



Committee for Infrastructure  
End of Session Report  
3 February 2024 – 31 August 2025

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# Contents

<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Primary Legislation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill .....	6
Review of Trust Ports .....	6
<b>Subordinate Legislation .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Legislative Consent Motions .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Inquiries.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>EU Scrutiny .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Budget Scrutiny .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Policy Scrutiny.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Northern Ireland Water .....	10
Northern Ireland's Road Network and Road Safety.....	11
Translink.....	12
Active Travel.....	13
Planning .....	14
Taxi Regulations.....	15
<b>Engagement .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Committee Motions.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Likely key priorities for the next session.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>External meetings .....</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>Outputs to date .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Session facts and figures .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Committee meetings & visits .....	19
Statutory Rules.....	20
Witnesses.....	20

## List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

CCG	Central Coordination Group
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DVA	Driver and Vehicle Agency
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
IMTAC	Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee
NAFD	National Association of Funeral Directors
RaISe	Research and Information Service
RRI	Reinvestment and Reform Initiative

# Remit, Powers and Membership of the Committee

The Committee for Infrastructure is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Assembly Standing Order 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) 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;
- approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of 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 of Infrastructure.

The Committee has nine members, including a chairperson and deputy chairperson, with a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee during the current mandate has been as follows:

- Mr Peter Martin MLA<sup>1</sup> (Chairperson)
- Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
- Miss Nicola Brogan MLA<sup>2</sup>
- Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
- Mr Mark Durkan MLA
- Mr Harry Harvey MLA<sup>3</sup>
- Mr Andrew McMurray MLA<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With effect from 15 September 2025 Mr Peter Martin replaced Mrs Deborah Erskine.

<sup>2</sup> With effect from 11 February 2025 Miss Nicola Brogan replaced Mr Danny Baker.

<sup>3</sup> With effect from 23 September 2025 Mr Harry Harvey replaced Mr Keith Buchanan.

<sup>4</sup> With effect from 20 May 2024 Mr Andrew McMurray replaced Mr Patrick Brown.

- Mr Peter McReynolds MLA

# **Review of 2024 – 2025 Session**

## **Primary Legislation**

### **Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill**

Whilst the Committee has yet to formally consider any primary legislation, it has undertaken some pre-legislative scrutiny on two areas outlined by the Department where it intended to introduce legislation.

At its meeting on 24 April 2024, the Committee received oral evidence from departmental officials to examine the policy proposals within its consultation with the aim to introduce legislation that seeks to provide a legislative framework on the regulation of water use, sustainable drainage systems and flood prevention.

In addition, the Committee also heard from representatives from Northern Ireland Water who, as one of the primary stakeholders under the proposals, to identify any relevant areas highlighted during its response to DfI's consultation.

On 23 June 2025, the Minister for Infrastructure introduced the Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill to the Assembly and anticipated Committee Stage in September 2025.

The Committee is also aware of other legislative changes being explored by the Department and a number of proposals currently being developed by individual members of the Assembly for non-executive bills.

### **Review of Trust Ports**

On 16 December 2024, the Department launched a public consultation seeking views on a range of policy proposals aimed at supporting the vital contribution the ports in Northern Ireland make to the local economy as main gateways for the importation and exportation of goods.

The Committee had previously received oral evidence from departmental officials at its meeting on 9 October 2024 to outline the existing legislative framework that the ports operate within and the impact this has on their commercial powers and ability to access external borrowing.

At its meeting on 28 May 2025, the Committee held an external meeting at the offices of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to hear first-hand the need for legislative change that will unlock opportunities to promote economic growth through sustained investment without risk to the public purse.

The Committee looks forward to engaging further with the Minister once updated policy proposals have been determined.

## **Subordinate Legislation**

Following the resumption of business in February 2024, the Committee has considered a total of 240 statutory rules laid by the Department for Infrastructure of which 135 were laid during the time when the Assembly was not sitting and, following scrutiny, the Committee agreed that it had no objection to the rules.

In addition, the Committee has been examining a number of DfI proposals for statutory rules that seek to implement provisions under the [Reservoirs Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#).

Having examined these proposals at its meeting on 20 November 2024, the Committee was concerned that the information provided by the Department was too broad and lacked sufficient detail for each of the proposals to enable Members to come to a fully informed decision.

As a result, the Committee agreed to defer its consideration and agreed to ask the Department to provide a more detailed commentary on the purpose and implications of each of the proposed rules.

Following receipt of a more comprehensive overview of the proposals from DfI in its correspondence to the Committee on 12 March 2025, the Committee agreed to receive further oral evidence from DfI officials at its meeting on 2 April 2025.

Having considered the updated and more comprehensive information provided and through further oral evidence, the Committee was keen to examine the information held by the Department to understand the condition of reservoirs in Northern Ireland, the obligations falling to owners or managers and the potential the financial impacts upon them to achieve compliance under the proposals.

Having commissioned and considered [research](#) by the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe), further oral evidence on 14 May and evidence in closed session on 4 June, the Committee welcomed the acknowledgement by the Minister for the need for a suitably funded grant scheme to support those in achieving compliance. However, such a scheme has been caveated by the Department on budget availability and the usual approvals being obtained.

The Committee notes that DfI is currently consulting on proposals for a grant scheme to support the initial supervision and inspections requirements that would come into effect if the proposed statutory rules are introduced and looks forward to engaging further with the Department upon the conclusion of its consultation.

**Table 1 - Statutory Rules Considered by Year**

<b>Session</b>	<b>2023 - 2024</b>	<b>2024 - 2025</b>
Negative Resolution	32	23
Affirmative Resolution	1	1
Draft Affirmative	-	-
Confirmatory	-	-
Not laid	32	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>91</b>



## **Legislative Consent Motions**

During the period covered within this report, no Legislative Consent Motions have been laid by the Minister for Infrastructure.

## **Inquiries**

During the period covered within this report, the Committee has not initiated any inquiries.

## **EU Scrutiny**

The Committee did not undertake any EU-related scrutiny during the session.

## **Budget Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the DfI's position and anticipated requirements in line with its submission to the Department of Finance (DoF) for the in-year monitoring rounds through oral evidence.

In addition, the Committee received oral evidence from Northern Ireland Water, Translink and DfI to understand each organisation's financial requirements under the Draft Budget for 2025-26.

Following the passing of the Budget Act, the Committee received oral evidence from the Minister and departmental officials to examine the more detailed allocation of resource across DfI's business areas with particular interest in the funding being made available to community transport providers and to Northern Ireland Water in light of Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI) borrowing by the Executive.

# Policy Scrutiny

## Northern Ireland Water

The Committee has examined a wide range of matters falling within the Department's responsibility to allow it to identify a number of strategic priorities for the remainder of the mandate.

The Committee recognises that, as a department with a high need for capital funding, DfI requires significant resource to maintain existing infrastructure and to deliver new projects.

The constrained funding position and the historical reliance on a single year budget facing the Executive has resulted in reduced allocations across all departments and therefore, this has limited DfI's ability to fully fund core infrastructure requirements.

During the session, the Committee has taken a considerable interest in the funding requirements of Northern Ireland Water and how the funding constraints are impacting the capacity of the water network, but in particular the wastewater system.

This has included engagement on the Forensic Review of Northern Ireland Water and the need for close scrutiny of the oversight of expenditure and the financial sustainability of the body.

The Committee has engaged extensively with a range of stakeholder groups which include the Department, Northern Ireland Water, the Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to gain an understanding of the key challenges respectively faced.

Additionally, the Committee has proactively engaged with groups impacted by these constraints caused by lower infrastructure spending, which include the Construction Employers' Federation, The Royal Society of Ulster Architects and the Law Society of Northern Ireland. The Committee has also heard views from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council and Northern Ireland Audit Office on the content of their reports.

## **Northern Ireland's Road Network and Road Safety**

Another area of particular interest has been on the road network in Northern Ireland which requires significant investment to maintain our existing roads and deliver new road projects. This is necessary to ensure all road users have good connectivity right across Northern Ireland whilst minimising damages to vehicles caused by poorly maintained roads.

The Committee has expressed concern over the limited service afforded to maintaining our roads which has resulted in increased numbers of noticeable and recurring defects.

The Committee considers that this approach increases the inconvenience to road users and is not a cost effective way to maintain the system with short term or temporary repairs.

Furthermore, the Committee considers that defective roads can have a significant impact on the safety of all road users and therefore a long term viable solution is required.

With responsibility for road safety, DfI has a key role to identify opportunities to deliver improvements to the network whilst educating road users.

The Committee remains concerned that the seasonal winter service has, over recent years been limited and considers that this is a fundamental function that requires to be fully funded to minimise the ever present risks to road users.

The Committee is acutely cognisant of the numbers of families and communities who have faced the tragic circumstances arising from those being killed or seriously injured on our roads and has, and will continue to engage with the Department, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Road Safety Partnership and to work with others to identify opportunities to better maintain, regulate and educate those living in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Committee has paid particular attention to the safety of schoolchildren in and around drop off zones at schools or designated stops. The Committee is concerned by the number of incidents involving school children

caused by issues ranging from poor driver behaviour, excess speed around the vicinity of schools or a lack of necessary infrastructure to improve safety.

The Committee subsequently wrote to the Minister to express its ongoing concerns surrounding the safety of school children and highlighted initiatives adopted in other jurisdictions which could have a positive impact in reducing the number of incidents.

In response, the Minister confirmed that it was her intention to initiate a review of existing legislation with a view to developing proposals to improve the safety of those commuting to and from school.

The Committee will continue to closely examine DfI's ongoing work that underpins the successful delivery of the necessary improvements to the A5 Western Transport Corridor whilst proactively engaging those impacted by the project to ensure that their interests are considered fully.

The Committee has been particularly exercised over the A5 Western Transport Corridor and has maintained an interest in the uncertainty for landowners whose land has been vested and contractors who face uncertainty in relation to the recent High Court judgement halting work on that project.

## **Translink**

The Committee has received oral evidence from representatives throughout the session to examine a number of key issues relating to Translink's services, ranging from its financial position and needs, passenger and staff safety to procurement matters and the delivery of services to those living in rural areas.

In addition, following the opening of the new transport hub at the Grand Central Station in Belfast, the Committee has been closely monitoring impact of traffic congestion in the surrounding streets whilst remaining works continue.

Having considered oral evidence from departmental officials, the Committee has been receiving regular updates from the Central Coordination Group (CCG), which comprises of the Department, Belfast City Council, PSNI and Translink, examining

peak journey times and traffic volumes in Belfast city centre compared against previous years.

As a contributor to harmful Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) the Committee is mindful of the need for Translink to replace its existing fleet to greener forms of zero emission buses to support its contribution towards achieving Northern Ireland's commitments under the [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

However, this would require a significant and sustained level of capital investment which is currently constrained by the funding available to the Executive.

## **Active Travel**

The Committee has taken a particular interest in DfI's approach to active travel and has received oral evidence from departmental officials and other stakeholders to examine the Department's programme of work and to monitor the level of expenditure to their delivery.

Under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, there is a statutory requirement on the Department to develop sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum 10% of spend on active travel from the overall transport budget.

The Committee has shown particular interest in how the department defines active travel spending. Some concerns were expressed by stakeholders that spending on routine or remedial maintenance works was being categorised as active travel spending and stakeholders were keen to emphasise that this does not result in an increase in delivery towards active travel projects in reality.

During oral evidence, the Committee questioned officials to examine these areas of spending to assess how spending can be determined deliver towards the required targets under the Act. In response, departmental officials highlighted that when seeking to deliver these schemes, it may be necessary to complete preliminary improvements such a road widening or improved street lighting to facilitate safe active travel routes once they have been developed.

The Committee will continue to monitor DfI's expenditure levels in this area and will be keen to examine the delivery of the active travel initiatives that have required these preliminary upgrades.

## **Planning**

Issues relating to planning process have also been of interest to members who, from their experiences at a local constituency level, are aware of the often complex landscape for acquiring and securing planning permission.

Given that responsibility of distinct aspects of the planning system do not solely rest solely with the Department, the Committee has focussed its attention on the specific elements that fall to DfI to understand the issues faced and to examine options to deliver improvements.

The planning system is a key economic lever to develop new homes and grow our economy that takes account of the changing needs of businesses however, the Committee noted that delays across the system can occur for a number of reasons which can include the lateness of responses from statutory consultees, delays in the appeals process and absence of the required information provided to support the application.

The Committee also heard oral evidence from the renewables sector which highlighted that delays in progressing applications can often be exacerbated due to the 'over consultation' that public bodies undertake when the nature of infrastructure surrounding the project differs from what was originally submitted.

The Committee commissioned two items of research from RalSe to examine the broader timescales in Northern Ireland compared to other regions and to examine the extent of planning decisions in areas of flood risk.

The Committee welcomes the introduction of validation checklists which aim to provide a more comprehensive overview of the information required to support applications being made prior to them being submitted and will be keen to examine the impact this has on the reducing the timescales to progress applications once the process has been fully implemented for comparison.

## **Taxi Regulations**

Through its positive engagement with representatives from the taxi sector, wedding cars and funeral car operators, the Committee had concerns over certain aspects of the licensing requirements for some operators who are required adhere to [The Taxi Licensing Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) which categorises wedding and funeral car operators and operators in the same way as taxis.

Whilst the Committee is fully supportive of having well trained and competent driving standards, it notes that operators providing these services in Northern Ireland are required to comply with different thresholds than equivalent operators in Great Britain.

In addition, the Committee notes with concern the reducing numbers of wheelchair accessible Class B taxi licence holders which was highlighting during oral evidence from the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and, in particular, the impact on those who are more reliant on wheelchair accessible taxis due to their rural location or reduced levels of public transport options as an alternative.

Having noted the range of issues impacting the sector, the Committee successfully influenced the Minister to undertake a review of the regulations with the aim of identifying proposals to support the sector through a different regulatory regime.

The Committee is appreciative of the Minister's responsiveness to commence with a phased approach and looks forward to examining the findings and proposed initiatives to support this important aspect of transport service delivery upon the completion of the first phase.

# Engagement

The Committee has sought to maximise its available time to concentrate on receiving oral and written evidence from a wide range of groups on matters that fall within DfI's responsibility.

Through this work, the Committee has conducted three external meetings to receive oral evidence from departmental officials and key stakeholders to examine the relevant aspects within the Committee's remit.

The first external meeting was conducted at the newly opened transport hub at Belfast's Grand Central Station during which the Committee received oral evidence from departmental officials on DfI's 2024-25 budget allocations and from Translink on public transport safety.

*Figure 1 - Committee Visit to Grand Central Station, Belfast, 29 May 2024*



The Committee also held an external meeting at the Moyola Water Treatment Works, Magherafelt. During this session, the Committee received a useful insight into the process needed to provide high quality drinking water across Northern Ireland and received oral evidence from Northern Ireland Water on the capacity constraints currently being experienced within the wastewater network.



*Figure 2 - Committee visit to the Moyola Water Treatment Works, Magherafelt, 13 November 2024*



More recently, the Committee held an external meeting in the Moreland Room within the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office to receive oral evidence to further inform the need for the development of legislative proposals to amend the statutory framework which Trust Ports in Northern Ireland operate within.

*Figure 3 - Committee Visit to Belfast Harbour, 28 May 2025*



Informal meetings have been conducted with the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) to discuss the impact of licensing regulations on the sector and

Logistics UK to discuss the scope for licensing derogation, parity of speed limits and the need for the development of a road haulage strategy.

In addition, the Chairperson has participated in a number of informal engagements, including meeting with the Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland, attending the formal commencement of rail services into the newly opening Grand Central Station Transport Hub, attending the annual gala dinner of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and responding to media requests on the Committee's behalf.

## **Committee Motions**

During the period of this report, no Committee motions have been agreed.

## **Likely key priorities for the next session**

With the anticipated referral of the Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill, the Committee will ensure sufficient time is afforded in its Forward Work Programme to allow for a detailed examination of the functions and powers contained within the draft Bill, to consider whether the provisions are fit for purpose and proportionate to deliver the intended outcomes and to assess whether the powers provide sufficient Assembly control.

In addition, the Committee has identified a number of strategic priorities which will continue to inform the basis of its approach which include:

- Financial Scrutiny
- Northern Ireland Water
- Improvements to the Planning System
- Strategic Capital Infrastructure Investment
- Public Transport, Community Transport and Active Travel
- Road Safety

## External meetings

As part of its ongoing programme of work, the Committee undertook the following external meetings:

Location	Date
New Transport Hub at Belfast Grand Central Station	29 May 2024
Northern Ireland Water Moyola Treatment Works, Magherafelt	13 November 2024
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	28 May 2025

## Outputs to date

### Appendix 1 – Session facts and figures

#### Committee meetings & visits

Session	Number of meetings held	Percentage minutes public/closed	Number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Number of committee visits
2023/2024	18	Public – 93% Closed – 7%	1	1
2024/2025	36	Public – 94% Closed – 6%	2	2

## Statutory Rules

Session	Negative Resolution	Affirmative Resolution	Draft Affirmative	Confirmatory	Not laid	Total
2023/2024	34	0	2	0	100	136
2024/2025	32	0	1	0	81	114

## Witnesses

Session	Organisations which gave evidence to the committee
2023/2024	BO Energy Clanrye Taxis Department for Infrastructure Driver and Vehicle Agency Licensed Taxi Operators Association Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership Northern Ireland Water Police Service of Northern Ireland RenewableNI Renewables Energy Systems Limited Sustrans Translink Utility Regulator Northern Ireland Visit Belfast Waterways Ireland

Session	Organisations which gave evidence to the committee
2024/2025	<p>Agnews</p> <p>Belfast Harbour Commissioners</p> <p>Community Transport Association</p> <p>Construction Employers Federation</p> <p>Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>Disability Action</p> <p>Donnelly Motor Group</p> <p>Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership</p> <p>Driver and Vehicle Agency</p> <p>Electric Vehicle Association Northern Ireland</p> <p>Fermanagh Community Transport</p> <p>Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)</p> <p>Interim Regional Planning Commission</p> <p>Law Society Northern Ireland</p> <p>Mark Todd Architects</p> <p>Mineral Products Association (Northern Ireland)</p> <p>Motorcycle Action Group</p> <p>Murray Kelly Moore Solicitors</p> <p>National Franchised Dealers Association</p> <p>Northern Ireland Audit Office</p> <p>Northern Ireland Electricity</p> <p>Northern Ireland Environment Agency</p> <p>Northern Ireland Fiscal Council</p> <p>Northern Ireland Water</p> <p>Peter Bowles &amp; Co Solicitors</p> <p>PricewaterhouseCoopers</p> <p>Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors</p> <p>Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA)</p> <p>Translink</p> <p>Ulster Angling Federation</p> <p>Utility Regulator Northern Ireland</p> <p>Wedding Car Representatives</p> <p>WhiteInk Architects</p>

## Appendix 2 – Committee expenditure

Table 2 – Expenditure for the period 3 February 2024 – 31 August 2025

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel	Committee members, staff travel and subsistence relating to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	£94.50
Advertising	Includes the cost of advertising relating to:	£0.00
External Consultancy	Includes costs associated with committee use of external consultants to assist in consideration of legislation, inquiries, etc.	£0.00
Refreshments and Hospitality		£0.00
General expenditure	Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, committee events, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, and conference fees for members etc.	£2167.55
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£2262.05</b>

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