

Daniel McCrossan
via email @
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Our Ref: SCOR-0206-2025

20 November 2025

Dear Daniel

MEMORANDUM OF REPLY: MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS: FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2025 advising of the Committee's consideration of my letter of 8 October which provided an explanation for the delay to the Memorandum of Reply (MoR) for the Follow Up Report on Major Capital Projects.

Your correspondence acknowledges that responses to 9 out of the 12 recommendations rely on Executive approval of the Investment Strategy (ISNI) and you have asked for an update on the 3 recommendations which do not rely on an approved ISNI along with an update on the ISNI Enabling Actions.

I appreciate it is not standard practice to provide updates on recommendations which have not been approved by the relevant Minister and Executive (where the report is cross cutting). However, the delay in publishing the MoR is also not typical and therefore I have sought approval from relevant Departments and the Finance Minister to provide the updates attached at Annex A which we believe do not impinge on the Minister's or Executive's authority to accept or reject the PAC recommendations.

Non-ISNI Related Recommendations

The three recommendations which do not rely on an approved ISNI Strategy are summarised below:

Recommendation 1 – sending a copy of the NICS Board Effectiveness Review to the Committee

Recommendation 3 - full consideration to be given to determine what expertise and authority an independent oversight body could bring, within the constraints of the constitutional position;

Recommendation 6 - an independent review of the roles and responsibilities of all bodies involved in the delivery of major capital projects should be commissioned, with the aim of identifying how major capital projects could be delivered more efficiently and effectively.

In addition to providing an update on any actions taken under each of these recommendations, Annex A also includes an update in respect of recommendation 7 which relates to engagement with the construction sector regarding the attractiveness of public sector contracts here.

Update on ISNI Enabling Actions

On 1 July 2025, the Committee was provided with a table detailing the timeframe for the 12 ISNI Enabling Actions including; i) the expected delivery/completion dates for full implementation; ii) progress updates; and iii) anticipated outcomes in terms of their impact on the delivery of major capital projects. A further updated table is attached at Annex B. The Highlight Report on the ISNI Enabling Actions, presented at the ISNI Committee on 14 November 2025, has also been provided at Annex C. This Highlight Report provides a more detailed update on the progress of each of the Enabling Actions over the delivery reporting period October and November 2025. I hope this update provides assurance that significant work is being progressed through the ISNI Committee to improve the delivery of major capital projects here.

Yours sincerely



NEIL GIBSON

**cc: Stuart Stevenson
Sharon Smyth**

Annex A – Update on Recommendations 1, 3, 6 and 7

Annex B – Updated Table on ISNI Enabling Actions (attached as a separate document)

Annex C – ISNI Committee Highlight Report 14 November 2025 (attached as a separate document)

ANNEX A – Update on the Recommendations 1, 3, 6 and 7

PAC Recommendation	Proposed Response to PAC November 25
<p>Rec 1: The Committee recommends that in line with good practice the effectiveness of the NICS Board should be reviewed annually, and that an externally facilitated independent review should be completed at least once every three years. The annual reviews should determine if the NICS Board is effective in the delivery of its role and whether its oversight is helping to improve performance in the delivery of major capital projects. The Committee expects to receive a copy of the first evaluation once complete and be informed as to where the findings and possible recommendations will be reported to, and how any proposed action will be taken forward.</p>	<p>The Executive Office forwarded a copy of the Board Effectiveness Report and associated action plan to the Committee on 7 November 2025.</p>
<p>Rec 3: The Committee is concerned that the ISNI committee (as a subcommittee of the NICS Board) lacks the authority to challenge departments on their performance in delivering major capital projects, in the same way that the NICS Board lacks authority. Drawing on the approaches in other countries, the Committee recommends that full consideration is given to determine what expertise and authority an independent oversight body could bring, within the constraints of the constitutional position. The Committee expects witnesses to report back to the Executive on the outcome of these considerations within the next six months.</p>	<p>Whilst this recommendation is not directly linked to the Investment Strategy, it would require Executive approval before officials can make any significant progress and provide an update.</p>
<p>Rec 6: Despite assurances that a different delivery model would not have yielded different results, the Committee remains unconvinced that the structures are fit for purpose. The Committee considers there is an ongoing need for collective, collaborative leadership and culture change to break the actual and perceived silos within the NICS and its ALBs. In the absence of an independent oversight body, the Committee recommends that the NICS Board commissions an independent review of the roles and responsibilities of all bodies involved in the delivery of major capital projects, with the aim of identifying how major capital projects could be delivered more efficiently and effectively. This should include ensuring that any unnecessary duplication is ended and ways of working together and making best use of skills are identified and enabled. This work must be taken forward urgently, and the Committee expects to see progress within the next six months.</p>	<p>Whilst this recommendation is not directly linked to the Investment Strategy, it would require Executive approval before officials can provide a full response.</p> <p>However, in consultation with the Education Minister, the Interim Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and the Head of the Civil Service, a review of the end-to-end delivery of the capital projects in the Education Sector is currently underway. A draft report setting out the findings and recommendations will be completed in January 2026. Once approved, lessons learned from the review process will inform the design of the process in other departments, which will be taken forward in consultation with relevant Ministers and Permanent Secretaries.</p>
<p><i>The response to Recommendation 7 below relies on an agreed Investment Strategy and pipeline of capital projects, however the engagement between the Department of Finance and</i></p>	

the Construction Sector is long standing, therefore it was felt that an update on the Industry perspective may be helpful to the PAC.

Rec 7: The Committee welcomes DoF, working with the private sector, to establish the criteria for being a good customer with construction contractors and determine what action it needs to take to improve confidence in investment in Northern Ireland. As part of this ongoing engagement the Committee recommends that DoF develops an associated timebound, measurable action plan and undertakes an annual review of progress in delivering that action plan.

DoF has a long-standing commitment to meet with Construction Industry representatives and Centres of Procurement Expertise every quarter. As part of this engagement, DoF officials have discussed the PAC recommendation with Industry representative at the NI Construction Group (NICG) meetings on 27 June 2025 and 12 September 2025. This is also scheduled to be discussed at the NICG meeting on 12 December 2025. The key actions the sector has identified to improve confidence in investment in NI include:

- An agreed Investment Strategy;
- Investment in wastewater infrastructure;
- A funded pipeline of construction projects including prompt agreement of the four-year capex budget;
- More engagement by the Executive with industry and funders to benchmark and explore funding and fiscal options to increase budgetary envelopes to meet the infrastructure deficit; and
- Improved planning processes to promote growth (particularly in the housing sector) and support renewables.

While some of these actions cannot be taken forward until ISNI has been agreed by the Executive, Industry Representatives have advised that *'its continued absence must not preclude vital long-term investment decisions being made, particularly once the four-year capex budget is in place'*.

ISNI Enabling Action Plan: Completion Dates; Progress Updates and Anticipated Outcomes

The completion dates are being regularly reviewed by the ISNI Committee reflecting the fact that Executive approval of the Investment Strategy NI has not yet been achieved.

No.	Owners	Enabling Action	No. Phases	Current Phase	Current Phase Completion Date	Expected Action Completion Date (if known)	Anticipated Outcomes (i.e. Impact on delivery of Major Capital Projects)
People							
1.	SIB (longer term owner to be determined).	Workforce Planning for Infrastructure Profession(s) and Delivery Capacity & Capability Support the development of the Infrastructure Profession and preparation of a Workforce and Capability Plan for the public and private sector to support the delivery of ISNI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Discovery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ EA1 Workstreams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1a. Establishing Best Practice in Strategic Workforce Planning across big spending ALBs (Phase 1 Discovery completed May 2025) ○ 1b. Consider private sector delivery capacity & capability - Phase 2: Scoping. - Phase 3: Actions: To be defined on completion of Phase 2 	Workstream 1a – Phase 2: Scoping 1b – Phase 1: Discovery	Workstream 1a – Scoping complete by Q1 '26 1b – Phase 1 to be completed Q1 '26	Workstream 1a – Phase 2: Scoping complete by Q1 '26 1b – Subject to outcome of Phase 1 Discovery stage including agreement of scope with DfE and ISNI Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS 1a - Capacity and capability needs established for professions required to support the delivery of ISNI within ALBs. • WS 1b – Identify private sector skills requirements that will lead to the successful delivery of the ISNI Investment Plan.
2.	SIB (longer term owner to be determined). DfI TRAM leading on Workstream 2a	Capacity and Capability, HR Policies In conjunction with the relevant sectors, identify and co-ordinate changes to simplify the process for recruiting external expertise and address human resource policies that hinder the retention, development and deployment of the required expertise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Discovery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ EA2 Workstreams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2a. Addressing DfI (TRAM) Capacity and Capability Barriers ○ 2b. Addressing department's sponsorship and investment decision making resourcing issues (Linked to completion of Phase 1 of Enabling Action 3) - Phase 2: Scoping. - Phase 3: Actions: To be defined on completion of Phase 2 	Workstream 2a – Phase 2: Scoping	Workstream 2a – Phase 2: Scoping Q4 '25 2b – Phase 1: Discovery	Workstream 2a – Subject to outcomes of a recruitment process and approval of an OBC to activate opportunities from HR policy 2b – The initial stages are now being taken forward as part of Workstream 1a and 1b through mapping what skills are required for ISNI projects and their delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS 2a - In the short term to address immediate capacity and capability issues in DfI and in the medium to longer term implement policy changes to address DfI's recruitment and retention issues. • WS 2b – Identify and address the NICS capacity and capability issues with respect to its sponsorship and investment decision making responsibilities for the ISNI Investment Plan
Process							
3.	SIB and DoF	Business Case Process Establish and monitor key performance indicators for the approval of business cases for Investment Strategy projects and introduce an escalation process to resolve any unnecessary delays in the system which cannot be resolved within the business area. Identify and co-ordinate improvements to the business case process including addressing deficiencies in project initiation, formalising the link between gateway review and business case approval processes, using appropriate mechanisms to calculate costs, ensuring the correct Optimism Bias is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Discovery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An SRO event was held November '24 to gather feedback on a pre-event questionnaire setting out proposed issues with business case production and approval, and what actions are likely to yield results.. - Phase 1: focuses on the impact that existing delegated limits and other processes are having on business case approvals. - Phase 2: Final scope and timing of Phase 2 report to be agreed. Likely to focus on the actual processes of 	Discovery Complete Phase 1: In Progress Phase 2: Not Started	Phase 1 Report and Recommendations to ISNI Committee Q1 2026	Subject to ISNI Committee/NICS Board agreement of Phase 1 report and recommendations Scope and target completion date for Phase 2 to be determined in Q1 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Increased delegated limits would reduce the 'points of contact' and number of iterations required to secure expenditure approval. • If implemented at a sufficient level this should reduce the time spent securing approval and the cost inflation suffered because of same. • Phase 2: Implementation of a wider set of changes that will help drive management of business case delivery and a focus on project over process (given the impact that construction inflation can have).

No.	Owners	Enabling Action	No. Phases	Current Phase	Current Phase Completion Date	Expected Action Completion Date (if known)	Anticipated Outcomes (i.e. Impact on delivery of Major Capital Projects)
		included and identifying improvements to accountability, decision making and approval timescales.	business case production and development of KPIs.				
4.	DfI and Local Government	<p>Short to Medium Term Planning Improvements Support the DfI Planning Group with the implementation of short-term improvements to enable a more efficient and effective Planning System working with statutory consultees, councils, the planning appeals system and other relevant stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Already agreed Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) - Phase 2: Continuation of PIP with additional workstreams 	Phase 2	DfI Permanent Secretary has advised that due to dependencies on bodies outside DfI, it is challenging to provide definitive start and end dates for many of the ongoing, continuous actions under Enabling Action 4	Programme of continuous improvement – ongoing	<p>Short to Medium Term Outcome: Improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of planning applications • Streamlining the planning application process (making Pre-determination Hearings discretionary and enabling online community consultation) • Streamlining the planning process (review of development thresholds for local and major development proposals) • Enhancements to community consultation and engagement in planning process • Improved performance of statutory consultees • Greater efficiencies in the local development plan process • Improved training and capacity building, as well as knowledge development for those working in the system <p>Greater planning resources now and for the future to support the system and drive performance improvements.</p>
5.	SIB	<p>Medium to Longer Term Planning Improvements Support key stakeholders in the planning system through the identification and implementation of medium and long-term planning improvement initiatives, that accord with the Programme for Government, to ensure that the planning system works for the well-being of businesses, people, and the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Discovery & Scoping – Identification and research on themes that are complimentary to DfI's Planning Improvement Programme (EA4) including: financial sustainability of the planning system, adoption of digital innovation, judicial procedures and outworkings of the NIAO report on the PAC - Phase 2: Delivery – Phased implementation of agreed Phase 1 recommendations 	Phase 1 - Scoping	Phase 1 (Discovery completed) with four work areas being progressed and in scoping stage	Phase 1 (Discovery completed) with four work areas being progressed and in scoping stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of medium to long term improvements to planning timeframes and decision making that are complimentary to DfI's Planning Improvement Programme which is being progressed under Enabling Action 4 along with other planning improvement initiatives
6	SIB	<p>Monitoring & Assurance Develop and implement the most effective and proportionate level of project and programme monitoring and assurance for ISNI Committee, NI Civil Service Board and the Executive. This includes short term improvements and an options appraisal for longer term improvements - applicable to both new investments and maintenance.</p>	<p>Phase 1: Short Term Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stage 1: Project Initiation - Stage 2: Pilot Approach - Stage 3: Execution <p>Phase 2: 12 Month Review</p>	Phase 1/Stage 3: Ongoing execution	The DataMAP tool was operational in Q1 2025. Enhancements and updates are being implemented as required, and analytical tools being developed. Data input remains the responsibility of Project Delivery Bodies/SROs and is being monitored and reported on to the ISNI Committee and NICS Board. Input of project information into DataMAP is slow in some areas and	Phase 2 completion - Q4 2026*, with ongoing data entry, analysis and reporting. <i>*Dependent on approval of the ISNI Investment Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised and efficient ISNI project delivery data collection and reporting processes. • Reduced ISNI project delivery data administrative burden on SROs. • Visual analysis of ISNI project delivery data to enable decision making on consistent and accurate information.

No.	Owners	Enabling Action	No. Phases	Current Phase	Current Phase Completion Date	Expected Action Completion Date (if known)	Anticipated Outcomes (i.e. Impact on delivery of Major Capital Projects)
					this will be brought to the attention of the NICS Board at the end of November.		
7	CoPEs	<p>Procurement Oversee the preparation of an integrated Procurement Plan to support the delivery of ISNI, encouraging collaboration between COPEs and departments to embrace best practice locally and in other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Phase 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the current delivery model for capital works procurement carried out by each Centre of Procurement Expertise; • Comparative analysis exercise carried out on a range of projects to identify indicative timescales for the procurement of capital projects in England, Wales, Scotland and ROI; • Confirmation of projects included in the 4 year capital budget; and • Confirmation of the scope and timescales for Phase 2. <p>Phase 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Procurement Pipeline for 4 year capital budgets; • Development of a mechanism to update and track the Procurement Pipeline; • Publish first Procurement Pipeline tracking report; and • Creation of Integrated Procurement Plan 	Phase 1	Phase 1: Q1 2026	Phase 2: Q4 2026	<p>Outcome: Achieving Value for Money by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving information of procurement pipelines and providing more certainty on the timing of procurement activity allowing suppliers to plan their resources and avoid unnecessary risk pricing • Standardising processes and practices when procuring in the same markets thereby reducing the cost of tendering for suppliers • Improving efficiency of the procurement process by reducing duplication and sharing best practice from other jurisdictions across Centres of Procurement Expertise
Policy							
8	SIB	<p>Social License Embed the concept, elevate the importance and improve the practice of Social License across the ISNI Investment Plan and in the planning and delivery of infrastructure and major capital projects</p>	<p>Phase 1: Pathway design (Complete and agreed by ISNI Committee and NICS Board - Q2 2025)</p> <p>Phase 2: Test & Learn</p> <p>Phase 3: System delivery</p>	Phase 2: Test & Learn	Q1 2026	Phase 3 completion will be subject to outcomes of Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding across the NICS and ALBs of the importance of social license • More effective early-stage project consideration of social license • Enhanced buy-in to projects by community and other stakeholders • Minimise risk to delay of statutory approvals • Better design and ways of delivering projects, including maximising social value • Sustain societal support for the ISNI and Investment Plan

No.	Owners	Enabling Action	No. Phases	Current Phase	Current Phase Completion Date	Expected Action Completion Date (if known)	Anticipated Outcomes (i.e. Impact on delivery of Major Capital Projects)
				enhance Gateway Review Panels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidance to support PPN 01/21 Social License workstream – March 2026 			
9.	SIB	<p>Alternative Governance & Financing Models</p> <p>On behalf of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, SIB will prepare Terms of Reference, prepare an options appraisal and make recommendations to generate additional infrastructure finance and funding for Executive consideration. SIB will work collaboratively with DfC, DfI, and DoF to ensure options appropriately address need, are supportive of the obligations in the Climate Change Act and are complementary to the Executive's commitments in the Fiscal Framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1: Confirmation of need. Complete. Phase 2: Consideration of approaches to optimize investment need. Complete Phase 3: Options appraisal for delivering investment need. Complete Phase 4: Financial Modelling: Completion Date: Complete Phase 5: Engagement with DoF on repayment options. Completion Date: Q2 2025 Phase 6: Recommendations and implementation plan. Completion Date: Q4 2025. 	Phase 6	Q4 2025	Q4 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An options appraisal with proposals for consideration to increase investment capacity and address any potential funding gaps in ISNI.
10.	SIB	<p>Infrastructure Needs Assessment</p> <p>Develop and implement an approach to a long-term Infrastructure Needs Assessment to inform priorities for the next Investment Strategy and consider how this will be most effectively implemented.</p>	<p>Phase 1: Landscape Review of Economic Infrastructure</p> <p>Phase 2: Landscape Review of Environmental and Social Infrastructure</p> <p>Phase 3: Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Informed by agreement on best approach to undertaking the Infrastructure Needs Assessment)</p>	<p>Phase 1: Completed Q2 2025</p> <p>Phase 2: Commenced Q3 2025</p>	Phase 2: Q2 2026	<p>Phase 3: Q2 2027* (*subject to decision on best approach to undertaking the Infrastructure Needs Assessment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Needs Assessment published Clarity on how future infrastructure need is identified across sectors Better prioritisation and sequencing framework to inform the next Investment Strategy. Delivery of Phase 3 and the implementation of its recommendations should lead to increased transparency and improved infrastructure planning through evidence-based analysis and expert input.
11.	DfE	<p>Energy Legislative & Regulatory Priorities</p> <p>Support DfE to facilitate investment in energy infrastructure and decarbonisation.</p>	<p>Phase 1: Grid Development:</p> <p>a) Smart Meter Design Plan and Delivery</p> <p>b) Policy for the Increased Socialisation of Grid Connection Costs</p> <p>c) Distribution network investment (RP7)</p> <p>d) Transmission network investment (Draft TDPNI 2025 – 2034)</p> <p>e) North-South Interconnector</p> <p>Phase 2: Delivery of additional renewable electricity capacity</p> <p>a) First auction under new support scheme</p>	<p>Phase 1 started Q3 2024</p> <p>Phase 2 started Q3 2025</p>	<p>Phase 1: Q4 2024</p> <p>Phase 2: Q1 2027</p>	<p>Phase 1</p> <p>a) Q4 2027</p> <p>b) Q4 2025</p> <p>c) Q4 2031</p> <p>d) Q4 2034</p> <p>e) Q4 2031 (Note: Northern Section will be complete by 2029, Southern section will complete in 2031)</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>a) Q1 2027</p>	<p>Upgraded grid infrastructure and greater integration of renewable electricity capacity, supporting sustained, cost-effective decarbonisation of the electricity sector; and facilitating delivery of major capital projects.</p>

No.	Owners	Enabling Action	No. Phases	Current Phase	Current Phase Completion Date	Expected Action Completion Date (if known)	Anticipated Outcomes (i.e. Impact on delivery of Major Capital Projects)
12.	Dfl and SIB	<p>Carbon Management in Infrastructure</p> <p>Engage with the relevant sectors to establish and co-ordinate the adoption and application of standards, quantification and assessment of carbon impacts for infrastructure throughout the project lifecycle.</p>	Phase 1: Infrastructure Sectoral Plan and Carbon Management Standard	<p>Phase 1: Scoping and Discovery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. preparation of the Infrastructure Sectoral Plan (ISP) with ISNI Committee being a major consultee and stakeholder on its development; and 2. approving a SOC for the introduction of a Carbon Management Standard across NICS and ALBs, namely PAS 2080 entitled 'Carbon Management in Infrastructure'. 	Initial draft Infrastructural Sectoral Plan by Q3 2026.	Subject to approval of the draft Infrastructural Sector Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with our climate change obligations • More efficient delivery due to overcoming legal risks associated with the legislation • Better value for money by optimising climate and environment goals alongside economic and social

ISNI Committee Meeting – 14th November 2025

Paper 53/25: ISNI Enabling Action Plan Highlight Report

1.0 Overview

This paper provides an update to the ISNI Committee of progress over the delivery reporting period October-November on each of the ISNI Enabling Actions.

The dashboard in Section 2 provides a summary status for each of the projects, including the current RAG (Red/Amber/Green) status; comparison with the previous (September) RAG status; and timeline for delivery of next milestone(s). The RAG status of 7 Enabling Actions are Green with the following 5 rated as Amber:

Enabling Action 3 remains rated as Amber as the expected delivery of the Phase 1 report has slipped from September 2025 to March 2026, with progress now being monitored against this revised date. A fresh engagement is underway with DfI and NIHE to understand the impact of business case processes on rolling programmes of spend. The end-to-end review of DE/EA is now underway.

Enabling Action 6 has now moved from Green to Amber to reflect the slow rate of progress in user data upload.

Enabling Action 7 remains rated as Amber due to the impact of the ISNI and associated Investment Plan not being approved by the Executive, meaning large parts of scope now not being deliverable. A revised scope was agreed by ISNI Committee which avoids this impediment and allows work to progress over the next 6 months to March 2026, progress will be monitored against the new time frame.

Enabling Action 11 remains rated as Amber due to issues relating to the RoI part of the N-S Interconnector and the requirement for primary legislation for a proposed support scheme. Both issues add risk to achieving the target.

Enabling Action 12 remains rated as Amber while DAERA provides input on a rescoped workplan prepared by DfI and SIB. If the workplan is agreed at NICS Board in November, the Enabling Action can be rated as Green.

The highlight reports in Section 3 provide a summary of objectives and deliverables for each of the Enabling Actions, and key activities undertaken in the delivery period since the last update in September 2025. An update on pending milestones, resourcing and risks/issues/concerns is also provided.

A list of delivered milestones has been added in Appendix 1.

2.0 Dashboard

Project	Sponsor	SRO	Status/Next Steps	Previous RAG status	Current RAG status	Next Milestone	Milestone Delivery
1: Infrastructure Profession(s) Workforce Planning	SIB (interim) ⚡	SW ⚡	Collect workforce data from ALBs . Finalise report with Atkins on ISNI Resource Needs	G	G	Data collection from ALBs. Produce ISNI Resource Needs Report	Q1-26
2: Capacity & Capability Planning & HR Policies	SIB (interim) ⚡	SW ⚡	Complete Reward & Recognition BC. Complete SIB OBC for resources & progress jobs	G	G	Complete R&R BC (Dec 25). Approval of SIB BC (input from DfI required)	Dec-25
3: Business Case Process	SIB (interim) ⚡	SW ⚡	Work is proceeding in line with revised plan	A	A	Completion of DE/EA end-to-end review	Mar-25
4: Planning Improvement - Short to Medium Term	DfI >>>	JA >>>	Review of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015	G	G	Engagement with Planning Authorities and elected representatives	Q4-25
5: Planning Improvement - Medium to Longer Term	DfI, SIB >>>	SW >>>	Progress Ph 1 Financial Sustainability. Work with BCC on C&GD for Planning Ai bid	G	G	Financial Sustainability (Dec 25). C&GD bid - decision on incl of planning	Dec-25
6: Monitoring & Assurance	SIB >>>	SW >>>	Further SRO & P3O engagement to facilitate project data completion	G	A	Target completion of PAC data upload by Departments	Nov-25
7: Procurement	DoF >>>	SS >>>	Comparative analysis progressing well. CoPEs to return As Is data analysis before 14 Nov	A	A	Draft As-Is analysis of capital works procurement & contractor facing activity	Jan-26
8: Social License	SIB >>>	SW >>>	Complete RPA, PRA and Gateway nominee proposals, complete guidance by March 26	G	G	Agree RPA, PRA and Gateway nominees with CPD, complete guidance by 03/26	Mar-26
9: Alternative Governance & Financing Models	SIB >>>	SW >>>	Draft paper for consideration and discussion complete	G	G	Await feedback and if required plan next steps	Sep-25
10: Infrastructure Needs Assessment	SIB >>>	SW >>>	Research proceeding as planned. Writing up sectoral sections	G	G	Phase 2 report due in March 2026	Mar-26
11: Energy Legislative & Regulatory Priorities	DfE >>>	IS >>>	Explore feasibility of new reporting approach; progress DfE workstreams	A	A	Publication of High-Level Design Plan for Smart Meters	Jan-25
12: Carbon Management in Infrastructure	DfI, SIB >>>	CW >>>	Revised workplan focused on Infrastructure Sectoral Plan and Carbon Management Standard	A	A	DAERA input to be incorporated and revised workplan agreed by NICS Board	Nov-25


RAG Status Indicators


Red: Indicates high risks or significant issues, such as budget overruns, delays or scope changes.


Amber: Indicates moderate risks or potential issues. Amber projects may have missed some targets but can still be managed within approved limits.

Green: Indicates that the project is on track and performing well, with no significant concerns.


3.0 Highlight Reports


Enabling Actions	1: Workforce Planning for Infrastructure Profession(s) and Delivery Capacity & Capability	
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB) interim	
Project Lead	Kevin Hegarty (SIB) interim	
Project Objectives	The objective of the discovery phases is to complete preparatory workforce planning investigations with ALBs and the private sector which will identify areas of focus and the resources required to initiate the first phase of the project.	
Project Deliverables	Discovery Phase 1 – Report detailing proposed workstreams (Complete) Discovery Phase 2 – Workstreams agreed that will output a summary report per workstream	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workstream 1a (Establishing Best Practice in Workforce Planning across all big spending ALBs). Met with most big spending ALBs end Oct who have agreed to share HR data and skills information on staff involved in delivering major capital projects. Data to be collected Nov. Ongoing engagement with P&OD and Integr8 team. Workstream 1b (Private sector delivery capacity & capability) – Working with DfE Skills team, CITBNI and CEF who are very keen for the work to happen and supportive. Atkins Realis has a draft report considering how many resources and what skills might be required to deliver the ISNI. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	Workstream 1a – Liaising with ALB nominees to collect key workforce data. Workstream 1b – Private sector skills baselining and needs analysis for ISNI Projects. Finalising Atkins Report	
Update on Next Milestones	Workstream 1a (Workforce Planning) Resource data sharing requests and requests for nominees issued.	Ongoing - Most ALBs have nominated reps and SIB has met with them. Need to get reps from 4 outstanding health Trusts. Work ongoing with ALBs & Ph 2 Scoping due Q1 2026.
	Workstream 1b (Private Sector Capacity and Capability) Skills baselining and needs analysis for ISNI Projects.	Ongoing - Work on-going with Atkins, DfE, CITBNI & CEF. Report due Q1 2026.
Resourcing	SIB continuing to assume SRO role and resourcing of workstreams 1a & 1b which have been staggered to reflect current capacity.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	The continued absence of Executive approval of the ISNI and Investment Plan will impact progress in engagement with ALBs and for private sector skills baselining	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 	


Enabling Actions	2: Capacity and Capability, HR Policies	
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB) interim	
Project Lead	Kevin Hegarty (SIB) interim (Colin Woods co-lead for Workstream 2a)	
Project Objectives	The objective of the discovery phases is to complete preparatory work with departments which will identify areas of focus and the resources required to initiate the first phase of the project.	
Project Deliverables	Discovery Phase 1 – Report detailing proposed workstreams (Complete) Discovery Phase 2 – Workstreams agreed that will output a summary report per workstream	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workstream 2a (Addressing Dfl (TRAM) Capacity and Capability Barriers) – SIB P&T Reward & Recognition OBC for Dfl ongoing with a revised delivery date of Dec '25. Dfl is considering the appropriateness of progressing with seconded staff from SIB to Dfl pending the A5 Appeal outcome. ● Workstream 2b (Accountability for Public Spending) – To respond to PAC Recommendations, work pivoted to start skills baselining and gap analysis for ISNI projects. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workstream 2a – Progress P&T Reward & Recognition OBC. Respond to Dfl as appropriate ○ Workstream 2b (Accountability for Public Spending) - The initial stages will now be taken forward as part of Workstream 1a and 1b through mapping what skills are required for ISNI projects and their delivery. SIB to write to NICS P&OD to ensure alignment with DoF People Strategy 	
Update on Next Milestones	Workstream 2a - Progress Report to ISNI Committee.	Revised date of Dec '25 for P&T R&R OBC Completion. Dfl are considering the situation with the A5 appeal before approving SIB's Recruitment BC for additional staff.
	Workstream 2b - Progress Report to ISNI Committee	Progress report to Nov ISNI Committee
Resourcing	Dfl and SIB jointly leading workstream 2a. SIB continuing to lead workstream 2b with 2a and 2b staggered to reflect current resourcing. Once the first phases of workstreams 2a and 2b are complete, a proposal outlining the future SRO role and resourcing will be considered by ISNI Committee.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	Workstream 2a P&T R&R OBC has been delayed from end of September to end of December but manageable within overall timescales.	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 	

Enabling Action	3: Business Case Process	
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB) interim	
Project Lead	Patrick McMeekin (SIB)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Objectives 	<p>The objective of the project is to produce actionable recommendations that lead to improvements to the business case process and approval of expenditure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Jan '25: ISNI Committee agreed to the plan of work. 28 Jan '25: NICS Board agreed to plan of work. Nov '25: ISNI Committee agreed to bring additional departments into the scope of Phase 1 and extend timing of Phase 1 report to Mar '26. 	
Project Deliverables	Implementation will remove inefficiencies in the business case process, reduce production and approval timescales, and provide the information required by the ISNI Committee to perform its progress monitoring responsibilities on behalf of NICS Board.	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement is underway with DfI and NIHE to understand the impact of business case processes on rolling programmes of spend. The end-to-end review of DE/EA is now underway. Engagement with DfE is ongoing. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DE/EA end-to-end review is likely to be the focus of the next period, starting with a process mapping workshop (aiming for w/c 10th November) Complete write-up for rolling programmes of spend which account for circa 50% of annual capital spend. These are NI Water network maintenance, NIHE estate maintenance, NIHE SHDP, DfI road network maintenance, Translink network maintenance, Health and Education estate maintenance. 	
Update on Next Milestones	Milestone 4: Final report to ISNI Committee	Mar '26
Resourcing	Scott Wilson (SIB) is the interim SRO for the project until a more suitable permanent SRO is identified; Patrick McMeekin (SIB) is leading the project, working with DoF.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	Benefits will not be realised fully without a managed change programme and more involvement of DoF, certainly in Phase 2.	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Amber 	


Enabling Action	4: Short to Medium Term Planning Improvements	
SRO	Judith Andrews (DfI)	
Project Lead	Rosemary Daly (DfI) Kevin Hegarty (SIB) (engaging with DfI on behalf of the ISNI Committee)	
Project Objectives	Support the DfI Planning Group with the implementation of short-term improvements to enable a more efficient and effective Planning System working with statutory consultees, councils, the planning appeals system and other relevant stakeholders.	
Project Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agreed Planning Improvement Joint Work Programme (Ph 1 & 2) • Refocus on key areas of action with the most potential to positively impact on planning performance. 	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The recent NI 2024/25 planning statistics show an average processing time of 39.6 weeks for major applications decided or withdrawn across all councils, which is the lowest since planning powers were transferred, with five councils meeting the 30-week target. This trend is continuing with major application processing times meeting the 30-week statutory target in the first quarter of 2025/26. ○ Officials continue to consider the findings from the recent engagement with the 12 planning authorities and observations at Planning Committees are almost complete. ○ Discussions are ongoing with NILGA to engage elected members in the planning improvement agenda. ○ The second phase of the review of the Development Management Regulations continues, with work focusing on a review of the Schedule of classes and thresholds of development for local, major, and regionally significant development and the criterion for each class. ○ A regional trainee planner scheme has been developed in partnership with RTPI, Belfast Met, and local councils. Subject to interest and recruitment, 10 trainee planners are expected to begin a dedicated course in January 2026, which aims to strengthen future workforce capacity and resilience within the planning profession. ○ As part of the financial sustainability workstream, a public consultation was launched in October 2025 to seek views on introducing charges for planning services that are not currently subject to fees. Q – Is this not EA5 scope? ○ Work is continuing with councils on the next steps for improving the LDP process, and work has commenced on updating associated guidance ○ Officials are continuing to work on and progress all other actions within the PIP, including the regional report on the planning system and proposals to appoint Independent Persons. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	DfI will continue working on the actions contained within the PIP as agreed by the Minister for Infrastructure.	
Update on Next Milestones	Milestone 2: Review of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015	On Track – Q4 25/26
	Milestone 3: Direct Engagement with Planning Authorities & elected representatives	On Track – Q3 25/26
Resourcing	DfI SRO and Project Lead in place. Kevin Hegarty (SIB) will work to support DfI on behalf of the ISNI Committee.	


<p>Risks/Issues/Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfI will continue to play a key role in bringing forward improvements to the planning system in collaboration with other key stakeholders, including the 11 councils, statutory consultees, and the Planning Appeals Commission. ○ PIP is a joint programme with local councils, who carry out the majority of planning functions, as such progress and implementation of the various actions is dependent upon delivery by both central and local government working collectively to achieve better outcomes.. • Progress and delivery are also subject to Ministerial agreement and statutory timeframes, particularly for those workstreams involving legislative change. • Improvements to the planning system also rely on key components of the system such as statutory consultees, being adequately resourced.
<p>Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period</p>	<p>Green</p> 


Enabling Action	5: Medium to Longer Term Planning Improvements	
SRO	Kevin Hegarty (SIB)	
Project Lead	Kevin Hegarty (SIB) supported by Rosemary Daly (Dfl)	
Project Objectives	Support key stakeholders in the planning system through the identification and implementation of medium and long-term planning improvement initiatives, that accord with the Programme for Government, to ensure that the planning system works for the well-being of businesses, people, and the environment.	
Project Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Scoping & Discovery • Landscape Review considering other jurisdictions • Delivery of Scope of Works & Schedule for each 'Workstream' 	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turleys appointed to complete landscape review with draft submitted and currently under review • Meetings with Dfl, Councils and City & Growth Team to advance Ai & Financial Sustainability/Cost Recovery Workstreams 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress bidding for planning Ai bid for City & Growth deal funding and if successful work to commence in early 2026. Work with Dfl on Ai. • WS3 dependant on NIAO report into PAC (latest indications are Sept 25 for release of this so work unlike this period) • Progress initial phases of financial sustainability and scope out next phase of work • Complete Landscape Review considering other jurisdictions 	
Update on Next Milestones	AI Discovery Phase report & scope for Pilot	Q4 2025
	Cost recovery in support of the longer-term financial sustainability of the planning system Discovery Phase report & scope for Pilot (subject to ISNI Approval and agreement with Councils)	Q4 2025
Resourcing	Kevin Hegarty (SIB) will work with Dfl and others on behalf of the ISNI Committee. Additional resources will be required to support the delivery of this work (set out in the forward workplan)	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continued absence of Executive approval of the ISNI and Investment Plan will impact progress in particular in workstreams that rely on engagement with ALBs and Councils. • Legislative change is very unlikely within the current mandate. 	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 	


Enabling Action	6: Monitoring & Assurance	
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB)	
Project Lead	Suzanne Allen (SIB)	
Project Objectives	To address inefficiencies in current manual processes of capital project data collection.	
Project Deliverables	To deliver a 'one source of the truth' data portal with self-service dashboard and reporting functionality. To enable project assurance reporting functionality within CPD.	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing refinements/continuous improvement to DataMAP. • Go live of additional functionality - roads planning, City & Growth Deals, project risks, SRO update. • Development of reporting functionality (ongoing). • Meetings with P3Os to prioritise project data for PAC. • Meeting with DoF to discuss mandating DataMAP completion through the 4 year capital budget process. • Development of Data Governance paper. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental meetings with P3Os and SROs to address data issues and get feedback on governance paper. • Meeting with Irish Government re data collection and reporting outputs. • Refine reporting outputs for PAC. 	
Update on Next Milestones	Target completion of PAC data upload by Departments	End-November '25
Resourcing	Being managed within SIB, with additional inputs from EY. Resources have been drawn from Enabling Action 3 to focus on refinement of the database.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	Rate of data upload is slow due to data availability and some reluctance to participate.	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Current: Amber Last report: Green 	


Enabling Action	7: Procurement	
SRO	Sharon Smyth (DoF)	
Project Lead	Jane Mellor (SIB)	
Phase 1 Objectives (Agreed at Sep 2025 ISNI Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report outlining As-Is processes, capacity and skills across CoPEs. Report describing lessons from the pilot comparison of procurement process timescales (i.e. comparative analysis pilot). 	
Project Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative analysis between NI and other jurisdictions. Report outlining As-Is processes, capacity and skills across CoPEs. Integrated procurement plan, including an ISNI procurement pipeline. Robust data collection and reporting. 	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<p>Phase 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55 bodies contacted for pilot comparative analysis. 17 meetings held. 7 data returns to date. Detail of the data collection for CoPEs' As-Is processes, capacity & skills outlined in paper 43/25 to Sep ISNI Committee agreed with the working group & deadline agreed for data submission by 14 Nov. Workshop to be held mid Nov with working group to discuss findings from comparative analysis pilot and agree next steps to enable a report to be produced for ISNI Committee & NICS Board and decide whether pilot is to be extended and for which sectors. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate As-Is responses from CoPEs and analyse. Develop report regarding comparative analysis pilot. If agreed, further procurement process timescales comparative analysis. 	
Update on Milestones (rescoped milestones as set out in paper 43-25 to Sept ISNI Committee)	Milestone 3: Draft As-Is analysis of capital works procurement and contractor facing activity produced	Jan '26 Status: Green
	Milestone 4: Pilot comparison of procurement process timescales report produced (i.e. comparative analysis pilot)	Mar 2026: Status: Green
Resourcing	Part time project lead; funding available until end of March 2026.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Risk: Working group members do not return data requested for As-Is analysis. ISNI Committee is asked for support to ensure CoPEs meet deadline of 14 Nov. Risk: Working group members reject lessons from pilot procurement process timescales comparison with other jurisdictions. Issue: NIHE has advised that its budget has been reduced significantly and that various options for delivery are being presented at the NIHE Board meeting in August 2025. They have advised that following this they may have a clearer understanding of the capital and maintenance budget and they will provide update as soon as possible after the options have been worked through. Issue: Lack of data from DoH and Translink on the maintenance procurement pipeline and general timescales for EA7 Working Group members to respond to requests for information. Issue: DoH has confirmed it is carrying out a review of their capital programme which may change the priority of projects on the draft plan, 	


	the outcome of this review would be on the critical path for the completion of the integrated plan and procurement pipeline.
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Current: Amber (previous status retained for phase 1 until ISNI is agreed). Last report: Amber 

Enabling Action	8: Social License	
SRO	Scott Wilson	
Project Leads	Stephen McGowan (SIB Projects) and Jean Wylie (SIB Comms)	
Project Objectives	Embed the concept, elevate the importance and improve the practise of Social License across the ISNI Investment Plan and in the planning and delivery of infrastructure and major capital projects.	
Project Deliverables	Phase 1 of the project established a Social License pathway approach, including agreed terminology and scope at ISNI programme and individual capital project level. Phase 2 workplan over 2025-26 will deliver project level guidance, programme level comms strategy and implementation initiatives, and direct support to pilot pathfinder projects.	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft guidance complete for Milestones 4 (risk assessments) and 5 (Gateway Review panels) for review with DoF. Draft approach strengthens social license lens in established assurance processes to instigate and embed systemic change in how social license is supported during the planning, delivery and monitoring of major projects and programmes. • Social License Lead and associated input started on Pathfinder project to enhance social license focus and support to the Magee Campus Expansion Programme and its investment in Derry~Londonderry. • Staff conference briefing to SIB project and programme managers on importance of Social License and its support to maximising Social Value 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress 2025/26 workplan. • Delivery on DfE Pathfinder on Magee Expansion Programme, and continue discovery phase on Belfast Rapid Transit (Dfl) • Launch Social License 'Community of Interest' for SIB project/programme managers with aim to develop and expand this platform across sectors 	
Update on Milestones	Milestone 2: Develop ISNI Communications Strategy (tbc as ISNI not yet approved by Ministers)	tbc 2025
	Milestone 6: First draft Guidance to support PPN 01/21 Social License workstream	Mar 2026
Resourcing	Being managed within SIB and with pathfinder project partners	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	ISNI comms strategy contingent on approval of the ISNI by Ministers – Milestone 2 has been designated tbc until this timeframe more certain.	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 	

Enabling Action	9: Alternative Governance & Financing Models
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB)
Project Lead	Michael Donnelly (SIB), supported by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark O'Donnell (DfC) (for Social Housing only) • Colin Woods (Dfl) for Water and Public Transport • Tracey Teague (DAERA) for Advisory input on Climate Action • Jeff McGuinness (DoF) for finance review
Project Objectives	To prepare an options appraisal and make recommendations to generate additional infrastructure finance and funding for the Executive's consideration.
Project Deliverables	To support infrastructure sectors impacted by significant funding shortfalls with the identification and/or implementation of alternative governance and financing options. EA9 deliverables were split over 6 phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Confirmation of need. Complete. • Phase 2: Consideration of approaches to optimize investment need. Complete • Phase 3: Options appraisal for delivering investment need. Complete • Phase 4: Financial Modelling: Complete • Phase 5: Engagement with DoF on repayment options. Complete • Phase 6: Recommendations and implementation plan. Complete
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Phases completed • Final draft paper with recommendations issued to FM and dFM for discussion.
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await briefing and feedback from FM and dFM.
Update on Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All milestones completed
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourced by SIB with input from Dfl, DfC, DoF
Risks/Issues/Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to feedback from FM and dFM.
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 

Enabling Action	10: Infrastructure Needs Assessment	
SRO	Scott Wilson (SIB)	
Project Lead	Johann Gallagher (SIB)	
Project Objectives	Develop and implement an approach to a long-term Infrastructure Needs Assessment to inform priorities for the next ISNI.	
Project Deliverables	The first deliverable was a Landscape Review report for economic infrastructure (Phase 1), followed by a similar report for social and environmental infrastructure (Phase 2). The two reports combined will inform advice to ISNI Committee on an approach to the future Infrastructure Needs Assessment to inform Investment Planning. .	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research underway - data collected and analysed on sectors to understand (1) how the sector is performing and how it has changed over the last 10 years; (2) the strategies and plans underpinning future investment; and (3) how need is determined. • Clarification meetings with a number of departments • Review of approaches to infrastructure strategic planning and Infrastructure Needs Assessments in other jurisdictions. This includes a review of the Enabling Better Infrastructure (EBI) Toolkit, developed by the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE). The ICE-led EBI programme has been learning lessons from governments all around the world on how to best plan infrastructure. . EBI has developed a set of principles for strategic infrastructure planning. This work will inform our approach to a future infrastructure needs assessments. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing up the sector sections and key findings emerging. • Review of Phase 1 Recommendations to assess how these may be best implemented, within resources available. • Drawing on findings from Phases 1 & 2 and the wider context, consider options in terms of the development of a future Infrastructure Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland. 	
Update on Milestones	Milestone 2: Phase 2: Final Report	May '25 - March '26
Resourcing	Being managed within SIB, with departmental sector leads providing input.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	Experience of delivering Phase 1 has been taken into account when developing the timescale for Phase 2.	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Green 	

Enabling Action	11: Energy Legislative & Regulatory Priorities	
SRO	Ian Snowden (DfE)	
Project Lead	Rachel Sankannawar (SIB embedded in DfE)	
Project Objectives	To determine the legislative and regulatory changes required to facilitate investment in energy infrastructure and decarbonisation.	
Project Deliverables	Prioritisation and delivery of appropriate actions, policy and legislation required to meet the statutory target for 80% of electricity consumption to be from local renewable generation by 2030.	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convened a multi-stakeholder workshop focused on solutions development, with emphasis on data-sharing, trust-building, and joint delivery planning. • Published the Final Scheme Design for the Renewable Electricity Price Guarantee (REPG). • Decision paper on socialisation of connection costs and the High-Level Design Plan for Smart Meters, pending Ministerial approval. • Continued engagement with SONI, NIE Networks, and the Utility Regulator; consultation launched on SONI's Transmission Development Plan (TDPNI) 2023–2032; RP7 rollout commenced. • Forest Service engagement progressed, with wind energy market engagement exercise completed and initial scoping of business case underway. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure approval and publish the High-Level Design Plan for Smart Meters. • Convene the first meeting of the 80 by 30 Steering Group. • Engage delivery stakeholders to explore feasibility of a two-tier reporting approach. • Continue legislative drafting with OLC and prepare for Executive write-around and associated steps required for introduction of the REPG Bill. 	
Update on Milestones	Milestone: Publication of High-Level Design Plan for Smart Meters.	By January 2026
Resourcing	Being managed within DfE. Project lead appointed through in June 2025.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the 80% renewable electricity target is highly dependent on external stakeholders operating under distinct legislative mandates and funding mechanisms. Conflicting statutory frameworks, such as the Energy Order governing grid stakeholders and the Utility Regulator, create complexity. • Potential legislative drafting delays due to constrained capacity across OLC, DSO, and project team. • Delay to North-South Interconnector from June 2028 to June 2031. • Pause of the SONI/EirGrid proposal to trial an increase in SNSP (Synchronous Non-Synchronous Penetration) from 75% to 80%. • Sensitivities across jurisdictions and recent heightened focus on security of supply continue to shape delivery risks. 	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Amber for DfE Projects 	

Enabling Action	12: Carbon Management in Infrastructure	
SRO	Colin Woods (DfI)	
Project Lead	Caroline Maxwell (SIB)	
Project Objective	Address carbon quantification, assessment and standards in the delivery of infrastructure projects in ISNI through the preparation of the Infrastructure Sectoral Plan.	
Project Deliverables	Infrastructure Sectoral Plan (ISP) providing thought leadership on accelerating and promoting carbon reduction in the built environment. SOC for the introduction of a Carbon Management Standard across NICS and ALBs, namely PAS 2080 entitled, 'Carbon Management in Infrastructure'.	
Key Activities Undertaken in this Delivery Period (Oct-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation by DfI and SIB of a revised workplan focused on the preparation of the ISP and the introduction of a Carbon Management Standard. Ongoing advice provided when requested by departments who wish to proceed with carbon quantification of their ISNI projects and commissioned consultants to develop a minimum viable product for expediting project-level carbon quantification using AI and projections. 	
Main Focus during Next Period (Dec-Jan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree the revised workplan at NICS board and DfI to lead its delivery with support from SIB. This will include progressing on its own adoption of PAS2080 and initiating the draft ISP. Continue to support departments when requested with carbon quantification of their ISNI projects as appropriate. SIB and DoF engaging on the emerging four-year capital budget within the context of carbon quantification and the Infrastructure Sectoral Plan development. 	
Update on Milestones	Revised scope and workplan to be agreed at the November NICS Board following incorporation of DAERA's input on the DfI/ SIB draft.	November '25
Resourcing	Led by DfI with support from SIB where relevant and appropriate. Advice and support from SIB and its consultants, ERM, as requested.	
Risks/Issues/Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised scope and workplan will be subject to DAERA input and NICS Board approval. Delays in preparation of the ISP due to ongoing resourcing needs for the A5 legal proceedings. 	
Current RAG Status and Change since Last Reporting Period	Amber 	

Appendix 1: Delivered Milestones

The following milestones have been delivered for each of the Enabling Action projects:

Enabling Action	Milestone and Date of Delivery
1: Infrastructure Profession Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: Discovery Phase 1 covering EA 1 & 2: A report summarising the outcome of engagements and recommended next steps, approach agreed to progress in 4 workstreams – Nov '24 • Strategic Workforce Planning Recommendations agreed by ISNI Committee May '25
2: Capability Planning & HR Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA2 WS 2- Report approved by ISNI Committee – Mar '25
3: Business Case Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: SRO event – Sept '24 • Milestone 2: Workplan approved by ISNI Committee and endorsed by NICS Board – Jan '25, Phase 1 completion now Mar '26
4: Planning Improvement – Short to Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: Scope agreed with ISNI Committee and endorsed by NICS Board – Nov '24 • Milestone 2: Propose KPI's to ISNI C'ttee – July '25
5: Planning Improvement – Medium to Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: Scope agreed with ISNI Committee and endorsed by NICS Board – Nov '24 • DfI Minister's feedback on Workplan received in May '25
6: Monitoring & Assurance – 'DataMAP'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: PID approved by ISNI Committee - July '24 • Milestone 2: Pilot data collection project completed - Feb '25 • Milestone 3 – Recommendations report to ISNI Committee and NICS Board on proposed reporting outputs – May '25
7: Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: ToR of Integrated Procurement Plan approved by ISNI Committee – Sept '25 • Milestone 2: Maintenance workshop with CoPEs – Feb '25 • Rescoped Milestone 1: Roles & responsibilities for robust data tracking agreed. Jul '25. • Revised scope agreed by ISNI Committee – Sept '25 • Rescoped Milestone 2: As-Is analysis preparatory work commences – Sept '25
8: Social License	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: Report approved by ISNI Committee/NISCB – Mar '25 • Milestone 3: Pathfinder projects – engage, select, agree resource/cost and update ISNI Committee – July '25 • Milestones 4 & 5: Updated RPA and PRA guidelines issued for discussion with DoF. Practitioners identified to strengthen social license lens on Gateway Reviews
9: Alternative Governance & Financing Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: ToRs agreed by ISNI Committee and endorsed by NICS Board Jan '25 • ToRs discussed and agreed with FM and dFM May '25 • Milestone 2: Work completed and submitted as draft for discussion to FM and dFM Sept '25

10: Infrastructure Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: Phase 1 Landscape Review of Economic Infrastructure presented to ISNI Committee Mar '25 • ToRs for Phase 2 agreed by ISNI Committee May '25
11: Energy Legislative & Regulatory Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone 1: ToR endorsed by ISNI Committee Jan '25 • Milestone 2: Project Director appointed through SIB June '25
12: Carbon Management in Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised scope and workplan to be shared with DAERA for input and agreed by NICS Board in Nov '25



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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Cc: Stuart Stevenson, ToA

27 October 2025

Dear Neil

**MEMORANDUM OF REPLY: MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS: FOLLOW-UP
REPORT**

At its meeting on 16 October 2025, the Committee considered your letter dated 8 October 2025 regarding the Memorandum of Reply for the Major Capital Projects Follow Up Report which has yet to be laid before the Assembly.

The Committee considered your response and Members noted that they can now expect to receive a copy of the Board Effectiveness Review and action plan at the end of this month. Members also welcomed your offer to provide further clarity on the issues raised. The Clerk will be in contact in due course with potential dates for your attendance.

Given that only 9 of the 12 recommendations are dependent on approval of the ISNI, Members have also requested that an update be provided on the remaining 3 recommendations, along with an update on the ISNI enabling actions.

The Committee has requested a response by **20 November 2025** to these

matters.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel McCrossan', with a small flourish at the end.

Daniel McCrossan
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee