

Given the recent decision by the Irish Government to postpone their contribution to the A5 project QPANI would ask that immediate attention is given to reallocating funding to other roads and construction projects that sustain the maximum number of jobs and creates the widest possible economic ripple effect in the local economy.

Our Association welcomed the commitment in the previous spending plans to key road infrastructure projects such as the A8, the A32, public transport infrastructure, and improvements in the water and sewage infrastructure to ensure that we meet all water quality standards expected by Europe. Now the Republic of Ireland Government has withdrawn funding from the A5 project it is our view that a major re-allocation of funds to projects that deliver significant benefits to the economy and the maximum creation of employment should be considered. In our view these should be priority schemes already identified in the Roads Service Strategic Roads Programme.

We would also urge the Executive and the Regional Development Minister to reallocate some £168 M of funds to Structural maintenance in years 2, 3 and 4 of the current CSR period to bring the SM expenditure over the four year budget period up to that outlined in the Departments SM funding plan.

The economic ripple effect of investment of the redirected funds in these projects would be enormous and act as a real springboard for re-energising and growth of the local economy and the construction industry.

### **Railway Infrastructure**

The facts are that Northern Ireland is almost completely reliant on our road network for all our transport needs and that is not going to change in the foreseeable future. There are a number of reasons for this notably

- Our rurally based economy.
- Small area and population
- Closure of most of our railway lines between 1950 and 1970.

However we must invest more in an integrated public transport system primarily in the greater Belfast area. QPANI welcome the continued support for the Belfast Rapid Transport System and the proposed £500 million in promoting more sustainable modes of transport. We would welcome more detail on how this is to be achieved and what projects the money will be invested.

### **Investment Strategy**

QPANI welcomes the commitment to invest around £5billion over the next four years in projects that will benefit construction and related sectors. We welcome the recognition by the NI Executive that certain labour intensive activities such as facilities and roads maintenance, refurbishments and upgrades can employ twice as many people as other construction related projects that require purchase of land or specialist materials.

We welcome the introduction of social clauses into Government Construction projects but believe it does not go far enough in supporting the sustaining of local jobs through the

promotion of local construction materials, keeping in mind the need to comply with European Procurement rules.

We welcome the commitment to invest in key road economic corridors as per the Strategic Roads Programme.

We welcome the investment in new trains that will improve comfort for the public and encourage more use of public transport.

We are disappointed that more focus has not been given to attracting alternative forms of funding and revenue generation to fund road maintenance and development.

We welcome the commitment for Government to work closer and in partnership with the private and social sectors to improve our infrastructure and essential services.

We welcome the range of efficiency saving plans identified in the strategy and the clear reporting requirements placed on Departments so that any savings can be reinvested in front line services. In particular the steps to realise the value of surplus and underutilised assets

In terms of delivery of infrastructure projects much more work needs to be done to reduce the cost of tendering to both the public and private sectors.

The Executives online investment strategy information portal is a welcome addition to communicating progress on key infrastructure projects. However experience to date indicates that the website is not being kept up to date and the information going on it could be of more value to the construction industry.

### **Conclusion**

QPANI believes the key areas below should be central to the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy:

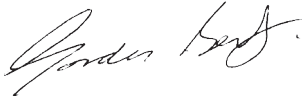
- Complete the upgrading of the Strategic Road Network.
- Increase investment in public transport as the strategic road network investment comes to an end.
- Improve access to our ports and airports.
- Speed up the delivery of the Rapid Transit System for Belfast.
- Maintain existing assets more effectively and sustainably by use of low carbon materials.
- Effective car parking policy and tariffs.
- More effective traffic management of existing road space and enforcement of road transport vehicles and operators.
- Cost effective measures to encourage cycling and walking,

The need for reducing transports carbon footprint and increasing the use of more sustainable modes of transport should not be in conflict with investment in roads infrastructure as we believe the two are complementary and need to be integrated. There is no doubt, as stated above, we need to get people out of their cars, particularly in our major towns and cities. At the same time we need to improve our connectivity with ports and airports to enable sustainable business growth and creation of jobs and wealth. We need to link up our hospitals to reduce journey times in cases of emergencies and we need to upgrade our road network to further reduce accidents and fatalities.

The vision of the Executive should be to ensure that Northern Ireland will remain competitive in the global international marketplace and that the fruits of our economic success will be shared more equally at regional level and throughout society and deliver key sustainable development targets. QPANI recognise that the commitments and priorities outlined in this Programme for Government can achieve this vision. However like so many other Programmes

for Government it is our view this programme lacks detail. We do recognise that that the PFG, the Economic Strategy and Investment Strategy do exhibit joined up thinking and there is significant integration between the three documents for which the Executive should be commended. QPANI, like so many others now want to see delivery, quick decisions being taken, regular and effective monitoring and clear accountability for responsible individuals.

Signed



**Gordon Best**

Regional Director QPANI

Date 7th December 2011

## DRD Presentation Sustainable Transport

### *Regional Development Committee Seminar on draft PfG and draft ISNI*

Sustainable Transport



### **Sustainable Transport Commitments in draft PfG**

- Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel
- By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport



## **Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel**

- The bulk of this investment is in public transport – 20 trains and around 80 buses + other grant support
- Includes provision for:
  - Active travel demonstration projects – initiated by October 2012
  - Park & Ride – increase provision by 2014
  - Belfast on the Move – 2.6km new bus lanes; 1.3km dedicated cycle lanes and 20 new controlled pedestrian crossings by 2013
  - Charge posts for electric vehicles – over 100 by 2013



## **Create the conditions to facilitate pupils to walk or cycle to school**

- Milestones / outputs:
  - Current: primary schools – 32%; secondary schools – 21%
  - 2012/13: 33%/21%
  - 2013/14: 34%/21%
  - 2014/15: 36%/22%
- Travel Survey NI is a rolling 3-year survey – milestones should be converted into that format
- Reprioritisation of funding required



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Sustainable Transport – what can be delivered?**

- ISNI – Potential investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives and ICT investment in Transport services will be considered and taken forward
- 3 – 6 Active Travel Demonstration projects
- A number of Park & Ride schemes
- Belfast on the Move sustainable transport enabling measures
- Rapid Transit enabling measures
- Over 100 charge posts for electric cars



## **Implications of draft ISNI for Sustainable Transport – what can not be delivered?**

- The full priority list of Park & Ride schemes in the Strategic Review
- The sustainable transport initiatives we are planning are building blocks for the future
- This represents the start of a long term process



## SUSTRANS Presentation Sustainable Transport



Draft Programme for Government  
2011 – 15

Comments from Sustrans





## Presentation outline

- Strengths of PfG
- Gaps in Draft PfG / Investment Strategy
- Milestones / outputs
- Monitoring progress



## Strengths of Draft PfG

Active school travel target:

“ by 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport ”

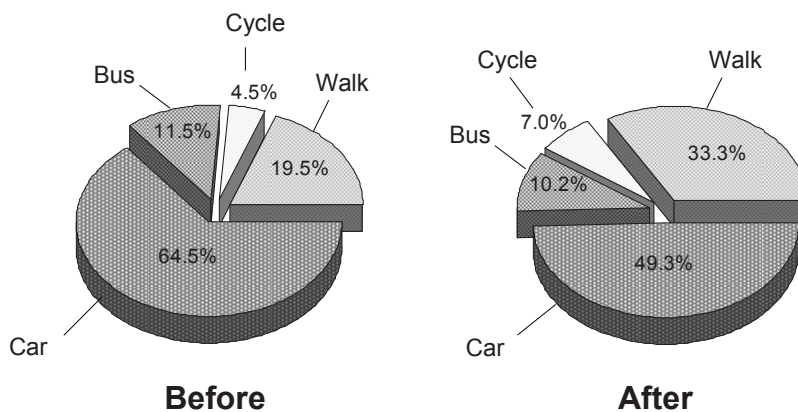


## School travel patterns GB / NI

	GB	NI
primary pupils travel by car	42%	52%
primary pupils walk or cycle	50%	32%
secondary pupils walk or cycle	42%	21%



## Rural Safe Routes to Schools 'Pilot'



Data based on responses to hands-up surveys, asking the question  
"How do you usually travel to school?"



## Gaps in Draft PfG / Investment Strategy

1. Lack of broad modal shift target
2. Low % level of sustainable transport investment
3. Insufficient focus on local travel
4. No specific target for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions



## Why modal shift target?

- provides strategic focus for transport investment, helping to ensure value for money

Increases in sustainable travel:

- reduces:
  - congestion and journey times
  - transport-related greenhouse gas emissions
- improves:
  - access to employment
  - travel choices for ordinary people, businesses and tourists
  - health and quality of life



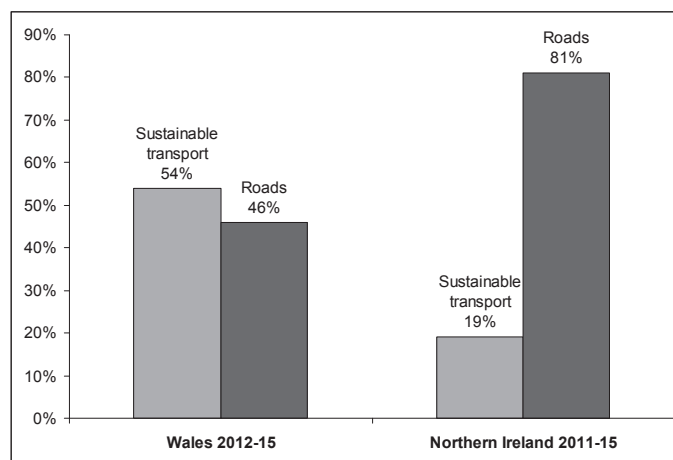
## Why modal shift target?

Compared to GB, people in NI:

- are more car-dependent  
74% of trips by car or van, compared to 63% in GB
- make less use of active travel  
18% of trips by cycling/walking, compared to 25% in GB
- make less use of public transport  
5.5% of trips by public transport, compared to 10% in GB



## Why better balance of capital investment?



## Why focus more on local travel?

- 63% of all journeys are local i.e. under 5 miles
- Potential for more active travel:
  - 34% journeys under 2 miles – half of them undertaken by car
  - 17% journeys under 1 mile – one third undertaken by car



## Why more specific emissions target?

- In GB, transport-related emissions in 2009 fell slightly from 1990 levels
- In NI, transport-related emissions in 2009 rose by 30% on 1990 levels
- In NI, transport:
  - produces more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector except agriculture
  - is only sector where greenhouse gas emissions are growing



## Milestones and outputs

Active school travel – realistic target



## Monitoring progress

- Active school travel target – NI Travel survey / individual school monitoring
- Transport-related greenhouse gas emissions – DOE collates regular stats
- Any broader modal shift target – NI Travel Survey



# Energy Saving Trust Sustainable Transport

## Energy Saving Trust in NI

Patrick Thompson  
 Operations Manager,  
 Energy Saving Trust (NI)

9 August, 2011



## Introduction

- Energy Saving Trust is the leading impartial organisation helping people save energy and reduce carbon emissions.
- We provide expert insight and knowledge about energy saving in the home, water use and travel, supporting people to take action and providing quality assurance for goods, services and installers.
- Have engaged with DRD on transport advice as far back as 2008



## Introduction

- Advice service here for over 15 years
- Last year helped people save 683,000 tonnes of lifetime CO2 and around £3.6 million a year on their household bills.
- We provide fleet advice and eco-driving support in Scotland, Wales and England
- Evidence is based on our expertise in advice and support and not on larger strategic policy decisions such as road building



## Programme for Government

- Sustainable transport cuts across many themes, but there is no explicit 'Sustainable Transport' priority
  - Regional Transportation Strategy
  - Sustainable Development Strategy
  - Integrated transport infrastructure/improved public transport
  - Rural poverty and isolation
  - Adapting to/mitigating risks of climate change
  - Air quality strategy
  - Greenhouse gas emissions reductions
  - Investment in more sustainable modes of travel





## Programme for Government

What should Sustainable Transport look like?

Consumers need a suite of options

- Car dependency – some areas will always be disadvantaged by limited public transport
- Rural fuel prices ever higher
- Welded to our cars – some won't move to other forms of transport – what can we do to help them?
- Need to start to look ahead – electric vehicles etc.



## Programme for Government

Consumers need to be empowered to effect their own changes

- engage people beyond the major policy decisions like road building
- Government needs to invest in providing advice on how people can make a change today
  - Eco-driving – all drivers can benefit
  - Modal shift – some can benefit
  - All-island dimension - electric vehicle infrastructure



## Examples of advice

- All GB Nations provide transport advice to consumers
- Scottish Government funded our advice centres to provide transport advice to over 50,000 people
- Fleet advice to 136 organisations with fleet of over 55,000 vehicles
- European Programme ECOWILL incorporating energy-efficiency driving skills at the learner stage



## Results easily evaluated

- 30,000 drivers provided with eco-driving training in England – fuel saving of 15% realised (c. £250pa per vehicle)
- Green Fleet Reviews – savings of 11,500 tCO<sub>2</sub> per year, mileage reductions of 2-5%, 70% of fleet managers took specific actions
- European research indicates 30% accident reduction due to eco-driving (for fleet managers this equates to £300 saving on time/injury costs)



## Outcomes

- Fuel cost savings
- Carbon emission reductions
- Economic benefit to businesses
- Gears us up for electric vehicles/next steps in low carbon economy
- Definitive, measurable outcomes



## Conclusions

### Gaps in PfG

- Needs specifics on what Sustainable Transport is

### Milestones and Outputs

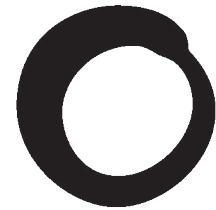
- Depends on vision of Sustainable Transport (advice easy to set targets and outputs for)

### Monitoring Progress

- For advice – numbers advised, evaluated fuel savings, economic impacts for businesses



# Friends of the Earth Sustainable Transport



**Friends of  
the Earth**  
Northern Ireland

## Draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015 and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's transport policy is heading in the wrong direction. We urgently need action to tackle the dual challenges of climate change and rising oil prices but the Department's current plans will do nothing to help. Indeed, they are likely to make achieving the 5 priorities of the Programme for Government more difficult to achieve.

### **Priorities in the Programme for Government**

- Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future
- Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being
- Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities
- Building a strong and shared community
- Delivering high quality and efficient public services

### **Balance of spend**

The DRD transport budget is heavily biased towards roads, and more specifically, new roads. Friends of the Earth's view is that the current transport balance of spend will not adequately tackle the problem of transport poverty, arrest the alarming growth in traffic volumes or benefit the regional economy.

The A5 and A8 roads constitute around 40 per cent of the Department's total budget and around 60 per cent of the transport spend. It is irrational and counterproductive to commit such a significant proportion of the budget to two roads while slashing the funds for roads maintenance, public transport, walking and cycling, and water and sewerage.

Friends of the Earth recommends the balance of spend should be reversed, with around 65 per cent of the transport spend dedicated to public transport, walking, and cycling.

### **Economy**

The transport balance of spend is likely to adversely affect the rural economy by loss of farmland to new roads and the fragmentation of communities, and contribute to tourism blight. The argument that roads spending benefits the economy was dismissed by the government-appointed Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) which pointed to evidence that major roads projects can have the effect of 'sucking' economic development from a region or locality as firms find it increasingly possible to service the region in question from a base at some distance.

Without further road developments any time savings to road users will be negated by the creation of bottlenecks where the new roads end. The extent of the roads spend could lock Northern Ireland into further roads spending in order to relieve the bottlenecks generated by increased traffic volumes, further cementing our car dependency.

Not only are the economic benefits of roads spending overstated, the economic benefits of public transport investment are overlooked. Evidence from Los Angeles has shown that 85 cents of every dollar spent on petrol immediately leaves the regional economy while, of every dollar spent on a public transport fare, 80 cents goes in transport workers' wages which goes on to generate \$3.80 of goods and services in the region.

Congested roads and bottlenecks are normally blamed on insufficient road capacity but the contribution made by inadequate public transport provision tends to be ignored. Building new road space is not a sustainable solution to the problem of congestion. In fact, SACTRA has warned that, far from alleviating congestion, the construction of new road space actually generates more traffic. New road space leads people to make journeys they would not previously have made, a phenomenon described as 'induced traffic'.

### **Climate change**

Northern Ireland faces a significant transport challenge with regard to surface transport being responsible for a higher proportion of emissions than other parts of the UK. The main source of greenhouse gas emissions is transport and transport emissions have increased by 38.8 per cent since the 1990 base year. The current transport balance of spend will further contribute to this significant adverse trend, contrary to stated policy in the Programme for Government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent by 2025.

The science of climate change is developing rapidly. The Berkley Earth Surface Temperature (BEST) report, released in October, confirmed the findings of previous reports – the Earth has warmed over the past century and continues to do so in this one.

The International Energy Agency warned we have until 2017 to get the world's economies on track for decarbonisation. The Agency further stated, "Delaying action is a false economy. For every \$1 of investment in the power sector avoided before 2020, an additional \$4.30 would need to be spent after 2020 to compensate for the higher emissions."

In December the Met Office published a report detailing the likely impacts of climate change on 23 countries, including the UK. According to the report, Northern Ireland is likely to experience more, and heavier, rainfall, and more flooding.

### **Environmental and social justice**

Transport poverty is a very real issue for many people in Northern Ireland. Impoverished urban communities tend to have low levels of car ownership and are dependent on public transport. Proposed increases in bus and rail fares, and reductions in services, including rural services and Park and Ride schemes, will most likely reduce public transport patronage and lead to a further dependency on the private car. The current DRD budget is likely to further marginalise these communities as they find it more expensive, and less practical, to use public transport. In addition, the reduction in rural services is likely to have a detrimental impact on isolated rural dwellers.

The decision to slash the budget for the Active Travel Strategy, and for cycling in Belfast in particular is a regressive step. Belfast is a compact city that lends itself well to cycling and other forms of sustainable transport.

### **Technical solutions**

Friends of the Earth is disappointed the Department is proposing to continue with the Rapid Transit scheme. The scheme is laudable, but appears to be poorly designed and is likely to compete with the existing bus service. The Department made the right decision in abandoning the Comber Greenway route. However, the scheme remains an expensive, and somewhat muddled concept. A better option would be to direct the funds for the Rapid Transit scheme into Quality Bus Corridors, more frequent services and an expanded bus network.

Electric cars have been championed as one of the solutions to reducing carbon emissions from transport, but these are unlikely to be a significant part of Northern Ireland's car fleet until well into the 2020s. Even then, the carbon-cutting potential of electric cars will only be realised if the electricity that powers them comes from renewable sources. Electric cars are worth pursuing, but the limitations of the technology should be taken into account, and they will not be a viable substitute for good public transport, cycling, and walking provision.

## **Conclusion**

The future for Northern Ireland is the low carbon economy yet instead of grasping the opportunities our Executive is failing to protect us from the emerging global energy, environmental, social, and economic crises. Successful regions of the future will be those that have re-orientated their economies fully to take account of a carbon constrained world as a consequence of climate change, rising fuels prices, and resource depletion.

Northern Ireland is a small, flexible economy. Rather than trying to catch up with the UK, we should be leap-frogging ahead and seizing the advantage while we can.

Rather than waste funds on ill-conceived road schemes, the Department should rebalance its budget in favour of public transport and other sustainable transport modes.

## DRD Presentation Water and Wastewater

### *Regional Development Committee Seminar on draft PfG and draft ISNI*

#### Water and Wastewater



### **Water & Waste Water Targets (PfG)**

- PfG target - Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government.
- DRD will continue to pay a customer subsidy to NIW during the Budget 2010 years (customer subsidy £270m in 2011/12).
- Primary legislation will be needed to extend DRD's powers to pay NIW subsidy beyond March 2013.
- The Minister is considering options for long-term governance and funding.



## Water & Waste Water Targets (PfG)



- Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing over £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure.
- Year 1 Compliance with regulatory targets: 99.7% water, 96.5% Wastewater
- Years 2/3 Compliance with regulatory targets for water and Wastewater



## Long-term Water & Wastewater Investment



- Over £1.2b through draft 10yr ISNI.
- £600m for the 6 yrs beyond PfG.
- Final PfG and ISNI proposals will be informed by the public consultation.






# NIW Water and Wastewater



**RDC PROGRAMME FOR  
GOVERNMENT EVENT**




**Introduction**

- Building a better future
- PFG priorities
- Charging
- GoCo/NDPB status




## Where we are

- £1bn investment since 2007
- Best ever drinking water quality and wastewater treatment compliance
- Compliance with Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive
- Investment in watermains & Rural WwTWs
- Reduction in pollution incidents




## Balanced, Equality & Sustainability

- Rural & Urban investment programme
- Social & Environmental Guidance
- Sustainable investments




## Shared Priorities




**Priority 1:**  
20% of electricity from renewable sources

- NIW already sources nearly 15% of its electricity from renewable resources
- We will include this 20% target within its business case for PC13



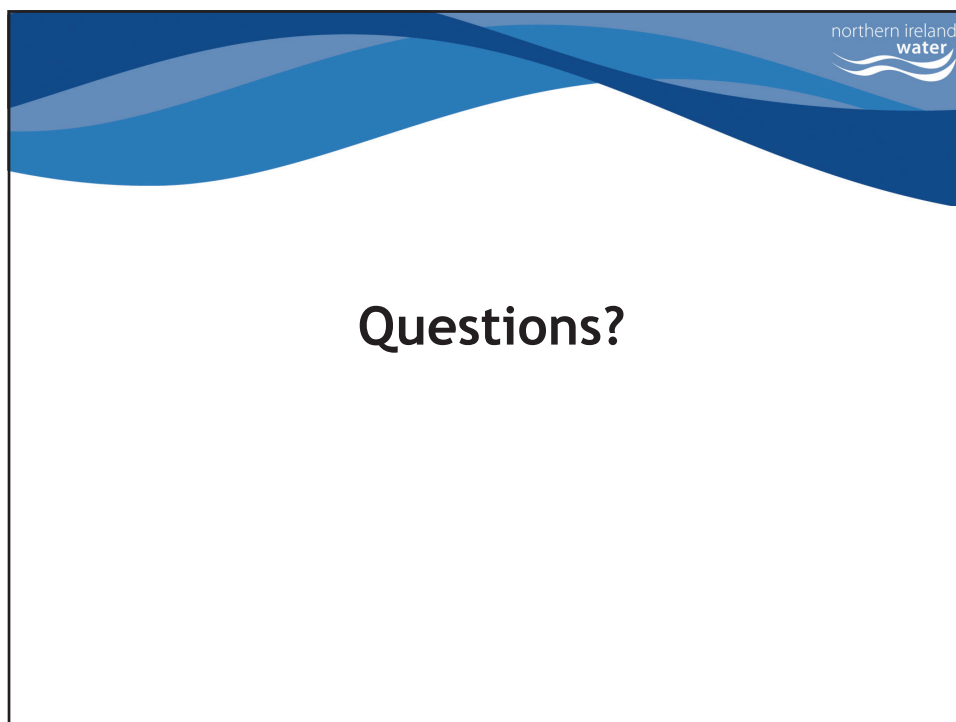
**Priority 2:  
Protecting the Environment**

- Fully regulated against challenging targets
- Assembly's Social & Environmental Guidance for Water and Sewerage Services
- Biodiversity within our landholdings
- Reducing pollution incidents & improving quality of our discharges
- Maintain the high quality of drinking water



**PFG Concerns**

- Inevitable some improvements will have to be deferred
- Water and sewerage services should be delivered within a long term framework
- Current status as NDPB and GoCo



# Utility Regulator Water and Wastewater



## **UR Briefing for RD Committee on Programme for Government 2011-15 and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-12**

### **1. Oral Briefing**

Date: Monday 12 December 2011

Time: 11.25 – 11.35

Venue: Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings

### **2. Background**

The Utility Regulator is pleased to be given the opportunity to submit and present evidence to the committee in relation its views on the Programme for Government 2011-15 and Investment Strategy for NI in the context of the provision of Water and Waste Water Services.

We note that you have requested that the oral evidence is focused on the following three points:-

- Gaps in the Programme for Government
- Comments on the Milestones and Outputs
- What is the best way to monitor progress-

### **3. Programme for Government commitments**

The PfG commitment is to :-

- a. Ensure no additional water charges through this Programme for Government.b.
- c. Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £668m in water and sewerage infrastructure.

We also note other commitments relating to energy use:-

- a. Continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025.
- b. Encourage industry to achieve 20% of electricity consumption from renewable energy and 4% renewable heat by 2015.c.

We would note that NI Water is currently targeting 15% renewable energy by 2014-15 and that the commitments may provide an underpinning for NI Water to generate more renewable energy and for us as a regulator to consider in the Price Control 2013-15 – PC13.

We also note that targets are given in Chapter 3 as 99.7% for water and note that the company is already exceeding this target. The percentage compliance achieved in 2010/11 as reported in the UR Cost and Performance report is 99.81%, we would not expect this level of compliance to reduce. Compliance for wastewater for 2012/13 is given as 96.5%.

**4. Funding levels for water and waste water services**

The table below summarises the funding levels indicated in both the PfG and ISNI and also reflects the funding level as determined through the regulatory process which assessed investment needs for the period 2010 to 2013.

Period	Spend in period	Spend per annum
2010-11 to 2012-13 PC10 (2007/08 price base)	£564m over 3 years	£188m/annum
2011-12 to 2014-15 PfG	£668m over 4 years	£167m/annum
2015-16 to 2020-21 ISNI	£600 over 6 years	£100m/annum

The level of funding presents a particular concern. As can be observed from the table above the annual funding level as assessed through the regulatory process, is higher than that provided for in the PfG and greatly reduced in the ISNI. The price control PC10 level of funding was determined based upon detailed analysis of need and value for money. The Price Control process assessed statutory compliance obligations arising from EU Directives alongside, investment required to maintain the current asset base and growth to accommodate development needs.

The annual level of investment is specifically concerning in light of:-

- The increased risk of failing to meet statutory EU obligations and the possibility of infraction from the EU which would result in substantial fines of the order £350,000 per day.
- NI Water has a considerable asset base which requires the order of £80m per annum to maintain current levels of service. The annual allocation of investment in both the PfG and ISNI raises concerns regarding the ability to maintain the asset base adequately alongside other investment drivers of quality compliance; levels of service and development needs. This, if left unaddressed raises a concern regarding the future resilience of the network.

**5. Security of funding for Water and Sewerage Services**

The PfG states that there will be no additional water charges through this Programme for Government. Without domestic charges or other ring fenced income stream NI Water will continue to be classified as a Non Departmental public body. This results in a number of constraints which impact on its ability to maximise efficiencies. Our analysis of NI Water, as set out in our most recent Cost and Performance report for 2010/11 indicates that a considerable operational efficiency gap remains between NI Water and the benchmarked English, Welsh and indeed Scottish Water companies. Our analysis shows that for every £1.00 spend by an efficient company, NI Water spends £1.64. The speed with which NI Water can close this gap is hindered by its current NDPB status.

There is also a negative impact on its ability to maximise the efficient delivery of priority capital projects. The need to spend annual capital allocations in year, the restrictions and delay in procurement and the possibility of changes in future annual capital allocations all serve to reduce the certainty with which NI Water can programme and execute its capital programme.

Reductions to the PC10 final determination capital expenditure, under the comprehensive spending review, have resulted in priority sewerage projects being delayed and a capital programme profile which is uneven and not ideal for such a capital intensive industry.

## **6. Milestones, outputs and monitoring of progress**

It is most helpful to have strategic milestones and outputs defined in the PfG which can then, feed into the Price Control Process. With the regulatory Price Control process there is a formal and statutory requirement for the Department to provide guidance, to consult on such guidance and to lay such guidance before the Assembly. Social and Environmental guidance was provided for the Price Control 2010 – 2013. Such guidance which would reflect any PfG milestones and outputs. It would also inform NI Water in preparing its Business Plan and the Utility Regulator when reviewing the company's business plan. The out workings of the regulatory Price Control process is a final determination which effectively is a contract setting out allowed funding alongside projects to be delivered, levels of service to be provided and compliance levels to be meet. Outputs are monitored on a quarterly basis, and performance reported on an annual basis by the Utility Regulator in a published Cost and Performance report. All the water industry key stakeholders (DRD, RD Committee, CCNI, NIEA, DWI) are fully engaged or briefed in the regulatory price control process. Public consultation is also carried out at key stages in the process. We believe that this open and transparent process provides a satisfactory means of monitoring progress.

## **7.0 UR Conclusions**

- Annual funding levels do not appear to be adequate and consequently we believe bring risks to future levels of service and raise the potential for EU infraction.
- The absence of additional water charges or ring fencing of funding results in NI Water being classified as a NDPB. This comes with constraints which impact on the company's ability to deliver priority works and maximise efficiencies and performance for consumers.
- NI Water is improving its service to consumers year on year while reducing running costs, there remains a significant gap to be closed. The current status of the company will hinder the speed with which this gap can be closed.
- Targets and milestones are helpful and positive but funding levels to delivery must be assessed alongside other investment drives and arising risks.
- We believe the monitoring and reporting of progress against targets is clearly and transparently made with quarterly monitoring by the UR and the annual publication of a Cost and Performance Report.



## Utility Regulator Presentation



### Utility Regulator views on Programme for Government 2011-15 and Investment Strategy for NI 2011-21

RD Committee Briefing Request  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2011



## Oral Evidence

- Gaps in the Programme for Government
- Comments on the Milestones and outputs
- What is the best way to monitor progress?



## Programme for Government - Gaps

- No additional water charges
- Maintain High quality drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards
- Sustainability and renewable energy targets
- Water and Waste Water compliance targets



## Funding Levels

Period	Spend in period	Spend per annum
2010-11 to 2012-13 PC10	£564m over 3 years	£188m/annum
2011-12 to 2014-15 PfG	£668m over 4 years	£167m/annum
2015-16 to 2020-21 ISNI	£600 over 6 years	£100m/annum

- Value of infrastructure approx £6 billion
- Cost of maintaining existing assets £80 million/annum
- Investment drivers
  - Growth (new properties and businesses)
  - Improving service (e.g. increased water pressure)
  - Staying compliant with EU directives (Water Framework)

PC10 07-08 prices



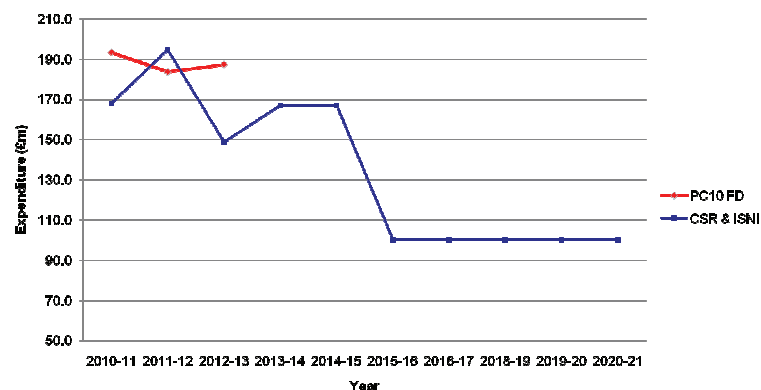
## Opportunities & Risks

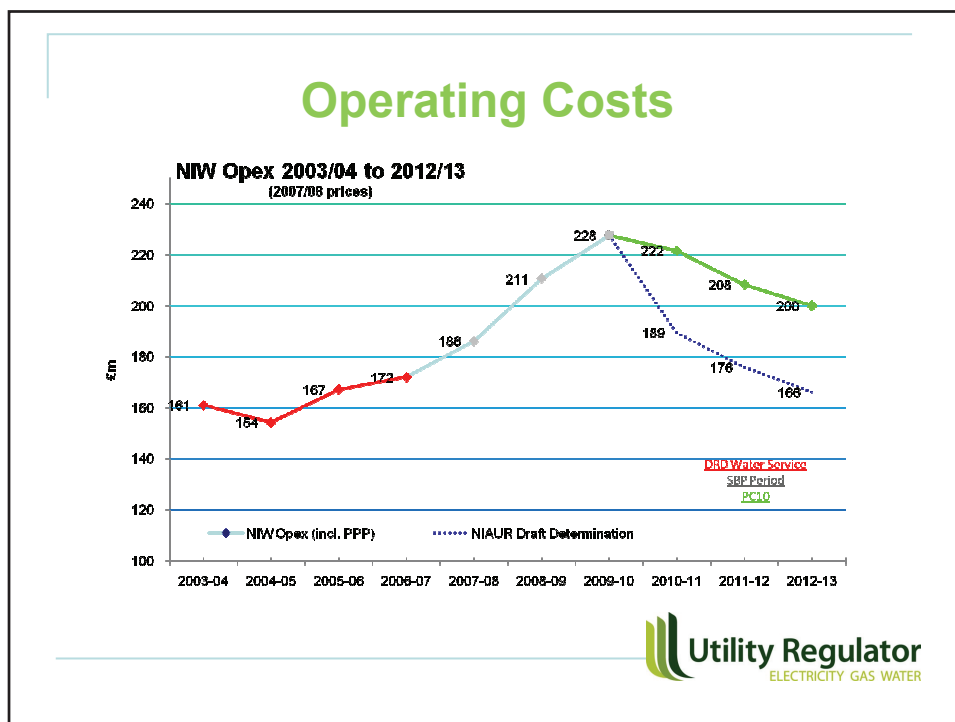
- EU Infractions – non compliance with Directives
  - Water Framework Directive
- Pollution Incidents
  - Focus to date has been on larger works
- Maintaining and Improving levels of service
  - Overall Performance Assessment Score
  - Improved water pressure
  - Reduction in out of sewer flooding
  - Major incidents – resilience and service
- Sustainability agenda
  - Renewable energy



## NI Water – Capital Investment profile

NI Water Capital Expenditure (£m)





## Milestones, Outputs and Monitoring

- Regulatory process – Price Control
  - Submission of a business plan by NI Water to the UR for determination and capping of prices for the price control period
- Social and Environmental Guidance
  - DRD Minister provides guidance to the UR on the governments long term objectives for the water industry incorporating PfG
- Price Control Contract
  - Binds NI Water to the delivery of detailed outputs for capped water and sewerage tariffs (or subsidy)
- Annual Cost and Performance Report
  - Reports on NI Water’s progress delivering the required level of service and investment over the price control period

## Developing a Sustainable Future

- Opportunities exist to deliver the same service in a better way
- Good information is key
- We monitor NI Water against a range of measures
- Capital investment is not the only solution – improved operational response can deliver better service
- Driving a more energy efficient service – power efficiency – power generation
- Cross party working with clear risk taking and risk sharing could provide more effective outcomes
- Needs to be a mechanism to weigh the costs and benefits of continual improvements in performance



## Conclusions

- Funding number when distilled to annual allocation brings risks to levels of service and raises potential for EU infraction.
- Government subsidy to NI Water comes with constraints which impact on the companies ability to maximise efficiencies and performance.
- Targets and milestones are helpful and positive but potentially not viable with funding allocation.
- NI Water is improving its service to consumers year on year, but reduced capital spending may risk its existing performance and potentially future compliance



## Conclusions

- Annual funding levels do not appear to be adequate and bring risks to future levels of service and raise the potential for EU infraction.
- NI Water's public expenditure classification comes with constraints which impact on the company's ability to deliver priority works and maximise efficiencies and performance for consumers.
- NI Water is improving its service to consumers year on year while reducing running costs, however a significant gap remains.
- Targets and milestones are helpful and positive but funding levels to delivery must be assessed alongside other investment drives and arising risks.
- We believe the monitoring and reporting of progress against targets is clearly and transparently made with quarterly monitoring by the UR and the annual publication of a Cost and Performance Report.



# Consumer Council

## Water and Wastewater



### **A Consumer Council Briefing on the Northern Ireland Executive Draft Programme for Government 2011-15**

Water and Wastewater

The Consumer Council

December 2011

Water and sewerage briefing for the Regional Development Committee's seminar on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21

## Introduction

The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland (NI) consumers. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count.

We have a statutory remit to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in NI and we have specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport and food<sup>1</sup>. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research and educating and informing consumers.<sup>2</sup>

The Consumer Council is also a designated body for the purposes of supercomplaints<sup>3</sup>, which means that we can refer any consumer affairs goods and services issue to the Office of Fair Trading<sup>4</sup>, where we feel that the market may be harming consumers' best interests.

In taking forward our broad statutory remit we are informed by and representative of consumers in NI. We work to bring about change to benefit consumers by making their voice heard and making it count. To represent consumers in the best way we can, we listen to them and produce robust evidence to put their priorities at the heart of all we do.

### **Water and Sewerage services**

Significant improvements have been made in our water and waste water services in the last number of years through increased and improved investment, improved work practices, an increasing focus on outcomes and a greater level of scrutiny, monitoring and accountability.

The draft Programme for Government (dPFG) contains two specific water commitments. Below, for each commitment we provide high level comment on the gaps, milestones/outputs, and monitoring plans for each commitment that will be expanded upon during our oral evidence.

- 
- 1 The Consumer Council undertakes its specific functions in relation to food recognising the role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA has responsibility for the development of food policy and for the provision of advice, information and assistance, in respect to food safety or other interests of consumers in relation to food. Therefore, to ensure good value and use of public money, the Consumer Council and FSA have a memorandum of understanding and the Council's strategic focus on food is primarily in relation to food prices and customer experience.
  - 2 The General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, 1984 No. 1822 (N.I. 12), <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1984/1822/contents>
  - 3 The Enterprise Act 2002 (Part 9 Restrictions on Disclosure of Information) (Amendment and Specification) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1400/schedules/made>
  - 4 The OFT is the UK's consumer and competition authority. Its mission is to make markets work well for consumers. It is a non-ministerial government department established by statute in 1973 <http://oft.gov.uk/about-the-oft/>
-

## **1. Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government;**

### **Gaps in dPFG**

The Consumer Council welcomes the deferral of the introduction of domestic water charges. NI Households are increasingly hard pressed as the recent Family Resources Survey 2009/10 showed:

- 23% (412,000) individuals are in poverty.
- 28% (122,000) of children are in poverty.
- 26% (75,000) of pensioners are in poverty.

The average unmeasured combined domestic bill for 2011/12 would be just over £400 per year.

We are very aware of the difficulties and risks caused by the current structure, revenue source and governance of NI Water.

- Current arrangements are confusing and inefficient;
- Reclassification as a NDPB;
- Lack of year end financial flexibility;
- Potential VAT costs; and
- EU WFD Article nine pricing policy clarification.

We would welcome a sensible public discussion to begin to look at the long term future of our water and sewerage services. The commitment to no additional water charges provides the space for this discussion to begin.

### **Comments on Milestones and Outputs**

The dPFG milestones/outputs for this commitment are to “apply policy”. We feel that an opportunity will have been lost if this period, while policy is being applied, is not taken to look in depth at different structural options and examine the long-term sustainable future of water and sewerage services able to secure consumer confidence.

### **What is the best way to monitor progress?**

Monitoring progress against the specified output is straightforward. An additional milestone of commitment to a timetable for evaluation of the long-term options would go some way to fill the gap identified above.

## **2. Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure.**

### **Gaps in dPFG**

£600m is a substantial investment over the dPFG period. However, we have concerns that cuts in capital budget will create a gap in funding and that longer term funding levels are seriously inadequate.

The draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21 (dISNI) clearly explains that investment is needed and allocates £100m per year to water and sewerage services beyond 2015. For 2010 – 2013 it has been determined via the Price Control process that NI Water requires around £200m per year to **maintain and enhance** its water and sewerage infrastructure to meet agreed targets. The £100m per year would cover the costs of maintaining the existing infrastructure only. It is unlikely to deliver the improvements necessary to meet the NI Executive's EU targets, close the gap on existing commitments and provide for future development plans. This issue was identified by the previous Committee in its end of session report.



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We support the proposal from DRD of a more strategic approach to Price Control 2015 that looks beyond its five year period. Such a strategic view will help bring together the many disparate policies that contribute to the management and betterment of our water environment and water and sewerage services.

The reality of restricted finances over the PfG and ISNI period require solutions that are more sophisticated than simply investing in capital projects and building more. A catchment management approach is needed focused on outcomes. A 25 year strategic view will help facilitate this. A commitment across Government to this strategic plan would be a welcome addition to the final PfG and/or ISNI.

### **Comments on Milestones and Outputs**

The milestones/outputs are “compliance with regulatory targets for water and wastewater”. We agree with others that there is a greater need for clearer links between NI Water’s investment plans and the outcomes for consumers.

If clear links between investment and outcomes are provided there are advantages to investing now. The downturn in the construction market means contracts should be negotiated at more favourable rates than we might expect in subsequent years. Cheaper prices now will lower the eventual costs to consumers. Additionally and importantly, consumers would also get the benefit of the improved service earlier.

### **What is the best way to monitor progress?**

The current structures of regulation monitor closely the quality of drinking water (DWI) and waste water treatment (NIEA).

The current regulatory regime, alongside Departmental quarterly returns, provides a comprehensive and robust mechanism for monitoring the improved delivery of water and sewerage services. The Price Control process introduced a transparent and open, albeit complex, regulatory process which involves consumers and stakeholders to define the costs and outputs of NI Water, and provides a framework for NI Water to evidence a disciplined approach to planning and costing.

Other outcomes are important to consumers. In consultation with us NI Water agreed five key service improvements identified by, and most visible to consumers. NI Water will improve:

1. Sewer Flooding
2. Low Water Pressure
3. Interruptions to Supply
4. Written Complaints
5. Customer Experience

These priorities will continue into Price Control 2013 (2013 – 2015). With other key stakeholders we will continue our key role in monitoring the delivery of these outputs and the benefits to consumers.

For further information contact Graham Smith, Acting Head of Water at the Consumer Council on 028 9067 2488 or e-mail [gsmith@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:gsmith@consumercouncil.org.uk).





Northern Ireland  
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Appendix 5

# Research and Information Service





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Library Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

17th November 2011

NIAR 000-00

**Des McKibbin**

# Programme for Government commitments: Department for Regional Development

## 1 Introduction

The First and Deputy First Minister introduced a Draft Programme for Government to the Assembly on November 17th 2011. There are a number of commitments in the Draft Programme for Government that will impact the work of the DRD.

## 2 Main issues

### **Transport**

- upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;
- progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5%;
- invest over £500 million to promote more sustainable modes of travel;
- by 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport.

### Water

- ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government;
- maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure.

### Construction (general)

- include Social Clauses in all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction;
- ensure 90% of large scale planning decisions are made within 6 months and applications with job creation potential are given additional weight.

### GHG emissions (general)

- continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025;

## 2 Priorities in the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

- Through the Investment Strategy, the Executive are providing a £5 billion stimulus over the next four years into the construction and related sectors of the economy
- Priority will be given to investment in those public works that are more labor-intensive. Research shows roads maintenance; refurbishment; upgrades; and extensions typically support twice as many jobs as similar value works that require the purchase of land and specialist materials.
- Funding for the first four years is consistent with the figures published in the Executive's Final budget. Funding for the period from 2015/16 to 2020/21 assumes an increase of 2.7% per annum in the Block Grant that will be made available for capital investment and augmented by RRI borrowing and a realistic level of capital receipts. The figures and allocations for this latter period are indicative only and allocations beyond 2014/15 will be determined by the Executive through a subsequent budget process

**Table 1: DRD Investment Priorities 2011/12 to 2020/21**

£ms	2011/12 to 2014/15	2015/16 to 2020/21	Total
Roads	1,190	1,281	2,471*
Public Transport	196	280	476
Gateways	-	-	-
Water and Waste Water	668	600	1,268
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,054</b>	<b>2,161</b>	<b>4,215</b>

\* The executive will consider the implications of the announcement by the Irish government in relation to the A5/A8 road projects and will continue to engage with them during the consultation period. The final document will be updated to reflect the outcome of these engagements

**Table 2: Investment Priorities**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Rationale/Details</b>
A5/A8	A major upgrade to the strategic roads network*. Improve safety and journey times to the North West and to the Port of Larne.
Further upgrades to strategic road network	Enhance safety and improve access to the ports and gateways thereby contributing to an improving economy.
Transport Masterplan for Belfast City Centre	Part of a scheme for the introduction of rapid transit System in Belfast. It will result in improved public transport services, better facilities for walking and cycling and a reduction in reliance on the private car.
Derry/Londonderry – Coleraine Rail line	Completion of re-signalling works and construction of a new passing loop will be under taken in 2015, with a full relay of the track expected to be completed in 2021
Knockmore to Lurgan rail line	The timing of the work on the Knockmore to Lurgan rail line will be considered in future budget scenarios
Integrated Transport Hub on Europa Bus site	The potential development of a new Integrated Transport Hub and Interchange on the site of the existing EuropaBus Centre and Great Victoria Street Railway Station and adjacent land will be taken forward.
Potential investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives and ICT investment in Transport services will be considered and taken forward.	Potential investment in Sustainable Transport Initiatives and ICT investment in Transport services will be considered and taken forward
Water and Wastewater	Invest £1.2bn over the ISNI period in our water and sewerage networks. This will allow us to maintain high standards of drinking water. It will address the challenges of effective waste water treatment necessary to meet the rising standards for river and bathing water quality, reduced leakage and our obligations under the Water Framework Directive.

### 3 Funding

- The Executive has been able to commit in the reaching £1.5 billion in capital funding up to 2014-15.
- The Executive is committed to working with business and social enterprise to get funding for improved infrastructure.
- Under this Investment Strategy, departments will work to identify opportunities for partnerships.
- The Executive has committed to actively engage with institutional investors in order to attract inward investment into public-private infrastructure.
- Under this Investment Strategy all departments will be supported to assess commercialisation potential in their area and, where significant potential is found, to develop and implement appropriate commercialisation plans to help fund core service delivery.









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