



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

23 October 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 Stephen Dunne MLA
- Mr Mark Durkan 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)
- Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:01 am.



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1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

Mr Peter McReynolds MLA joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a note of an informal meeting with the National Association of Funeral Directors regarding legislation in respect of funeral limousines.

Agreed: To ask the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for:

- the number of class C licences held for funeral limousines, if available;
- its views on whether funeral limousines should be exempt from the 'hire and reward' regulatory requirements of the 2008 Act, which the NAFD contends is the case in other jurisdictions;
- its views on the NAFD's concerns regarding the future availability of drivers for funeral limousines, should the current position not change; and
- clarification of whether any changes to the treatment of funeral limousines could be made by regulations or if primary legislation is required.



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4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 October 2024.

5. Matters Arising

Agreed: To forward a copy of the Committee's response to the Committee for the Executive Office on the draft Programme for Government 2024-27 to DfI for information.

6. Correspondence

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing an update on discussions with Strategic Planning officials in relation to the use of an 'old' planning policy for the positioning of EV chargers.

Agreed: To forward the response to EVANI for information.

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding issues raised by a member of the public in relation to hackney carriages.

Agreed: To forward the response to the member of the public for information.

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to issues raised by a member of the public in relation to night time transport in Belfast.

Agreed: To forward the response to the member of the public for information.

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to concerns raised by a member of the public regarding oversight of the planning system.

Agreed: To forward the response to the member of the public for information.



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Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to concerns from members of the public around how objections were dealt with in relation to the Kings Lane, Warrenpoint (Stopping-Up) Order.

Agreed: To forward the response to the members of the public for information.

Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure providing an update on progress to increase the uptake of electric vehicles by Executive Departments, arms-length bodies and local councils.

Agreed: To seek information from all local councils on the size of vehicle fleets, numbers of zero emission vehicles in the fleets and their future plans to replace their fleets with greener forms of transport.

Agreed: To forward the Minister for Infrastructure's response to all statutory committees for their information and suggest that they may wish to engage with their respective departments on the uptake of electric/zero emissions vehicles across their fleets.

Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy requesting a copy of Translink's business case in respect of the pilot scheme for the extension of the Nightmovers service.

Agreed: To request that Translink copies its response to the Committee when issued.

Responses from City of Derry Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport regarding assistance available for passengers living with disability.

Agreed: To forward the responses to IMTAC for information.

Responses from IMTAC and the Consumer Council providing details of its role as complaints handling body with regard to the rights of those living with disabilities or reduced mobility when travelling by air.

Agreed: To ask the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland for written evidence on its role as a designated complaints handler, historical complaint data, the work of the Accessibility Forum and issues or concerns raised in audits of airports in Northern Ireland.



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The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing an update on progress against the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Action Plan.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing an update on work to extend the scope of the Concessionary Fares Scheme to include Black Taxi operators.
- Copy of a response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the Committee for Communities on the Commissioner for Older Peoples' Report on Preparing for an aging population.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to issues raised in oral evidence from Motorcycle Action Group.
- Response from the Police Service for Northern Ireland to issues raised in oral evidence from Motorcycle Action Group.
- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing note on the Enhanced Rider Scheme.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing information requested during Ministerial briefing on 25 September including: the impact, in cash terms, of the increase of 4.2% to the baseline funding for community transport services; disability requirements at the new transport hub; and reason for flushing exercise on part of the water network.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing details on the comparative costs of equivalent fees in other jurisdictions and its assessment of any anticipated increase in fees here following deregulation of approved tachograph fees.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the issues and proposals contained in IMTAC's revised position paper on taxis.
- An update from the Minister for Infrastructure on the affordability review of the Living with Water Belfast Plan.



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- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing the work programme for the interim Regional Planning Commission.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing further information on the opinions and concerns of councils in relation to the Review of Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy.
- Copy of a response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the Committee for the Economy regarding the extension of the Nightmovers service.
- Response from Guide Dogs NI regarding taxi refusals for guide dog owners in Northern Ireland.
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's Draft Strategic Plan 2025-28.

7. Impact of Northern Water's Capacity Constraints on the Construction Sector – Construction Employers Federation and Royal Society of Ulster Architects – Oral Evidence

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:09 am:

- Mark Spence, Chief Executive, Construction Employers Federation (CEF);
- Martin Mallon, Managing Director of South Bank Square and Chair of the CEF's Housing Committee;
- Ciarán Fox, Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) Director;
- Joan McCoy, White Ink Architects, RSUA Past President and Honorary Secretary; and
- Mark Todd, Mark Todd Architects.

The representatives provided the Committee with an overview of the impact of Northern Water's Capacity Constraints on the construction sector. A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.



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The RSUA representatives agreed to provide the Committee with a list of projects across Northern Ireland that its members have indicated have been delayed due to connection issues with Northern Ireland Water.

The representatives left the meeting at 11:26 am.

Mr Andrew McMurray MLA left the meeting at 11:28 am.

Mr John Stewart MLA left the meeting at 11:28 am.

Agreed: To request an update from the Executive Office on progress to establish an independent, expert-led Infrastructure Commissioner.

Mr Andrew McMurray re-joined the meeting at 11:29 am.

8. Review of South East Flooding Autumn 2023 – Department for Infrastructure – Oral Evidence

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:29 am:

- Jonathan McKee – Director of Rivers Development;
- Gary Quinn – Director of Rivers Operations; and
- James Kelly – Head of Rivers Operations.

The representatives provided the Committee with an update on the Review of South East flooding for Autumn 2023.

Mr John Stewart MLA re-joined the meeting at 11:32 am.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr Peter McReynolds MLA left the meeting at 12:23 pm.

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA declared an interest as having a family member who works for the Department for Infrastructure.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 12:29 pm.



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Mr Cathal Boylan MLA left the meeting at 12:29 pm.

Agreed: To seek further detail from DfI on:

- The changes made to the criteria for the Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme to make it more accessible to applicants;
- How gullies are risk assessed; the frequency of checking and clearing gullies and how this is determined, particularly in areas identified as being at risk of flooding and rural areas; and how DfI Rivers communicates with DfI Roads when issues with gullies have been identified;
- Contact details for key personnel/agencies across Northern Ireland who lead on co-ordinating a response to occurrences of flooding and how easily accessible this is for members of the public.

9. SR 2024-176 - The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 176 The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) 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 2024-176 The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.



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10. SL1 - The Coopers Mill Park, Dundonald (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SL1 - The Coopers Mill Park, Dundonald (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing more information on the practice of regularisation in respect of Abandonment Orders.

Agreed: That the Committee was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

11. SL1 - The Drumna Walk, Lurgan (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SL1 - The Drumna Walk, Lurgan (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Agreed: That the Committee was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

12. SL1 The Waring Street, Lurgan (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SL1 The Waring Street, Lurgan (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Agreed: That the Committee was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.



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13. Subordinate Legislation – SR's Not Subject to Assembly Proceedings

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

- SR 2024-179 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-180 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Belfast) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- 2024-181 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-182 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Derry/Londonderry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024; and
- SR 2024-183 The Parking Places on Roads (Electric Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

14. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered correspondence from the Belfast Harbour Commission inviting the Committee to visit and offering an oral briefing.

Agreed: To schedule a visit and briefing at an appropriate time in the Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted the invitation and agenda for the launch event for the Consultation on the Active Travel Delivery Plan.

The Committee considered the Draft Forward Work Programme.

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



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15. Any Other Business

Agreed: To issue the meeting pack for the 6 November 2024 on the 4 November 2024 outside of normal service standards, due to recess.

Members noted the Secretary of State for Transport's recent statement on the establishment of a cross-Government Taskforce on motor insurance.

Agreed: To advise the Secretary of State of the Committee's view that it is vital that the Taskforce takes sufficient time to benchmark, assess and evaluate the unique circumstances within the Northern Ireland market and seek her assurance that this will be the case; and request clarification of whether the scope of the Taskforce's work will extend to motorcyclists.

16. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:47 pm.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure
6 November 2024