



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

11 September 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Mrs Deborah Erskine MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Danny Baker MLA
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
- Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
- Mr Mark Durkin MLA
- Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
- Mr Andrew McMurray MLA
- Mr Peter McReynolds MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance:

- Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
- Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
- Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:02 am.



1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson updated members on the recent visit to the newly completed Grand Central Station in Belfast. The Chairperson thanked Translink for providing the opportunity for all Committee members to visit the new station in advance of its official opening.

The Committee welcomed the timely completion of the project and noted that its increased capacity will provide wider opportunities to expand Northern Ireland's transport infrastructure and connectivity.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 June 2024.

5. Matters Arising

None



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6. Road Safety – oral evidence from the Motorcycle Action Group

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:05 am:

- Mr Martyn Boyd, Northern Ireland Representative, Motorcycle Action Group (MAG); and
- Mr Colin Brown, Director of Campaigns and Political Engagement, MAG (joining remotely)

The representatives provided the Committee with an overview of road safety related issues from the perspective of motorcycle users.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was recorded

The evidence session ended at 11:23 am.

Agreed: To ask the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) if the positioning of road defects/potholes is considered when determining how repairs are prioritised or if only the depth is taken into account; and whether those assessing such defects are trained to identify risks to motorcyclists.

Agreed: To ask DfI and the Road Safety Partnership/Police Service of Northern Ireland for their assessment of the consideration given to the issues raised by MAG in their submissions to and in the course of engagement on the development of the Road Safety Strategy; and clarification of measures proposed by MAG that have been included in the Strategy.

Agreed: To request an analysis of the percentage of those killed or seriously injured over the last ten years who were motorcyclists compared to the percentage of road users who were motorcyclists from DfI.

Agreed: To request research on Enhanced Driving Rider Training Schemes in other jurisdictions.



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7. SR 2024-134 The Lurgan Road, Portadown (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024-134 The Lurgan Road, Portadown (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had raised no concerns regarding the technical aspects of the Statutory Rule.

Agreed: That the Committee for Infrastructure has considered SR 2024-134 The Lurgan Road, Portadown (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.

8. SR 2024-135 The Kings Lane, Warrenpoint (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024-135 The Kings Lane, Warrenpoint (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had raised no concerns regarding the technical aspects of the Statutory Rule.

Mr Stephen Dunne left the meeting at 11:26 am.

The Committee noted items of correspondence from three individuals detailing their objections to the stopping-up order and the consultation process.

Agreed: To forward to the correspondence to the Department for response to the issues raised.

Agreed: That the Committee for Infrastructure has considered SR 2024-135 The Kings Lane, Warrenpoint (Stopping-Up) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.



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9. SR 2024-144 The U8133 (unnamed road) of Friary Road, Newtownhamilton (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024-144 The U8133 (unnamed road) of Friary Road, Newtownhamilton (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had raised no concerns regarding the technical aspects of the Statutory Rule.

Agreed: That the Committee for Infrastructure has considered SR 2024-144 The U8133 (unnamed road) of Friary Road, Newtownhamilton (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.

10. SR 2024-145 The Footway between Peters Hill and Clifton Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024-145 The Footway between Peters Hill and Clifton Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had raised no concerns regarding the technical aspects of the Statutory Rule.

Agreed: That the Committee for Infrastructure has considered SR 2024-145 The Footway between Peters Hill and Clifton Street, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.



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11. SL1 – The Armagh Road, Moy (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SL1 – The Armagh Road, Moy (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Agreed: The Committee was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

12. SL1 – The Moyraverty Centre, Craigavon (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

Mr Stephen Dunne returned to the meeting at 11:32 am.

The Committee considered SL1 – The Moyraverty Centre, Craigavon (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Agreed: The Committee was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

13. SL1 – The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SL1 – The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Agreed: To ask DfI for further information relating to a number of issues including: the scope of the propose rule; the dispute mechanism and capacity of the Planning Appeals Commission; timescales and costs; if checklists will apply to all forms of planning applications; and whether guidance on the development of the checklists/matters for inclusion on the checklists will be provided to ensure a level of consistency across councils.



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- Agreed:** To defer consideration of the proposal for the Statutory Rule until a response to the issues raised has been received.
- Agreed:** To ask the Department for an update on primary legislation required to provide similar powers for the Department in respect of planning applications that fall under its remit.

14. SRs not subject to Assembly proceedings:

The Committee noted the following Statutory Rules that have been laid in the Business Office but are not subject to Assembly Proceedings:

- SR 2024-42 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Bangor) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-143 The Waiting Restrictions (Cloughey) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-148 The Parking Places on Roads, Waiting Restrictions and Motor Hackney Carriages (Belfast) By-Laws (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-149 The Bus Lanes (Belfast City Centre) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-150 The Road Races (Armoy Motorcycle Road Race) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-151 The Road Races (Garron Point Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-154 The Road Races (Ulster Rally) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024; and
- SR 2024-158 The Road Races (Bushwhacker Rally) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.



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15. SL1s not subject to Assembly proceedings

The Committee noted the following proposals for Subordinate Legislation not subject to Assembly Proceedings.

- The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Newtownards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- The Roads (Speed Limit) (No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- The Cycle Routes (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024; and
- The Waiting Restrictions (Augher) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

16. Budget 2024-25 – Interim 2024-25 Budget EQIA Consultation Report and Final Opening Budget Decisions – written paper

The Committee considered a written briefing paper on the Budget 2024-25 – Interim 2024-25 Budget EQIA Consultation Report and Final Opening Budget Decisions.

Agreed: To ask the Department to clarify the anticipated publication date of the final consultation report and to request that the Committee is furnished with a copy of the report prior to its publication.

The Committee noted that the Committee Clerk had been informed that the Department of Finance had commissioned a budget information gathering exercise during the summer.

Agreed: To request a copy of DfI's submission to the Department of Finance for the exercise.



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Agreed: To broaden the scope of the planned evidence on the October Monitoring Round to include wider budgetary issues and the financial position of the Department.

17. Changes to eligibility for the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme – Summary of responses to consultation – written paper

Mr John Stewart left the meeting at 11:45 am.

The Committee considered and noted written evidence setting out the summary of responses to proposed changes to eligibility for the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme.

Agreed: To seek an update from DfI on any consideration to extend the scope of the scheme to include licensed black taxis.

18. Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 – Progress Report 2023/24 – written paper

Mr Mark Durkan left the meeting at 11:47 am.

The Committee considered and noted the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 – Progress Report 2023/24.

Members made a number of observations in respect of the use of funding for road safety purposes and noted that a further response from the Road Safety Partnership will be considered at its meeting on 18 September 2024.

Mr John Stewart returned to the meeting at 11:49 am.



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19. Review of South East Flooding Autumn 2023 – written paper

The Committee considered and noted written evidence on the Review of South East Flooding Autumn 2023.

Members noted the absence of detail on the interim measures being undertaken arising from the review to mitigate future occurrences.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence on the report in the Forward Work Programme.

20. All-Island Strategic Rail Review – Final Report June 2024 – written paper

The Committee considered and noted the All-Island Strategic Rail Review – Final Report June 2024.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence on the report in the Forward Work Programme.

21. Deregulation of Approved Tachograph Centre fees – outcome of public consultation – written paper

The Committee considered and noted a report on the outcome of the public consultation on the Deregulation of Approved Tachograph Centre fees.

Agreed: To request further detail from the Department on the comparative costs of equivalent fees in other jurisdictions and its assessment of any anticipated increase in fees.



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22. Changing the exhaust emissions test for light vehicles with a modern diesel engine – public consultation – written paper

The Committee considered and noted the public consultation on proposals to change the exhaust emissions test for light vehicles with a modern diesel engine.

Agreed: To consider the matter further when the results of the consultation are available and before the final decisions are made on the way forward.

23. Amendment to Northern Ireland law for people who return to Northern Ireland with an EEA driving licence – targeted consultation – written paper

The Committee considered and noted a targeted consultation on an amendment to laws in Northern Ireland law for people returning to Northern Ireland with an EEA driving licence.

Agreed: To consider the matter further when the results of the consultation are available and before the final decisions are made on the way forward.

24. Strategic Plan

The Committee considered the Draft Strategic Plan 2024-2027.

Agreed: To approve the draft Strategic Plan, subject to the inclusion of Road Safety as an Additional Priority issue.

25. Correspondence

Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure and from the Community Transport Association regarding funding for the sector.



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Agreed: To request a copy of the Minister's written response to Community Transport Association and an update on the outcome of the meeting.

Correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Commissioner for Older People NI Report 'At the Centre of Government Planning: The Programme for Government and Preparing for an Ageing Population.'

Agreed: To request a copy of DfI's response to the Committee for Communities.

The Committee noted the response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding NIEA Planning Delays – Major Planning Applications for Renewable Developments.

Correspondence from Renewables NI requesting a copy of the response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding NIEA Planning Delays – Major Planning Applications for Renewable Developments.

Agreed: To forward a copy of the response to Renewables NI.

Correspondence from the Mineral Products Association Northern Ireland requesting an opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Committee.

Agreed: To schedule an evidence session in the Forward Work Programme.

Correspondence from the Road Haulage Association requesting to meet the Committee regarding an increase in the DVA checks for coach operators serving cruise liners.

Agreed: To arrange an informal meeting.

Correspondence from Marrac Design and Sheehy Consulting requesting to meet with the Committee to discuss the impact of Northern Ireland Water's capacity constraints on the construction industry.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence from the Construction Employers Federation and the Royal Society of Ulster Architects to discuss these issues.

Agreed: To request a written briefing from Marrac Design and Sheehy Consulting and advise of the Committee's agreed approach to receive evidence from representative groups on the issues raised.

Correspondence from the National Franchised Dealers Association (NI) Division requesting to provide evidence to the Committee on the proposed introduction of the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate.



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Agreed: To schedule an oral evidence session in the Forward Work Programme.

Correspondence from a member of the public regarding Hackney Carriage Taxi issues.

Agreed: To forward to DfI for a response on the issues raised.

Correspondence from a member of the public highlighting concerns on the oversight responsibilities of DfI Planning.

Agreed: To forward to DfI to request clarification on the points raised in respect of oversight of the planning system.

Correspondence from a member of the public regarding night-time transport issues in Belfast.

Agreed: To forward to DfI for a response to the issues raised with regard to the availability and costs of taxis or public transport at night in Belfast; details of any engagement with the Department for the Economy on the impact on the night-time economy; and what steps can be taken by DfI to improve the situation.

Correspondence from a member of the public regarding the unsatisfactory water supply at Torr Head.

Agreed: To advise the individual of the Committee's scrutiny, policy development and consultation role and that individual cases should be referred to constituency MLAs.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- A response from the Minister for Infrastructure on Parking enforcement and taxi ranks;
- A response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing an update on pilot biodiversity project; and use of weed killer;
- A response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the calculation of road drainage costs;
- A response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding Lough Neagh and Northern Ireland Water – assessment of storm drains; and water treatment costs;



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- A response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding Lough Neagh and Northern Ireland Water – NIEA review of SORPI;
- A response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the review of drive axle weights;
- Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding notice of conservation area consent for 13-39 Quay Road Ballycastle;
- Departmental response advising that the Public Consultation Response Report on the Review of the Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy will be provided once the Minister has determined his preferred approach to finalising the policy revision;
- Departmental correspondence regarding the A29 Cookstown Bypass – Public Inquiry Announcement;
- Committee for Finance correspondence regarding the Monthly outturn for April and May 2024;
- Correspondence from Renewables NI regarding Savings for NI consumers due to onshore wind generation in follow up to the oral evidence session on 26 June 2024;
- Department for the Economy response regarding Renewables – High Level Design for a market support scheme.
- Correspondence from Translink regarding additional services to support major events;
- Correspondence from Translink regarding fare disparity between Translink and Irish Rail;
- Correspondence from Sustrans thanking the Committee for the opportunity to provide oral evidence;
- Correspondence from a member of the public regarding Victoria Square Residential Tower;
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Planning Statistics Bulletin 2023-2024; and
- Report from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels for April to June 2024.



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26. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Draft Forward Work Programme from September.

Agreed: to proceed with the scheduled evidence as set out in the Draft Forward Work Programme.

27. Any Other Business

None.

28. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 18 September 2024 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 pm.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure
18 September 2024