

Via email: Committee.Infrastructure@niassembly.gov.uk

Date: 1 May 2026

Dear Michael

Review of Planning: Call for Evidence

Thank you for your letter of 27 April 2026 notifying me that the Committee for Infrastructure is carrying out a review of planning decisions for Regionally Significant Projects, including the impact of Judicial Reviews on major capital projects.

I am very appreciative that you have sought my views as part of the Committee's call for evidence. As Comptroller and Auditor General, the Committee will be aware that my views and opinions are entirely based on evidence gathered by my office in the course of its work.

Whilst I am unable to make specific comments on the three key areas of focus in your letter, there have been areas of work undertaken by my office in recent years which may have some relevance to your inquiry. I have therefore set out below the relevant reports published (or due to be published) by the NIAO and any subsequent Public Accounts Committee (PAC) scrutiny should the Committee wish to consider this work as part of its inquiry.

In doing so, you will appreciate that the conclusions and recommendations set out in my reports (and the PAC reports) are evidence based and were accurate at the date of publication. Therefore, the Committee may wish to seek updates from relevant officials on any matters raised within these reports.

Major Capital Projects – December 2019

This report subsequently led to a [Public Accounts Committee \(PAC\) inquiry](#) which concluded in October 2020. Within its report the PAC made several recommendations which received a formal response by way of a [Memorandum of Reply \(MoR\) in June 2021](#). You may wish to consult with the Clerk of the PAC for further detail.

Planning in Northern Ireland – February 2022

This report subsequently led to a [Public Accounts Committee \(PAC\) inquiry](#) which concluded in March 2022. Within its report the PAC made several recommendations which received a formal response by way of a [Memorandum of Reply \(MoR\) in April 2024](#). Following scrutiny of the MoR the PAC held an [evidence session](#) on 13 June 2024 to receive an update from the DfI Accounting Officer. You may wish to consult with the Clerk of the PAC for further detail.

The Judicial Review process in Northern Ireland - July 2023

As there was no sitting Executive or Assembly this report was published, an arrangement established by the Secretary of State at the time, placed a duty on departments to formally respond to my reports and publish these, in the absence of Assembly scrutiny. The Departmental Response to the report can be found [here](#).

Major Capital Projects - Follow up – February 2024

This report was a follow up to the original 2019 report. It was also the subject of a PAC inquiry which commenced in September 2024, but remains under PAC primacy, as the MoR from the Department of Finance remains outstanding. The relevant PAC report published in April 2025 can be found [here](#).

Strategic review of the Planning Appeals Commission – work in progress

This future report is work in progress and is due for publication in the coming weeks. Members will receive an embargoed copy just ahead of publication, in accordance with our standard procedures.

I trust the Committee will find this information useful and should you have any further questions, or need additional information, please reach out to my Assembly Support Office, Kyle Bingham in the first instance. Should you and/ or the Chair wish to meet to discuss any of our reports, I am of course happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Dorinnia Carville

Comptroller and Auditor General