



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

26 March 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Mrs Deborah Erskine MLA (Chairperson) Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Mr Keith Buchanan MLA Mr Stephen Dunne MLA Mr Andrew McMurray MLA Mr Peter McReynolds MLA
Apologies:	None
Via Video Conference:	Mr Cathal Boylan MLA Ms Nicola Brogan MLA Mr Mark Durkan MLA
In Attendance:	Ms Barbara Love (Assembly Clerk) Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor) Mr Oliver Briant (Clerical Officer)

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

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

Ministerial appointment of Forensic Accountant Services (Northern Ireland Water)

The Chairperson referred members to the Minister's recent announcement of her intention to appoint forensic accountant services to investigate Northern Ireland Water's ability to manage its budget allocation arising from the anticipated overspend for the 2024-25 financial year.

Agreed: To write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request the following:

- A copy of the Draft/Agreed Terms of Reference for the investigation;
- What scope exists to enable the Committee to consider the Draft/Terms of Reference and express its views or suggest amendments;
- To request that the Department provides a precise timeline of the anticipated milestones for the investigation to include reporting on findings; and
- An undertaking from the Minister to provide oral evidence on the key findings or next steps arising from the investigation.

Language Signage – Grand Central Station, Belfast

The Chairperson highlighted to members the Minister's announcement relating to Irish language signage at the Grand Central Station, Belfast.

Agreed: To write to Translink to seek further detail on the extent of the signage requiring to be upgraded and the individual associated costs.

Agreed: To write to the Minister to seek further detail of the factors considered when allocating funding to Translink to upgrade signage and her

assessment of why a full Equality Impact Assessment was determined not to be necessary.

Phased Review of Taxi Policy and Legislation

The Chairperson referred members to correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure advising that the Department will be undertaking a phased review of taxi policy and legislation.

Members noted the Committee's extensive engagement with a range of stakeholder groups on the regulatory requirements impacting the taxi sector and welcomed that the focus of this work has been recognised by the Minister's subsequent decision to undertake a phased review.

Agreed: To issue a press release to reflect the work of the Committee on this issue and to welcome the Minister's initiation of a review.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 19 March 2025.

5. Matters Arising

None.

6. Correspondence

Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to a Committee request for historical reports on funding models for Northern Ireland Water referenced during the Minister's oral evidence session.

Agreed: To write to the Minister to request copies of the internal reports as referenced in the response.

Response from the Department of Finance to Committee correspondence regarding the qualification requirements of land agents acting on behalf of property owners subject to compulsory purchase orders.

Agreed: To write to the Department of Finance to seek confirmation of whether Land and Property Services requires those acting on behalf of landowners to meet any specific criteria.

Agreed: To write to all MLAs representing constituencies along the A5 route enclosing the response from the Department of Finance for information.

Mr Peter McReynolds left the meeting at 10:30 am.

Mrs Deborah Erskine declared an interest as having family members who live along the route of the A5.

Correspondence from a member of the public complaining about the abuse of facilities at Park and Ride/Share locations.

Agreed: To ask that the Committee be copied into the response from the Minister on the issues raised.

Request from the Ulster Angling Federation (UAF) to provide oral evidence the Committee on the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and discharges by Northern Ireland Water.

Agreed: To receive oral evidence from the UAF focussing on DfI's specific proposals for statutory rules arising from the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 at an appropriate date in the Forward Work Programme.

Correspondence from Northern Ireland Assembly Public Engagement Manager regarding Committee attendance and participation at the Balmoral Show.

Agreed: To write to the Assembly's Public Engagement Manager to highlight that, due to the Committee's extensive work programme and attendance by Members at the Balmoral Show in their party capacities, to confirm that the Committee will not be in a position to attend.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Copy of the response from the Minister for Infrastructure to Sepha Ltd regarding a planning application;
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the Committee's request for further detail on the potential for ring-fencing funding for road maintenance and the expansion of public transport for rural areas;
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to a Committee correspondence in relation to the implementation of the recommendations of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Inquiry;
- Response from the Minister for Infrastructure to a Committee request to be kept updated on the review of data on further statutory consultations and for a copy of the information requested regarding further consultations, when available;
- Copy of correspondence to the Committee for Communities from the Department for Infrastructure regarding wastewater infrastructure and the Housing Supply Strategy; and
- A report from Pivotal on 'Achieving greater integration in education and housing'

7. Work Programme of the Interim Regional Planning Commission – Oral Evidence

Mr Peter McReynolds re-joined the meeting at 10:37 am.

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:38 am:

- Kate Clifford, Member, Interim Regional Planning Commission;
- Michelle Hill, Member, Interim Regional Planning Commission;
- Stephen Jones, Member, Interim Regional Planning Commission;
- Paul Roberts, Member, Interim Regional Planning Commission; and
- Mark Hand, Secretariat, Interim Regional Planning Commission (Joining remotely).

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials provided the Committee with an update on the Work Programme of the Interim Regional Planning Commission.

A question and answer session followed.

Miss Nicola Brogan left the meeting at 11:16 am.

The representatives left the meeting at 11:39 am.

Agreed: To write to the Interim Regional Planning Commission to highlight that whilst not being proscriptive, the Committee noted the absence of any engagement with a wide range external groups who would frequently engage with the planning system, and to suggest it reflects on whether such groups could provide meaningful contributions to inform the IRPC's final report.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence from the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce on its report highlighting issues within the planning system.

8. Impact of Regulatory Requirements on Wedding Cars Providers and Funeral Directors - Department for Infrastructure – Oral Evidence

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:47 am:

- Jackie Robinson, Director of Transport Regulation and Public Transport Policy, Department for Infrastructure; and
- Philip Gallagher, Head of Taxi and Bus Policy Branch, Department for Infrastructure.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials provided the Committee with an update on the impact of regulatory requirements on wedding cars providers and funeral directors.

A question and answer session followed.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 12:18 pm.

9. Northern Ireland Water's Water Resource and Supply Resilience Plan – Written Evidence

The Committee considered Northern Ireland Water's Water Resource and Supply Resilience Plan.

Agreed: The Committee staff will review the plan in more detail and, where necessary, highlight any issues for future consideration.

10. Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure – Consultation – Written Evidence

The Committee considered the Departmental consultation on Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure.

Agreed: To note the written evidence and schedule an oral evidence session on the outcome of the consultation at a suitable date in the Forward Work Programme.

11. Implementation of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 – Consideration of revised SL1's - Written Evidence

The Committee considered the revised SL1's which contain a number of proposals for statutory rules as part of the implementation of the associated provisions under the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Chairperson reminded members that the primary legislation received Royal Assent in 2015 and had been subject to committee scrutiny by the then Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Following a transfer of functions to the Department for Infrastructure, it was proposing to introduce a number of statutory rules to implement provisions contained within the Act.

The Chairperson reminded members that the proposals for the statutory rules had been previously considered by the Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2024 however, due to the lack of information contained within the original proposals, the Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that each of the proposals are revised to contain comprehensive detail setting out the purpose and implications for the subordinate legislation.

The Committee noted the revised SL1's and that oral evidence has been scheduled on 2 April and 30 April with departmental officials.

12. Subordinate Legislation – SR's Not subject to Assembly Procedure

The Committee noted the following Statutory Rules that were laid in the Business Office and are not subject to Assembly Proceedings:

- SR 2025-56 The Road Races (Croft Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025; and
- SR 2025-57 The Roads (Speed Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025.

13. Subordinate Legislation – SL1s Not subject to Assembly Procedure

The Committee noted the following proposals for Statutory Rules, which are not subject to Assembly Proceedings:

- SL1 – The Road Races (Craigantlet Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025;
- SL1 - The Road Races (Circuit of Ireland Rally) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025; and
- SL1 - The Road Races (Cookstown 100 Motor Cycle Road Race) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025.

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 and to reflect to any changes agreed in the course of the meeting.

15. Any Other Business

The Chairperson informed members of her recent attendance at the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation's (CIHT) Annual Gala Dinner and highlighted the positive engagement and feedback received from CIHT members on the Committee's approach to its work.

16. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 2 April 2025 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure

2 April 2025