



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENTAL PROGRESS AGAINST PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT TARGETS

ISSUES PAPER

BACKGROUND

1. The Committee for Regional Development (the Committee), during its strategic planning for the 2015/2016 parliamentary session, agreed to conduct an inquiry into the Department for Regional Development's (the Department) progress against its targets in the Executive's Programme for Government 2011/2015 (PfG).
2. The PfG sets the strategic context for both the Budget and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. Further information on the PfG can be found [here](#).
3. The Department's PfG targets are to:
 - progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5%;
 - upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;
 - invest over £500 million to promote sustainable modes of travel;
 - by 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport;
 - maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £668m in water and sewerage infrastructure; and
 - for households, ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government.
4. The Committee's call for evidence was issued in October 2015 and the closing date for receipt of submissions was Friday 11th December 2015.
5. The inquiry's terms of reference were to:
 - Assess departmental progress against the targets attributable to them in the Programme for Government;
 - Assess whether any ancillary objectives contained in the departmental business plan have been achieved.
6. By the closing date of 11th February, no responses to the call for evidence had been received.
7. At its meeting of [20th January 2016](#), the Committee agreed, given that no submissions had been received, to revert from an inquiry to an issues paper on this matter. The Committee did, however, agree to still receive the scheduled briefings from its Assembly Research Officer and Departmental Officials at its meeting of 3rd February 2016.
8. The associated research paper and the paper from the Department on the progress against the PfG targets are attached at [annex A](#) and [annex B](#), respectively.

PROGRESS TO DATE

9. This section provides an analysis of the progress to date against each of the Department's 6 PfG commitments.

“progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5%”

10. This commitment relates to the reduction of journey times on the Strategic Road Network by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline by 2014/15 with a milestone that includes the achievement of 85% of major road network improvement works.
11. Surveys conducted indicated positive progress both in 2009 and 2011 with a slight decrease in journey times; regrettably a survey conducted in 2013 indicated an increase in journey times of approximately 2%. Not only was the target not achieved, but the journey times actually increased by 3.14% on the 2003 baseline, as per the survey conducted in November 2014 - 4 months prior to the target date.
12. The Department anticipates achieving reductions in journey times as a result of the implementation of schemes from the Strategic Road Improvement Programme, such as the A8 and A2 Shore Road schemes and the A5 and A6 flagship road schemes but this does not change the fact that it failed to deliver on this commitment.

“upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line”

13. The upgrading of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry line is essential to provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate improved services and reduced journey times from Derry/Londonderry to Belfast. The upgrade will be delivered in 3 phases:
 - (1) To relay from Coleraine to Castlerock and from Eglinton to Derry/Londonderry, including bridge works;
 - (2) To fully re-signal the whole line and construct a passing loop;
 - (3) To fully relay track between Eglinton and Castlerock.
14. The first phase of the upgrade was completed on time and within budget and the line reopened in March 2013. This element of the PfG target was therefore achieved in full and the Department should be commended on this. However, despite the expectation that phase 2 will conclude by the end of 2016, the Committee had significant concerns around this, so much so that it initiated its own inquiry and concluded that this phase of the project went significantly beyond both budget and deadlines. It also expressed concerns that the project team was not even aware that the project was a PfG commitment.

“invest over £500 million to promote sustainable modes of travel”

15. The reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs) by at least 35% by 2025, based on the 1990 levels, was set in the PfG and all government departments bear a collective responsibility to achieve this target; particularly DRD given its remit in relation to transport, one of the largest contributors to GHG emissions. To achieve this target there needs to be a modal shift out of the car and into public transport or active travel alternatives. The Committee has been, and remains, perplexed at the level of investment in road schemes as opposed to public transport; put simply, improving the roads will only serve to encourage people to drive and not seek alternative modes of travel.
16. A cumulative total of £506.75 million was invested over the 4-year period up to 31 March 2015. So, looking simply at the total, it can be seen as an achieved target. However, the investment in road schemes must be questioned, so too must the impact of this expenditure as without detailed analysis there is no robust evidence that this investment has contributed to the reduction of GHGs.

“by 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport”

17. This commitment aimed to facilitate at least 36% of primary school children, and 22% of post-primary school pupils, walking or cycling as their main mode of transport. The Department’s TravelwiseNI initiative, complimented by the Active School Travel programme, reached more than 180 schools by 2015; this equates to only 17.5% of the 1029 schools in Northern Ireland. The Department allocated £1 million for infrastructure improvements at schools participating in the Active School Travel programme.
18. The results from the first year of the programme indicated an increase in the number cycling or walking rose by just 16%. The most recent results are not yet available but the Committee is disheartened that the 2014/15 Continuous Household Survey shows that, of primary school children, 29% walk and 1% cycle to / from school; the figures for post-primary children are that 19% walk and 1% cycle.
19. These lower than desired levels show that the Department has failed in its commitment to this target.

“maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £668m in water and sewerage infrastructure”

20. Throughout the timeframe of this PfG the Department has invested a cumulative total of £670.2 million in water and sewerage services. NI Water achieved its commitment to the provision of high quality drinking water and improved on its compliance with waste water standards in 2012/13 and 2013/14 and is on track to achieve its annual operational performance targets for drinking water and wastewater compliance for

2014/15. It has complied with its regulatory targets throughout the period from 2012/13 to 2014/15. This target has, as a result, been exceeded and this is a credit to the work of NI Water and the Department.

“for households, ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government”

21. This target has been achieved, as evidenced in the Water and Sewerage Services Bill that is currently awaiting Royal Assent. The Bill “extends existing arrangements to allow the Department to pay subsidy to NI Water in view of the Executive’s commitment not to apply household charges to domestic customers during the current Assembly mandate. It also gives the Department the power to make subordinate legislation to extend the period for which subsidy is paid in the future if necessary.”

ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE COMMITTEE

22. The Committee is extremely concerned that despite some initial reductions in journey times, there has actually now been recorded an increase in times by 3.14% on the 2003 baseline and would encourage the incoming Committee for Infrastructure to ensure that the implementation of the Strategic Road Improvement Programme (SRIP) over its 12 year period is carefully monitored, that action is taken to address the current lengthening of journey times and that the targets of the SRIP are met. The new Department must be held to account for any failings on this matter.
23. The Committee’s concerns around the upgrading of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line are detailed in its separate inquiry report on this matter.
24. Continued spending on road schemes contradicts the investment of £506.75 million and the commitment to achieve a modal shift in how people choose to travel. The Committee feels that there needs to be more detailed analysis of the return on this investment and how this has contributed to a reduction in GHGs.
25. The Committee would have concerns as to the low number of schools reached by the Active School Travel programme and therefore the extremely limited impact that this could have in increasing the number of school children walking or cycling to school.

CONCLUSION

26. In conclusion, the Department has met 3 of its 6 commitments of the 2011/15 Programme for Government. Whilst the Committee has concerns around the 3 that were not met, particularly the upgrading of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line, there are positives to be taken from the work done to date.
27. The Committee would recommend to the incoming Committee for Infrastructure that it continues to monitor these matters. Although these commitments may not be included in the new PfG for the 2016/2021 mandate, they are important issues in terms of promoting alternative sustainable modes of transport and in promoting the associated health benefits to be gained from cycling and walking. For these reasons, ever effort should be made to strive to deliver on these issues.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 000/00

28th January 2016

Annex A

NIAR 000-00

DRD: Progress towards delivery of Programme for Government commitments

1 Introduction

The following paper provides an overview of the Department for Regional Development's (DRD) key commitments within the 2011-15 Programme for Government and the progress made toward achieving these. This paper is intended to support committee's scrutiny of the Department's delivery over this PfG period by providing a number of potential inquiry lines.

2 Background

The 2011-15 Programme for Government (PfG)¹ outlines the Northern Ireland Executive's strategic priorities and key goals for the mandated five years. These were framed around a set of five core priorities:

- Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future;

¹ Northern Ireland Executive (2011) Programme for Government for 2011-15 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/1s6>

- Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing;
- Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities;
- Building a Strong and Shared Community; and
- Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Service.

Following the decision to extend the current NI Assembly mandate, Executive Departments were required to refocus their plans for delivering on their PfG commitments. These were set out in their respective business plans for 2015-16. For example the DRD stated in its business plan:²

The Department has proposed that its current six commitments should be rolled forward to the end of the extended Assembly mandate. These are fully integrated within our balanced scorecard. Our six PfG Commitments are:

- 1. Progress the upgrade of key road projects and continue to improve the strategic road network;*
- 2. For households, ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government;*
- 3. Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;*
- 4. Invest over £630 million to promote sustainable modes of travel by March 2016;*
- 5. By 2016 increase the percentage of children walking and cycling to schools participating in the Schools Active Travel Programme; and*
- 6. Ensure a high quality of drinking water and maintain compliance with waste water standards.*

The committee may wish to enquire how the extension of the mandate has impacted on the DRD's delivery of its PfG commitments i.e. to what extent has it overachieved or indeed failed to deliver within the extended timeframe.

3 Progress to date and potential lines of inquiry

The PfG commitments outlined above are set out in the table overleaf. In addition this table provides:

- details of the six commitments;
- milestones set by the department;
- a series of observations made using to most up-to-date available data on the Department's progress; and

² DRD (2015) Business Plan 2015-16 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/2z5>

- a number of potential lines of inquiry which members may find useful when questioning the Department. These have been provided as the relevant information was not available at the time of writing.

Commitment	Overview	Milestone / output 2012/13	Milestone / output 2013/14	Milestone/ output 2014/15	Observations	Potential lines of inquiry
<p>Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against the 2003 baseline</p>	<p>This PfG includes a commitment to reduce journey times on the Strategic Road Network, which reflects the implementation of the Strategic Road Improvement Programme (SRIP) over a 12 year period.</p> <p>Journey times are calculated from information obtained through biennial surveys of the Key Transport Corridors. The baseline position was established in 2003.</p>	<p>Improve the strategic road network by achieving 85% of our major works milestones</p>	<p>Improve the strategic road network by achieving 85% of our major works milestones</p>	<p>2.5% reduction in journey times</p>	<p>Both the 2009 and 2011 indicated a slight decrease in the journey times, however, the 2013 survey information indicated an increase in journey time of approx. 2% over the 2003 results.</p> <p>A final survey, in advance of the March 2015 target date, was completed in November 2014. The results of this survey reported an overall increase in journey times of just over 3% over 2003 baseline.</p> <p>The DRD anticipates achieving reductions in journey times, particularly as more schemes from the Strategic Road Improvement Prog. are implemented in future years.</p> <p>Two significant projects were completed and opened towards the end of 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The A8 on 16th Dec.; and • The A2 Shore Road on Saturday, 25th Sep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a breakdown / comparison of journey times across the five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs) from 2003 to 2015; • Detail all investment along the 5 KTCs during the 2003-2015 period; • Detail investment levels outside of the 5 KTCs; • Is a target seeking to reduce journey times achievable given the Executives desire to grow the economy i.e. greater levels of economic activity = more congestion; • Provides an assessment of all the factors which may have led to an increase in journey times; • The ring-fencing of some £700 million for the A5 / A8 led the DRD to warn about significant reductions in other capital programmes – given this scheme did not go ahead and the funds had to be reallocated – what impact was there on the planning and delivery of other schemes over the PfG period?

Commitment	Overview	Milestone/output 2012/13	Milestone/output 2013/14	Milestone/output 2014/15	Observations	Potential lines of inquiry
Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line	<p>The Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line is a 33.5 mile (predominantly) single track line with a passing loop at Castlerock station. The purpose of the upgrade was to provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate improved services, particularly a train that can arrive from Belfast before 9am.</p> <p>Due to a lack of funding the scheme was broken up into three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: to relay from Coleraine to Castlerock and from Eglinton to Derry/Londonderry, including bridge works; • Phase 2 to fully re-signal the whole line and construct a passing loop; and • Phase 3 to fully relay track between Eglinton and Castlerock. 	NA	Complete Phase 1: Re-lay end sections at Coleraine and Derry and complete essential bridge works	Phase 2: New signalling and passing loop – Substantially complete	<p>The first phase of the project was completed on time and within budget; and the line reopened in March 2013.</p> <p>Translink's project team has been progressing with the Phase 2 works on the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line.</p> <p>Phase 1 complete</p> <p>Translink/NI Railways has started the re-signalling works and a creation of a passing loop at Bellarena which make up phase two of Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line project. The works commenced in June 2015 and are expected to be complete by the end of 2016.³</p>	Can the department provide an update on the work being carried out under phase 2 including estimated completion date and whether or not it is within budget?

³ <https://www.drdni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/drd-resource-accounts-for-the-year-ended-31-march-2015.pdf>

Commitment	Overview	Milestone / output 2012/13	Milestone / output 2013/14	Milestone/ output 2014/15	Observations	Potential lines of inquiry
Invest over £500m to promote sustainable modes of travel	<p>The Programme for Government has set a target to continue to work towards a reduction in GHG emissions by at least 35 per cent on 1990 levels by 2025.</p> <p>All government departments bear a collective responsibility to achieve this target, none more so than DRD, given its role in the oversight of transport which is one of the largest contributors to GHG emissions.</p> <p>The DRD's ability to achieve modal shift i.e. get people out of cars and seek either public or active transport alternatives is essential if these targets are to be met.</p> <p>However, departmental has traditionally favoured expenditure on road schemes as opposed to public transport.</p>	£298 million invested	£389.5 million invested	Over £500 million invested	<p>According to the 2014-15 Annual Report and Accounts the DRD invested £116 million during 2014-15 and a cumulative total of £506.75 million was invested over the four year period up to 31 March 2015. This included expenditure on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subsidised travel for vulnerable groups, such as senior citizens; • Belfast on the Move; • Belfast Rapid Transit; • Park and Ride Facilities; • cycling projects; • ecar; and Active Travel Demonstrations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed breakdown of this expenditure (year-on-year) across the various programmes and modes i.e. Bus, Rail, Cycling, Walking; • Analysis of the detail and impact of this expenditure – particularly on ecars; park and ride; cycling and active travel demonstrations. • How does this investment compare to previous budgetary periods? • The rhetoric from the Department is that it strongly supports sustainable transport. However, funding is disproportionately allocated towards road schemes – what has the roads: public transport ratio been during this PfG?

Commitment	Overview	Milestone / output 2012/13	Milestone / output 2013/14	Milestone/ output 2014/15	Observations	Potential lines of inquiry
By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport	<p>TravelwiseNI is the DRD's main initiative to encourage people to choose sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing.</p> <p>It is complimented by the Active School Travel programme, which is a three year programme, targeted at a selection of primary and post-primary schools and funded by the DRD and the Public Health Agency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This AST programme has reached more than 180 schools to date (there were 1029 primary/post-primary schools in NI in 2015⁴), introducing around 60 per year. • DRD has been allocated £1 million for infrastructure improvements at the 	33% (Primary School) 21% (Secondary School)	34% (Primary School) 21% (Secondary School)	36% (Primary School) 22% (Secondary School)	<p>It appears the DRD are measuring the impact of the Active School Travel Programme against this commitment, However this programme has reached less than 20% of the 1029 schools in Northern Ireland and is therefore extremely unlikely to have an impact on the overall levels of primary and post-primary pupils walking or cycling to school.</p> <p>Results for the first year of the programme (September 2013 - June 2014) indicate an increase in the number of children walking and cycling to school of 16%.</p> <p>The most recent results are not yet available.</p> <p>The Method of Travel to/from school by pupils in NI, 2014/2015, taken from the 2014/15 Continuous</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear what the baseline percentage is and what the source of this is therefore the committee may want clarify these issues; • Are the figures from the CHS an indication that the DRD will fail to reach this target; • If not what alternative source does it have; • If yes, what have been the main barriers to achieving this target and how will it go about increasing the levels in future.

⁴ <https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/statistical-bulletin-annual-enrolments-at-grant-aided-schools-in-Northern-Ireland-2015-16-basic-provisional-statistics.pdf>

	schools participating in the AST Programme which will complement the impact of the walking and cycling skills delivery already underway.				Household Survey (CHS) indicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29% of primary school children walk while 1% cycle. • 19% of post primary pupils walk while 1% cycle. The survey indicates this level has been sustained for a number of years	
Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £668m in water and sewerage infrastructure.	Targets for 2012/13 and 2013/14 were achieved. NI Water is on track to achieve its annual operational performance target for drinking water and wastewater compliance for 2014.	Compliance with regulatory targets	Compliance with regulatory targets	Compliance with regulatory targets	The Department has invested a cumulative total of £670.2 million in water and sewerage services by 31 March 2015. NI Water has surpassed its targets for drinking water quality and waste water treatment throughout the period.	

DRD: Programme for Government 2011-15 commitments - Updated 31 December 2015

Commitment	Milestones			Commentary at 31 Dec 2015
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
<p>Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% - against 2003 baseline.</p>	<p>Improve the strategic road network by achieving 85% of our major works milestones.</p>	<p>Improve the strategic road network by achieving 85% of our major works milestones.</p>	<p>2.5% reduction in journey times.</p>	<p>This PfG period will see the results of a commitment to reduce journey times on the Strategic Road Network, which reflects the implementation of the Strategic Road Improvement Programme (SRIP) over a 12 year period. Journey times are calculated from information obtained through biennial surveys of the Key Transport Corridors. The baseline position was established in 2003. Whilst surveys in 2009 and 2011 indicated a slight decrease in the journey times, the 2013 survey results indicated an increase in journey times over the 2003 baseline. A final survey, in advance of the March 2015 PfG target date, was completed in November 2014 and confirmed an overall increase in journey times of 3.14% when measured against the 2003 baseline.</p> <p>Journey time reductions are anticipated, however, as more schemes from the SRIP are implemented in future years. For example the A8 Belfast – Larne dual carriageway which opened to traffic in summer 2015 and the A26 Glarryford to A44 dualling which is expected to be completed by summer 2017.</p> <p>In addition, journey times will further improve with A5 and A6 “Flagship” road schemes which have been given a significant financial boost as part of the Northern Ireland Executive’s recently announced Budget Statement and the Irish Government’s funding commitment in the “Fresh Start” agreement.</p>

Commitment	Milestones			Commentary at 31 Dec 2015
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line.	-	Complete Phase 1 – re-lay end sections at Coleraine and Londonderry and complete essential bridge works (subject to no legal challenge to procurement exercise).	Phase 2 – new signalling and passing loop – substantially complete (subject to no legal challenge to procurement exercise).	Phase 1 of the upgrade was completed in March 2013. Translink's project team has been progressing with the Phase 2 works. Contractors have been appointed to undertake Phase 2 of the upgrade which involves full re-signalling and the addition of a passing loop. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will be substantially completed by the end of 2016.
Invest over £500m to promote sustainable modes of transport.	£298m invested.	£389.5m invested.	Over £500m invested.	With expenditure of £116m in 2014-15, the PfG target to invest over £500m to promote sustainable modes of travel over the four year period to 2014-15 has been achieved. This includes progressing Belfast Rapid Transit, ecar, Active Travel Demonstration Projects, Audio Visual System in the Metro network and the Park & Ride Strategy Delivery Programme.

Commitment	Milestones			Commentary at 31 Dec 2015
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport.	33% (Primary school) 21% (Secondary school)	34% (Primary school) 21% (Secondary school)	36% (Primary school) 22% (Secondary school)	<p>Results from the most recent Continuous Household Survey found that during 2014/2015, almost one third (30%) of primary school pupils walked or cycled to school as their main mode of transport compared with one fifth (20%) of post primary school pupils. These results are similar to the 2013/14 findings. 191 Schools (ave. 64 each year) are participating in a three year Active Schools Travel Programme. The third year of the programme (September 2015 - June 2016) has commenced with skills training being delivered to a further 61 primary schools and 4 post primary schools.</p> <p>In the second year of the programme, the number of primary school pupils who indicated walking or cycling as their usual method of travel to school increased by 20% after intervention. There was also an 11% increase in the number of post primary school pupils who walked and cycled to school.</p>
Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £668m in water and sewerage infrastructure.	Compliance with regulatory targets: 99.7% water; and 96.5% wastewater.	Compliance with regulatory targets: 99.7% water; and 97.2% wastewater.	Compliance with regulatory targets: 99.7% water; and 97.8% wastewater.	<p>The Department has invested £670.1 million in water and sewerage infrastructure at the end of 2014/15 and has therefore exceeded the investment target during the PfG period. In addition, the Department has confirmed further investment of £140 million for 2015/16.</p> <p>On compliance with 2015/16 regulatory targets: Water target 99.79% - Achieved **99.83% (1 Jan 2015 – Dec 2015); Waste water target 98.08% - Achieved **98.55% (1 Jan 2015 - Dec 2015).</p>

* A delivery plan is not required for the commitment "For households, ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government".

** Figures subject to audit by NIEA.