



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

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19 June 2026

Cc: Stuart Stevenson, TOA

Dear Emer

MEMORANDUM OF REPLY: ROAD OPENINGS BY UTILITIES

At its meeting on 18 June 2026, the Public Accounts Committee considered the Memorandum of Reply (MOR) to its report on “Road Openings by Utilities”.

The Committee welcomed the broad acceptance by the Department of the Committee’s recommendations and agreed to write to the Department seeking further clarification on a number of matters.

The Committee noted that 9 of the 11 recommendations were fully accepted, while recommendations 4 and 7 were partially accepted. The Committee also noted that the target implementation dates presented in the MOR broadly align with the timescales recommended by the Committee, with the exception of recommendation 1, where the target implementation date extends beyond the Committee’s recommended timescale.

In relation to recommendation 1, it is the Committee’s understanding that the reason given for a later implementation target date is the ongoing mapping exercise and accepts that, in this context, an three-month extension appears reasonable. However, the Committee is seeking clarification that the Department will review the methodology underpinning its financial analysis to

ensure that it is robust and evidence based.

In relation to recommendation 4, the Committee agreed to write to the Department to reiterate the importance of the inspection programme being suitably robust. Members emphasised that the inspection programme should provide assurance not only regarding the quality of works undertaken by utility bodies and for the materials used, but also regarding the overall quality of reinstatement and the appearance of roads and footways following completion of works.

The Committee remains concerned about examples of poor reinstatement, including patchwork repairs and inconsistent restoration standards, which can negatively impact the public realm and lead to avoidable costs to the public purse.

The Committee is seeking detail of how the Department intends to meet its inspection and monitoring arrangements to meet its responsibilities in this important issue. Further, the Committee is seeking detail on the engagement and co-ordination, including timelines, that is carried out between the Department and utility bodies ahead of commencement of work.

In relation to recommendation 7, the Committee is seeking confirmation on whether the reason for partial acceptance is due to work already under way by the Department. Further, the Committee is seeking detail on whether the Department believes that public perception aligns with the Department's own assessment of road openings.

In relation to recommendation 8, the Committee is keen to see greater transparency through the publication of contractor related data. It would therefore be helpful, for the Department to clarify whether it is the intention of the Department to publish such data, or whether work is currently being undertaken to assess how this could be achieved.

Finally, the Committee requests that Department officials attend in six months to provide an update on progress of the recommendations.

I look forward to your response by **3 July**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John [unclear]', written in a cursive style.

Daniel McCrossan
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee