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PRESS RELEASE: CEF comments on draft Budget 2026-2029/30 proposals

Commenting after the publication by the Finance Minister of his draft Budget 2026-2029/30 proposals, Construction Employers Federation Chief Executive Mark Spence said:

"While the publication today of the Finance Minister's draft Budget 2026-2029/30 proposals is to be welcomed, our immediate reaction is that it comes with two key points of concern.

"Firstly, this is clearly a publication by the Department of Finance and not one that comes with NI Executive endorsement. As we said with the publication of our Construction Survey yesterday, it is critical that the NI Executive agrees a four-year budget - today's announcement falls far short of what we would see as a baseline requirement of the Executive and we would ask for urgent clarity on the positions of all Executive parties on these proposals.

"Secondly, while the early earmarking of RRI funding for NI Water and newbuild social housing is an important step, the £433m for water and wastewater infrastructure specifically falls some £1.36bn short of the indicative funding required by NI Water over the same four-year period. It is of course the case that more funding will be allocated by the Department for Infrastructure to close that gap - but, as we have consistently said and in the context of the other earmarked allocations being made, it is implausible that the NI Executive could meet the recurrent capital needs of all the Government Clients within the capital funding envelope detailed today.

"We therefore reiterate again what we said yesterday:

"As the detailed work commences on NI Water's next Price Control which will come into effect in 2028, we again call on Ministers to act on the CEF joint position paper with the NI Chamber of Commerce and NI Federation of Housing Associations from last summer which proposed a potential way forward which includes the introduction of a low-cost Infrastructure Levy, along with other measures. Our proposal, which is progressive in nature, protects those most vulnerable in our society while also charting a sustainable path towards dealing with an issue which is now the principal inhibitor to economic growth and accelerant of environmental decline that we face. The decisions made in this last full year of this Executive and Assembly will inform the electorate as to the seriousness of our local politicians to face up to, and take concerted action to avert, the ever-deepening infrastructure investment crisis that will define our economic potential.

"We will now take the time to analyse the Minister's proposals in further detail."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Construction Employers Federation (CEF) is the sole certified representative body for the second largest industry in Northern Ireland, the

construction industry. We represent approx. 70% of construction in NI and around 800 businesses of all sizes employing over 30,000 staff directly and 65,000 in the wider supply chain.



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