



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

25 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 Durkan MLA
Mr Andrew McMurray MLA
Mr Peter McReynolds MLA

Apologies:

Mr Stephen Dunne MLA

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 9:05 am.



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1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Minister for Infrastructure – Oral Evidence

The Minister and Permanent Secretary joined the meeting at 9:06 am:

- Mr John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Infrastructure; and
- Dr Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Minister provided the Committee with an update on Departmental issues and priorities.

A question and answer session followed.

Mr Cathal Boylan joined the meeting at 9:12 am.

Mr Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 9:19 am.

Mr Danny Baker joined the meeting at 9:28 am.

Mr Mark Durkan and Mrs Deborah Erskine each declared an interest as residents on un-adopted sites.

As requested during the evidence session, the Minister agreed to provide details of what the 4.2% increase in resource for community transport for 2024-25 is in real terms; and clarification of the reasons why a flushing exercise was recently undertaken on parts of the water network. The Minister also undertook to discuss the width of platforms at Belfast Grand Central Station with Translink to confirm they meet disability access requirements.



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The Minister and Permanent Secretary left the meeting at 10:28 am.

Mr Cathal Boylan left the meeting at 10:28 am

The Committee noted a copy of the Minister's response to Community Transport Association regarding community transport funding for 2024-15.

The Committee noted copy correspondence from Shopmobility to the Minister regarding funding for 2024-25.

Agreed: To seek a copy of the Minister's response to Shopmobility.

The meeting was suspended at 10:29 am.

The meeting recommenced at 10:35 am with the following members present:

Mrs Deborah Erskine MLA (Chairperson)

Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA

Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

Mr Mark Durkan MLA

Mr Andrew McMurray MLA

Mr Peter McReynolds MLA

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised of her concern regarding the recent experience of Mr Andy Allen MLA who was unable to travel on his scheduled flight due to failure to provide the necessary assistance for him to board the aircraft at Birmingham International Airport.

The Committee echoed the Chairperson's concern and agreed to pass its best wishes to Mr Allen MLA.



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Members noted their concern at the difficulties still being experienced by those who may require assistance to travel and highlighted the importance of inclusive and accessible travel.

Agreed: To ask Belfast International Airport, Belfast City Airport and the City of Derry Airport for details of:

- Their operational policies or procedures in respect of accessibility and the provision of assistance for those who require it;
- The number of instances where requested assistance was not provided at the airport which resulted in disruption to travel, if available; and
- What remedial action is taken to assist passengers when the required assistance has not been provided.

Agreed: To write to the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee to establish if it holds any figures or any information on instances where passengers living with a disability have been subject to disruption arising from a failure to provide the necessary assistance at airports.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 September 2024.

6. Matters Arising

The Committee noted further information from The Electric Vehicle Association Northern Ireland (EVANI) following its oral evidence at the meeting on 18 September.



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Agreed: To forward the correspondence to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to request an update on the discussions with Strategic Planning officials on the issues raised in the correspondence.

Mr Danny Baker returned to the meeting at 10:41 am

7. Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate – National Franchised Dealers Association (NFDA) – Oral Evidence

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:42 am:

- Mr Symon Cook, Head of Association, NFDA;
- Brian Robinson, Member, NFDA; and
- Dave Sheeran, Member, NFDA.

The representatives provided the Committee with NFDA's perspective on the ZEV Mandate and the potential impact on car dealerships and the car industry in Northern Ireland.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide a breakdown of the weighting of fleet vehicle sales and private sales for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The representatives left the meeting at 11:28 am.

8. Statutory Instrument – SI 2024-XXX The Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (Amendment) Order 2024

The Committee considered SI 2024-XXX The Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (Amendment) Order 2024.



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Agreed: To defer the decision on the Statutory Instrument and schedule oral evidence from the Department for Infrastructure to allow it to respond to issues raised in the course of the evidence from the NFDA.

9. 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.

The Committee noted the response from the Minister for Infrastructure providing further information requested by the Committee in respect of the proposal.

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

10. 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 2024-164 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-167 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Newtownards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-168 The Roads (Speed Limit) (No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024;
- SR 2024-169 The Waiting Restrictions (Augher) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024; and
- SR 2024-170 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.



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11. Review of Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – Policy Revision to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement – written evidence

The Committee considered written evidence from DfI on the Review of Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and the Policy Revision to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

Agreed: To note the correspondence and request further information from the Department on the opinions and concerns expressed by local councils in response to Consultation Question 1 and DfI's response, including details of any engagement with the councils concerned.

12. Active Travel Delivery Plan – Public consultation notification – written evidence

The Committee considered written evidence advising of the Department's intention to launch with a public consultation on the Active Travel Delivery Plan.

Agreed: To note the correspondence and to consider the Committee's attendance at the launch event upon receipt of a more substantive agenda and formal invitation.

13. Correspondence

Correspondence from the Committee for Justice enclosing correspondence from a member of the public relating to taxi licensing issues.

Members noted the Committee's previous consideration of the issues raised by the individual and its subsequent response to the individual setting out the role and



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functions of the Committee and advising that advice and support is available from constituency MLAs and other bodies.

Agreed: To note this and any further items of correspondence originating from this individual on this issue.

Correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) providing further information from the Department for Infrastructure in follow up to PAC's consideration of the Memorandum of Reply (MoR) to its previous report on 'Planning in Northern Ireland'.

Agreed: To request a copy of the interim Regional Planning Commission's (iPRC) work programme to March 2025 as referred to in DfI's correspondence.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence from the iRPC into the Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Committee for Finance regarding the 2025-26 Budget including anticipated timeline, commissioning templates and linkages to the Programme for Government (PfG);
- Committee for Finance providing an update on the work of the interim Public Sector Transformation Board (PSTB);
- Committee for Finance highlighting the forthcoming Financial Provisions Bill;
- The Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) departmental guide of its coverage of the Department for Infrastructure;
- Response from the Motorcycle Action Group following the oral evidence session on 11 September 2024;
- Response to issues relating grass cutting and road safety from:
 - Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
 - Ards and North Down Antrim Borough Council;
 - Mid Ulster District Council;
 - Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council;
 - Belfast City Council;



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- Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council; and
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

14. 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.

15. Any Other Business

Members noted that the Local Development Plans currently being developed by local councils will include the number of projected housing units for each council area, and agreed that it will be important for the Committee to monitor Northern Ireland Water's plans to improve capacity to facilitate delivery of housing units and other proposed developments.

Members noted Lough Neagh's importance in providing water to 40% of the population of Northern Ireland.

Agreed: To explore options for a Committee visit to a water treatment facility for Lough Neagh.

16. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 2 October 2024 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.



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The meeting was adjourned at 11:49 am.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure
2 October 2024