

APPENDIX 1A



To: Mary McKeown (Tourism Manager and MUDC lead officer for the Sperrins Partnership Project)

Mid Ulster District Council

Via email: mary.mckeown@midulstercouncil.org

Date: 24th February 2022

Subject: MUDC Financial contribution to Sperrins Partnership Project for period 2022/2023

Dear Mary,

You will be aware that the Sperrins Partnership Project is a joint collaboration between four councils across the Sperrin area Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council.

Each Council in 2018 committed to equal financial contribution towards the project delivery and have also funded the Sperrins Future Search initiative. The funding was originally intended to be for the financial year 2019/2020 but due to delays in recruiting staff this support was not apportioned until the financial year 2020/2021.

A Sperrins Partnership Project Officer and part time Administrative Support have been appointed and took up their respective roles in October 2020. Work completed or progressing since mid-October 2021 includes:

- Approval and sign off of the Sperrins Partnership Agreement between the partners councils
- A Governance Structure for the project drawn up and agreed at Board level
- The formation of a Sperrins Partnership Board
- The development and launch of a new website dedicated to the project www.sperrinspartnershipproject.com and social media platforms
- An official Launch of the Sperrins Future Search Report and Actions Plans
- A review and update of the Brand and Tourism Action Plan
- The formation of the Brand and Tourism Thematic group
- Engagement with Statutory Agencies
- Support, assistance and promotion of collaborative projects including, the Sperrins Sculpture Trail and IAT (International Appalachian Trail) projects.
- There are several projects which each of the partners councils are leading on that will support the collaborative work of the partnership and enhance the product offering in the region.

The project has several priorities over the coming months which include:

- Commencing work on the delivery of the short- and long-term actions contained within the Brand and Tourism Action Plan (Action Plan attached at **APPENDIX 1**)
- Identifying funding opportunities and creating the respective business cases (HLF, RDP, Peace Plus etc)
- Completing an audit of the tourism product of Sperrins Region

- Forming strong cross boundary partnerships
- Work has commenced to identify and deliver a Management Structure and associated Management Plans suitable for Sperrin AONB. Options to deliver this are currently being scoped out through active engagement with DAERA and the Sperrins Partnership Board. Consideration will be given to best practice delivery models in other AONB in NI. This piece of work will be a key focus for the Partnership over the coming months.
- The formation and development of the remaining Thematic Groups.
- Collaboration with partner councils on delivery of Sperrins Walking Festival and update and refresh exercise of the Sperrins Scenic Driving Routes.

The total contribution across the 4 partner councils equates to £88k, ie, £22k per partner Council.

Mid Ulster Council's financial contribution for 2021/22 ends in March 2022, and Sperrins Partnership now request a continued contribution of £22k for the 2022/23 financial year. This further financial contribution will allow the work of Sperrins Partnership to be extended and continue the project's momentum building on early success and allow for effective forward planning and project management.

We would therefore invite Mid Ulster District Council to make arrangements for your contribution to be made to Derry City and Strabane District Council who are the lead council for the project. My colleague, Louise McDermott will be in touch to request a PO number to start this process.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Ciara Toner
 Sperrins Partnership Project Officer
Reaching New Heights, Realising Our Potential
 Email: ciaratoner@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk
 Phone: 078 95 329 789

Appendix 1B

Sperrins Partnership Project – DRAFT Brand and Tourism Action Plan

*Reaching New Heights,
Realising Our Potential*

Updated January 2022 by PO

Brand and Tourism: The Sperrins, spurs of rock, is a great natural, undiscovered and unspoilt destination that is recognised and cherished by others as it is by those who live and work here, and is steeped in history, rich in culture and with majestic views.

Status Keys (RAG)		
Red	Action Required	
Amber	Ongoing	
Green	Complete	

Strategy/Task	Measure	Help from	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Responsible	Status (RAG)	Values (£)	Notes
1. Short Term								
1.1 Identify where major resources are coming from and how they will be utilised to design and develop and implement the strategies/ action plans developed.	Strategic plan/ structure required. AONB Management Plan as part of wider strategic plan and to gain recognition/ funding for protection. Management body in place.	Partnership Board Tourism NI NIEA E & H Thematic Group		1 – 2 years	Partnership Board Tourism NI NIEA 4 Councils			Sperrins Project Officer & Admin Support appointed in Oct 20' for 1 year period initially. External funding sources to be pursued HLF/RDP Peace Plus
1.2 Definition “The Sperrins” area	Previously agreed the AONB and neighbouring settlements (gateway towns) to be included.	Partnership Board NIEA Local Communities		3 months	Brand and Tourism Group			
1.3 Definition of the essence of the product What is it? Where is it?	Audit Of what constitutes the Sperrins required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider stakeholders Collaborate with other 		3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Councils Stakeholders Tourism NI 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NI Largest Mountain Range by

What is the USP? Why would people visit? Current perception of the Sperrins?		Thematic Groups						geographic area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB • Outdoor Recreation • Local Economy • Environmental Sustainability • Unexplored wilderness
1.4 GIS Mapping Exercise of current product	Original map previously developed and currently being updated	4 Councils – excel spreadsheet shared and currently being populated.			Information being compiled across partner councils by George Bradshaw. Comparison of data held by TNI complete.			GB has requested trail/walking/cycle route information from ORNI (Jan 21) which will be combined with the data.
2. Short Term Initiatives								
2.1 Explore the creation provisional brand identity/ logo in short term Ensure TNI Embrace the Giant Spirit experience brand is considered in any marketing/ promotional activity	Pull together a short-term identity for the Sperrins for use in promotional activities	Partnership Board 4 councils TNI Stakeholders and Thematic Groups		3 – 6 months	Brand and Tourism Group			Wider than tourism focus/ multifunctional (to include themes from the 4 common ground statements)
2.2 Creation of a website and Social Media platforms	Building awareness. Promotional activity. Consolidation of existing information.	4 council leads	January 2021	2 months	Website and social media platforms launched August 2021. Website will be update and developed on an ongoing basis. Enquires being received through website.	COMPLETE ONGOING		www.sperrinspartnershipproject.com
2.3 Official Launch Event	Event planned to officially launch the project and the Sperrins Future Search Report.	4 council leads/ SPO	Originally planned January 21 however	Launch Event took place August 2021	4 council Leads SPO	COMPLETE		Launch Event can be viewed by clicking here .

			postponed due to tightening of Covid-19 restrictions					
2.4 Sperrins Partnership Project – Walking Festival	Using existing funding across the 4 councils	4 council leads Community Groups Local Guides SPO			Brand and Tourism Group			Working group set up and meeting regularly to progress. FO plan to host walking event in Spring 2022 under the umbrella of the Sperrins Partnership.
2.5 IAT (collaborative project)	A domestic and international promotional campaign planned for the IAT this year.	4 Sperrin council Mid & East Antrim Council Donegal Local Development Company RDP LAGs (Rural Development Programme Local Action Groups) Along IAT Route DAERA IAT Steering Group		Marketing Completion Date- 25/02/2022 Capital Worsk Dec 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAT – ORNI contracted to deliver the marketing for the entire route ORNI awarded Marketing 		£141,000 Marketing £613,000 Capital Works Related	Capital works at various stages of delivery with most partners complete or nearing completion. ORNI Appointed to deliver marketing activity on behalf of partners commencing Feb 2022.
2.6 Sperrins Sculpture Trail (collaborative projects) Marketing piece	The installation of three iconic artworks at key sites – Sperin Heritage Centre (Glenelly Valley), Davagh Forest, and Mullaghcaran (Gortin)	DCSDC/FODC/ MUDC DAERA		Capital Works Completion Date Sept 2022	DCSDC Lead		£283,000 - Marketing Plan £1.887m n-	Planning permission for 3 sites secured. Sculpture and design considerations agreed.

							Capital Works Related	At phase 2 – Construction and instalment.
2.7 Identify Collaborative Projects through DAERA rural tourism funding opportunities for Sperrins Experiences	Initial meeting of the 4 councils and funding officers to scope out if collaboration is possible and the practicalities around this.	4 Council			4 Councils			DCSDC: DAERA Rural Tourism Trail, should be in a position to appoint at end of April 2021
2.8 Refresh/revitalise the Sperrins Cycle Routes and Driving Routes	Each council update their area in terms of tourism product and information. Also carryout audit of route signage to assess condition/gaps etc.							Man of Sperrins Event
2.9 Mountain Biking Trails Promotion?	Gortin Glen/ Garvagh Forrest/ Davagh Forest Trails	4 Council			4 Councils			Joint promotion campaign
2.10 Heart of Ancient Ulster Project	Restoration and maintenance of over 25,000 hectares of blanket and raised bog, the recruitment of volunteers to help plant 100,000 native trees, the reduction of carbon emissions from the peatland and the creation of 10km of new heritage trails.							Revisit potential funding from Heritage Trust. Joint Project MU/FODC within Sperrins Is there potential to widen this out to include heritage projects in CCG and DCSDC?
2.11 Ancient Routes and Trails	Ancient pilgrimages/ trails/ railways/ religious routes/ monuments/ tombs	4 councils NIEA HED						Identify the heritage offering throughout the Sperrins. Engage with HLF. Eg. Glencolmcille Donegal
2.12 Local Fam Trips	VIC staff and FS groups tour of Sperrins to experience what is on offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Stakeholders 		1 year	4 Councils			Links with 1.3
2.13 50 years AONB Designation – Celebration Event	Develop a combined 50 year celebration of original AONB declaration across the Sperrins Region that showcases the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism NI 4 Councils NIEA 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Councils Tourism NI Stakeholders 			AONB Designation 1968 Date has passed – suggest work

	natural richness and promotes the area, tying in with established/ ongoing community events and encourage more positive action within the AONB than the previous 50 years.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIEA 			towards 60 year celebration event?
2.14 What's on Guide / Events Calendar	Incorporate current events across all 4 councils and local community groups etc into a whats on guide/ Events calendar specific to the Sperrins area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 councils VIC and tourism staff Tourism NI 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 councils Tourism NI 			Links with 1.3
2.15 Research – Internal and external, looking at the perceptions of people in relation to the Sperrins, both local and wider audiences	Report delivered – Research/ Statistics required for informing policy/plans	Tourism NI			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism NI Management Structures 			
2.16 Development of visitor experience plan – consider development of a wider strategic plan for the Sperrins area which incorporates V.E plan	Output and outcomes measures – strategic plan developed	4 councils		1 – 2 years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sperrins Partnership Board Stakeholders TNI Brand & Tourism Group 			Links with 1.3
3. Long Term								
3.1 Identify strategic objectives over the next 5 years		Partnership Board 4 councils TNI Stakeholders and Thematic Groups		1 - 2 years				Growth deal (High proposition detailed asks)
3.2 Creation of a unified logo/branding/strapline	Identifiable brand that pulls together the identity of the Sperrins and its products/communities	Partnership Board 4 councils TNI Stakeholders and Thematic Groups		1 – 2 years	Brand and Tourism Group			Links with 2.1
3.3 Brand Development: Use visitor experience plan to develop current product offerings	Further development of area and additional literature and offerings	4 councils Tourism NI Tourism Ireland		2+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sperrins Partnership Board 4 councils 			

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism NI • Tourism Ireland 			
3.4 Trial new initiatives/pilots	KPI's: Holiday World stand with Sperrins branding and literature.	4 councils Tourism NI		2+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 councils • Tourism NI 			
3.5 Consultation/ engagement process	Tactical forward thinking	4 councils NIEA Tourism NI		2+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 councils • NIEA • Tourism NI 			
3.6 Brand Awareness: Marketing/ Communications campaigns Tactical plans Use of branding on own social media pages and website	Building relationships Trade Buy-in developed	4 councils NIEA Tourism NI		2+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 councils • NIEA • Tourism NI 			
3.7 Flagship events: “Undiscovered” international events	Visitor Numbers	4 councils NIEA Tourism NI			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 councils • NIEA • Tourism NI 			
3.8 Schools and Youth Outreach Programme	Pride, more awareness through upcoming generations and across NI	4 councils NIEA Tourism NI EA			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 councils • NIEA Tourism NI 			

Appendix 2

From: Sharon McGowan (By email)



Mr Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council

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Telephone: (028) 82 2555506

Email: Sharon.McGowan@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: CO1-20-11980

Date: 22 March 2022

Project Reference No	CO1-20-11980
Project Applicant	MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Project Title	COVID-19 RECOVERY REVITALISATION PROGRAMME
Total Funding	£1,452,000
Period of Funding	27 July 2020 – 31 March 2021
Organisation's Financial Systems and Controls Rating	Robust

Dear Adrian,

1. Revised Approval

The purpose of this letter is to effect certain amendments and variations to the Contract for Funding constituted by the letter dated 28th October 2020, the Letter of Variance dated 2nd March 2021 and a Letter of Variance dated 26th August 2021 issued to Mid Ulster District Council for the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme. I am pleased to confirm that the period of funding has been extended to

31 December 2022. Accordingly upon the Organisation's acceptance of this letter as hereinafter provided the said Contract for Funding shall be amended and have effect as follows:

(i) The contract detail table, as above, is substituted to:

Project Reference No	CO1-20-11980
Project Applicant	MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Project Title	COVID-19 RECOVERY REVITALISATION PROGRAMME
Total Funding	£1,452,000
Period of Funding	27 July 2020 to 31 December 2022 (as per letter issued by G. Murray Director of Regional Development Office 15 March 2022)
Organisation's Financial Systems and Controls Rating	Robust

(ii) Annex B (2) is attached which updates projects and costs following agreement on active travel schemes with DfI. It is noted some re-profiling will be required as per monitoring report received 11/1/22.

(iii) A revised Annex E (2) is attached which changes the target dates for the key objectives from March 2023 to December 2023.

2. Acceptance

This letter is issued electronically by e-mail and, accordingly, if the Organisation is prepared to accept the variance to the original Contract for Funding, please return a scanned PDF copy of this letter duly signed and dated on behalf of the Organisation within one week from the date of this letter. Failure to return the acceptance within this period shall result in the offer being deemed as withdrawn.

3. Availability

The foregoing offer shall remain open a period of four weeks from the date of this letter. Failure to return a scanned PDF copy of this letter duly signed and dated on

behalf of the Organisation within this period shall result in the offer being deemed as withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sharon McGowan".

Sharon McGowan
Deputy Director NWDO/West

4. OFFICIAL FUNDING ACCEPTANCE

Project Reference No	CO1-20-11980
Project Applicant	MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Project Title	COVID-19 RECOVERY REVITALISATION PROGRAMME
Amount of Funding	£1,452,000
Period of Funding	27 July 2020 – 31 December 2022 (as per letter issued by G. Murray 15 March 2022)

I _____ have authority **on behalf of**
(Name of Chief Executive in Block Capitals)

Name of Council

to accept the offer of funding set out in the letter dated 22 March 2022 and agree to deliver the above project on the terms and conditions therein.

Signed by
(Chief Executive)

Name in Block Capitals

Date

Witnessed by
(Registered Office Bearer)

Name in Block Capitals

Date

5. BANK DETAILS

Project Reference No	CO1-20-11980
Project Applicant	MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Project Title	COVID-19 RECOVERY REVITALISATION PROGRAMME
Amount of Funding	£1,452,000
Period of Funding	27 July 2020 – 31 December 2022 (as per letter issued by G. Murray 15 March 2022)

Please complete Bank details below.

Name of Organisation: _____

Name of Account: _____

Bank Name: _____

Bank Address: _____

Sort Code: _____ **Account Number:** _____

Signed by
(Chief Executive)

Witnessed by
(Registered Office Bearer)

Name in Block Capitals

Name in Block Capitals

Date

Date

ANNEX A

AREAS TO BE FUNDED UNDER TRANCHE 1 OF THE PROGRAMME

[illegible]

ANNEX B (2)

AREAS TO BE FUNDED UNDER TRANCHE 2 & 3 OF THE PROGRAMME

[illegible]

**COVID-19 RECOVERY REVITALISATION PROGRAMME
OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES**

Objectives

1. To support each district council to develop a costed Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Plan by September 2020. **This objective has now been met.**
2. By August 2020, each district council will have established or identified a suitable stakeholder engagement forum to support the delivery of its Covid-19 Revitalisation Plan. **This objective has now been met.**
3. To support each district council to deliver its Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Plan by December 2022.
4. By December 2023, 80% of businesses in scheme areas agree that the improvements to their businesses and other Capital purchase projects would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area (by council).
5. By December 2023, 80% of people using the scheme areas agree that the improvements to the area would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area (by council).
6. By December 2023, council schemes funded through this Programme will have positively impacted on efforts to see footfall levels returning to a level which is at least 70% of levels recorded prior to the public health crisis.
7. By December 2023, surveys completed by traders indicate that council schemes funded through this Programme will have positively impacted on efforts to see sales figures returning to a level which is at least 70% of levels recorded prior to the public health crisis.
8. By December 2023, attitudinal surveys indicate 80% of the public are satisfied with the measures taken in the Scheme areas to respond to safety issues raised by the Covid-19 pandemic.

9. By December 2023, attitudinal surveys indicate 70% of the public are satisfied with walking facilities in the Scheme area.
10. By December 2023, attitudinal surveys indicate 60% of the public agree that they are satisfied with cycling facilities in the Scheme area.
11. By December 2023, attitudinal surveys indicate 40% of the public agree that measures taken in the Scheme area would encourage people to change from car use to more environmentally friendly choices such as walking and cycling for journeys of under two miles.
12. By December 2023, grant fund measures in the Scheme area to demonstrate the benefits of low-emission fuel options.
13. By December 2023 the scheme area will have an increase in land used for active travel (i.e. extended footways, cycle ways, and connecting pathways) which connects people with key services and ensures accessibility for all including those with disabilities.

Outputs

Council Revitalisation Plans.

- Each council will provide a quantification of the outputs associated with their plan.

Outcomes

Outcome Delivery Plan - Outcome 10: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.

- New and improved physical infrastructure and environment in which opportunity can flourish in economic, social and cultural terms to develop our attractiveness as a home, place of business, and tourist destination.

- Bring communities together and deliver programmes that target social need through social, economic and physical regeneration of cities, towns and villages.
- Complete a range of Urban Regeneration Schemes in towns and cities across Northern Ireland to enhance our attractiveness as a home, place of business, and tourist destination.
- Develop strategic sites across Northern Ireland to provide new and improved physical infrastructure and environment.

Outcome Delivery Plan - Outcome 11: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

- Achieve a shift from the private car to active travel modes such as walking and cycling
- Protect and enhance our 'green' and 'blue' infrastructure (parks, green spaces and street trees; ponds, streams and lakes) to define a sense of place and character within our communities, making it more attractive to walk and cycle to access key services n with associated health and wellbeing outcomes and strengthening the resilience of our natural environment.
- Develop integrated sustainable drainage solutions to manage rainwater on the surface to protect against flooding.

INFRASTRUCTURE 2050

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

Draft Consultation Document

isni.gov.uk



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

www.northernireland.gov.uk



**Investment
Strategy**
Northern Ireland



**Investment
Strategy**
Northern Ireland

INFRASTRUCTURE 2050

DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

JANUARY 2022

STATUS: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	8
RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION	11
Why we are consulting	11
How to respond to the consultation	11
What happens after the public consultation	12
PART A: OUR VISION.....	13
The Role and Importance of Infrastructure	13
The Executive’s Vision for Infrastructure	14
Supporting the Executive’s Priorities.....	15
Question 1	15
PART B: STRATEGIC CONTEXT.....	16
Our Investment in Infrastructure	16
The Strategic Context	17
Development of the Investment Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement.....	19
Structure of the Strategy	21
Question 2	21
PART C: OUR INVESTMENT NEEDS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES.....	22
Question 3	22
OBJECTIVE 1: TO DECARBONISE OUR ECONOMY, ASSETS AND SOCIETY	23
Where We Are Now.....	23
Where We Need To Be	24
What We Need to Do	25

Question 4	27
Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Decarbonise Our Economy, Assets and Society	28
OBJECTIVE 2: TO STRENGTHEN OUR ESSENTIAL SERVICES	29
Where We Are Now.....	29
Where We Need To Be	31
What We Need to Do	31
Question 5	34
Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Strengthen Our Essential Services.....	35
OBJECTIVE 3: TO ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITIES AND PLACES	36
Where We Are Now.....	36
Where We Need To Be	36
What We Need to Do	37
CASE STUDY: A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres / Town Centre First	37
CASE STUDY: 15-Minute City	39
CASE STUDY: Path of Health	40
CASE STUDY: Quiet Lanes	41
Question 6	42
Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Enhance Our Communities and Places	43
OBJECTIVE 4: TO BUILD A STRONG, CONNECTED AND COMPETITIVE REGION	44
Where We Are Now.....	44
Where We Need To Be	44
What We Need to Do	45

CASE STUDY: Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee (GCSC) – Øresund Region	46
Question 7	49
Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Build a Strong, Competitive and Connected Region	50
OBJECTIVE 5: TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS FROM EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES	51
Where we are now	51
Where We Need To Be	52
What We Need to Do	53
Question 8	55
Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Maximise The Benefits From Emerging Technologies	56
PART D: OUR APPROACH TO STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT	57
Introduction	57
Embedding infrastructure into Government approval and delivery processes	57
Funding and financing	59
The Executive's 10-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan	63
Information Portal and Contracts Pipeline	64
Question 9	64
Question 10	64
Question 11	64
Question 12	64
Improving Delivery	65
CASE STUDY: Social Value	67
Measuring Progress and Impact	68
Question 13	69

Accountability and Oversight	70
Question 14	73
Question 15	73
Question 16	73
Question 17	73
Glossary	74
Freedom of Information Act 2000: Confidentiality of Consultations	76

FOREWORD

Investment in infrastructure will play a key part in enabling us to achieve our ambition of a greener and fairer society. Our vision is that we will have the infrastructure that enables everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life; supports sustainable economic development; and protects our environment. Infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals, schools and colleges, energy, water, digital and transport networks, requires careful planning, takes time to deliver and is used for many years. We need to consider our current needs as well as the needs of our children. We also need to make best use of our existing infrastructure and maintain it for the future.

Climate change, the consequences of rapid technological change and an ageing population are the most important issues facing our generation. We must innovate in the ways we design, build and operate our infrastructure systems if we are to solve these problems, while taking advantage of the opportunities they present.

The strategy takes a long-term view, looking forward to 2050. It sets out the current state of our infrastructure, identifies where we need to be and explains what we need to do to get there. It defines our strategic investment priorities and demonstrates how we will make best use of our resources.

The strategy is aligned with the principles of the Executive's other key strategies, some of which are currently in development such as 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy and the Housing Supply Strategy. It embodies an approach to coordination that will ensure government policies and plans are consistent and complementary at every level.

The strategy describes the outcomes we intend to achieve. It will be implemented through a rolling 10-year investment plan that will define and prioritise the individual programmes and projects we need to deliver and will be matched to a financial plan that will show how these will be funded.

The strategy is ambitious. Pressing challenges such as decarbonisation mean that we need to do more, in new ways and quickly. That is why the Executive is focused on delivery – getting things done.

Engagement has been central to the development of this strategy. Many people inside and outside government have already helped in its formation. We want this dialogue to continue, so please review the strategy carefully and contribute your views and ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Givan". The signature is stylized, with a large initial 'P' and a cursive 'Givan'.

PAUL GIVAN MLA

First Minister

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Michelle O'Neill". The signature is cursive and clearly legible.

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA

deputy First Minister

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

High-quality physical and digital infrastructure is the foundation of all modern economies and is required for a fair and just society. Infrastructure is used by everyone every day. It enables the provision of healthcare, education, housing and transport. It delivers the water we drink and the energy that heats and powers our homes. It is needed to protect our environment, support our jobs and connect us to the rest of the world. It touches all our lives and will form our legacy to our children.

The Executive's vision for infrastructure is that it will enable everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life, and that it will support sustainable economic development and protect our environment.

This strategy sets out how the Executive will achieve this vision. It provides a clear framework for planning and prioritising infrastructure investment, defining the outcomes required of that investment and setting out the mechanisms, including greater collaboration that will ensure its efficient and effective delivery.

Over the last ten years, government has invested £14.9 billion in maintaining, upgrading and extending our regional infrastructure – an average of £1.48 billion per year, or £8,000 per person. Nearly three-quarters of this has been directed to the major infrastructure areas of roads, housing, water and wastewater, schools, public transport and hospitals. Over 400 projects have been completed, thirty with a value of more than £100 million. Although this is a record to be proud of, some projects have been delivered late or over budget, and this strategy includes actions to accelerate and improve infrastructure delivery.

Despite this investment, there are significant deficiencies in our existing infrastructure, particularly in health, social and intermediate housing, water and wastewater, roads maintenance and the rail network. Addressing these existing problems is a key element of the strategy. Coupled with this is a recognised need to invest in the increased capacity and skills required to deliver such an ambitious investment strategy.

The region will face significant new challenges in the coming decade and beyond. These include:

- the immediate need to respond to the climate emergency and achieve net zero
- the changing requirements of an ageing population
- our evolving trading relationships with our neighbours in Europe and elsewhere
- the speed of technological innovation and the increasing risks to cyber-security
- the need to invest both capital and resource funding to address historic underinvestment in our current infrastructure
- the need to innovate at pace and develop our approach to delivery.

Our objectives and priorities for infrastructure investment are based on a dispassionate and impartial assessment of where we are now, where we need to be and what we need to do.

We know that our investment must:

- decarbonise our economy and society
- strengthen our essential services
- build a strong, connected and competitive region
- enhance our communities and places
- maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation
- protect and strengthen our natural infrastructure.

Our investment must be prioritised to address proven needs and make the most effective use of the available resources. We will achieve this through the development of a 10-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan and a Medium-Term Financial Plan that will together result in a pipeline of individual projects.

We recognise that the investment needed to achieve the outcomes set out in this strategy will require significantly greater capital and revenue funding than has previously been available. We will explore all possible sources of finance and develop and use innovative funding approaches where these are needed and appropriate.

We will continue to take steps to improve our capacity and capability to deliver projects on time and to budget. We will ensure that those responsible for projects have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources necessary to be successful. We will collect, analyse and publish data on our performance, using it to manage our projects better and informing actions to address the root causes of delay and cost overruns.

We will ensure that when procuring from the private sector, we derive the best possible social value from our purchasing power.

The entire region will benefit from the implementation of this strategy. Infrastructure investment will drive inclusive growth and increase resilience to climate change and economic shocks. It will safeguard jobs, promote skills development and encourage innovation. It will help build a green economy, protecting our heritage and environment. It will help us all to achieve our full potential.

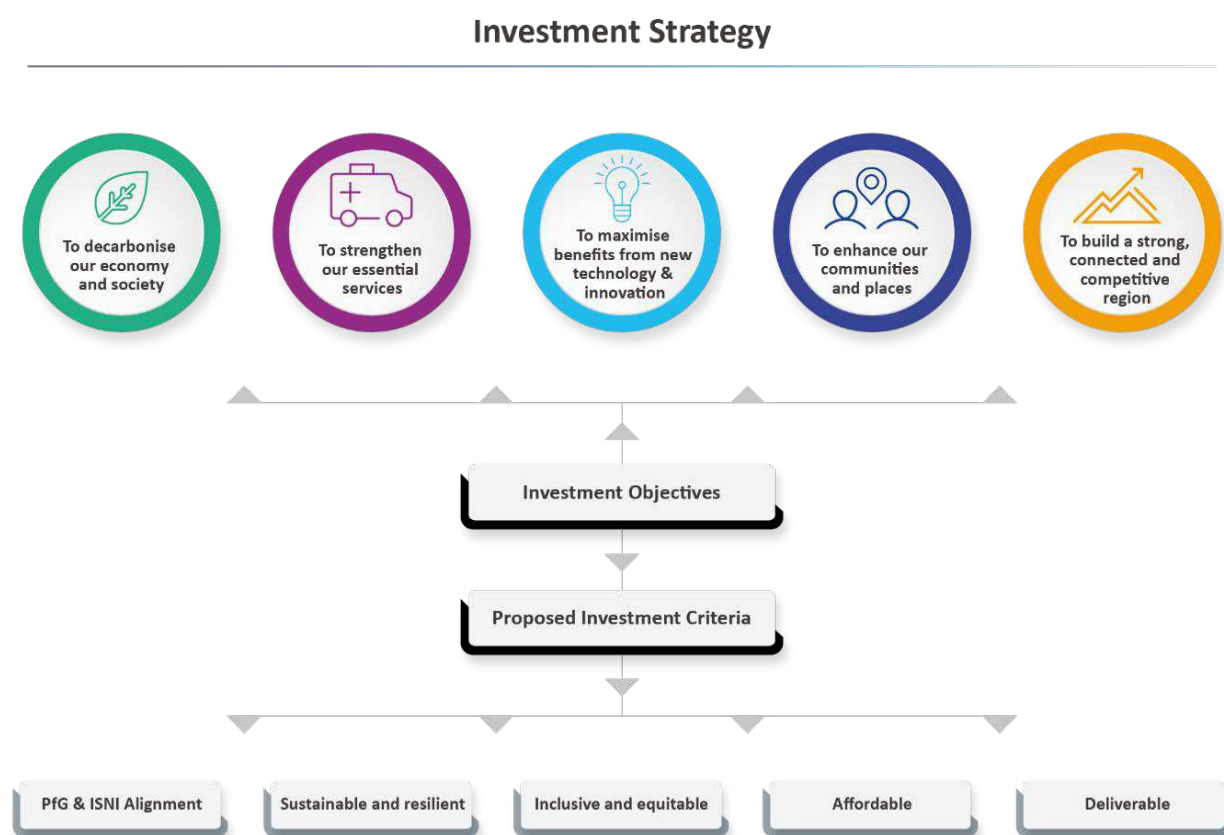


Fig 1: Proposed Investment Objectives and Criteria

RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

Why we are consulting

Our infrastructure is critical to our well-being, our success, our prosperity and our future. If we are to invest in infrastructure successfully to address the long-term issues we will face in the coming decades, government must work with citizens and organisations to use their knowledge and expertise to help guide and develop an Infrastructure Strategy that benefits us all.

The ISNI team would like to thank those organisations and individuals who contributed to the extensive engagement during the scoping phase. To ensure our thinking is sound, we want you to tell us what you think of our assessment of the infrastructure needs, and priorities going forward.

How to respond to the consultation

To make this consultation as accessible as possible, we are using NI Direct's Citizen Space as our response route for collating responses.

You can respond to this consultation online through our survey on Citizen Space (<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dof/infrastructure-2050-consultation-document>).

The survey is straightforward to complete and seeks views on our investment objectives, proposed governance structure and proposed infrastructure planning process.

If you are unable to respond online please contact the ISNI team by email: consult.isni@sibni.org. An easy read version of the consultation document will be available online and if you need documents to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know. Responses to this consultation are invited until 11.59pm on 20th April 2022.

Written responses can be sent to us by e-mail at: consult.isni@sibni.org or by post at: **Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, Strategic Investment Board, 5th Floor, 9 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3LP.**

Please note, the Strategic Investment Board will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Please refer to the final section of this document (page 76) which outlines our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act.

What happens after the public consultation

The consultation on the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland closes on 20th April 2022. Following consideration of all responses, including the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA), a full analysis report will be prepared for Executive consideration.

PART A: OUR VISION

The Role and Importance of Infrastructure

High-quality physical and digital infrastructure provides the vital foundation for a modern, high-performing competitive economy and a fair and just society. It underpins our quality of life, promotes economic and social prosperity and regional balance, and helps to protect our environment for the future. Our transport networks, our healthcare facilities, our schools and colleges, our homes and community facilities, our water and utilities, our communications networks, our justice and community safety facilities and our environmental and heritage assets: these are some of the essential components of our infrastructure that touch on all our lives.

As an Executive, we understand the importance of infrastructure. We are determined to invest in maintaining, upgrading and expanding it to support sustainable economic development and enhance Northern Ireland's attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest for the years ahead.

Although this Investment Strategy primarily relates to the infrastructure that is owned and operated by the public sector, it recognises there is often considerable synergy and integration between public and private infrastructure. For example, key assets such as our airports, ports and the electricity and communications networks are privately/ independently owned or operated, or partly funded by charges levied on users. This Investment Strategy recognises that, as an Executive, we have a significant role too in encouraging and facilitating investment into these sectors from a wide range of sources.

Building and maintaining our infrastructure requires long-term commitment, financial planning (for both capital and revenue) and certainty. This Investment Strategy sets out our long-term vision for high quality infrastructure across the region, our investment priorities and recommends a process for identifying the optimum financing and delivery for all of our people. It also describes how we will address the significant challenges of transitioning our

economy and society to a future based on clean energy, while taking advantage of the opportunities arising from rapid technological advancement.

The Executive's Vision for Infrastructure

This new Investment Strategy sets out our ambitious vision:

***“We have the infrastructure that
enables everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life;
that supports sustainable economic development and
protects our environment.”***

It provides:

- a clear framework for planning and prioritising our future infrastructure investments
- a commitment to maximise the capital and revenue available to finance our investment needs and accelerate delivery
- a thematic, cross-cutting and coherent approach to enable more responsive, efficient and effective delivery of public infrastructure
- a clear signal to the private sector to enable and encourage infrastructure investment.

The challenges for our current and future infrastructure are fundamental and structural: demographic shifts, digitalisation, new technologies, climate change and the commitment to maintain our current infrastructure. The Investment Strategy provides the longer-term framework needed to prioritise investment to address these challenges and make the most of our opportunities. It sets out clear funding mechanisms and the strong governance and monitoring arrangements needed to manage delivery and assess the impact of our investment over the coming 30 years.

The strategy shows how, as the Executive, we will make the best use of our capital and revenue budgets to meet immediate priorities as we deal with the outworkings of Covid and in light of the UK's withdrawal from the EU and how we will invest for the longer term.

Supporting the Executive's Priorities

The Investment Strategy is one of the Executive's key strategies that will support the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG). It is consistent with and complements the principles of the 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy, the Housing Supply Strategy and the spatial planning framework set out in the Regional Development Strategy 2035.

The proposed Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland will place targets at a macro level and Climate Action Plans will set out how these will be delivered at a sectoral level. This will require our future investment plans to support these statutory commitments on emissions and our environment.

QUESTION 1

Do you agree with our vision for infrastructure? If not, what would you change?

PART B: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our Investment in Infrastructure

This strategy encompasses all areas of public infrastructure, including health, housing, education, justice, communities, transport, water and wastewater treatment and the environment. As such, the condition, efficiency, effectiveness and safety of this infrastructure affects most aspects of our daily lives.

Over the last 10 years, we invested nearly £15 billion in maintaining, upgrading and extending our regional infrastructure – an average of £1.48 billion per year. This is the equivalent of more than £8,000 per person. Nearly three-quarters of our investment has been in the major infrastructure areas: roads, housing, water and wastewater, schools, public transport and hospitals.

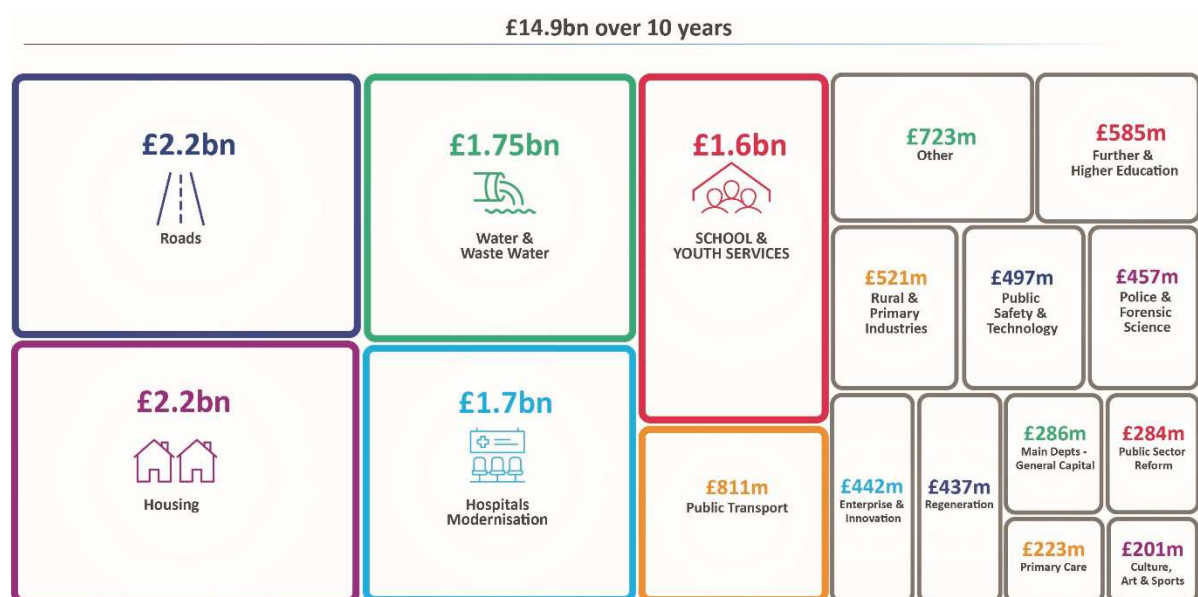


Fig 2: Infrastructure Spend 2011 – 2021

We have also invested in prisons, tourism, flood risk management, telecoms, courts, libraries, heritage, the environment and the arts and tourism.

During this period, more than 400 projects have been delivered across the region. Thirty of these have had a value of £100 million or more. Among these are investments such as the

Belfast Rapid Transit (The Glider), which has transformed public transport within Belfast; and the NI Water Dunore Water Treatment Works Solar Farm, which is saving 2,000 tonnes of carbon per year.

Some projects have, however, been delivered late or over-budget, or in some cases postponed in response to adverse budgetary situations. This strategy takes account of the lessons we have learned from these and sets out actions to improve the way we plan, fund, deliver and manage both our built and natural infrastructure to make smarter, more sustainable and more efficient use of our resources.

The Strategic Context

Our region faces significant challenges in the coming decades. At present, we are focused on supporting economic and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. But there is an urgent and growing need for us to address global climate change, to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population and to harness technological and digital change to improve lives, protect our environment and to secure jobs for the future. These present major challenges, but also opportunities, particularly as we invest to develop the green economy. The Investment Strategy provides a framework to address these generational challenges.

Responding to the climate emergency

Mitigating and adapting to global climate change will be the defining challenge for the 30-year period covered by the Investment Strategy. In 2019, the UK Government committed to achieving net zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Committee has indicated that we will need to make at least an 82% reduction in our emissions from the 1990 base level. Whichever target is ultimately adopted, the journey to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions must start now and will mean fundamental changes to how we design, build, use and fund our infrastructure, including how we generate energy; the design of, and standards for, our houses and our service delivery assets; our transport networks and vehicle fleets; and how we manage flood risk, coastal erosion and surface water. We will need to adopt a joined-up, whole-of-society approach to deliver integrated solutions, for

example by investing to update our electricity transmission and distribution grid to support mass electrification of transport systems.

Our changing population

Our population has risen consistently over the past century and is projected to continue to grow, although more slowly, to reach a peak of almost 2 million citizens by 2050. However, more than 3,500 new households are being formed each year – a rate that is higher than the rate of population growth and which reflects the trend towards smaller households. Although we have a relatively young population, it is ageing. The number of people over 65 is expected to increase by more than 200,000, and the number over 85 will more than double, requiring our infrastructure to adapt to support healthier, active lives for longer.

Our changing trade relationships

Our trading relationships with neighbouring countries are changing as we adjust to the UK's withdrawal from the EU and implement the new arrangements agreed by the UK Government and the European Commission. As yet, it is unclear what the long-term impact of these changes will be, but it is likely our trade patterns will continue to evolve, a factor that emphasises the need to improve connectivity for people and goods across the island of Ireland, with Great Britain, and to and from continental Europe and beyond.

Pace of technological innovation and increasing cyber-risks

We have experienced significant technological change over recent years, including the rapid development of 4G and 5G communication technologies; improved construction materials; the rise of artificial intelligence; and the increasing proliferation of smart sensor technology. Our ability to take advantage of the opportunities of digital infrastructure and new technology will depend on us having sufficient relevant skills and ensuring all our citizens have access to the technology they need. However, an increasingly digital future brings new and increased risks. As services become ever more interconnected, protecting our data is a priority, drawing on the world-class expertise of our universities and cybersecurity companies.

Over the past 10 years, just over half (54%) of our infrastructure investment has been in new assets. Although we are ambitious to continue to develop our infrastructure, the Investment Strategy recognises that much of the infrastructure we will use in the coming decades has already been built. We know we face challenges as a result of historic underinvestment in maintenance, with backlogs in services such as housing, roads, wastewater¹ and health², even though one-third of our annual capital investment is allocated to these existing assets, for example resurfacing roads or replacing street lighting. These maintenance liabilities require significant revenue as well as capital investment to maintain their condition, safety and effectiveness. Simultaneously, investment requirements driven by ever increasing safety, consumer and environmental requirements, drive a requirement for improvement across our existing assets. These improvement liabilities require additional revenue and capital investment to ensure they remain fit for the future. Over the next 30 years, we will maintain and improve existing assets, adapt them for new socially valuable uses or, where they are no longer required, ensure their timely decommissioning or disposal.

We are determined to get the balance right between investment in new and existing infrastructure. We will only build new infrastructure that we can afford to maintain, and consider not only the cost of construction but also the ongoing costs – much of which is revenue rather than capital expenditure – associated with operating and maintaining new assets.

Development of the Investment Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement

This Investment Strategy consultation document was developed between the autumn of 2020 and summer 2021. Building on extensive research and analysis, and detailed equality and rural needs impact assessments, it has involved extensive engagement with:

- community organisations, including the Youth Forum and Age NI
- business and industry organisations and representative bodies

¹ DFI estimates a backlog in structural maintenance for road of in excess of £1bn (NIAO 2019)

² The backlog maintenance across the Health Estate is currently £1.2bn (DoH 2021)

- government departments and agencies, their arm's length bodies and public corporations
- Local Authorities and their representative organisations.



Fig 3: Stakeholder Engagement

Much of this engagement was undertaken online due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Overall, 97 organisations were part of the process, which included one-to-one and 'town hall' meetings, workshops and discussions. Many organisations sought the views of their wider membership and 36 supplemented their meetings with written submissions. Others provided additional supplementary research or evidence.

This engagement has been central to identifying the **key strategic investment objectives, needs and priorities** that we will focus on for the coming decades. Our engagement has emphasised the need for the Investment Strategy to take a holistic and cross-cutting

approach – working across traditional departmental and sector boundaries – to reflect the increasingly interconnected way in which services will need to be delivered.

Structure of the Strategy

Part C of the strategy sets out our objectives and priorities, based on:

- where we are now
- where we need to be
- what we need to do.

Stakeholder engagement made clear that infrastructure investment must be based on principles of fairness and sustainability. These are set out in Part D of the strategy. This section also explains the new processes, structures and governance arrangements that will strengthen our delivery capacity and capability. We will also establish improved governance and monitoring arrangements to ensure we deliver value for money and can demonstrate the positive impact our investment is making.

QUESTION 2

Do you agree with our assessment of the challenges that we will face with our infrastructure over the next 30 years? If you disagree, why? And what do you think are the challenges and why?

PART C: OUR INVESTMENT NEEDS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In developing this strategy, we have set five key objectives for our investment in infrastructure over the coming decades. To achieve our vision, we must:

1. decarbonise our economy and society
2. strengthen and protect our essential services
3. build a strong, connected and competitive region
4. enhance our communities and places
5. maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation.



Fig 4: ISNI Investment Objectives

QUESTION 3

Do you agree that these five key investment objectives address the challenges? If not, what would you consider to be the key investment objectives?

OBJECTIVE 1: TO DECARBONISE OUR ECONOMY, ASSETS AND SOCIETY

Where We Are Now

We have made significant progress in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions – more than the Republic of Ireland but not as much as Scotland, Wales, England or other countries in Europe. And we need to do much more.

Our society remains heavily dependent upon fossil fuels. In 2020, for example, less than 1% of our vehicles were electric-powered, compared to nearly 25% in the Netherlands and 74% in Norway. Currently, the majority of our homes meet only Category D or E (the lowest) in terms of Energy Performance, and our extensive public sector estate needs to improve its carbon footprint. Too many of our journeys are taken by private car rather than using sustainable public transport or active travel.

We have a strong record in the development of renewable energy. Around 42% of our energy is generated from renewable sources, which exceeds the 40% target we set for 2020. More than 65,000 homes, however, remain reliant on oil heating. Although the roll-out of the natural gas network over recent years has been a notable achievement, this has been mainly in urban areas. More properties need to be linked to the grid and we must decarbonise the system using bio-gas or natural gas blending with hydrogen. Our gas transmission and distribution infrastructure is relatively new compared to networks in GB, which means we are relatively better placed to manage the transition to a low-carbon gas mix. Net zero choices should be available for all our citizens, and while utilising the gas grid is a key part of this, for those premises off the gas grid then solutions such as heat pumps and hybrid heat pumps will be critical to deliver on our emissions reductions ambitions.

Our recycling rates have steadily increased from 2010, reaching a peak of over 50% in 2020. Waste arisings have also increased, with 2020/21 representing the most significant increase to date, of 3.2%. We have the capacity to reprocess some of the recycling we collect. That which cannot be dealt with here is exported to the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain, Europe and in some cases, to the rest of the world. Too much of our waste is exported each year to

become someone else's opportunity to recycle into higher-value material, generate energy; or unfortunately in some cases, to become someone else's disposal problem.

Where We Need To Be

We will need to make significant changes to the way we live to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It is anticipated that the proposed Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland will set ambitious targets for the reduction in our emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases. This will require change across every sector of our economy such as transport (land, air and sea), agriculture, energy, housing, and land use. The Executive's Green Growth Strategy and its supporting Green Growth and Climate Action Plans will set out the interim targets and how these can be achieved. Alongside decarbonisation, we need to ensure that other environmental issues which have the potential to adversely affect human health – such as noise, biodiversity and air quality – are addressed. These documents will identify the funding required and show how progress will be measured.

A key aspect for meeting our climate change targets will be decarbonisation – reducing greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. Transport and agriculture are particularly important because together they account for more than half of the region's emissions. To achieve decarbonisation of our economy and society by 2050 will require the use of new technologies, behavioural change and regulation.

However, reducing future emissions will not be sufficient. We will have to build in greater resilience to our existing and future infrastructure and, in some places, constrain building to reduce the potential for harm to people and property, for example where the risk of flooding or coastal erosion has increased substantially.

The draft Green Growth Strategy aspires to a just transition to a greener economy. We need to ensure that this is regionally balanced and provides significant local employment and skills development opportunities across the region.

What We Need to Do

Energy Generation & Distribution

We will need to reduce the amount of energy we require and change how we produce, store and use it in order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. For many sectors, including transport, moving towards electrification will be essential to decarbonising. Low-carbon electricity will also be required to play a central role in meeting our heating needs in the next decade and beyond. We will therefore need to invest in our electricity-generating capacity; improve the transmission and distribution network; and develop new storage systems. In the case of marine-based projects, the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and the UK Marine Policy Statement must be considered. Clear direction and policies will be required to ensure investment supports such new renewable generation, providing both large-scale and community-based project promoters with greater certainty to take forward projects.

Sustainable Travel

Our dependence on petrol and diesel vehicles will have to end. We need to reduce our journeys and ensure many more of them are taken by sustainable public transport or active travel. More than 40% of vehicles here will need to be electric by 2035 if we are to be on track to meet our transport emissions targets. This will require significant investment across urban and rural areas in rapid charging stations, electricity generation, storage, distribution and battery recycling, plus engagement with consumers and the manufacturing sector.

The public sector can set an example by transitioning its fleet of more than 12,000 vehicles to alternative fuels. Translink has already signed the Climate Action Pledge and committed to halving its emissions by 2030. It intends to provide zero-emission bus and rail services by 2040, and go beyond net zero by 2050. To deliver this will require significant additional investment in rail infrastructure.

Decarbonise our Assets

Investment in housing, water and wastewater treatment facilities and buildings will be needed to improve energy efficiency. However, a significant proportion of the assets we already have will last for many years to come. For example, improved building thermal efficiency and retrofitting will be needed throughout much of our housing and building stock. We will need to exploit opportunities to further decarbonise – by using bio-gas or gas blended with hydrogen. Similarly, we will need to consider how existing assets, which are no longer needed, can be repurposed to meet new and emerging patterns of demand, thereby ensuring the impact of embodied carbon is minimised. Our leadership in energy efficiency should act as a catalyst for new supply chain and job opportunities so that all sectors can deliver.

Develop a Circular Economy

The principles of a circular economy are that we should:

- design out the generation of waste and pollution
- keep products and materials in use
- implement measures to sequester carbon.

Although there is already a commitment to achieve recycling levels of 65% by 2035, we will need to invest in and develop a more coherent, robust and resilient waste management system for the whole of the region.

Adaptation and Mitigation

The Climate Change Committee's assessment for Northern Ireland identifies flooding as the most significant risk we face, requiring investment in flood mitigation and flood alleviation measures. Over the next decade, more than £155m will be required for new flood alleviation capital works. There will need to be greater emphasis on habitat and green space protection and flood prevention, with a focus on upstream and natural solutions, for example building on the 'Living with Water' approach to improve capacity in our drainage and wastewater management systems.

QUESTION 4

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to decarbonise our economy and society? If not, what are the investment priority areas that will help decarbonise our economy?

Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Decarbonise Our Economy, Assets and Society

We will:

Decarbonise our utilities	by improving energy efficiency and diversified renewable energy generation, storage and distribution, including solar, hydrogen, off- and on-shore wind
Develop a circular economy	by establishing a coherent, resilient and robust waste management system and investing in facilities to reduce waste generation, increase recycling and reduce landfill and the export of waste
Transition to sustainable homes	by ensuring new-build properties are heated sustainably and retrofitting existing properties to ensure as many of them as possible over time reach Energy Performance Category A or better
Decarbonise the transport sector	by expanding the public rapid EV charging network for cars and other vehicles; investing in public transport and active travel; and transitioning the public sector fleet(s) to alternative fuels
Improve our resilience to climate change	by continuing to invest in flood prevention, alleviation and mitigation measures to improve the resilience of our critical infrastructure and to invest in coastal erosion adaptation

OBJECTIVE 2: TO STRENGTHEN OUR ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Where We Are Now

Strong, efficient and effective public services that are responsive to needs are essential to deliver our ambitions for the region and to meet the expectations of our citizens. Infrastructure such as modern schools and healthcare facilities, social and intermediate housing, digital connectivity, accessible court facilities and good community infrastructure underpin a fair and prosperous society for all.

Good quality infrastructure helps us to promote equality and good relations. It is also essential for our businesses and to support our economy. Transport networks, communications and energy infrastructure and water and wastewater treatment services all need to be fit for purpose.

Water and Wastewater Treatment

Wastewater treatment facilities are a critical part of our public infrastructure. They treat domestic, commercial and industrial effluents efficiently to make them safe to return to our environment. Across the region, some of our combined wastewater plants that collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage and industrial wastewater into one pipe are nearing or at capacity – especially at times of high demand due to adverse weather. This is now acting as a brake on the planned development of the new homes and businesses we need. The lack of wastewater treatment capacity has also resulted in an excess of small legacy treatment works, often developed privately to enable small-scale housing developments to proceed. This approach is inefficient and costly, with more than 70% of wastewater treatment works serving only 10% of the population. Such a fragmented approach to critical infrastructure is environmentally and financially unsustainable.

Health and Social Care

We have unacceptably wide variations in health outcomes. Poverty and deprivation have a significant impact on the demand for primary and secondary health and social care services. For example, emergency hospital admissions are 60% higher in our most deprived

communities compared with the least deprived communities. The level of demand for primary care is already higher than in comparable countries. This emphasises the urgent need to plan infrastructure, such as leisure facilities, that enable us all to live longer, healthier lives.

The demands of the Covid pandemic have tested our health and social services as never before. There is now a significant backlog of demand for medical care and treatment. During this period our health and social care services have sought to accelerate transformation, innovating and adopting new technology to improve the way in which care is planned and delivered. The momentum of this change must be maintained and the pace of improvement increased, all of which will require significant investment.

Education and Skills

Our schools, colleges and universities are at the heart of our local communities and are valuable community assets. They provide learning, sports and leisure facilities for adults in addition to being places of education for our children. But our school population is expected to fall over the coming years and there are already more than 40,000 surplus places in our school system. Our schools, on average, tend to be smaller than in other regions, meaning that spending per pupil is below what is typical in the UK. In 2021, more than 30% of schools had enrolments that are below the threshold of what is deemed sustainable by the Education Authority.

Justice and Community Safety

Our justice system is too slow and is delivered from facilities that are often antiquated and use outdated technology. This needs to change, as our communities deserve a justice system in which every element, from preventative services to our courts and prisons, is more accessible, responsive and efficient. The PSNI estate needs to be transformed alongside new approaches to the deployment of people and technology to improve services for victims and criminal justice outcomes.

Where We Need To Be

How we use our public services will continue to change and we will need to be able to respond to reflect the needs of an ageing population. This will affect the ways in which we will live and work. Our services will need to be fit for the future, meeting citizens' aspirations and able to handle the demands of a rapidly changing climate.

Over the coming 30 years, some of our public sector assets will have to be renewed, some will be repurposed and some will no longer be required. Ensuring the efficient and effective use of the assets we have is understandably less eye-catching than focusing on new developments, but a "right size" of public sector, one that is fit for purpose, will be a key element in the successful delivery of essential public services. This is particularly relevant to Health where 45% of the current estate does not meet Statutory Standards and no significant in-roads are being made to address the estimated £1,241 million backlog maintenance liability. It is cheaper to maintain our assets well today rather than catch up on a backlog of maintenance tomorrow.

What We Need to Do

The long term strategic plan for health and social care is to provide modern, fit for purpose facilities through the creation or maintenance of sustainable models of care that support communities and contribute to improved health, well-being and quality of life for the people of Northern Ireland.

Over the next 30 years, we will invest in our acute hospitals to provide a better patient environment, improved clinical outcomes for patients and to maintain service delivery. We will do this by strategically analysing data to provide suitable hospital accommodation, emergency departments that are right sized to meet demand and new maternity and children's hospitals.

Now more than ever we need to provide investment to deliver new mental health inpatient units as many of the existing facilities are in poor condition and provide a very unhelpful environment for therapy for patients facing the challenges of mental illness. Similarly, investment is required to provide appropriate support, therapies and a range of

accommodation options for the most vulnerable adults and children in society and their families. Investment in a range of residential respite facilities providing short and long term breaks to support families to meet their caring duties, in new day care facilities to ensure the care is focused to meet the needs of the most complex service users with a learning disability, and in residential care facilities for children and young people who are looked after.

With an ageing society, we will also continue with the Primary Care Infrastructure Development Programme which will provide primary-care hubs as key community facilities going forward, strengthening prevention, social/domiciliary care and outpatient treatment to support our population well within the community. The Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex – which opened in 2017 – provides one example of this, offering a central health hub that has reduced demand on A&E departments.

However, investment in health is much more than delivering new health facilities, it includes investment in new strategies such as the Elective Care Framework and the Cancer Recovery Plan, in research and development which has been vital in the fight against Covid 19 and the specialist equipment required by modern medicine. However, we will still need our acute facilities, and will focus investment on the specialist equipment and facilities modern medicine requires.

We will need to continue to transform our healthcare delivery through investment in digital technology. The Encompass programme will transform patient records management and administration across all our health and social care services, encompassing acute care, community care and eventually extending to cover primary care service delivery. A modern unified and integrated clinical information system will provide more joined-up care for patients and more efficient use of staff time and resources.

Alongside the physical and technical infrastructure there is a drive to understand and exploit the wealth of information collected in the course of delivering health and social care to citizens. This will be used to inform service improvements, drive innovation and inform policy decision making. The work will result in the development of a modern, responsive skills base with the potential to promote growth in the wider economy.

Investment is required to modernise and reform the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service if we are to maintain the high standards of service and improve performance through better facilities, fleet, equipment and technology.

Our schools, colleges and universities must be sustainable – financially, environmentally and educationally. This means each institution must have sufficient numbers of pupils and students to enable the delivery of a wide and balanced curriculum and to get value for money from investment in equipment and facilities. For our universities, delivering on existing commitments such as the innovation investments in our City Deals and the expansion of Magee, will not only support the growth of these institutions but also act as an economic catalyst for the region. Further rationalisation of the education estate will be required. We will focus investment on schools and colleges that are sustainable, ensuring they are well equipped and well-maintained and ensuring that all educational provision available is taken into account when considering the need for new buildings. This will be balanced by our strong commitment to ensuring equality, providing for the differing needs of individual learners, facilitating pupil and parental choice and ensuring adequate access in rural and remote areas.

Investment in IT for the justice system is needed to enable the greater use of remote hearings, improve the online submissions of documents and speed up the payment of fines. For cases that go to court, we need improved buildings that meet the needs of vulnerable witnesses and defendants. The NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) will target investment to deliver a more consistent standard of accommodation, facilities and services for all court and tribunal users. For those in the care of the NI Prison Service, there will be a focus on using digitalisation to improve staff and prisoner safety, enhance prisoner independence and family connectivity and maximise efficiency.

Policing is changing as we move away from the legacy of the past, resulting in the sale of surplus assets such as redundant police stations and housing. New police training facilities are needed to enable and support new policing models and technology. Police headquarters will be rationalised, shared administration systems implemented, and new analytic capabilities developed to meet the needs of policing in the twenty-first century. A major upgrade is planned for the regional communications network, shared across the 'blue light' services and other critical public sector services.

To achieve all of this we will need other essential infrastructure such as public transport and water and wastewater facilities to be fit for purpose. This will require a more collaborative and joined-up approach to planning and investment to avoid sub-optimal or ad hoc outcomes.

QUESTION 5

Are these the priority areas we need to focus on to strengthen our essential services? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will strengthen our essential services?

Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Strengthen Our Essential Services

We will:

Strengthen secondary, primary and mental health care	by investing in acute hospitals, in mental health and social care facilities and in the continued development of primary care hubs to provide high-quality, effective and efficient physical and mental healthcare
Increase the efficiency and responsiveness of our health service	by continuing to invest in the digital transformation of our health services and in our emergency services to improve their efficiency and effectiveness
Invest in sustainable facilities for learning and education	by a whole-system approach to rationalising and modernising our education estate to provide fit-for-purpose facilities for learning and skills that take account of the needs of our pupils, our businesses and the economy
Increase our wastewater treatment capacity	by investing in high-quality wastewater treatment facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose, support sustainable development, are efficient and meet rigorous environmental standards
Invest in the transformation of our justice system	by investing in technology and facilities that support the delivery of a modern, responsive justice system

OBJECTIVE 3: TO ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Where We Are Now

Our towns and villages are the fabric of our communities and our way of life. They provide a focal point for employment, leisure and the public and community services on which many people depend. They also provide a sense of identity for local people and places.

Too many towns and villages have experienced decline in recent years, with rising retail vacancy rates and under-utilised high streets. The reasons for this are complex. They include an increasing reliance on out-of-town shopping centres; the rise of online retail and services; low levels of residential accommodation; and discrepancies in business rates for high street shops. All these factors have been aggravated by Covid-19 restrictions, which reduced the number of people working in urban areas.

Where We Need To Be

Our towns and villages need to regain and then retain their vibrancy, purpose and sense of place. High streets of the future should be safe and attractive gathering points for whole communities, where people can live, work, shop, learn, do business, use public services and enjoy their leisure time.

The value of open space, community, leisure and recreation facilities has been highlighted clearly throughout the Covid pandemic. We need to restore and improve the quality of our natural environment for the benefit of all.

Significant intervention will be required to help our towns and villages. In cases of market failure, the public sector may need to re-think the location of service delivery and administration investment or pump-prime regeneration, at least in the short term, to encourage private and community investment. This can support the long-term evolution of our high streets from retail centres, helping them to redefine their purpose, to embrace a broader role servicing local social, environmental, housing and economic needs.

What We Need to Do

Regenerate Our High Streets

Our high streets need to be redefined for their future role. They will be anchored with public-sector tenants, providing multi-functional hubs such as libraries, community services, police stations, healthcare, leisure, education, open spaces, housing and sports facilities. We will increase housing in our urban areas – recognising that this will require us to address outdated attitudes to town centre living – as well as ensuring accommodation complies with high standards for space and amenities. Working with private-sector and community organisations also presents opportunities to focus on the reuse, repurposing and refurbishment of existing urban buildings instead of new developments. People rather than vehicles should be the priority to encourage our high streets to be community-focused, attractive environments.

CASE STUDY: A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres / Town Centre First

In response to the challenges facing their town centres, Scotland's communities, local government, businesses and third-sector partners took a collaborative 'town centre first' approach, guided by the internationally recognised 2013 Town Centre Action Plan. This plan emphasised the role of town centres and the need to prioritise and support them. Six themes (town centre living; accessible public services; proactive planning; digital towns; enterprising communities; and vibrant local economies) provided the framework to focus activities to improve town centres. COSLA and the Scottish Government signed an agreement on Town Centre First, promoting town centre development as the primary place of development, and in 2019 adopted the Place Principle (to provide a shared context for place-based work).

In June 2020, the Scottish Government launched an independent collaborative review of the progress and scope of the 2013 Action Plan, to build on the town centre-first approach and develop a refreshed vision for towns and the means to achieve it. A key element of the review was to ensure the right measures were put in place to enable towns to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic with more resilience. The Review Group adopted the following vision to guide their work.

"Towns and town centres are for the well-being of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone, and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centre successful."

The review recognised the Place Principle and town centre planning and visioning has helped generate investment and build a sense of place. It also noted that concepts such as Community Wealth Building including community asset ownership were gaining ground. These and Community Empowerment legislation were recognised as exciting ways to deliver on the growing appetite for localism. The review acknowledged the changing context in the development of the National Outcomes and their linkage to the UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which positioned Scotland as focusing on well-being, inclusive development, climate emergency responses and health and inequalities. It concluded that the approach from the 2013 Action Plan remained sound, but more consistent and rapid progress was needed. The review proposed strengthening the position of town centres to ensure a local embeddedness and focus on working the local community by:

- *strengthening the formal positions of town in National Planning*
- *reviewing the current tax, funding and development systems to ensure well-being, economy and climate outcomes, fairness and equality are at their heart*
- *expanding and aligning funding of town and town centre demonstration projects.*

The plans in Scotland have informed the work of the NI Executive's High Street Task Force, which met for the first time in February 2021.

The town centre-first approach taken in Scotland and Wales provides a good model for future decisions. This approach places town centre health at the heart of decision-making processes, driving public sector investment decisions, aligning policies and targeting resources to prioritise the regeneration of town centre sites.

Sustainable and Active Transport

We are a highly car-dependent society. We must rethink how and when we travel, creating more sustainable, accessible and safer communities through improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and prioritising our public transport. Electric and zero-emissions vehicles (EV/ZEV) will play an important part, especially for longer and rural journeys if public transport is not available. However, the design of our town and city centres will need to encourage and reflect a determined move to sustainable and active travel. Our infrastructure will also have to adapt to meet the needs and aspirations of an ageing population.

CASE STUDY: 15-Minute City

The concept of the '15-minute city' is one in which urban residents can fulfil six essential functions – living, working, commerce, healthcare, education and entertainment – within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from their home. Developed in 2016 by Professor Carlos Moreno, a leading urbanist at the Sorbonne in Paris, there are three core tenets to the concept:

- *the rhythm of a city should follow humans, not cars*
- *each square metre of urban fabric/space should serve multiple purposes through the day*
- *neighbourhoods should be designed so inhabitants can live, work and thrive in them, without having to commute elsewhere.*



Whilst acknowledging cities are places of economic dynamism and innovation, the '15-minute city' concept recognises that urban life needs to be pleasant, agile, healthy and flexible. The purpose is, therefore, to create an urban environment based on:

<i>Ecology</i>	<i>Proximity</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>	<i>Participation</i>
<i>...for a green and sustainable city</i>	<i>...living with reduced distance to other activities</i>	<i>...to create links between people</i>	<i>...involving citizens in the transformation of their neighbourhood</i>

Paris is leading the way, with an all-embracing vision of the model. Under Mayor Anne Hidalgo's aim for 'La Ville Du Quart d'Heure', Paris is focusing on a new economic model for local businesses. Reducing traffic and reclaiming streets as bike lanes and areas for leisure, and transforming existing infrastructure are all priority areas of focus.

Other cities around the world are now exploring the potential of this vision of urban living to deliver more resilient and vibrant communities. Many including the C40 cities are also promoting the '15-minute city' idea as a blueprint for post Covid-19 recovery, with the 15-Minute City Project established in 2020 as an information resource and platform to promote relevant and inspiring efforts around the world.

Active travel will need to be attractive and practical in both rural and urban areas, not just for leisure travel but for daily mobility and for children to get to school. This will mean investment in footways, and in safe and separate cycle facilities, such as Greenways for leisure and the reallocation and sharing of road space to create Quiet Lanes and Healthy Ways. In urban areas, pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority will have a key part to play.

CASE STUDY: Path of Health

Slí na Sláinte (SnaS) meaning "path of health", is an initiative developed by the Irish Heart Foundation and supported by the HSE to encourage people of all ages and abilities to walk for leisure and health.



Slí na Sláinte routes are signposted walkways providing an accessible and inexpensive environment for regular exercise. Yellow signs on blue poles are placed at one-kilometre intervals, allowing walkers to keep track of how far they walk. Signs are not numbered so walkers can start and finish at whatever point they like. International research has confirmed that the development of such community walking trails can boost exercise and improve health at low cost.

Trained leaders promote and lead walks in their area and run the "Slí Challenge", helping people calculate their time and distance walked to meet their personal targets. With 230 Slí na Sláinte routes all over Ireland, the programme has expanded internationally with Heart Foundations in ten countries implementing the scheme to date.

Each is developed locally by the relevant Local Authority in partnership with the community and (optional) other appropriate commercial organisations. It then becomes part of the approved list of Slí routes. All routes are on Local Authority land or Coillte property, with management and maintenance the responsibility of the Local Authority.

CASE STUDY: Quiet Lanes

The Transport Act 2000 gave Local Authorities in England the ability to designate country lanes as 'Quiet Lanes'. These are defined as minor rural roads or networks of minor rural roads appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vehicles. The aim is to maintain the character of minor rural roads by seeking to contain widespread, rising traffic growth. They are a sustainable initiative aimed at opening up more of the countryside for leisure and recreation activities and active travel.



Quiet Lanes must be rural in character (though not necessarily in a rural area), carry fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day and the 85th percentile traffic speed should be less than 35mph. Narrow, single-track roads are the most suitable for the designation. Community involvement is essential to define which lanes should be considered and encourage a change in behaviour of road users.

Typically, a Quiet Lane is hosted by a local, rural community, such as a parish or village group, who recognises that designation can bring benefits to their local quality of life.

There are three key elements to a Quiet Lanes scheme:

- *community involvement to encourage a change in user behaviour*
- *area-wide direction signing to discourage through traffic*
- *nationally prescribed signs to remind drivers that they are entering or exiting a Quiet Lane, a place where they may expect people to be using the whole of the road space for a range of activities.*

Designation does not bring any enforceable restrictions or prohibit use by any type of vehicles or regulate their speed. However, signage reminds users of the types of traffic they will be expected to see and encourages them to respect each other.

Quiet Lanes were initially introduced as demonstration projects in Kent, Essex and Norfolk, and are now widespread across England. There is a growing interest in their further development to support more active forms of travel as the country lives with the Covid-19 virus, as well as contributing to local responses to the climate emergency.

Investing in Housing

The location and design of new housing and the maintenance and improvement of existing housing will be critical to building sustainable communities. Too often we permit significant housing development on greenfield sites or single dwellings in the countryside, often poorly supported by existing infrastructure and leading to car-dependent lifestyles. This must change to support a sustainable future and alternative sites must be found that are better suited to meeting our needs. We must equally find a way to align long-term supply with demand, repurposing non-residential buildings that are no longer used.

We will prioritise our investment in sustainable housing, maintaining or locating it close to services, where it contributes to tackling climate change, can meet the needs of communities and an increasingly elderly population who require easy and independent access to services including health and social care. Good quality and well-located private and public housing will also be central to place-making and integration, and to addressing well-being, mental health and loneliness.

Enhancing Cultural, Arts and Leisure Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

Our leisure and cultural projects are vital social infrastructure, supporting economic development and contributing to our sense of place. Our creative industry sector is strong and growing. But our museums need ongoing investment in their storage and exhibition spaces to upgrade their attractiveness to citizens and visitors alike.

We need to ensure continued access for all to high-quality and local open spaces, as well as to sporting and leisure facilities.

QUESTION 6

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to enhance our communities and places? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will enhance our communities and places?

Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Enhance Our Communities and Places

We will:

Redefine the purpose of our high streets/urban centres	by regenerating our key urban and rural towns and villages, building on the work of the Northern Ireland High Street Task Force to ensure they are vibrant and thriving
Promote active travel, prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling for leisure and mobility	by encouraging active travel through the reallocation of funding and road space to prioritise safe and accessible walking and cycling for leisure and commuting; this will include the further development of Greenways, Quiet Lanes/Healthy Ways, and segregated pedestrian/cycle facilities
Expand social and intermediate housing	by continuing to invest in the building of additional high-quality housing and the refurbishment of existing social homes to meet the needs of communities, including those relating to an ageing population; and reducing the waiting times for social housing
Develop our sports, culture, arts and leisure facilities and enhance our natural environment	by expanding the provision of high-quality, accessible green space, leisure and sporting facilities; by supporting and enhancing our natural environment and by maintaining our arts and cultural venues

OBJECTIVE 4: TO BUILD A STRONG, CONNECTED AND COMPETITIVE REGION

Where We Are Now

Our economy has shown great resilience in dealing with the Covid pandemic. We have numerous strong, world-class, indigenous companies, particularly in advanced manufacturing, agri-food and the creative industries. We are a recognised leader in many specialist areas such as cyber security, data analytics, life and health sciences, and fintech. We are Europe's leading foreign direct investment destination for new software development.

However, our economy has been characterised by long-term structural weaknesses and inequalities, further exacerbated by the pandemic. It suffers from poor productivity, relatively low wages, with too many lacking high-level skills or in need of reskilling; high rates of economic inactivity; and relatively low levels of investment in research, development and innovation.

Where We Need To Be

Investment in the right physical and skills infrastructure will need to encourage stronger, more balanced and consistent economic growth and enable us to build on our strengths. The Covid pandemic has underlined the importance of improving our resilience against economic shocks, and enable us to achieve greater prosperity, whilst addressing the imbalances and inequalities that have persisted for too long.

Given our geographical location, we need to maintain strong connectivity internationally, nationally and locally. This is critical for our economy to survive and thrive to 2050. With changing working patterns, the need for physical connectivity is also evolving. We must rethink the traditional models of focusing investment primarily on supporting daily peak-hour car travel to work and deliveries into major centres. Instead, we must address the new disparate and dispersed patterns of travel for work, leisure and deliveries.

Rapid changes in working and service delivery prompted by Covid have also emphasised the need to maintain and strengthen our digital connectivity – providing fast, reliable broadband and advances in mobile connectivity for all our citizens and businesses.

For a small, advanced economy such as ours to be competitive, we must overcome the physical barriers and infrastructure constraints that limit our competitiveness. Two critical examples are strengthening our wastewater network and overcoming shortages in the land available for commercial and residential development.

What We Need to Do

Our Strategic Road Network

Our strategic road network is vital for the effective transport of people and goods within our region, across the island of Ireland and to ensure good and reliable connectivity with Great Britain. The development of the Investment Strategy has coincided with the UK's Union Connectivity Review. An emerging recommendation of the Review is the development of a new UK Strategic Transport Network. This will achieve better management of the flow of people and goods between UK regions and improve the partnership working between the UK government and devolved administrations. As well as strategic links within our region, the Review recognises the importance of the port of Cairnryan and the A75 and A77 in Scotland for our companies taking goods to UK markets and their onward transport to customers in mainland Europe.

There is much potential for further investment in cross-border strategic networks, for example the completion of the A5 Western Transport Corridor as a strategic corridor to the northwest; the Narrow Water Bridge, and the promotion of leisure routes and trails to support our tourism sector.

Public Transport Services: We have a relatively small rail network, although there is growing interest in understanding the potential for its expansion and improvement. In particular, the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, when complete, will help to articulate this potential, but only where demand supports such investment and value for money can be demonstrated. The electrification and upgrading of the Belfast-Dublin rail corridor are recognised as being future

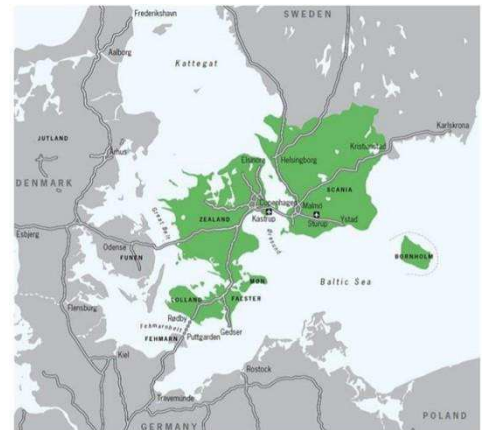
developments of strategic importance. 40% of the population on the island lives within 30 minutes of this economic corridor. Focus on such key corridors elsewhere has been shown to encourage economic growth.

Investing in our bus network and developing multi-modal hubs will help create a more connected and accessible sustainable public transport network.

CASE STUDY: Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee (GCSC) – Øresund Region

Founded in 2015, Greater Copenhagen is a collaboration between local authorities and regions in Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark, encompassing 4.4m citizens and focused on generating growth.

The initiative involved the creation of a cross-border functional economy with a new regional brand/name. It builds on the metropolitan area around Copenhagen and, across the sound, southern Sweden following the opening of a fixed-link bridge/tunnel in 2000. The link provides agglomeration benefits, creating a larger metropolitan region with an integrated labour market, helping to overcome the drawbacks of the area's peripheral location in global terms. The Øresund Region is a technology hub with innovation potential, world-class scientific infrastructure and a good environment for start-ups. Wider policy efforts were needed to connect the assets and capabilities in the enlarged region. Many of the Øresund initiatives have prioritised the creation of business and knowledge networks and collaborative platforms.



It believes a successfully integrated labour market will secure more jobs and bring new businesses to Greater Copenhagen. In 2017 the European Commission (EC) named Greater Copenhagen a model metropolis for collaboration across borders, partly linked to the improved integration of the labour market and economy that was kickstarted in 2000 by the completion of the Øresund Bridge. However, the EC also pointed out that this could be improved by expanding public transportation across borders, as a more efficient traffic infrastructure would strengthen the region's reputation as an integrated and functional metropolis. In response, Greater Copenhagen developed a Traffic Charter which features both regional and cross-border infrastructure projects, including accessibility to cities from rural areas. Using public transport, it should take no longer than an hour to reach Copenhagen or Malmö, no matter from where in the region people are travelling.

Greater Copenhagen is building on this work (in 2021) with its vision to “be a global hub for growth, sustainable solutions and innovation”. It promotes cooperation between its members and creates alliances at both regional and international levels, connecting knowledge hubs, businesses

and public institutions. It is about breaking down barriers between local authorities, regions and countries and creating a partnership where everyone pulls in the same direction and invests in shared solutions to shared challenges. The area is a hub for knowledge and excellence, boasting approximately 14,000 researchers, 19 research parks and innovation centres and 17 universities. It will focus on five key areas, which it believes are essential to its future growth and welfare.

Greater Copenhagen recognised that infrastructural improvements are an essential driver for regional integration and competitiveness. However, these improvements are not sufficient on their own. Wider policy efforts were needed to connect the assets and capabilities in the enlarged region. Many of the initiatives in the Øresund have been to create networks and collaborative platforms.

In Belfast the Belfast Rapid Transit Glider service, introduced in September 2018, uses hybrid high-capacity tram-style vehicles and has been highly successful in increasing public transport use at a time of decline elsewhere in the UK. Further enhancement and strengthening of our rural and urban public transport network and services, including a north-south Glider link across Belfast and potentially similar services elsewhere, will be key to developing a more sustainable approach to transport and ensuring easier access to services, especially for the young and older people.

Ports, Harbours & Airports

Our ports, harbours and airports provide vital links for travellers, freight and trade. Each of our three airports serves a distinct market, but between them they offer a strong network of business, cargo and leisure flights. Our ports, harbours and airports need an overall coherent air and port strategy, including investment plans that encourage and enable greater accessibility.

Brexit and the Covid pandemic have demonstrated clearly the importance of ensuring the smooth flow of cargo for imports and exports. Our ports serve freight and passengers, and also increasingly the cruise/leisure travel market in Belfast and Derry. Ongoing investment will be required to meet these demands. Belfast Harbour plans considerable investment in its marine and estate infrastructure, including schemes to deepen the shipping channels and create deep-water quays. We will encourage further investment in our key gateways and provide assistance where there is a need to do so.

Efficient Utility and Digital Networks

Resilient and efficient utility networks are essential to support businesses and citizens. The north-south interconnector, for example, will ensure security of supply and the achievement of strategic renewable energy and decarbonisation targets.

We have a strong communications infrastructure reflecting past and current investments by both public and private sectors. This has provided vital foundations for our thriving digital economy. We will continue to encourage and support investment, as we could quickly fall behind other regions, given the fast pace of technology development and new demands for speed and bandwidth arising from a more connected world. We are determined to maximise the benefits that digital networks offer to create a more regionally balanced, sustainable economy based on the principles of Green Growth. The Shared Rural Network – a joint venture between commercial operators and the UK Government – aims to increase mobile broadband coverage to a minimum of 95% by 2025, addressing the many ‘not spots’ and allowing rural business to prosper and rural communities to thrive.

5G networks will provide the much-needed capacity to underpin increased mobile traffic. This technology will also be a crucial foundation for our post-Covid-19 recovery and future growth in innovation, especially as we adapt to increased home/remote working, smart cities and the growth of the Internet of Things. 5G will also support the proliferation of connected devices and open up new opportunities for business and jobs. Productivity gains to business, equality gains for regions and economic gains for the region as a whole are only as achievable as the networks they can access. Belfast Harbour is already seeing the tangible benefits that disruptive digital technologies can deliver for business and industry, with plans for 5G-enabled applications part of its vision for creating a ‘Smart Port’.

Unlock Our Strategic Sites

There is a legacy of former military or defence and other industrial sites being left vacant. These provide potentially valuable large-scale and usually well-connected brownfield sites in locations where there are often shortages of development land for business and housing – shortages which constrain economic growth. Ensuring the planning regime enables us to unlock these sites for investment should be a key priority, allowing for well planned, sustainable economic development.

QUESTION 7

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to build a strong, competitive and connected region? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will help build a strong, competitive and connected region?

Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Build a Strong, Competitive and Connected Region

We will:

Improve connectivity on strategic corridors	by continuing to invest in our strategic transport networks to ensure effective and efficient connectivity within and between regions (rail, road, air, port, active travel and digital/utility) and within key economic corridors such as the Belfast–Dublin corridor
Strengthen our public transport networks	by maintaining and strengthening our inter-urban, urban and rural public transport networks, including the expansion of the rapid transit system within Belfast
Maintain strong utility and digital connectivity	by encouraging and supporting investment in our utility and digital networks to ensure individuals, communities and businesses throughout the region can maximise the benefits networks can offer with world class digital and telecom connectivity
Leverage key strategic development sites	by facilitating the development of strategic sites, such as Maze/Long Kesh, to maximise economic opportunities and act as exemplars for sustainable, multi-use developments

OBJECTIVE 5: TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS FROM EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Where we are now

Although we have already made a start on transforming and modernising our public services, too much of our public sector is still reliant on paper-based or ageing IT systems that are often fragmented and hard to use. However, our response to Covid-19 has shown that we can use technology to deliver many services more efficiently and effectively.

Our region benefits from a strong communications infrastructure base and is the UK's best digitally connected region, with 65% of homes and businesses (530,000 premises) – including 75% within Belfast – having access to full fibre broadband. Project Stratum is improving this further for the 10% of premises currently unable to access broadband speeds of 30 Mbps primarily in rural areas, which to date have not benefited from commercial investment.

We are starting from a strong base. Our academic institutions and industry partners are recognised leaders in research, development and commercialisation in key technology domains – particularly in cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and software development focused on financial services, insurance, agri-food, medical/pharmaceutical applications and green technologies. The NI Digital Catapult leads the UK catapult network in areas of artificial intelligence, machine learning, virtual reality and augmented reality – helping our companies to grow by harnessing the power and potential of these new technologies.

Already, in the public sector, we are investing in 'smart technologies' to improve accessibility, drive up the quality of our public services, and drive down costs. For example, we are utilising sensors on road surfaces to identify and respond quicker to defects that affect drivers. We are also monitoring livestock using satellite imagery to improve services to farmers and response to disease outbreaks. These are some of many applications that indicate the potential for the future.

Where We Need To Be

However, technology is continuing to develop rapidly and will profoundly change infrastructure in terms of:

- **embedding technology** into infrastructure assets so that we can monitor and improve their performance
- **system integration and management** – optimising infrastructure networks so that we can improve their utilisation
- **technology affecting how people and businesses use current infrastructure**
- **innovative technology** that will change future demand for and supply of infrastructure, in some cases make existing infrastructure obsolete, in others changing the way infrastructure is designed, built and operated.

To guide our future investment in data and digital infrastructure, we need to ensure:

- no-one will be left behind in the transition to a more digital-focused future. Equality of access to digital technology is an important issue of social equity and fairness. This was demonstrated clearly during the Covid pandemic when a rise in schooling and working from home highlighted the need for affordable, reliable broadband connectivity and access to devices.
- our systems are secured from attack, and that users' data and privacy is protected. Increasingly, our critical infrastructure is connected by digital networks that are themselves interconnected. This raises the level of vulnerability and contingent risks – and necessitates vigilance and investment.
- we adopt a 'digital by default' approach to improve access for all public service users. Our systems will be developed – in ways that ensure ease of use and accessibility for users with different needs.
- we adopt an approach that fully recognises that public sector data is now a strategic asset. Managed in the right way, it will provide a significant return on investment. To this end, we intend to bring forward a NI Public Sector Data Strategy as a priority.

- our investments in data and digital systems will be procured in ways that ensure all our data are fully owned and accessible to the public sector and that new systems do not lock us in and prevent the use of better alternatives in the future.
- that citizens are able to use their own devices when accessing public systems and services. Ensuring sensitive data remains secure will be essential.

What We Need to Do

Digitisation of Public Service Interfaces

We will continue to invest in upgrading our digital infrastructure and systems to enable citizens to engage and transact effectively with public services – building on the success of NI Direct. Getting information about public services and getting business done will be faster and easier – whether it’s applying for a school place, renewing a license, paying fees or fines. In the future it is likely there will be greater acceptance of technology for more patient/clinician interactions, and these will provide substantial opportunities for efficiencies within the health service.

Under this strategy, investment will be targeted on the digitisation of our public services.

Upgrade of Public Sector Data/Digital Infrastructure

Investment in our public service digital infrastructure will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our public services by reducing processing times, driving up data quality and ensuring that decisions can be made on the basis of accurate, timely and comprehensive information.

Encompass, a Health and Social Care (HSC) initiative, will introduce digitally integrated care records to improve patient safety and health outcomes through regional standardisation and best practice. Major investment is also planned to transform education and justice information systems.

New Analytics to Maximise the Value of Data

The public sector handles vast quantities of data, which could be used better to target services more effectively and make them more responsive to the needs of citizens. Examples of these applications include the deployment of emergency services based on predictive analytics and using usage data to optimise the treatment of drinking water.

In the Belfast Region City Deal, iREACH is an NHS, industry and academic facility, focusing on the innovative design and delivery of clinical trials. Extending this capacity within the Belfast Region will enable the facility to take on larger and more complex trial studies. Building on an established electronic patient record, iREACH will increase access to treatments for patients and signal to industry the expansion of healthcare capability in Northern Ireland, enabling access to growing global markets and creating investment opportunities.

Smart Cities/Sensors

The emergence of Smart Cities and the Internet of Things must be fully integrated across policy areas, ensuring smart technologies play a central role in enabling connected regional and national infrastructure such as transport, energy and water, and linking these technologies and data sets to deliver improved city, region and central government services.

Network Risks and Security

As our core infrastructure becomes more digitally connected, our vulnerability to systems failure, cyber-attack and related disruptions increases. Fortunately, our region is a world-leader in cybersecurity research, development and commercialisation – and we will work in partnership with academia and industry to meet this challenge.

Offsite Manufacturing and New Materials

The development of new materials and changing fabrication techniques will change the way infrastructure is designed and manufactured, and affect the cost of building and maintenance. New applications of smart materials are already being seen in transport infrastructure such as solar roads that generate renewable energy and surfaces that self-detect or charge vehicles at speed. Increasingly, new materials, such as ductile or bendable or self-healing and low-

carbon concrete, will change the design and build of infrastructure, and reduce annual maintenance costs and environmental impact, for example of bridges and tunnels.

Changes to fabrication methods, including 3D printing, will alter the way and location where construction is occurring, offering the opportunity for onsite fabrication (or offsite manufacturing allowing for faster construction and higher quality production) reducing the costs of transport of materials and construction.

QUESTION 8

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to maximise the benefits from emerging technologies? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will maximise benefits from emerging technologies?

Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Maximise The Benefits From Emerging Technologies

We will:

Digitise public service access points	by targeting the digitisation of public interfaces to our core public services, where appropriate, in order to use technology to improve accessibility, reduce transaction times, enhance service provision and responsiveness, drive up service quality and meet user expectations
Upgrade the public service digital infrastructure	by focusing investment on upgrading core enterprise systems to reduce operational delivery costs, modernise and streamline workflows and transform service delivery; this will include a heavy emphasis on smart technology, leveraging smart devices and artificial intelligence
Take advantage of data analytics and data science	by investing in our data management and analytics infrastructure, recognising data as a valuable public sector asset, and strengthening the capacity and capability of our public services to make decisions at all levels informed by evidence derived from analysis of data
Improve information security and network resilience	by working collaboratively with industry and academia to ensure effective investment in strengthening our network resilience and security

PART D: OUR APPROACH TO STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Introduction

This Investment Strategy recognises that investment in infrastructure should be based on an evidenced need; should be prioritised to ensure the most effective use of resources overall and to achieve the outcomes we need; and should make tangible, positive differences to citizens' lives.

This means we will develop a balanced investment plan that recognises the funding needs of existing infrastructure (both capital and revenue) as well as the new, enhanced and reconfigured infrastructure requirements set out in this document.

Embedding infrastructure into Government approval and delivery processes

Delivering infrastructure investment at scale means creating alignment between all departments' investment needs; the Department of Finance as the key funding stakeholder; and the NI Executive as the body that endorses the overall investment strategy.

To ensure that infrastructure investment is embedded into funding and delivery plans, we will develop a comprehensive rolling 10-year Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan. This will be supported by a new Medium-Term Infrastructure Financial Plan and will enable the development of detailed departmental Investment Plans. This approach will seek to take full advantage of collaborative working across public bodies, community and private-sector stakeholders to ensure that strategic, regional and local investments maximise the opportunity for value creation and enhanced inclusion through co-ordination of resources and investment.

These plans will result in the publication of a visible pipeline of projects for the construction industry and other sectors, and create transparency in the delivery of infrastructure against plans.



Fig 5: Infrastructure Investment Plan

Funding and financing

The Scale of Required Investment

The scale of investment required to maintain our existing infrastructure and provide for our future needs and ambitions will be significantly higher in real terms than the £1.2–£1.4 billion per annum typically invested over the past 10 years.

To optimise our ability to invest in coming years we need to:

- (i) prioritise investment to areas with the most need
- (ii) maximise and co-ordinate the public and private sources of finance to help us deliver our goals
- (iii) ensure that sufficient delivery capacity exists within the public, private and community sectors to ensure that we invest in projects that can be delivered on time and on budget.

Proposed Investment Prioritisation

A prioritisation framework will need to be developed to help inform the Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan. The following proposals set out some of the criteria that will need to be considered in the development of such a framework.

1. Does the proposed investment support the achievement of the objectives of the Programme for Government and the priorities of the Investment Strategy?

- There must be a clear strategic fit between the proposed investment and the achievement of the outcomes set out in the Programme for Government and this Investment Strategy.

2. Will the investment be sustainable and resilient?

- Will the proposal deliver the required outcomes at the right whole-life cost?
- Will the investment result in an improved and more efficient public service?
- Will the investment make best use of public and private infrastructure assets?

- Do they contribute to decarbonisation?
- Does the investment protect/enhance the natural environment and ecosystems?
- Will the new assets be resilient and sustainable in future?
- Does the proposal reflect the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- Does it contribute to climate resilience?
- Are they consistent with the Circular Economy?
- Will the investment impact the marine environment?
- Does the use of technology enable digitisation opportunities and address cybersecurity risks?

3. Is the proposed investment inclusive and equitable/equal?

- Does the proposal address imbalances (for example, urban/rural, social economic, age and gender)?
- Does it promote greater intergenerational fairness?
- Will it support equality and good relations?
- Will it deliver balanced development across rural and urban areas, across sectors and communities?
- Will it maximise Social Value?
- Has it been developed through co-design and stakeholder engagement, and moving forward can it be developed through co-delivery (for example central/local government partnerships, community partnerships)?

4. Is the proposed investment affordable?

- How do we decide between unaffordable projects with the greatest need and affordable projects for which the need is lower?
- What is the right balance of public and private finance required?
- Is there sufficient public finance and can it be deployed more efficiently?
- Have all opportunities to secure alternative funding and finance been explored?

- Is there sufficient capital and resource funding to manage and maintain investments?
- Is there the opportunity to maximise economies of scale?

5. Is the proposed investment prepared for delivery?

- Are appropriate governance and accountability arrangements in place?
- Have opportunities for collaboration been identified and exploited?
- Are the appropriately skilled resources in place and are they fully funded?
- Has planning and procurement risk been appropriately mitigated?
- Is there evidence of market readiness to deliver the investment?
- Can progress and risk be transparently monitored?
- Is there evidence of market capacity to deliver the investment?

Investment Planning

We will set out exactly how we will prioritise, fund and deliver these plans in a **Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan (MTIFP)**.

Infrastructure investment projects and programmes, by their nature, take a significant period of time to plan, procure and deliver effectively. This is often measured in years. Good investment practice dictates that capital budget allocations (or indicative allocations) therefore need to be made on the same timescale. A longer-term perspective on the supply of finance encourages longer-term planning, better coordination between projects and partners and more efficient use of capital. It helps to avoid otherwise more costly and sub-optimal investment decisions. Engagement with the NI Fiscal Council will be key to ensure that all possible means of financing our infrastructure are fully exploited.

In recent years, long-term investment planning has been hampered by immediate-term (1-3 year) budget settlements. This has inhibited our ability to plan on a multi-year basis and has tended to favour smaller and less strategic investments that can be delivered in the shorter timeframe. A Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan will be developed to help inform departmental capital planning. The plan will:

- cover a rolling 10-year period, and be updated each year in line with the NI Budget process
- commence with confirmed Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL) for all departments and related public bodies in line with committed HM Treasury Spending Review allocations to the Executive, and consistent with the NI Budget and this Investment Strategy
- be supplemented by an assumption of indicative capital allocations for years beyond the Budget, up to and including Year 10
- include an assessment of all other sources of public finance, such as Reinvestment and Reform Initiative borrowing, Financial Transactions Capital loan finance or equity, external public funding (UK, RoI and International)

- include an assessment of potential private finance, where this does not unduly impact on the NI Executive budget and risk appetite
- consider the revenue costs associated with pre-development and operational management.

The Executive's 10-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan

Departmental Investment Proposals will be assessed, in aggregate, against the priorities set out in this strategy, and the available resources set out in the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan.

From this work, we will agree and publish a new Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan, setting out all projects and programmes ongoing, planned or expected to commence within the next 10 years. This will demonstrate the matching of prioritised infrastructure needs and demands with projected financial resources set out in the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan, presented under each of the strategic investment priorities set out in this strategy.

Delivery of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan will be subject to the enhanced governance and oversight arrangements described in more detail later in this document.

We intend that the initial Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan (including the Finance Plan) should be delivered by the end of 2022 and cover the period to 2032, reflecting both existing commitments and new investment programmed for that period.

This approach will ensure investment planning is strategic in addressing the major areas of investment need and effectively coordinated between sectors and across all public sector bodies. Publication of the Plan will provide the construction sector and investors with greater clarity and visibility of proposals, through a published pipeline of future investment that will be regularly reviewed.

Information Portal and Contracts Pipeline

More granular information on investment programmes and projects will be published on the Executive's ISNI Information Portal. This will be enhanced to include a detailed Contracts Pipeline to ensure our construction industry and its supply chain have the information they need to plan ahead effectively. It will also assist the wider industry and academic institutions to plan ahead to ensure we have the right skills in our local workforce to help deliver our investments on the ground.

QUESTION 9

How should we prioritise between maintaining or upgrading existing assets and new aspirations?

QUESTION 10

How should we communicate with consultees on projects that present affordability challenges, and thus may require alternative funding and financing to be utilised?

QUESTION 11

Do you agree with the proposed prioritisation criteria? If no, then what changes would you suggest?

QUESTION 12

What level of engagement should we have with consultees on project milestones and delivery progress once a project has been programmed for delivery?

Improving Delivery

The Challenge

Our delivery challenge is considerable. We must respond to fundamental changes to the infrastructure needs documented in this strategy by delivering more projects and by delivering them on time and to budget.

Stakeholder engagement during the development of this strategy highlighted that the planning policy framework and planning process have often been perceived as barriers to effective infrastructure investment: taking too long, or being too unpredictable or inconsistent, with legal challenges an ongoing feature in many planning applications. We know that a strong, sustainable spatial planning framework that is robust and consistently applied can provide certainty for developers and confidence to investors, as well as assurance to citizens and businesses. We need to recognise that all will need to contribute to secure these improvements, including better quality applications and increased upfront engagement, as well as improved efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system.

Construction is one of our major industries. It is experiencing skills gaps and an ageing workforce and there is a need for development of both traditional site-based and vocational skills, adapting to the changing digital delivery of construction and new opportunities in the green economy. Ensuring we invest in skills to support our infrastructure will be essential, and expertise will also be needed in emerging technical areas, for example to manage flood risk and climate change impact.

How We Will Improve Delivery

Programme and Project Management

Departments will continue to develop their programme and project management capacity and capability. Working with SIB, CPD and NICSHR, they will ensure staff involved in the delivery of projects have the skills, knowledge and experience required to be successful. This will require significant investment not only in additional resource capacity in the short term but also in a longer term capacity building, recruitment and training programme. Governance

and oversight will be improved and better monitoring and reporting of performance will enable informed decision-making. Delivery collaboration and the breaking down of silos will also improve outcomes and delivery confidence.

Procurement and Ensuring Social Value

Building on the work of the Procurement Board, we will continue to strengthen the professional development of procurement and construction staff to support efficient procurement management, and streamline procurement processes to maximise buying power and improve delivery.

Public procurement is an important source of expenditure and social value clauses are included in our construction contracts, building in employment and training requirements such as apprenticeships and providing placement opportunities for the long-term unemployed, as well as work experience and community initiatives. From June 2022 a minimum of 10% of the total award criteria of tenders must be to social value, where the construction contract is valued at over £4.7m, and we will continue this commitment to maximise the social value from our infrastructure investment.

CASE STUDY: Social Value

Social value refers to wider financial and non-financial impacts on the well-being of individuals, communities and the environment. Legally, social value outcomes can be included in the procurement process if they are considered at business case stage and relate to the subject matter of the contract or the performance of the contract. The Procurement Regulations specifically refer to incorporating social value into specifications, contract performance clauses, selection criteria and award criteria.

The Executive has previously promoted the use of public procurement to deliver social, economic and environmental objectives, including endorsing Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement in 2008 and including 'sustainability' as a component of Value for Money alongside cost and quality in 2011.

An important initiative to deliver social value is the Buy Social Model, which the Procurement Board approved in 2015. The Buy Social Model specifically addresses key quality of life indicators such as: personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development. Over this period many public bodies have been highly innovative in their use of public procurement to promote social value, including the scoring of social value criteria.

By September 2021, 2,065 New Entrant Trainees had a training and employment opportunity under Buy Social. In addition, 98% of Buy Social participants who completed their NET period remained in employment with the contractor, found alternative employment or returned to education/training (where an outcome has been recorded).

Building on this, Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) has recently launched guidance on the policy to evaluate social value as an award criterion (within public procurement contracts) alongside cost and quality. The Executive has approved this policy, so that from 1 June 2022 tenders must include a minimum of 10% of the total award criteria to social value.

A jobs model commissioned by SIB will allow assessment of the potential impact (including on long-term unemployed/apprentices) of investment on full-time employment. This model provides a quantitative assessment of the impact of specific investment plans and projects going forward.

Measuring Progress and Impact

We must make sure that how and what we invest in achieves the objectives we want. Our engagement has shown there is real interest from organisations and citizens in our infrastructure and investment decisions.

Our current delivery tracking system already allows for monitoring of the construction pipeline. This will be expanded and developed to allow for greater interaction and be more accessible to a wider audience. It will include:

A forward look – providing information and certainty for the construction industry so they can plan. This will set out:

- What is likely to be invested in, by whom and when. This will be searchable, for example by location, by type of project, scale of expenditure, procurement route, and current status (e.g., business case, planning, design, etc.).
- Users will be able to request alerts, and get clear information on how to bid.

Performance monitoring – to ensure we are delivering projects to time and to budget; and, if not, to enable us to understand why so that remedial actions can be taken. We will implement a new portfolio management system that will ensure there is a single, accurate, consistent and timely picture of the state of each major project. This will be accessible to the Executive, Ministers, Assembly Committees, officials, the private sector and citizens. Searchable and downloadable data, complemented by interactive dashboards, will be available through the Investment Strategy website.

Retrospective impact assessment – of the infrastructure investment, linking with the PfG outcomes delivery framework (when approved) and other high-level strategic objectives such as the 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy, the Housing Supply Strategy and Anti-Poverty Strategy. Key performance metrics will be agreed to allow for ongoing monitoring of our infrastructure investment.

Our monitoring will set out to demonstrate a range of impacts including:

- social value
- social impact
- rural needs
- equality and good relations
- environmental impact
- economic impact

We will publish an Annual Monitoring Report that will include a specific Investment Delivery Report.

QUESTION 13

Do you agree that the proposals we have set out will adequately measure progress and impact? If no, then how should we measure progress and impact?

Accountability and Oversight

The Challenge

With so much changing quickly in relation to infrastructure, we know that solutions will be increasingly complex, and require a cross-departmental, inter-jurisdictional and more joined-up approach to planning, investment, delivery and monitoring. We will need to ramp up our capability and our capacity to be able to work in a more agile way to manage our infrastructure investment. This will require interim measures to overcome short-term capacity and skills issues, complemented by a programme of recruitment, training and capacity building to provide a more sustainable long-term solution to infrastructure investment.

Accountability for delivery of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan will be sharpened, providing greater clarity of oversight, more transparency and improved monitoring to critical areas of the Executive's spending.



Fig 6: Accountability and Oversight

Providing Resilient Leadership for Infrastructure Investment

Strategic Oversight by the Executive

The Executive will exercise strategic oversight on Infrastructure Investment to assure strategic direction and focus on delivery is maintained at the highest level, and to respond to emerging strategic issues, risks and opportunities in the years ahead. The Investment Strategy will be included on the agenda for Executive meetings twice per year, supported and informed by inputs from the ISNI Programme Board.

ISNI Programme Board

The NICS Board will sit as the ISNI Programme Board **twice per year, or more frequently if needed**. The role of the Programme Board will be to scrutinise delivery of the **Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan and Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan**. The ISNI Programme Board will consider all opportunities to collaborate, innovate, accelerate delivery, address any blockages that arise, oversee risk management and take timely actions as appropriate.

Departments and Related Public Bodies

Departments and related public bodies will retain principal responsibility for the planning, resourcing, procurement and successful delivery of projects under this ISNI, working closely with other departments as appropriate, and with the Strategic Investment Board and Department of Finance. Normal accounting officer responsibilities and business case approvals processes will apply.

Senior Officials Group

A Senior Officials Group will meet regularly to ensure departmental collaboration throughout the development of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan and across the delivery phase. This will include senior officers from all key infrastructure departments and SIB, providing consistency with the governance arrangements of the other high-level strategies such as the Green Growth Strategy.

The ISNI Senior Officials Group will, from amongst its membership, appoint lead officers for each of the five investment themes. This will provide appropriate structures to encourage and support the inter-departmental working necessary to deliver the investment required by this strategy.

Strategic Investment Board

The Strategic Investment Board has the statutory function to develop the Investment Strategy. Consistent with this, it will ensure the ongoing development, application and monitoring, reporting and review of the strategy.

SIB will ensure there is ongoing collaboration and engagement with departments, industry and citizens regarding investment in our infrastructure. This engagement will be critical to the development of the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan and 10-yearly Executive Infrastructure Investment Plans, to effective monitoring, and to ensuring the continued relevance of our Strategic Investment Priorities.

SIB will provide a secretariat function to both the Ministerial Strategic Oversight Group and the NICS Programme Board.

Stakeholder engagement has been central to the initial development of this Investment Strategy and identifying our investment needs and Strategic Investment Priorities. This engagement will continue with the establishment of a wide-reaching forum, facilitated by SIB. This will provide ongoing feedback, identification of needs/gaps and reassessment of priorities and enable ongoing engagement with industry and relevant stakeholders.

SIB will lead a specialist task and finish/working group structure providing critical input into and oversight of the development of the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan and Infrastructure Investment Plan.

The Infrastructure Commission

The Executive has made a commitment in its Covid Recovery Plan to establish an Infrastructure Commission. At the time of writing, work is ongoing to determine the precise remit of the Commission and its relationship with the Executive, departments and SIB. This

section of the strategy will, therefore, be adapted to take account of the Executive's decisions in respect of the role of the Commission.

QUESTION 14

Do you agree that the proposed accountability and oversight structures will support successful delivery? If no, then what other proposals should we consider?

QUESTION 15

Do you agree with the process and the findings of the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)? If no, then please explain why.

QUESTION 16

Are there any other issues or inequalities that have not been highlighted in the draft EQIA or RNIA that you believe need to be noted? If yes, then please explain what they are.

QUESTION 17

Are there any other comments or suggestions that you think are relevant to help us develop and deliver the Investment Strategy?

Glossary

CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CODA	City of Derry Airport
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limits
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
EV	Electric Vehicles
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTC	Financial Transactions Capital
GHG	Greenhouse Gas(es)
HSCT	Health and Social Care Trust
ISNI	Investment Strategy Northern Ireland
NDNA	New Decade New Approach
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIE	Northern Ireland Electricity

NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NISRA	Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency
NIW	Northern Ireland Water
PfG	Programme for Government
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
ROI	Republic of Ireland
TEO	The Executive Office
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SPPS	Strategic Policy Planning Statement

Freedom of Information Act 2000: Confidentiality of Consultations

The Strategic Investment Board will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Strategic Investment Board can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Strategic Investment Board in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Strategic Investment Board cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department (Strategic Investment Board) should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's (Strategic Investment Board's) functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department (Strategic Investment Board) should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department (Strategic Investment Board) of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

INFRASTRUCTURE 2050

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

Draft Consultation Document

isni.gov.uk



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

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**Investment
Strategy**
Northern Ireland

APPENDIX 3B



1 April 2022

Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
Strategic Investment Board
5th Floor, 9 Lanyon Place
Belfast
BT1 3LP

Email: consult.isni@sibni.org

Re: Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Consultation

To whom it may concern:

Mid Ulster District Council would like to take this opportunity to submit relevant feedback in relation to the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Draft Consultation. The Council welcomes the publication of this draft Strategy and is optimistic that the strategy has the potential to provide solutions to many of the key financial and infrastructure challenges that currently exist. It is a welcome aspect of the strategy that it sets out the major spending objectives in Northern Ireland for the next 30 years and identifies the areas in most need, which must be prioritised.

However, with regards the Vision for infrastructure the document does not mention specific infrastructure projects, but highlights the need for investment in new roads, schools, hospitals, social housing and public transport. It acknowledges there are "significant deficiencies" in our current infrastructure. For example, investment in Northern Ireland's water and wastewater infrastructure is a key priority, which could see a real possibility of tax increases such as water charging. The former Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy recognised the importance of infrastructure to balance with effective regional development.

Mid Ulster District Council believes that the Vision for the Investment Strategy is ambitious, looking at key objectives for infrastructure investment in the region up until 2050. However, the Council would suggest the Vision should include reference to "**promoting regional balance**" in Northern Ireland in order to address decades of infrastructure underinvestment West of the Bann including Mid Ulster. Investment in infrastructure and connectivity is central to addressing regional imbalances and achieving "levelling up". Northern Ireland has developed an unbalanced economy with investment in jobs and infrastructure focussed largely on Belfast.

Suggested Vision:

*“We have the infrastructure that enables everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life; that supports sustainable economic development, **promotes regional balance** and protects our environment.”*

The Council is concerned that the strategy states “will make the best use of our capital and revenue budgets to meet immediate priorities”. In the past that has meant the economic viability of undertaking projects was the deciding factor. Rural proofing or addressing the problems in areas of most need have been overlooked.

The critical aspect of this Vision is that it correctly notes that future economic development must be ‘sustainable’; to enable this the future approach and investment from government must therefore, be on a longer-term strategic basis. Over previous years, the short-term approach to investment planning has proved to be a severe constraining factor to supporting economic growth, effectively acting as a barrier not a driver.

Infrastructure planning should be people-centred and genuinely developed as a fully inclusive region. In turn, this will create conditions for a sustainable region that is accessible and connected.

The new Investment Strategy should seek to create the conditions to successfully deliver the City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland to achieve regional balance’ and ‘levelling-up’ policy imperatives respectively. This would support the delivery of the Strategy’s vision for our society and economy and unlock better social and economic outcomes and address global challenges in a sustainable way.

Identifying indicative timeframes (short/medium/long) would assist in striving to achieve the aspirations of the strategy until 2050.

Objective 1: To Decarbonise our Economy, Assets and Society

Mid Ulster District Council is broadly supportive of the details set out to achieve this objective. However, as a rural district it is important to be mindful that connectivity is a significant issue that challenges the rural economy need to be addressed in order for the economy to thrive throughout Northern Ireland. Therefore, decarbonisation of the economy needs to be addressed within the context of cumulative issues such as poor broadband and mobile phone coverage and poor road and transport networks.

However, the Council acknowledges the clear strategic benefits of a circular economy and would particularly support resilient waste management system solutions. Council would also be supportive of additional electric charging points on Councils sites as well as incentives and support for local businesses and industries to ensure their materials and packaging.

Objective 2: To Strengthen Our Essential Services

In relation to the Investment priorities to strengthen our essential services, the Council is supportive of the proposed long term funding streams to deliver these ambitions. In particular, a common theme amongst local authorities in recent years has been decreased or static year-on-year local funding (despite inflationary costs).

The Council believes that there is a need to secure both support and resources from other government departments and agencies, in particular the need for cross-government approach, which includes transport, health, education and planning in order to make the most of opportunities including the various other departmental strategies. The Council would support the imposition of a number of quantifiable targets where possible with regular milestones and the inclusion of Key Performance Indicators.

Mid Ulster District Council would also strongly advocate that this proposed overarching strategy should act as a catalyst and springboard for the Mid-South West (MSW) Growth Deal. While strengthening key services within the region, the investment priorities should also ensure that the social and economic conditions are created and maintained to encourage and capture further investment. This will then also ensure 'spin off' investment for local SMEs and new innovations. This is within the context of already boasting Northern Ireland's fastest growing manufacturing business base, and the largest outside Belfast. Our district produces 7.3% of Northern Ireland's economic output.

However, Mid Ulster District Council cannot emphasise strongly enough, the detrimental impact of the issue of water and wastewater management in Mid Ulster and the associated negative impact on the district achieving a number of key PfG outcomes. Many people living in the Mid Ulster District Council area are facing significant housing stress because of house building not keeping up with housing demand. New housing developments particularly in our urban towns and key settlements are being refused by NI Water, due to lack of upgrading to WasteWater Treatment works and new water mains not being delivered. Significant WasteWater network capacity issues are emerging in our five main hub towns including Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Maghera and Coalisland. These towns have been identified within the Area Plan for Mid Ulster for growth status. Mid Ulster is currently completing on the development of the Area Plan and has estimated a need for approximately 10,950 new houses by 2030. In addition to the WasteWater Treatment Works, WasteWater network capacity issues are emerging in 20 areas across the district. Because of this, new connections are being declined in parts of the catchment.

Objective 3: To Enhance Our Communities and Spaces

Redefine the purpose of our high streets/urban centres

Mid Ulster District Council considers high streets and urban centres as key social and economic drivers and as such there is a clear and urgent need to make them fit for purpose in 21st century, particular as we recover from the devastating impacts of Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought new and unprecedented economic challenges to Mid Ulster town centres and has required us to reimagine and reinvent our High Streets for the future and tackle the huge problem of empty units and derelict sites. However, it is clear that local and central Government cannot do this in isolation. There is a critical need for direct partnership working with the private sector supporting them with financial package incentives and investment. The Council believes that local authorities have a critical role to play in the future of our high streets and addressing local needs but are held back by the lack of devolved “Regeneration powers” and supporting financial resources. The current fragmented “ad-hoc” approach simply does not work. There is a need for multi-year budgets to enable Councils to plan effectively.

The Council would recommend a cohesive, joined-up approach by central government involving; the Department for the Economy (DfE), Department for Communities (DfC) and Department of Agriculture, Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). This type of cross-departmental partnership working is essential to enable our towns and high streets to be vibrant and thriving. Regarding planning the “Town Centre First” approach must be fully strengthened and implemented. Furthermore, empty units need to be repurposed to meet the business need and an extensive package of incentives introduced to achieve this goal. There is a clear need for strategic and significant investment to support the recovery and renewal of our town centres, similar to the Future High Streets Fund in England and Strategic Sites Acquisition Fund by the Welsh Government. A capital fund is needed to incentivise property owners to invest in the reuse and repurposing of derelict/empty premises through internal restructuring and reconfiguration of shop units or liveable spaces. The cost of doing business in our high streets is huge with spiralling rates and ever-increasing rents. This has caused businesses ‘to go under’ and discouraged new retail start-ups in our town centres.

To further compound these challenges, parking charges, poor infrastructure and the closure of bank branches have contributed to the decline of our high streets. The Council would support the proposal for more public sector service delivery in town centres in order to act as a catalyst for footfall and private sector investment. Businesses trading in town centres are at a market disadvantage to out of town developments (such as enterprise parks) because they are paying much higher rates. It is difficult to see the plan developed by Professor Carlos Moreno, (leading urbanist from Paris) being adaptable to the rural towns in Mid Ulster where all business is within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from home.

Promote active travel, prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling for leisure and mobility. Develop sports, culture, arts, and leisure facilities and enhance our natural environment.

Mid Ulster has a large reliance on cars as the main means of transport. There is a variety of reasons for this reliance, for example, the population is rural and public transport is not easily accessible to everyone, there is no train service and there are very few dedicated cycle lanes in town centres.

Therefore, in relation to the promotion of active travel, prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling for leisure and mobility, the Council would agree that active travel, walking and cycling for leisure has now become a key part of everyday life and almost all communities are involved in this. Further investment in infrastructure will be welcomed in developing safe and well light routes that are accessible to all.

However, as previously noted, in promoting these activities, government must be cognisant of the key issues and challenges in delivering this agenda to predominantly rural areas such as Mid Ulster. These are fundamental considerations to ensure future investment is balanced across the sub-regions and that active travel opportunities are available for all.

In terms of investing in Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure, restoring the **Ulster Canal** to its former glory has the potential to be the most exciting waterways project in Ireland. Realising the full ambition of the canal could see cruisers navigating their way from the mouth of the River Bann at Castlerock through Coleraine to Lough Neagh and Lough Erne and into the Shannon before continuing down through the southern canal system to Dublin, Limerick and Waterford.

Minister Mallon reported the following progress on the restoration of the Ulster Canal at North/South Ministerial Statements in the NI Assembly on 30 November 2021:

“Phase 1 of the Ulster Canal is complete and now open for navigation. The phase 2 restoration of the stretch from Clones to Clonfad is underway. The creative design is complete, and there are plans to develop a vision for the canal to Clones, including an architectural features that links the canal to the cultural history of the town. Phase 3, preliminary work on the restoration of the stretch Castle Saunderson to Clonfad will commence before phase 2 is complete. Of course, all three phases of the project have been funded by the Irish Government.

Waterways Ireland has North South Ministerial Council approval to explore the potential restoration of the stretch of the Ulster Canal from Clones to Lough Neagh. It remains a clear commitment in the Stormont House Agreement, the Fresh Start Agreement and in New Decade, New Approach. I am very keen, funding permitting, to see that progressed.”

A Feasibility/ economic study on the River Blackwater is currently underway to consider the economic benefits arising from the reinstated water system between Moy and Clones with particular focus on Mid Ulster District Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council. The document has identified the need for investment to implement the mentioned projects and works along the river. A Working group is to be established between the two councils to drive forward ambitions for Lough Neagh and the Ulster Canal.

In relation to enhancing the Natural Environment and considering sustainable tourism the Government needs to protect our Dark Skies with the creation of a Light Management Tourism Policy for Northern Ireland.

Funding needs to be made available to the private sector to enhance and reimage their property/product to become sustainable and environmental friendly (and promote Green Tourism).

In addition, the Sperrin Mountains provide the setting for a highly distinctive landscape, containing a rich tapestry of both spatially extensive and diverse built, cultural and natural heritage assets many of which remain unknown to the wider public and underutilised as a tourism resource. The Sperrins remain a highly inaccessible landscape, more so than many other similar landscapes in the UK and Ireland, with only short to medium distance access routes developed by local communities as a localised recreational resource. However, it is this inaccessibility, extensiveness and diversity of the resource base that lends itself to the provision of opportunities for creating a wide range of outdoor recreation, tourism, wellbeing and heritage engagement activities, which require investment.

Expand social and intermediate housing

In the Mid Ulster area, house building has not kept pace with growth in demand. Many people and households are currently facing major housing challenges with exceptionally high levels of housing stress and homelessness and as such, Mid Ulster has one of the highest levels of social housing need and this is reflected in the level of housing stress. At March 2020, there were 1,899 applicants on the waiting list for Mid Ulster with 1,169 in housing stress and only 306 allocations over the year. Housing stress in rural areas is also increasing on an annual basis since March 2016. At March 2020, there were 501 applicants on the rural housing waiting list for Mid Ulster with 279 in housing stress and only 131 allocations over the year. Over 1/3 of the housing stress stems from the affordability of other rented options; both private and some housing association provision. Mid Ulster has the second lowest number of NIHE and Social Housing properties across all districts. Up to March 2020, NIHE and Housing Associations have sold 7,654 units under the house sales scheme, leaving 3,875 of NIHE housing stock in the district. NIHE has identified a social housing need of 685 units required for the 2019/2024 period. There were 42

units completed and 76 units onsite at March 2020; and 202 units programmed for the 2020/2023 period, falling well short of what is required by 2024. Almost 50% of all units required are in the Dungannon area followed by Coalisland and Magherafelt.

Affordable and social housing provision is a key strategic issue identified for Mid Ulster as part of its Community Plan. As the allocation of housing is a central element in achieving many of the objectives detailed in the Community Plan, it is difficult to consider it in isolation of the other key areas, including poverty, regeneration, health and wellbeing and prosperity. Mid Ulster Community Planning has identified a number of actions to address the housing crisis in the District. Mid Ulster Community Planning has initiated a pilot Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan in Dungannon, in partnership with NIHE. This plan will identify 'Place Shaping Principles' that we will seek to have adopted and implemented by Council and NIHE when assessing social housing planning applications, based on complementing the priorities for regeneration for Dungannon town. Mid Ulster Community Planning is seeking Executive support to replicate this partnership and process across all hub towns.

The set of draft principles include:

1. Good quality design with adequate density to suit the streetscape, for example if streetscape is 2-storey to continue this frontage, if 3-storey then this is to be accommodated
2. Preference for town house schemes in line with, town conservation, housing for families with 2-3 bed provision
3. Parking provision to be provided
4. Good quality green space provision and play areas for children in all housing areas
5. The 1970s model of flats with a minimum of 2 bedrooms in a town house setting – 2 apartments per house setting
6. Locations must be suitable for family housing, not beside leisure/nighttime economy establishments
7. Housing design and quality to be in character with the area and not of a lower standard
8. Housing that regenerates an area (economy and regeneration)
9. Living over the shops to be promoted for apartments
10. Future social and affordable housing should be within mixed tenure developments only (private and social/affordable mix)

Additional factors that have been identified that require significant consideration in relation to addressing future housing provision include:

- Mixed tenure
- Affordability
- Intervention in the Private Rented
- Latent Demand Testing
- Homelessness
- Housing Standards and Quality Housing
- Supported Housing
- Public Sector Asset Mapping
- Land Banking
- Adequate Green Space Requirement in Planning

Objective 4: To Build a Strong, Connected and Competitive Region

Improve connectivity on strategic corridors

Facilitating transport, advanced cross-border connectivity, greater access to road, rail, ports and airports, progressive digital communication capability, access to industrial land, energy and water are all considered by Council as the bedrock to prosperity and building a strong, competitive and connected region.

Infrastructure has a key role to play in terms of boosting Northern Ireland's long run competitiveness, raising standards of living and societal wellbeing.

There are significant infrastructure and connectivity deficits in the Mid Ulster region which need to be addressed within the NI Investment Strategy:-

Road Infrastructure

Within the Mid Ulster Community Plan, '*Infrastructure*' has been identified as one of five themes and a key action is to advance the development of the Strategic Road Network (the A29 – A31, A4, A6 and A5), including bypasses for the main towns and villages on the strategic routes.

The Mid Ulster region is growth dependent on the A29, and investment in Hub Bypasses in Cookstown and Dungannon would strengthen economic competitiveness, enhance accessibility to regional services and reduce peripherally.

Our engagements indicate that industry has been forced to operate with substandard road networks in Mid Ulster for a long period of time with consequent constraints on the efficiency of their operations and associated productivity. Businesses located in Mid Ulster are wholly dependent on the A29 for a range of critical business functions including freight movement, getting products to market, business travel (client meetings), staff commuting, and leisure travel (including by visitors and tourists) etc. The further economic development and regeneration of Mid Ulster as an industrial and commercial hub will be supported by expanded economic networks and trade facilitated by the A29 infrastructure investment.

The strategic importance of the A29 should be recognised in the emerging RSTNTP by upgrading the route to a Key North South Transport Corridor and in doing so addressing key infrastructural and connectivity deficits across the region.

The long awaited Cookstown bypass Scheme is a priority project within the MSW Growth Deal and is being led by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). The Council would emphasise the importance of retaining momentum on all stages of scheme development to ensure the business case can be completed in line with MSW timescales as well as managing public expectations for this project delivery. It is important that DfI officials work at pace with Council and key stakeholders including landowners to push forward this critical capital project within the required timeframes of the MSW Growth Deal or earlier,

It is also imperative that the Dungannon Bypass scheme is included in the forthcoming RSTNTP to ensure there is a strategic transport corridor through Mid Ulster. Investment in a bypass in Dungannon is critical to enable all three towns (Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt) to collectively fulfil their potential as dynamic Hubs and collaboratively act as an economic powerhouse for the Mid Ulster and Mid-South West Region.

Cookstown and Dungannon will play a central role in helping to realise a number of long-standing strategic policy objectives, most particularly in delivering a regionally balanced economy across the whole of Northern Ireland.

Bypasses in Cookstown and Dungannon were first proposed over 40 years ago and illustrate decades of underinvestment in the road network in our region that has left our businesses facing a daily battle to access export markets via non-classified road networks, with consequent impacts on productivity as noted above.

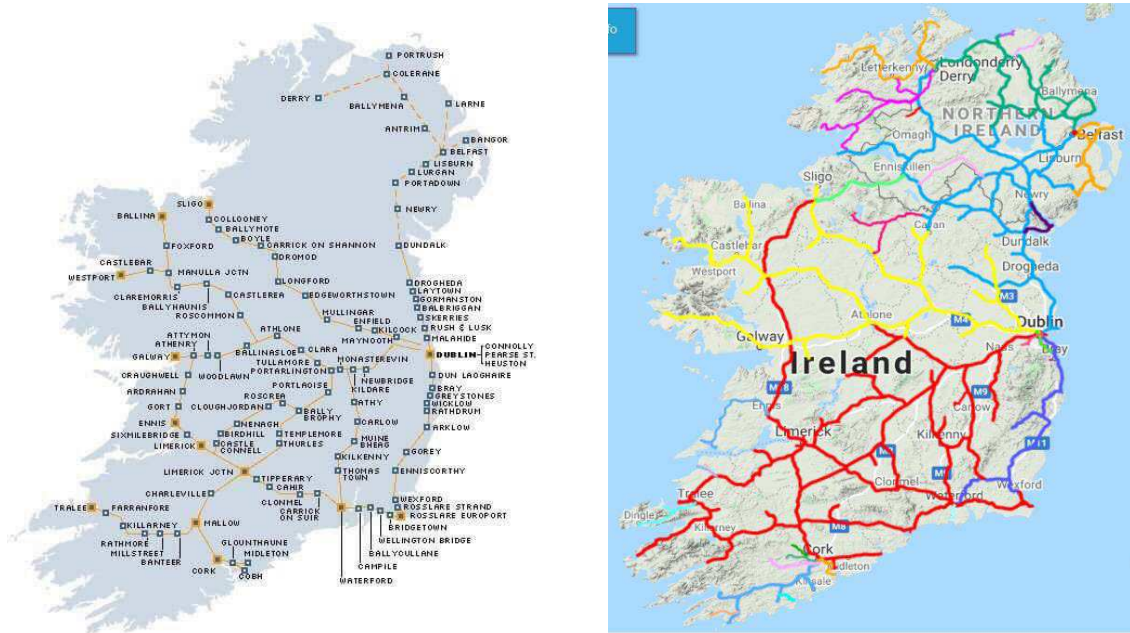
The Council also supports the completion of the A5 Western Transport Corridor as a strategic link to the North West.

Rail

In order to address regional imbalances and achieve levelling up of the NI economy, it is essential in the first instance, to expand the rail network to include Mid Ulster as a gateway to the 'west' and as a cross-border link. Decades of underinvestment in our road and rail network has left communities marginalised and isolated from essential services as well as businesses facing a daily battle in the movement of freight to export markets via non-classified road networks, with consequent impacts on growth, productivity and competitiveness.

The map of the rail network in Ireland on the next page shows that the West of the Bann has a very striking and major gap in accessibility to rail services relative to the rest of the island economy (and expands on the map on previous page, which only includes the NI road network). Second map shows all historic railway lines in Ireland.

It confirms that most of the railways that served the MSW region and provided the necessary connectivity have been stripped away over recent decades.



To achieve the aspiration of inclusive, balanced regional growth, rural communities must have greater access to services and an equal opportunity to participate in the economy. Moreover, investment in rail infrastructure West of the region would create opportunities to increase the use of the network for freight, which is essential to supporting economic recovery, and long term sustainable growth. Rail freight also delivers environmental benefits by reducing congestion and carbon emissions.

As a result of the lack of accessible public transport approximately 85% of households in Mid Ulster own a private vehicle, with this dependency expected to continue in the future. Accordingly, Travel Survey NI 2014-16 notes that 91% of rural workers travel to work by car/van. Unfortunately, residents cannot rely on a poor public transport network which exists and has been reduced further in recent years. For Mid Ulster residents the private vehicle is the only viable option.

Therefore, while the Council recognises that investment in an improved rail infrastructure could contribute to decarbonisation and reduce carbon emissions from motor vehicle travel, this will only be achieved across the Mid Ulster Council area with the restoration of connections that the former rail network afforded. This would improve connectivity to the two major cities in Northern Ireland and create an alternative to private vehicle usage to Derry City Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airports located in Northern Ireland.

The Council request consideration of a range of effective rail solutions (including for example light rail), including:

- Reinststate the **Derry-Portadown** rail line via Dungannon, Omagh, Strabane and Newbuildings;
- Reinststate the rail network from **Dungannon to Coleraine** (via Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt and Maghera).
- Extend the rail network to access and develop key economic and industrial areas such as **Carn and Seagoe, Granville (Dungannon), Derryloran (Cookstown) and Toome etc**

Industrial lands

Investment in infrastructure should include “industrial lands” to allow for economic growth and business expansion.

The acute shortage of industrial land and Invest NI serviced sites is a huge barrier to investment in Mid Ulster and has forced high growth businesses to relocate employment opportunities outside the region (and Northern Ireland) resulting in a subsequent loss of exports and GVA. Consequently, the area has lost out on significant investment and businesses have been forced to look at alternative sites outside the district, which is unacceptable. Indeed, the chronic shortage of industrial land in Dungannon in particular has pushed industrial land prices up to £125,000 per acre (in some cases 240% higher than some other areas of Northern Ireland). In recognition of this shortage, an additional interim supply has been identified at Dungannon and Granville within the Council’s Local Development Plan 2030 (Draft Plan Strategy).

In addition to the shortage of Invest NI owned industrial land, many private landowners are reluctant to develop land for industrial use as other uses are more lucrative. However, even if this land was to be developed for industry, there is evidence of an impending shortage of any suitable land. This suggests market failure on a much larger scale. For example, land zoned for industrial development in Cookstown, Dungannon & Magherafelt has declined by 22.8% in 2018. At that rate, without additional industrial land, the total available land zoned for industrial development in the area will be exhausted by c.2030, if not sooner.

Despite being the most enterprising and entrepreneurial region in Northern Ireland (and having the largest business base outside Belfast), underinvestment in the provision of industrial land is a contributing factor to the fact that too many indigenous businesses in Mid Ulster fail to grow. For a number of years Mid Ulster District Council and its legacy Councils have been lobbying for an increased supply of industrial zoned land to meet growing demand for existing and new business in the area.

Mid Ulster presently has no industrial land available for development; industrial estates in Granville, Dungannon, Cookstown and Creagh are at full capacity with no room to expand.

Strengthen our public transport network

Mid Ulster is a geographically dispersed population with a quarter of citizens living in the main towns, a third living in local towns and 40% of our homes located in the countryside. The district suffers from a lack of rural accessibility with very poor rural roads and bus services leaving many rural communities cut off, unable to access jobs and services. This situation is compounded by the absence of any rail infrastructure and connectivity in the district.

The whole question of transport cannot be considered in isolation, it must be led by an environmentally friendly policy and localised to suit each rural, urban and suburban place. More public transport routes will bring some but not all the answers in Mid Ulster because the population is dispersed.

Unless significant investment is provided public transport for rural areas such as Mid Ulster then the gap between access to services such as economic opportunities, health, education, and civic services will widen further between rural and urban Districts.

Investment in our public transport network must consider rurality, and the communities and populations that are isolated from core and more importantly essential services.

Maintain strong utility and digital connectivity

Mid Ulster's economy is private sector led and boasts the largest business base (9,200 businesses) outside Belfast. Global connectivity is vital to the competitiveness of our businesses and therefore the Council fully supports strong digital connectivity.

Digital connectivity would enable Mid Ulster citizens to access public services and allow students to benefit and compete equally with others from main towns and cities.

We note that the Strategy (p48) states, '*We have a strong communications infrastructure reflecting past and current investments by both the private and public sector*'. While Mid Ulster (and other rural areas) has indeed benefitted from recent initiatives such as Project Stratum there remain a number of areas in this District where the level of broadband speed and indeed, mobile connectivity, is wholly unacceptable. Project Stratum will bring full fibre to over 12,000 premises in Mid Ulster but unfortunately, it will not fix everyone under 30 Mbps.

We welcome the 'Shared Rural Network', however, further work is still required not just to 'maintain' strong digital and mobile connectivity' but to also ensure that this is made available to all. Mid Ulster has a strong entrepreneurial culture, almost two thirds of our population and businesses are rurally based. Access to high-speed broadband and reliable mobile connections should already be available to all by now, and not an aspiration to be achieved by 2025. Failure to deliver on this fundamental infrastructure requirement will continue to impede business start-up and growth in rural areas, as well as innovation and productivity.

Many of the rural areas within Mid Ulster suffer from poor broadband and worse mobile phone coverage. The ongoing issues of 'not-spots' or poor broadband connection need to be addressed as a matter of priority.

A major challenge for Mid Ulster is encouraging further investment in telecommunications infrastructure. Communications Providers do not have a sufficiently robust business case to adequately address the broadband and mobile requirements of our rural areas, with their low population densities and low rates of urbanisation.

Mobile phone coverage in Mid Ulster is of a relatively poor quality at a number of locations and across certain networks. There is a need for Government Departments to work in partnership with international providers to enhance and extend the reach of mobile voice and data services in the Council area. The lack of reliable mobile connectivity clearly disadvantages both Mid Ulster businesses and residents and endangers our future growth prospects. Therefore, there is an urgent need to significantly improve the telecommunications infrastructure across the entire Council area.

Leverage key strategic development sites (e.g. Maze/Long Kesh)

In order to meet this Investment Priority, there is a critical need to address chronic and long-standing shortages of industrial land for development within the Mid Ulster District Council area. Therefore, the Council would request that the **Desertcreat site**, outside Cookstown should be **leveraged as a key strategic development site** within the new Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Mid Ulster is recognised as one of the most entrepreneurial and enterprising regions in NI, with a dynamic private sector driven economy boasting the largest business base outside Belfast with over 9,000 VAT registered businesses. It has a higher productivity per head of population compared to the NI average and a GVA of £3.24bn (producing 7.7% of NI's economic output).

However, the acute shortage of industrial land and Invest NI serviced sites is a huge barrier to investment and has forced high growth businesses to relocate employment opportunities outside of Mid Ulster (and NI) meaning a subsequent loss of exports

and GVA. Mid Ulster is a hotbed for manufacturing, producing more than 40% of the world's mobile crushing and screening equipment.

This project, involving the acquisition of 180 acres of land at Desertcreat provides a once-in a-lifetime opportunity to unlock the investment potential of a large strategic development site to meet latent and immediate demand for the provision of high quality serviced sites to enable indigenous businesses to expand and grow to their full potential.

Desertcreat industrial lands project is of immense importance, not only to Mid Ulster but also to the Northern Ireland economy.

Objective 5: To Maximise the Benefits from Emerging Technologies

With regard to embracing the pace of the emerging technologies, the Council would agree with the objectives to prioritise the public interfaces to our core public services across Local and Central government. Funding/investment to address such actions should be accessible to both local authorities and departments under such initiatives.

The need to provide a secure and highly resilient Network and Core system infrastructure is a continuous challenge and requires investment and ongoing review involving industry security expertise, design and implementation. Investment in conjunction with NCSC guidelines and industry will lead to a highly resilient public service infrastructure critical to maintain the integrity, availability and confidentiality of public services and data. The importance and wider use of data sets available across the public sector will be strategically and critically important in planning, delivering and decision-making made within the public in the future, based on an evidence-based approach.

Closing Remarks

In relation to the approach to Strategic Infrastructure Investment, the Council welcomes the proposal for a rolling 10 year Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan. Departmental alignment to ensure that strategic investment requirements are met are also important to develop, maintain and review. Mid Ulster District Council is also encouraged by the scope of the proposals and is of the opinion that the strategy has the potential to bring in wider range of investment to Northern Ireland that could help to ensure regional balance to outcomes delivered as a result. The Council would also recommend that the related timescales and budgets allocated to projects are realistic. The Council also welcomes the collaborative aspects to the proposals and that there is an overall aim to enhance inclusion.

In relation to communication with consultees on projects that present affordability challenges, early communication is critical where affordability challenges are identified. Risks associated with affordability should naturally emerge as part of the prioritisation framework, which will in turn help to inform the Infrastructure Investment Plan and be clear to all consultees. Affordability challenges identified should then be

further explored in the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan; ensuring challenges remain to the fore as planning progresses. In so doing, stakeholders and consultees will have early warning of where the identifiable challenges may be and early discussion/consideration/input can then take place about alternative funding. Clearly not all challenges will emerge at these initial stages and some will develop as projects reach the more detailed planning stage. However, direct communication with the right person/people is critical, and so, the identification of a named person (people) in each organisation to whom these challenges can be flagged as appropriate is essential.

Regarding what level of engagement should be carried out with consultees on project milestones and delivery progress once a project has been programmed for delivery, the document acknowledges that to date 'engagement has emphasised the need for the Investment Strategy to take a holistic and cross-cutting approach – working across traditional departmental and sector boundaries – to reflect the increasingly interconnected way in which services will need to be delivered'. If this has been the case at a macro level in terms of the strategy's development to this point, then it follows that targeted engagement should take place through every stage of the process and delivery of the resulting plans, particularly the detailed departmental Investment Plans which is where, we would anticipate, individual project milestones will be stated and against which progress will be measured.

Engagement should be formally mapped out as part of the planning stage of project plan delivery, in such a way to reach the right people at the right level in the right organisations, at the right time. This reflects the fact that some stakeholders and consultees will have differing priorities at different stages of a project and indeed, that from departmental perspectives, there will also be a different priority and importance attached to the input of stakeholders and consultees at different stages. The strategy needs, therefore, to recognise that there is unlikely to be a 'one engagement approach fits all'.

Finally, in relation to accountability of the strategy, the Council is satisfied with the mechanisms detailed in the consultation. Council is also content in relation to the areas examined and mitigated against in the EQIA and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

Mid Ulster District Council strongly agrees that region faces significant challenges in the coming years and as such it looks forward to the implementation of a robust and ambitious Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, that will provide effective strategic collaborative, resulting in positive outcomes for residents.

Yours sincerely

Paul McLean
Chairperson of Mid Ulster District Council

Appendix 4



Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council

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Email: gerard.murray@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: CO1-21-23485

Date: 18 March 2022

By email: Adrian.McCreesh@midulstercouncil.org

Project Reference No	CO1-21-23485
Project Applicant	Mid Ulster District Council
Project Title	Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme
Amount of Funding	£2,781,000
Period of Funding	15 March 2022 – 31 March 2023
Organisation's Financial Systems and Controls Rating	Robust

Dear Adrian

1. Award Approval

The Department for Communities ("the Department") is pleased to inform you that total funding of £2,781,000 towards the Organisation's Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme has been approved.

The funding is awarded on the basis of the organisation's Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan dated 15 March 2022 (a summary of which is set out in Annex A to this document), and any other detail provided throughout the assessment process prior to the date of this letter. Specifically, funding is offered

on condition that the project delivers its aims and contributes to the achievement of the Department's Programme Outcomes, as set out in the Schedule hereto attached. Approval is subject to your acceptance of all the conditions set out in this letter.

2. Definitions

In this Letter:-

"the Organisation" means Mid Ulster District Council ;

"the Project" means Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme; and as further defined under (revenue) items and (capital) items below.

"the grant" means a sum up to a maximum of £2,781,000; of which:

"capital items" means a sum of £2,590,000 towards the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan.

"revenue items" means a sum of £191,000 towards plan delivery costs. This can include staffing resource, goods and services, marketing and promotion, and materials.

"the project start and completion date" means the day by which the project must start and be completed so as to achieve the performance outputs as specified in paragraph 3 below.

"the equality legislation" means the statutory provisions from time to time in force in Northern Ireland in relation to discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender or political opinion, including the obligations on public authorities set out in s.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in s.1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ;

3. Funding Period and Termination

The Organisation shall not commence the Project before 15 March 2022 and shall end the Project no later than 31 March 2023. The expenditure should be incurred before the end date of the Project. In the event that unexpected delays occur, the Organisation may request an extension to this end date. This should be in exceptional circumstances.

The Department reserves the right to terminate this offer of funding at any time by giving 3 months written notice to the Organisation of termination. Any liabilities properly incurred or earned before the date of termination will be payable by the Department in accordance with the terms of this Letter of Offer.

4. Default

If:-

- (i) any information provided by the Organisation or any representative of the Organisation in connection with or for the purposes of this letter and whether before or after the date of this letter is misleading or incorrect in any material respect;
- (ii) the Organisation is in breach of any obligation on the part of the Organisation contained in this letter and such breach is incapable of remedy or if capable of remedy remains unremedied for a period of 30 days after written notice by the Department;
- (iii) an order is made or an effective resolution is passed for the winding up of the Organisation or a Receiver is appointed over the undertaking or a material part of the undertaking of the Organisation;
- (iv) the Organisation is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of Article 103 of the Insolvency (NI) Order 1989;
- (v) an Administration Order is made in respect of the Organisation,

then in any such event or events the Department shall be under no obligation to make any payment or further payments of the funding and the Organisation shall forthwith on written demand by the Department repay the whole of the amount of the funding paid under this letter or such lesser amount as the Department may at its sole discretion so determine. Furthermore in the event of the Organisation defaulting under section 4 (i) of the letter, criminal proceedings may be instigated against the Organisation under Article 4 of the Social Need Order (NI) 1986 as the Department may at its sole discretion so determine.

5. Grant Conditions

- (i) The grant (a breakdown of which is set out in Annex A) shall only be made upon the return of this Contract for Funding, duly signed and dated by the appropriate council officials.
- (ii) Grant shall only be used for goods or equipment which are new, unless prior written consent from the Department is obtained. It shall not be used against costs for equipment, materials, goods or any services incurred prior to the date of this letter. The Organisation shall have due regard to its statutory Health & Safety obligations when purchasing, installing and using any capital equipment purchased with this funding.
- (iii) A dedicated current account must be maintained for the disbursement of project expenditure. Details of the account must be provided on the Bank Details form provided at Annex C to this letter. The funding will be paid directly into this bank account. The bank account should be identified as a Departmental funded project account and must be maintained by the Organisation for the sole purposes of the Project.
- (iv) Organisations involved in the delivery of multiple projects may already have a financial system using cost centres rather than multiple bank

accounts. Such organisations may wish to negotiate with the Department to retain this system for the purposes of managing the project. These negotiations will require that the Applicant establishes a dedicated cost centre for this fund and demonstrates to the Department's satisfaction that the systems in place guarantee a clear audit trail with regard to all aspects of the project finances. Should subsequent system checks reveal that the Department's requirements are not being met in this respect then the use of a dedicated bank account will become mandatory.

- (v) The Department will make every effort to pay funding promptly but accepts no liability in respect of loss or charges attributable to delay in the payment or to any suspension, reduction or cancellation of funding.

6. General Conditions

The Organisation shall:-

- (i) **Grant use** - apply the grant solely for the purposes of carrying out and implementing the Project;
- (ii) The development and delivery of the Organisation's Small Settlements Regeneration Plan should be informed by suitable stakeholder engagement, to be determined by the Organisation and should show clear connections to the outcomes and objectives of the overall programme. Consideration should be given to engagement with representatives from the Historic Environment Division (contact Manus Deery at Manus.Deery@communities-ni.gov.uk), Arts Council for Northern Ireland (contact Damian Smyth at dsmyth@artscouncil-ni.org), the Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture and the Built Environment (contact the Secretariat at magsecretariat@communities-ni.gov.uk), and Business Improvement District managers (should one be established within the town);
- (iii) Ensure the project is completed in accordance with any necessary statutory approvals;
- (iv) **changes** - immediately inform the Department in writing of any circumstances which will or may affect the ability of the Organisation to deliver their Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan; (Examples include: major changes to the project; the potential failure to meet agreed outputs/targets; posts becoming vacant through sickness; and Maternity Leave. This list is not exhaustive)
- (v) immediately inform the Department in writing of any proposed major change to the individual schemes or items of expenditure or profile amounts for same as set out in the Organisation's Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme. For the purposes of this clause and clause (iv) above, a major change is defined as one that impacts upon works, goods and/or services that account for more than 10% of the value of the funding.

- (vi) not without the prior written consent of the Department vary or alter the Project; its scope, use, financing or ownership; start and end dates;
- (vii) **constitution** - not alter or vary it's memorandum or articles of association without the prior written consent of the Department;
- (viii) **assignment** - not without the prior written consent of the Department assign or in any way encumber this letter of offer or any benefit derived or to be derived by the Organisation under it;
- (ix) **duplicate funding** - not seek, or make any application for or accept any financial assistance from any other Government Department, Agency or other funding body in respect of the expenditure for which funding is or may be payable under the terms of this letter; provided always that the provision shall not apply to financial assistance which may be payable by another funding body but the Department shall be entitled to reduce the funding available under this letter by an amount if equal to such financial assistance;

The levels of funding have been agreed as follows:

- (i) **Department for Communities – up to a maximum of £810,000 Capital and £115,000 Revenue;**
- (ii) **Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs - up to a maximum of £1,050,000 Capital and £76,000 Revenue;**
- (iii) **Department for Infrastructure – up to a maximum of £730,000 Capital**
- (iv) **£309,000 Council contribution**

You must advise the Department immediately if there are any changes.

- (x) **Procurement** – to ensure Best Value for Money, the Council will ensure that all procurement is carried out in line with its own procurement policies, and in accordance with the principles of the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy and all relevant Procurement Guidance Notes, and that all spend is compliant with the Council's policy and procedures on Capital Expenditure. The Council will provide the Department with a Procurement Plan which sets out procurement arrangements for each project, and will not engage in any procurement until the Procurement Plan has been evaluated by the Department in conjunction with the Department of Finance's Construction & Procurement Delivery Directorate;
- (xi) **ensuring Value for Money** - Council should ensure that any capital construction project in the Plan with a value of £500,000 or above is

supported by a business case that has been approved by the Department before procurement commences.

The Department will also test drill projects below the value of £500,000 to ensure suitable documentation is in place to support the value for money decision to fund the project. Council should, therefore, retain and make available on request all relevant documentation related to these projects.

- (xii) **insurance** - insure any items of an insurable nature which have been obtained with the benefit of the funding to the full replacement value thereof.
- (xiii) **maintenance** - Provide evidence that an arrangement for the maintenance of the project after completion has been put in place;
- (xiv) **inventory of assets** – establish and maintain an inventory of all fixed assets acquired, built or improved wholly or partly using the Department's funding, whether owned by the applicant or third parties. An asset is defined as an item that will not be used up within 12 months and which is not intended to be sold before the end of its useful life. The inventory should show the date of purchase; description of the asset; net price paid; location of the title deeds; serial or identification numbers; location of the asset; date of disposal; and sale of proceeds net of VAT.
- (xv) **disposal of assets** – not dispose of any asset without the prior authorisation of the Department. If any asset obtained with the benefit of the funding is disposed of within 4 years from the date of acceptance of this letter, the Organisation shall, on demand, repay to the Department the depreciated value of the asset. For the purposes of this clause, depreciation shall be calculated at 25% per annum of the asset's original cost;
- (xvi) **Financial controls** - establish and maintain effective financial control systems in relation to its operations generally but specifically in relation to the Project;
- (xvii) **provision of records** - from time to time upon request by the Department furnish the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland with both hard and soft copy documents of all such financial accounting and other information relating directly or indirectly to the Project as the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland may request. Original documents or verified true copies must also be produced upon request. Failure to produce the original documents or satisfactory agreed substitutes could result in requests for repayment of funding;
- (xviii) **retention of records** - ensure that all records and information relating to the implementation of the Project and its financing are retained for a period of not less than 7 years following the payment of funding under this letter and make any such record available to the Department and the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland for inspection upon

request by the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland.

- (xix) **publicity** – You should acknowledge our funding prominently in any press release or any other type of media activity that you may be planning surrounding the support. Please send a copy of your draft press release prior to publication to DfC Press Office -Press.Office@communities-ni.gov.uk and allow at least three working days for approval. On occasions the Department will also include a quote into your press release to highlight the importance of the funding. The Department may also choose to issue its own press release to promote the funding of the project.

If you have an active social media presence you may wish to announce the funding on your social media platforms. The Department has a Twitter profile so you may wish to tag us using @CommunitiesNI. Unfortunately due to the large number of projects we support each year we are unable to commit to tweeting about them all individually. We do however encourage you to tag us when you share updates in your project so we can keep up to date and 'like' your tweet where possible.

Council shall include appropriate references to the assistance made available by the Department to the Organisation under this letter in any publicity or brochures or other material produced by or on behalf of the Organisation and in which the Project is mentioned.

- (xii) **data protection** - acknowledge that information on applications and claims for payment for Grant assistance is stored on computer and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, and that such information may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000; in addition this shall include any applicable national implementing Laws as amended from time to time including (i) the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Law Enforcement Directive (LED) and (ii) Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 to the extent that it relates to processing of personal data and privacy; and (iii) all applicable Law about the processing of personal data and privacy;
- (xiii) **overpayments** - shall repay the Department any overpayment forthwith on first demand or becoming aware that funding has been overpaid, whichever first occurs;
- (xiv) **political or religious** - ensure that the funding shall not be used for the purpose of or in any way connected with the promoting of any political party or religious viewpoint. No aspect of the activity being funded should be party political in intention, use or presentation or likely to be perceived as discriminatory. Any activities, such as campaigning, by the Organisation must be in furtherance of, and ancillary to, its main purpose.
- (xv) **legislation** - comply with the equality legislation to the extent that the same applies to the Organisation. No aspect of the activity being funded

should be party political in intention, use or presentation or likely to be perceived as discriminatory on the grounds of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender or political opinion. Any activities, such as campaigning, by the Organisation must be in furtherance of, and ancillary to, its main purpose;

- (xvi) **liability** - by accepting this letter acknowledge that the Department accepts no liability to the Organisation other than as expressly provided for, in and subject to, the terms and conditions stated in this letter. Further, the Organisation shall indemnify the Department against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands and liabilities arising out of, in respect of, or in connection with this letter, caused or contributed to by the negligence or default of the Organisation, or by any circumstances within its control.
- (xvii) **Employment** - the Department accepts no responsibility or liability for the staff employed on the Project. The Applicant shall be the employer of staff required for the Project and shall be responsible for all matters in connection with their employment. The Applicant shall comply with the requirements of all EC Directives and legislation from time to time in force relating to working conditions, health and safety at work etc. The Applicant shall comply with the requirements of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 and 1988, the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and any enactments amending, extending or replacing the same
- (xviii) **Conflict of Interest** – declare any actual or potential Conflicts of Interest which could exist as a direct consequence of the Organisation’s use of the funding to be provided by the Department and record same in a Register of Conflicts.
- (xix) **Charity law** - ensure that the organisation, [and any Charity Registered Voluntary & Community Sector organisation receiving funding through this Contract for Funding], operates within, and meets its obligations under charity law in Northern Ireland and further promotes, where relevant to the project, the charitable sector’s obligations under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- (xx) **Public Accounts Committee** – attend Public Accounts Committee hearings on request and fully co-operate in an honest and candid manner at such hearings.
- (xxi) **Government Funders Database – requirements for Government Departments, NDPBs and Councils etc.** Ensure that any award to a Voluntary & Community Sector organisation made from this funding is recorded on the Government Funders Database no later than 4 weeks from the date the award is made.
- (xxii) **Child protection and safeguarding vulnerable adults** – The grant recipient [and any Voluntary & Community Sector organisation receiving

funding through this Contract for Funding]* must provide assurance that they have a Safeguarding Policy in place, and confirm that they operate effective procedures and controls, including appropriate checks, to ensure the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

7. Fraud

- (i) The organisation (and/or its representatives) may be prosecuted if it fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with any condition subject to which financial assistance has been given to the organisation requiring it to inform the Department of any event whereby the financial assistance becomes repayable.
- (ii) The Department may by notice require the organisation to furnish to the Department such information, or to produce for examination on behalf of the Department such books, records or other documents, as may be specified in the notice for the purpose of enabling the Department to determine whether any condition subject to which the financial assistance is given is satisfied or is being complied with or whether the financial assistance has become repayable in whole or in part in accordance with any such condition.
- (iii) The organisation (and/or its representatives) may be prosecuted if in purported compliance with a notice issued under paragraph (ii) it knowingly or recklessly makes any statement or produces any document which is false in a material particular.
- (iv) The organisation (and/or its representatives) may be prosecuted under Article 4 of the Social Need Order (NI) 1986, if without reasonable excuse, it fails to comply with a notice under paragraph (ii).
- (v) It will be the responsibility of the Organisation to take whatever action is necessary to minimise the risk of fraud and to notify the Department immediately of any instances of attempted, suspected or proven fraud. Following a Departmental investigation all instances of suspected fraud will be reported to the Police and criminal proceedings may be instigated if deemed appropriate.

8. Sharing of Information

All Government Departments, Agencies and other funding bodies may share information to enable them to prevent and detect fraudulent applications and to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications. Accordingly, information provided by the Organisation during the application and assessment process, monitoring returns and any other information provided by the Organisation may be made available to other Departments/Agencies for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of information and preventing or detecting crime. Such information may also be placed in the public domain.

9. Monitoring & Evaluation

The Department shall monitor and evaluate the Project on a quarterly basis by reference to the Performance Outputs and also to the Department's Outcome Based Accountability Report Card (Annex D). The Organisation shall complete a quarterly monitoring return by 30th June 2022 and quarterly thereafter (see Annex E for template) and submit it to the Department, along with any other such information and assistance for these purposes as the Department may request.

The Department may also from time to time require the Organisation to provide evidence that the Organisation have fulfilled their statutory obligation in relation to HMRC in respect of PAYE and National Insurance contributions.

10. Withholding of Funding

The Department may withhold all or part of the funding and may require all or part of the funding to be repaid if it considers that you have not complied with any of the terms and conditions in this Letter of Offer.

11. Notice

Any letter, notice or demand by the Department shall be sufficiently served on the Organisation if it is delivered by hand at, or sent by post to, the Organisation's last known address.

12. Duration

The obligations of the Organisation under this letter shall remain in force for a period of 4 years following the date of acceptance of this letter; with the exception of 7 (xviii), which shall remain in force for a period of 7 years following the date of the last payment of funding under this letter in line with legislative requirements.

13. Acceptance

This letter has been issued electronically and accordingly if the Organisation is prepared to accept the foregoing offer please return one complete copy of this letter duly signed and dated on behalf of the Organisation (see Annex B) within 4 weeks from the date of this letter.

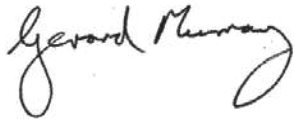
In accepting this offer the Organisation is agreeing to comply with the conditions contained in this letter and any guidance that the Department subsequently issues.

This letter may be made available to other Departments/Agencies and other funding bodies for the purposes of preventing or detecting fraud.

14. Availability of Offer

The foregoing offer shall remain open for a period of 1 week from the date of this letter. Failure to return one complete copy of this letter duly signed and dated on behalf of the Organisation within this period shall result in the offer being withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerard Murray', with a stylized, flowing script.

GERARD MURRAY
Director for Regional Development

ANNEX A

Capital	Project costs	Funder contribution		
		DFI	DAERA / DFC	Council
Castlecaufield Recreation Area	£ 671,000	£ -	£ 603,900	£ 67,100
Castledawson (Riverside)	£ 175,000		£ 157,500	£ 17,500
Manor Park, Moneymore	£ 227,000		£ 204,300	£ 22,700
Coalisland Canal	£ 519,111	£ 467,200	£ -	£ 51,911
Bellaghy - walking trail and recreational area	£ 422,000	£ 262,800	£ 117,000	£ 42,200
Clady recreational area	£ 130,000		£ 117,000	£ 13,000
Moy 4G multi use pitch	£ 733,667	£ -	£ 660,300	£ 73,367
	£ 2,877,778	£ 730,000	£ 1,860,000	£ 287,778
Resource				
ICT	£ 212,222	£ -	£ 191,000.00	£ 21,222.00
Overall totals	£ 3,090,000	£ 730,000	£ 2,051,000	£ 309,000

ANNEX B**OFFICIAL FUNDING ACCEPTANCE AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S
STATEMENT**

Project Reference No	CO1-21-23485
Project Applicant	Mid Ulster District Council
Project Title	Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme
Amount of Funding	£2,781,000
Period of Funding	15 March 2022 – 31 March 2023

I **ADRIAN MCCREESH** have authority **on behalf of**
(Name of Chief Executive in Block Capitals)

MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name of Council

to accept the offer of funding set out in the letter dated 18 March 2022 and agree to deliver the above project on the terms and conditions therein.

Signed by
(Chief Executive)

ADRIAN MCCREESH
Name in Block Capitals

Date

Witnessed by
(Registered Office Bearer)

Name in Block Capitals

Date

FINANCIAL DECLARATION (TO BE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE OR EQUIVALENT)

I hereby confirm that this funding will be spent in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures for capital/revenue expenditure. I further confirm that there will be no duplication in expenditure from other public sector funding, and that the fund will not be used to pay for equipment, goods or service costs incurred prior to the date of this letter.

Signed by: _____

Name in block capitals: _____

Position in Council: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX C

BANK DETAILS

Project Reference No	CO1-21-23485
Project Applicant	Mid Ulster District Council
Project Title	Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme
Amount of Funding	£2,781,000
Period of Funding	15 March 2022 – 31 March 2023

Please complete Bank details below.

Name of Organisation: Mid Ulster District Council

Name of Account: Mid Ulster District Council General Account

Bank Name: Bank of Ireland

Bank Address: 11 Market Street

Magherafelt

BT45 6EE

Sort Code: 90-49-82 **Account Number:** 88583270

Signed by
(Chief Executive)

Witnessed by
(Registered Office Bearer)

Name in Block Capitals

Name in Block Capitals

Date

Date

ANNEX D

OUTCOME BASED ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARD

<u>How much did we do?</u>	<u>How well did we do it?</u>
Number of costed Small Settlements Regeneration Plans (SSRP) developed by councils.	% of costed Small Settlements Regeneration Plans (SSRP) developed by councils within agreed timescales.
Number of stakeholder engagement forums established or identified to support delivery of SSRP.	% of stakeholder engagement forums established within agreed timescales.
Number of projects that support increased use of land for active travel (i.e. extended footways, cycle ways, connecting pathways) which connects people with key services and ensures accessibility for all including those with disabilities.	% of stakeholders reporting that they were satisfied with the quality of the engagement by the forum (by council).
Total funding distributed by DfC by council	% of projects completed on time % of projects that improved accessibility
<u>Is anybody better off?</u>	
% of residents in smaller settlements where projects have been delivered agree that the improvements to the area would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area.	
% of the public (residents and visitors) using smaller settlements where projects have been delivered agree that the improvements to the area would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area.	
% of the public (residents and visitors) agree that projects supported would encourage people to change from car use to more environmentally friendly choices such as walking and cycling for journeys of under two miles	
Number & % of businesses within the scheme areas who reported schemes funded through this Programme have positively impacted on sales figures.	

ANNEX E

Monitoring Assessment Report

Name of organisation	
Full description of project	
Reference number	
Period of report	
Project contact	

Section 1: Assessment of expenditure

Is the expenditure expected for the full year still achievable?

If **yes** please confirm that the expenditure is on track and no underspend or overspends are expected, if **no** explain what action is being taken

Are there any budgetary or re-profiling changes

If **yes** please detail what agreed re-profiling changes have been made and why, if **no** please write 'no' in the box below

Section 2: Progress on objectives/outputs

Is the project/service in line with the Council's objectives/outputs identified in their Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme, and with the Department's OBA Report Card as stated and agreed in the Letter of Offer?

If **yes** please detail how the project/service is meeting its objectives/outputs, if **no** explain what action is being taken to bring the project/service into line

Have the targets as outlined in the Council's Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme been met for this reporting period?

If **yes** please detail how the project/service is meeting its targets, if **no** explain what action is being taken to bring the project/service into line

Are the targets for the full project lifespan still achievable?

If **yes** please confirm that the targets are still achievable, if **no** explain why the targets are no longer achievable and what action is being taken

Has there been any change to targets within the funding period?

If **yes** please detail what changes have been made to the targets and comment, provide details of any letters of variance or revised Letter of Offer, if **no** please write 'no' in the box below

Section 3: Governance update

Are there are any Governance issues or concerns or are there any ongoing investigations or suspected fraud?

If so, please detail below, including the action taken or required

Section 4: Declaration

I am content that the monitoring report shows that the organisation is delivering in line with the contract for funding.

Please use this space to add additional supporting information, or to identify any issues with project delivery

Name of officer (in capitals):

Signature:

Position within Council:

Date:



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin Monaghan County Council

APPENDIX 5

Acmhainní Daonna
Human Resources
047 30586

Airgeadas
Finance
047 30589

Na Bóithre
Roads
047 30597

Clár na dToghthóirí
Register of Electors
047 30551

Comhshaol
Environment
042 9661240

Na hEalaíona
Arts
047 38162

Iasachtaí /Deontais Tithíochta
Housing Loans/Grants
047 30527

Leabharlann an Chontae
County Library
047 74700

Mótarcháin
Motor Tax
047 81175

Músaem an Chontae
County Museum
047 82928

Pleanáil
Planning
047 30532

Pobal
Community
047 73719

Rialú Dóiteáin/Foirgnimh
Fire/Building Control
047 30521

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office
047 71818

Seirbhísí Uisce
Water Services
047 30504/30571

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council
Burn Road
Cookstown

BT80 8DT
Adrian.mccreesh@midulstercouncil.org

Date: Tuesday, 15 February 2022

Re: Contribution towards Sliabh Beagh Scoping Study

Dear Mr McCreesh

The Sliabh Beagh Partnership was established in September 2021 and its aims are to assist and support rural communities and businesses within the Sliabh Beagh area to further develop and be more sustainable. Three Councils form Sliabh Beagh and these are Mid Ulster District Council, Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

At the January meeting of the partnership, following a presentation from Shane Campbell, ICBAN discussions centred around accessing funding for product development in the area.

It was proposed that £5,000 would be requested from each council to develop a scoping study to identify priority recreational projects and to draw up outline costs for these projects.

The subsequent plan would then be used to seek funding for the partnership to deliver these projects on a phased basis.

As a result, I am now writing to request a contribution of £5,000 from Mid-Ulster Council for the development of this joint Scoping Study.

If you have any further queries on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Bennett

Councillor Cathy Bennett
Chairperson
Sliabh Beagh Partnership

Received

23 FEB 2022

Chief Executive

Fálann an tÚdarás Áitiúil roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge.

Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin, Oifigí an Chontae, An Gleann, Muineachán, Éire.

Monaghan County Council, Council Offices, The Glen, Monaghan, Ireland.

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✉ eolas@monaghancoco.ie info@monaghancoco.ie