



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

4 December 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 10:05 am.



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1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

Mrs Deborah Erskine declared an interest as having family members employed by the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA).

3. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered correspondence from Belfast City Airport inviting the Committee to visit and hold a meeting there. Members noted the Chairperson's availability on the dates proposed.

Agreed: That further consideration will be given to scheduling an informal visit at a suitable time in the Forward Work Programme.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 27 November 2024.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a note of the key issues discussed and additional actions identified during its informal strategic planning meeting on 27 November 2024.

Agreed: To proceed with the additional actions identified.



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The Committee considered responses from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Northern Ireland Water regarding the Committee's request for a joint oral evidence session.

Agreed: To schedule to separate evidence sessions in the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: To provide NIEA and NI Water with an outline of the areas or themes to be discussed in advance of the evidence sessions and advise that this will not preclude Members from asking other questions during the sessions.

6. Correspondence

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing further information regarding the All Island Strategic Rail Review.

Agreed: That the Committee will consider the Review further when the ongoing feasibility studies and Strategic Outline Cases have been completed.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding issues raised by the Law Society relating to Regional Property Certificates.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure relating to the Driver and Vehicle contract for vehicle testing equipment.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the non-recognition of ex NI/ex-GB EEA driving licences.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure on the scope for widening the services offered by the Bereavement Service.
- Response from the Minister for Communities on the scope for widening the services offered by the Bereavement Service.



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- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Statutory Instrument – The Road Transport (International Passenger Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding changes to emission tests for light vehicles with new diesel engines.
- Copy of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads Eastern Report to Belfast City Council for Autumn 2024.
- Correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding NICVA - Transformation Plans: Fair Pay + Grant and Contract Arrangements.
- Correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing an update on proposals under consideration by the Interim Public Sector Transformation Board.
- Copy correspondence from a member of the public regarding a complaint against a traffic warden;
- Research paper from Assembly Research and Information Service - Chancellor's Autumn Budget 2024: initial considerations for Northern Ireland.
- Copy of the Department for Infrastructure's Investing Activity Report – November 2024.
- Notification from the Minister for Infrastructure of his intention to make an oral statement to the Assembly on the British-Irish Council.

Mr Stephen Dunne left the meeting at 10:26 am.

7. Electric Vehicle Public Charging Infrastructure - Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Taskforce – DfI – Oral Evidence

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:27 am:

- Sian Kerr – Director of Transport Planning and Policy, DfI;
- David Strain – Head of Transport Decarbonisation Unit, DfI;
- Claire McAleavey – Transport Decarbonisation Unit, DfI; and
- Ceira McGurnaghan – Transport Decarbonisation Unit, DfI.



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Mr Stephen Dunne re-joined the meeting at 10:28 am

The representatives provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Taskforce.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 11:32 am.

Agreed: To ask the Department for:

- Its assessment of the scope to utilise Financial Transactions Capital funding as a means to incentivise private charge point operators to invest more widely;
- An overview of The Electric Vehicles (Smart Charge Points) Regulations 2021 in Great Britain and detail of the required changes to our infrastructure to be able to align with these regulations;

Mr Andrew McMurray left the meeting at 11:32 am.

- Details of the geographical spread of EV Charge Points in rural and urban areas; and

Mr Andrew McMurray re-joined the meeting at 11:34 am.

- Details of its engagement with the Department of Finance to explore the viability of amending Building Regulations to include charge points in new homes;

Agreed: To request that the Committee is kept informed of communication plans to improve messaging for consumers; on engagement with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive regarding cross-pavement charging; and on any discussions on measures to incentivise the uptake of EVs and/or installation of related infrastructure.



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8. Driver Vehicle Agency - Business Plan for 2024-2025 – In Year Update - Written Evidence

The Committee considered written evidence providing an in-year update on progress against the the DVA Business Plan for 2024-2025.

Agreed: To seek further information from DVA in respect of targets 1 (MOT waiting times), 8 (Compliance and Enforcement) and 13 (trading fund financial target).

9. Budget 2024-25 – Final 2024-25 Budget EQIA Consultation Report – Written evidence

The Committee noted written evidence from the Department on the Final 2024-25 Budget EQIA Consultation Report.

10. Department for Infrastructure Equality Action Plan – Written evidence

The Committee considered written evidence on the Department for Infrastructure's Equality Action Plan.

Agreed: To request information from DfI on the following issues relating to road safety measures:

- action being taken to urgently address any lapsed legislation to deal with pavement parking;
- details of other areas within Belfast or other towns across Northern Ireland where similar legislation has lapsed;
- detail of the options identified following the Department's engagement with disability organisations and when will these be implemented; and



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- an assessment of how enforcement teams are resourced to deal with those parking illegally, including those using bus lanes and taxi ranks.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Draft Forward Work Programme.

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

12. Any Other Business

The Committee noted media reports highlighting the intention for NI Water Staff to commence industrial action due to a pay dispute.

Agreed: To ask NI Water for details of its contingency plans arising from the proposed strike action by staff including mitigations to reduce the impact upon users and risks to public health.

Agreed: To write to the Ministers of Infrastructure and Finance to:

- recognise the rights of workers to fair pay;
- highlight concerns on the impact industrial action may have on this critical service and risks to public health; and
- request details of actions being taken to resolve the dispute.

Mrs Deborah Erskine declared an interest as having family members employed by Northern Ireland Water.



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13. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 11 December 2024 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 am.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure
15 January 2025