



Appendix A  
Planning & Water Appeals  
Commission  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
92 Ann Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3HH

Phone: 02890 244 710  
(switchboard)

Email: [info@pacni.gov.uk](mailto:info@pacni.gov.uk)

**Website: [www.pacni.gov.uk](http://www.pacni.gov.uk)**

Our Ref 2019/D001

DATE 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Public Local Inquiry into the A5 Western Transport Corridor Road Scheme

Further to previous correspondence, I am writing to update you on the inquiry timetable.

The proceedings will re-open at 10.30am on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in the Strule Arts Centre, Townhall Square, Omagh, and will continue there until Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> May. During that week, the environmental statement, the habitats reports and the proposed supplementary vesting order will be discussed. After a week's break, the inquiry will convene in Omagh Enterprise Centre, Gortrush Industrial Estate from Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May to Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023, when strategic issues (including the justification for the scheme, alternatives, funding and phasing) will be discussed. A more detailed agenda will be posted on our website [www.pacni.gov.uk](http://www.pacni.gov.uk) closer to the re-opening date.

The Chief Commissioner has appointed Commissioner Gareth Kerr to preside over the inquiry. He will be assisted by Mr Trevor Rue.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has provided the Commission with written comments on each representation received in response to its March 2022 public consultation. You should have received a copy of the comments relevant to your representation(s) in early December 2022.

The Commission is now requesting DfI Roads to submit a written comment on each individual representation received in response to its November 2022 and January 2023 consultations by 4.00pm on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and at the same time to copy each comment to the person or organisation who made that representation. We are asking DfI to confine its comments to no more than 1,500 words per representation.

Should you wish to reply in writing to DfI's comments on your representation(s), you may send a response to the Commission by no later than 4.00pm on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Responses should also be confined to no more than 1,500 words per representation. Copies of all responses received will be forwarded to DfI Roads for its information.

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The Commission's procedures for the A5 inquiry can be viewed on our website but if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

RUBY McLAREN  
Inquiry Administrator



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**From:** NAC NI <office@nac-ni.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:52 am

**Subject:** NAC NI Region Constitution

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Councillors (NAC), NI Region in relation to their revised Constitution as per the attached Draft.

I would be grateful if you could table this document at your next appropriate or full council meeting.

Any comments can be sent by email to: [office@nac-ni.org](mailto:office@nac-ni.org) no later than Friday 28th April 2023.

Yours sincerely

Clr Joe Boyle  
SECRETARY

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS**  
**Northern Ireland Region**

**Office:** 028 9181 9413

**Mobile:** 07711 932943

**Email:** [office@nac-ni.org](mailto:office@nac-ni.org)

**Web:** <http://nac-ni.org/>

Sketrick House - Jubilee Road - Newtownards BT23 4YH

## **1. Name**

The name of the Association shall be The National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region herein referred to as the Association.

*Mission Statement: -*

*The Association strives for the better governance of local communities within Northern Ireland by seeking to ensure that those who are elected to serve to the office of councillor are equipped, to the greatest possible extent, to discharge the many and varied responsibilities falling upon them.*

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

- To promote & represent civic leadership.
- To extend and strengthen the links between all Local Authorities, and to enhance friendship and co-operation.
- To address and understand matters of common and mutual interest.
- To facilitate the coming together of members on a regular basis.
- To promote equality of opportunity, combat discrimination and embrace diversity in both the work of the Association and its membership.
- To provide a forum for members to research, discuss and progress issues and a means whereby joint views may be formulated and expressed.
- To identify training needs of members, and solutions.
- To provide information on the Association to members, to ensure that they are afforded the opportunity to contribute to the Association's activities and to the development of policies.
- To promote the policies of the Association by providing information to local authorities, bodies representing local government, the public, the media, and outside organisations.
- To promote the status of members and to ensure adequate remuneration, pension rights and working conditions.
- To advocate measures which will remove barriers to serve as a councillor and encourage a diversity of candidates standing for election.
- To actively take part in consultations with the NI Assembly, when required.
- To maintain and develop the Association on a structured basis.
- To appoint elected representatives and officers, as appropriate.
- To develop relations with other organisations and bodies, as appropriate.

## **3. Membership**

Membership shall be open to all councils in Northern Ireland as corporate members. Each council shall appoint 8 delegates to attend NAC Member's Meetings. All delegates shall have voting rights.

#### **4. Executive Committee**

An Executive Committee shall be elected, in accordance with item 16, at the AGM and drawn from members who have been appointed by their council.

The Executive Committee shall conduct the ordinary business of the Association and meet on the first Monday of each month, unless agreed to postpone to a later date for a specific reason.

All meetings of the Executive Committee shall be summoned by not less than 4 days' notice in writing, or by email, specifying the business to be conducted there-at, save that, in the case of business which the chair of the meeting deems to be of urgent nature, any such business may be included on the agenda at any time prior to the commencement of the meeting.

A quorum of 2 Executive Committee members may summon an emergency meeting with 24 hours prior notice, this would be coordinated by the secretary who will contact each member of the Executive Committee with the meeting details, either orally or electronically. The quorum for an emergency meeting will be 5 Executive Committee members, preferably cross-party.

#### **Chair**

A Chair shall be elected at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 2 years. Should the position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should the chair no longer be a member of the party holding the position, allocated in accordance with the rotation formula at item 5, the position shall automatically be declared vacant, and a replacement shall be made by the party.

#### **Senior Vice Chair and Junior Vice Chair**

A Senior and a Junior Vice Chair shall be elected at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 2 years. Should either position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should either no longer be a member of the party holding the position the position shall automatically be declared vacant and a replacement shall be made by the party.

#### **Secretary**

A Secretary shall be elected every 2 years at the AGM of the Association. If the position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be made by the Executive Committee. The secretary of the Association will be the designated accounting officer, and the line manager for staff.

#### **Treasurer**

A Treasurer shall be elected every 2 years at the AGM of the Association. If the position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be made by the Executive Committee.

### **Women's Representative**

A Women's Representative shall be elected every year at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 1 year. Should the position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should the Women's Representative no longer be a member of the party holding the position the position shall automatically be declared vacant and a replacement shall be made by the party. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.

### **Other Executive Committee Members**

- All parties represented in a NI council may appoint one other member to the Executive Committee at each AGM, provided the party has a member nominated by a council as a delegate. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If a position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be from the party holding that position. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If an Executive Committee member leaves the party they represent, the position shall be declared vacant, and a replacement shall be made from the party's members. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- Any individual elected as an Independent, and nominated by a council, may be appointed to the Executive Committee. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If more than one Independent is nominated by council(s) they shall agree the one appointment to the Executive Committee.
- A member no longer in a party, after an election, shall not be regarded as an Independent for the Independent Executive Committee position.

## **5. Party Rotation for election of Officers and Women's Representative**

The positions of Chair, Senior Vice Chair, Junior Vice Chair, Women's Representative, UK Executive Member nominee and appointments to other bodies shall follow the rotation.

DUP ~ SDLP ~ APNI ~ SF ~ UUP

The rotation cycle shall continue from one council term to the next and altered with any additional political party representation to the Executive Committee.

## **6. Co-option Policy**

The Executive Committee may co-opt an elected member(s) with specific skills/knowledge to assist the NAC - there will be no voting, proposing or seconding rights.

## **7. Honoraria**

The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer shall be paid an honorarium monthly in arrears, amounts to be determined by the Executive Committee at the first meeting following an AGM.

**8. NAC UK Executive Committee**

Executive Committee members are eligible for election to the NAC UK Executive following nomination by the Executive Committee. Nominations shall be made in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5.

**9. Appointment to Other Bodies**

Nominations shall be made in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5.

**10. Finances**

The financial affairs of the Association shall be conducted under the financial regulations agreed by the Executive Committee and approved by full membership.

**11. Subscriptions**

The Association shall decide the rate of subscriptions at the AGM each year. Subscriptions shall be due before the 1 September each year.

**12. Financial Year**

The financial year of the Association shall end on 31 July each year.

**13. Audit**

The accounts of the Association shall be subject to an independent examination at the end of the financial year.

**14. Notice of Meetings**

A notice of an Annual General, an Extra-ordinary General Meeting or a Special Meeting shall be issued giving 7 days' notice. Meetings may be held by way of a virtual meeting due to a time of national emergency, such as a pandemic, or other event, which involves the application of social distancing.

**15. Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be open to all members of the Association and shall be held each year in the month of October, at such place and at such time as may be determined by the Executive Committee. If, due to a time of national emergency, such as a pandemic or other event, the Executive Committee may vary the month to hold the AGM.

**16. Procedure at the AGM**

- To receive the Minutes of the previous AGM.
- To receive a Report from the Secretary on activities of the Association during the preceding year.

- 
- To receive a Balance Sheet and Audited Statement of Accounts for the preceding financial year.
  - Bi-Annually elect a Chairman, a Senior Vice Chair, and a Junior Vice Chair.
  - Bi-annually elect a Secretary.
  - Bi-annually elect a Treasurer.
  - Every year to elect other members of the Executive Committee in accordance with item 5.
  - To deal with resolutions, showing the name of the Mover and Seconder and having been notified in writing to the Secretary 28 days prior to the AGM.
  - No other resolution, other than Motions of Procedure shall be permitted.
  - Voting at an Annual General, an Extra-ordinary General Meeting or a Special Meeting shall be restricted to the delegates nominated by their council.

#### **17. Extra-ordinary General Meeting**

An Extra-Ordinary General Meeting shall be called by the Executive Committee upon a written request from 5 Members and shall be held with 21 days from receipt of the request.

#### **18. Special General Meetings**

The Executive Committee may call a Special General Meeting if required to do so.

#### **19. Quorum**

The Quorum of an Annual General Meetings, an Extra-ordinary Meeting and a Special Meeting shall be 15 Members. Where a quorum has not been reached before 15 minutes of the scheduled start time the meeting shall not be held, and a further meeting shall be called within 21 days.

#### **20. Termination of Membership**

Membership of the Association shall cease where a council's subscription is 6 months overdue.

#### **21. Dissolution**

If at a meeting of the full membership, called for this purpose, a motion for the dissolution of the Association shall be passed by at least two thirds of Members, where at least 7 councils are represented at the meeting, the NAC Executive, and up to 2 appointed Senior Officers from 2 councils shall realise the assets and pay the liabilities of the Association as a Dissolution Group. The Group shall make arrangements whereby they shall distribute or discharge the Association's net assets or liabilities. Any remaining property or money shall be distributed in equal share to the 11 councils. Any outstanding balance shall be met by the 11 councils and administered by the Group.

#### **22. Amendments to the Constitution**

This Constitution may be amended at any time by the Association on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, if the recommendation is passed by at least two-thirds of the representatives present and voting at the quorate meeting of the Association.





Department for

**Communities**[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

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From: Colum Boyle  
Permanent Secretary

Level 9  
Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 823301  
E-mail: [colum.boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:colum.boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: PSC 0180.23  
Date: 24 March 2023

## 2023/24 Funding Position

I wanted to update you on the current budget position and the outlook for 2023/24, as I recognise the impact of the ongoing uncertainty on our partner organisations. Given the absence of a budget settlement for 2023/24, the position for all Northern Ireland Departments remains unclear, however, the financial outlook for 2023/24 is extremely challenging with pressures at a NI Block level, leading to the potential for reductions in the Department's final 2023/24 budget allocation.

I appreciate that this situation provides significant challenges and frustration for organisations and their staff who receive funding from our programmes. I also recognise the vital nature of the support and the services delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector at a time when the cost of living crisis continues to impact communities, groups and individuals.

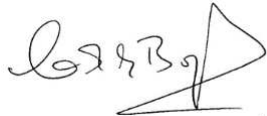
In response to concerns raised by the sector and to alleviate some of the immediate pressures that organisations are facing, I have taken the decision to provide a level of financial support to help sustain services and posts. This support will be provided by the Department to cover the 3-month period up to 30 June 2023 with the allocations based on the 2022/23 budget settlement. I hope you will understand why this allocation cannot be interpreted as an assurance as to the level of funding available for the remainder of 2023/24, given the absence of clarity on the overall budget settlement for the Department.

I can assure you that I remain committed to doing everything within my gift to ensure that organisations can continue to deliver critical services to the most vulnerable and to those who are most in need of support and advice.

I appreciate that this will not meet the immediate needs of all organisations, but I hope this goes some way to providing a level of support to help sustain critical services and retain experienced staff. Officials from across the Department continue to be available to help support organisations and to provide advice and guidance on the various programmes.

I would hope that we will be in a position to confirm our annual funding budget within the coming weeks, and in the meantime I am very grateful to you and your organisations for all that you deliver on behalf of the department for our communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colum Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**COLUM BOYLE**  
**PERMANENT SECRETARY**



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

Depairtment fur

**Infrastructure**

[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Councillor Cora Corry

[Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org)

County Hall  
Drumragh Avenue  
Omagh, County Tyrone  
BT79 7AF

Tel: 0300 200 7894  
Text Phone: 028 9054 0022  
Fax: 028 8225 4009

Your reference:  
Our reference: 151300-23

20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear Cora,

## **GRITTING ON RURAL ROADS IN MID ULSTER**

Thank you for your further letter of 27 February regarding the access to grit on the rural road network in Mid Ulster.

Grit piles are placed by our contractors at strategic locations along rural roads and are replenished as and when necessary during the winter period. These are provided for use by the public on a self-help basis. Further grit piles can be requested through the local Section Offices. The request is then assessed in accordance with our Winter Service Policy.

Please note that there is also a grit bunker located outside the DfI Roads depot, Station Road, Magherafelt where members of the public can access grit 24hrs a day. During cold snaps this facility is well used and we keep it topped up on a regular basis.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**Daniel Healy**  
Divisional Roads Manager  
Western Division



**To: Council Chief Executives**

**Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7EG**

Telephone: (028) 90582 3346  
e-mail: [anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk)  
Our ref:  
Date: 24 March 2023

Dear Chief Executive

### **Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings**

Further to my letters of 25 March and 26 September 2022.

Section 78 (local authority meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained provision to provide councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency. This included an enabling power for the Department to make subordinate legislation regarding remote/hybrid meetings and the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 were subsequently made and came into operation on 1 May 2020.

The expiry date of section 78 (Local Authority Meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 was previously extended to 24 March 2023, thus allowing councils to continue to hold remote/hybrid meetings under the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2020.

This was intended as an interim measure until such time as proposals for more permanent legislation, to be made under section 2 of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021, could be considered by a Communities Minister. In the absence of the Assembly, it is not possible to make regulations under the 2021 Act.

A further extension order has therefore been made to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act for a further 6 months, until **24 September 2023**. [The Coronavirus](#)



[Act 2020 \(Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings\) \(No2\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2023](#) was made on 23 March. As previously highlighted in my earlier letter of September 2022, an Order to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act is subject to the confirmatory procedure in the Assembly and, whilst it comes into operation once made, it will cease to have effect 40 days from the date of making unless it has been approved by resolution of the Assembly (the 40 day period does not include any time in which the Assembly is dissolved, in recess for more than 4 days or adjourned for more than 6 days). The Department will monitor the situation and keep councils informed.

Yours sincerely

**Anthony Carleton**  
**Director**  
**Local Government & Housing Regulation**

## Public Transport Policy Division



Department for  
**Infrastructure**  
An Roinn  
**Bonneagair**  
Department für  
**Infrastructure**  
[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Councillor Cora Corry  
[Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org)

Ground Floor, Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
BELFAST, BT2 8GB  
Tel: 028 9034 6247

Your reference:  
Our reference: STOF-0107-2023

30 March 2023

Dear Ms Corry,

Thank you for your letter which we received on 13 March 2023 to Julie Harrison regarding Mid Ulster District Council's support for the motion carried by Derry City & Strabane District Council in relation to railways in Northern Ireland. Your correspondence has been passed to me for response as I have responsibility in my role as Director of Public Transport Policy.

While the aforementioned motion covered a number of railway matters, the Council is particularly interested in the request regarding the introduction of a 'Restoring your Railway' fund in NI, and it is this part of the motion that I will respond to.

The £500m Restoring Your Railway Fund was launched in January 2020 by the Department for Transport (DfT) in GB to provide financial support to projects seeking to restore railway lines and/or stations removed from the network during the 'Beeching cuts'. It primarily funds business cases and feasibility studies.

At present there are no specific plans to introduce such a scheme here. The All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR) will however provide a strategic vision for the rail network and allow investment decisions to be made going forward to best serve the needs of citizens.

For your information, the AISRR will consider how the rail network on the island of Ireland can improve sustainable connectivity between major cities, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development. This will include how our existing connections could be improved and where new rail links would be best placed. Work on

the Review is now at an advanced stage, with a draft final report expected in the coming weeks.

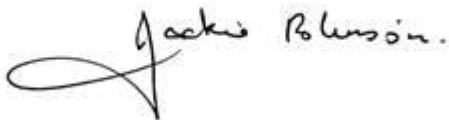
Before the Review is published, it will have to go through the appropriate governance requirements on both sides of the border, including screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). If a SEA is required, it is anticipated this will be subject to consultation around the middle of the year and the draft Review will be published for the purposes of the consultation. The Review will be finalised as soon as possible thereafter, with recommendations from the SEA process (if required) appropriately incorporated.

When these steps have been completed, it is anticipated that the Minister of Transport and Government in Ireland as well as Minister for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland will be asked to approve the Review. Should there continue to be an absence of Ministers in the NI Executive, approval will be considered taking into account the decision-making framework set out in the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2022 or relevant legislation in place at the time. It is expected that the final Review will be published in the second half of 2023.

Once published, the Review will provide an overarching framework to inform policy and future strategy, including decisions in relation to investment in our rail network across the island.

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Robinson'. The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial 'J'.

**Jackie Robinson**

Director, Public Transport Policy Division



The premature baby charity  
for Northern Ireland

Unit A5, 15 Heron Road, Belfast, BT3 9LE  
Tel: 028 9081 5050 | Fax: 028 9081 5850 | Email: [info@tinylife.org.uk](mailto:info@tinylife.org.uk)

Cc: [chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org)

Dear Ms Corry,

**Reference: Neonatal Leave Policy for Mid Ulster District Council**

I am writing following recent news that Belfast City councillors [voted in favour of amending maternity leave provision](#) for Council staff to better support families of premature babies. TinyLife hopes that other local councils will follow Belfast's example, and develop policies that will help ease pressure on families with a baby or babies receiving care on a neonatal unit.

As you may know, TinyLife provides vital support to families of babies who are born too small, too sick or too soon in Northern Ireland. We have been campaigning on the issue of paid neonatal leave for almost a decade. Most recently, we have been engaging with MPs, MLAs and policymakers to examine the implications of GB's Neonatal Care (Leave & Pay) Bill for families in Northern Ireland. We have also worked with local employers in the private sector, including FinTrU, to help develop organisation-specific neonatal leave policies. Public sector employers, like private business, have a unique opportunity to show leadership and initiative in the absence of forthcoming regional legislation on neonatal leave.

In Northern Ireland, around one in 13 babies born each year are admitted to neonatal care due to prematurity or sickness<sup>1</sup>. Fathers and non-birthing parents have only two weeks of parental leave, meaning that many return to work long before their child is well enough to leave hospital. Additionally, some mothers of premature or vulnerable babies use up much of their maternity leave while their baby is still in hospital.

Both at work and at home, the whole family's mental health can suffer following the birth of a premature or sick baby. 80% of parents report that their mental health suffered after their baby's neonatal stay<sup>2</sup>. Up to 24% of parents are diagnosed with PTSD following their baby's discharge from neonatal care<sup>3</sup>. Leo's Neonatal Charity found that 25% of dads and 33% of mums needed antidepressant or antianxiety medication after their baby's neonatal stay.

<sup>1</sup> Bliss and TinyLife (2018) [Northern Ireland Baby Report 2018](#)

<sup>2</sup> Bliss (2022) [Neonatal Care \(Leave and Pay\) Bill Members Briefing](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Smallest Things (2021) [Life After Neonatal Care: A post pandemic survey](#)

TinyLife is a company limited by guarantee.  
Registered office: Unit A5 17 Heron Road, Belfast, BT3 9LE  
Charity No: NIC 101869 Company No: NI 037799

Founder and Former President - Professor James Dornan  
Chair: Laura McKeaveney

Patrons: David Healy MBE, Sarah Travers, Cara Dillon  
Ambassadors: Rita Fitzgerald, Denise Watson, Marissa Callaghan, Kurt Walker







The premature baby charity  
for Northern Ireland

Unit A5, 15 Heron Road, Belfast, BT3 9LE  
Tel: 028 9081 5050 | Fax: 028 9081 5850 | Email: [info@tinylife.org.uk](mailto:info@tinylife.org.uk)

With regards to the impact on businesses, a survey of parents with a child in the neonatal unit<sup>4</sup> found that:

- Two thirds of dads had to return to work while their baby was still in receiving neonatal care;
- 1 in 3 dads resorted to being signed off sick in order to spend time with their baby on the neonatal unit; and
- 42% of mums and 21% of dads surveyed left work altogether to become a full-time carer for their child or children.

With 99% of respondents (including employers) who responded to the UK Government's consultation in agreement with the proposed legislation<sup>5</sup>, employers, including those in the public sector, have the opportunity to do best by their workers – and for their own business – *before* local legislation requires them to.

Paid neonatal leave would make a material difference to a family's financial stability and mental and physical health, as well as the long-term developmental outcomes for the new-born child. Paid neonatal leave would also ensure that skills, knowledge and talent are not lost from Northern Ireland's workforce.

**We are requesting a meeting to discuss these issues, or to present to Mid Ulster councillors on the topic of neonatal leave. Should the Council decide to move forward with its own neonatal leave policy, we would like to offer any assistance and guidance we can during its development.**

Attached is a briefing paper on the Neonatal Care (Leave & Pay) Bill, which may also contain some useful information on the potential impact of a neonatal leave policy in the workplace.

**I look forward to hearing from you or your team in the near future and can be contacted at [alison@tinylife.org.uk](mailto:alison@tinylife.org.uk).**

Many thanks,

**Alison McNulty**  
Chief Executive, TinyLife

<sup>4</sup> Bliss (2019) [Two thirds of dads forced to return to work while their baby was still in neonatal care](#)

<sup>5</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2020) [Neonatal leave and pay: Good work plan proposals to support families, Government Response](#)



# Briefing: Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill



*The only premature baby  
charity for Northern Ireland*

**Tiny  
Life.**



## KEY FACTS

The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill is a Private Member's Bill that passed all stages in the House of Commons in January. It receives its second reading in the House of Lords on 24th March.

This legislation is designed to create two entitlements - to leave and pay - for families of babies who spend time in a neonatal unit. Families will be eligible if their baby is born **premature** (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or **full-term but sick** and is cared for in a health setting for **more than 1 week** before they reach 28 days of life.

Neonatal Care Leave would be a **day one right** to be extended to all employees who meet the eligibility conditions, regardless of how long they have worked for their employer. The maximum duration of the leave and how and when it must be taken would be set by regulations, but would be **at least one week**.

Families will be entitled to Neonatal Care Pay if they meet the minimum service and earning requirements:

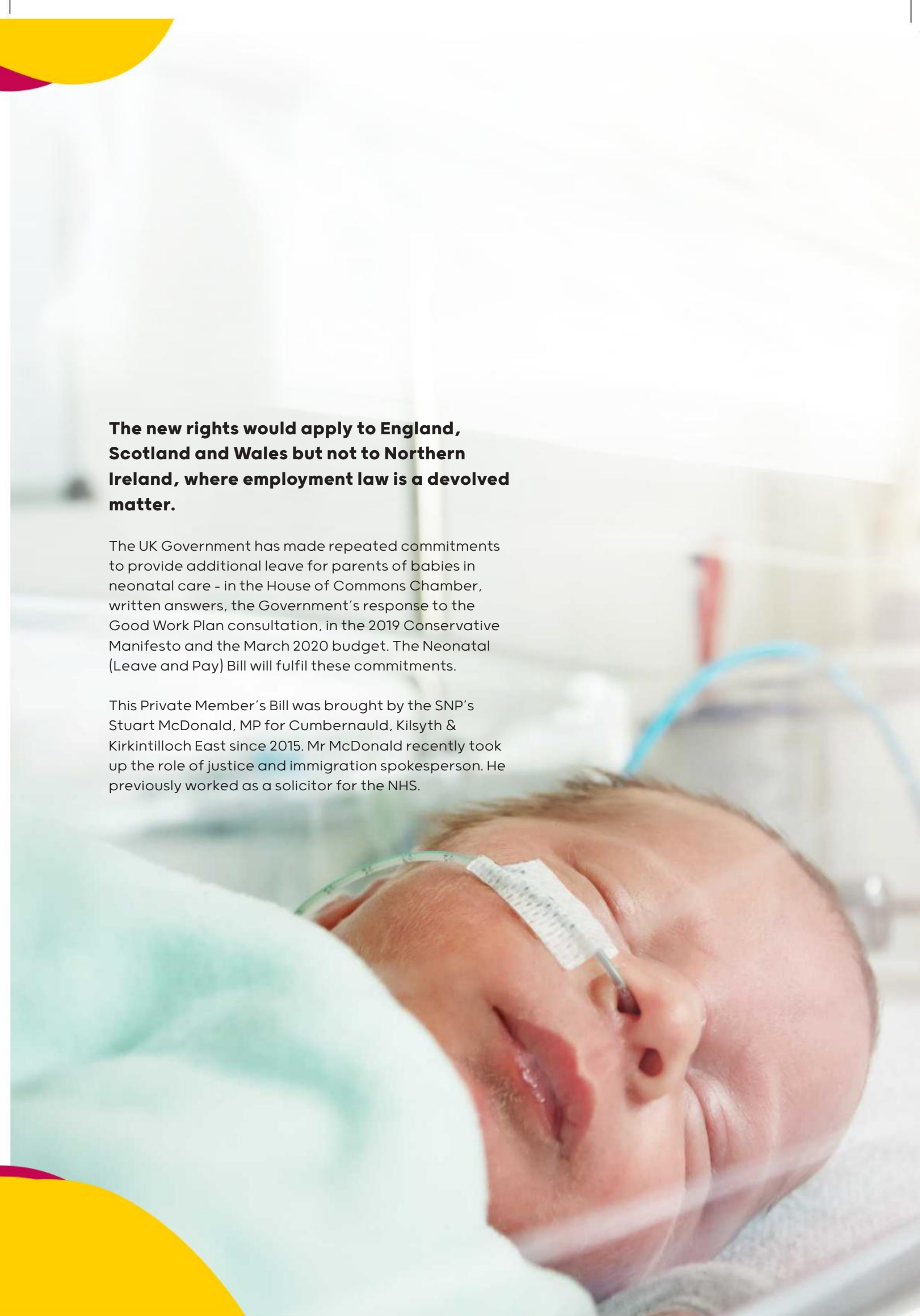
- At least 26 weeks' continuous service
- Weekly earnings at or above the lower earnings limit (currently £123 per week for 2022/23)

The level and duration of pay would also be set by regulations, but the limit that could be claimed would be **at least 12 weeks**.

**The new rights would apply to England, Scotland and Wales but not to Northern Ireland, where employment law is a devolved matter.**

The UK Government has made repeated commitments to provide additional leave for parents of babies in neonatal care - in the House of Commons Chamber, written answers, the Government's response to the Good Work Plan consultation, in the 2019 Conservative Manifesto and the March 2020 budget. The Neonatal (Leave and Pay) Bill will fulfil these commitments.

This Private Member's Bill was brought by the SNP's Stuart McDonald, MP for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth & Kirkintilloch East since 2015. Mr McDonald recently took up the role of justice and immigration spokesperson. He previously worked as a solicitor for the NHS.



The only premature baby  
charity for Northern Ireland

# TIMELINE

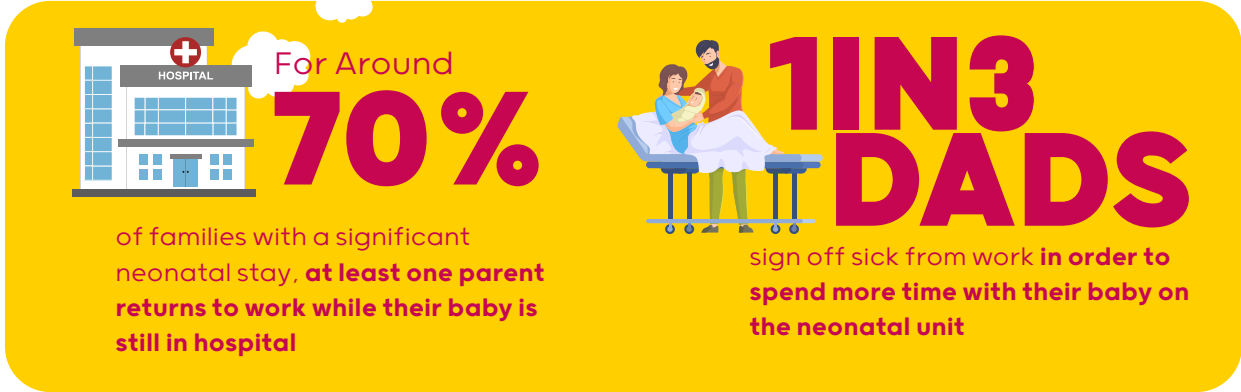


# CONTEXT

Following the birth of their child, most parents expect a hospital stay of a day or two before returning home with their baby. However, the situation is very different for the parents of the 1,800 babies admitted to a neonatal unit in Northern Ireland each year. Some of these premature or sick babies will receive weeks of neonatal care, while others will spend months in the hospital.

The inflexibility of current parental leave law heightens the trauma and stress felt by the whole family.  
**For some parents, much of their parental leave is spent in hospital or caring for a sick or vulnerable baby at home, leaving less time to enjoy simply bonding with their child.**

Fathers and non-birthing parents are often excluded from their baby’s care by the parental leave system.  
**With just two weeks of Paternity Leave available, many fathers and non-birthing parents return to work long before their babies are well enough to return home.**



**sources:**  
It’s not a game: the very real costs of having a premature or sick baby in Northern Ireland, Bliss/TinyLife (2014) & ‘Two thirds of dads forced to return to work while their baby was still in neonatal care’, Bliss (2019)

Caregivers who feel forced into returning to work too soon are excluded from important caregiving activities, such as skin-to-skin contact, changing and feeding their baby.

Many mothers of babies admitted to a neonatal unit use weeks or months of their Maternity Leave entitlement before their baby returns home. Currently, Statutory Maternity Pay is only payable during the first 39 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave. When a mother or birthing parent is due to return to work, their premature or vulnerable child may be at an earlier stage of development than their peers. Some babies will still be under the care of neonatal clinicians.



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Families might find it difficult to secure childcare that is appropriate for their baby's needs. Some parents drop out of the workforce altogether.

**The solution to many of these problems lies in keeping families together for as long as possible, and allowing families the time to bond with and care for their premature or sick baby at home.**

**Thankfully, an overwhelming majority of employers support additional leave and pay for families of premature or sick babies.** The UK Government's response to the consultation noted that there was very little difference between businesses and other respondents in support of Neonatal Leave and Pay - *99% of responses were in favour of the idea*. Employers recognise that taking sick leave is not a sustainable alternative to appropriate leave and pay. Unlike the majority of parental pay, Statutory Sick Pay cannot be reclaimed by employers. **Employers would be able to reclaim the cost of neonatal pay.** Neonatal leave and pay would also provide a much more predictable pattern of leave than ad hoc sick or unpaid leave.



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# IMPACT OF A NEONATAL STAY ON FAMILIES

When one parent is forced to return to work sooner than they planned or would like, this can cause challenges for the whole family. For example, this may limit the other parent's ability to visit their baby on the neonatal unit if they are reliant on their partner for transport (including after a caesarean section) or if they share a car. Twins and multiples are sometimes treated in separate hospitals - or even in different areas of the same hospital - which can limit the time that parents have to care for each of their babies. The non-working parent may not be able to spend as much time in hospital as they would like to if they need to care for older siblings in the family. Aside from these practical considerations, the non-working parent will sometimes hear life-changing news about their baby's condition, and may have to make decisions about their baby's care alone.

**Parents of babies in the neonatal unit can expect £405 per week on:**



**Food & Drink**



**Transport**



**Parking**



**Overnight  
accommodation**

**sources:**

**Impact of cost of living crisis in neonatal care, Bliss (2022)**

Additional research has found that:

- More than half of families surveyed said their finances affected their ability to spend time with their baby
- One in four families had to borrow money or increase their debt because of their baby's neonatal stay
- 77% of parents report that the costs of attending the neonatal unit had a negative impact on their mental health

**The combination of additional costs associated with neonatal care, coupled with inadequate parental leave and pay, has a significant detrimental impact on the financial and mental wellbeing of a family.**



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## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY-CENTRED CARE

For the very best start in life, babies must receive hands-on care. This includes feeding, kangaroo care (skin-to-skin contact), changing, bathing and, in some cases, administration of medication. For babies, sustained periods of direct care can increase weight gain, improve breastfeeding rates, improve reflexes and gross motor development at 4-5 years and reduce pain during invasive procedures.

**Parental involvement - physical and emotional closeness - is highly important for forming strong parent-infant bonds. Parents who spend time with their babies for long periods of time report increased confidence, as well as reduced levels of stress and anxiety.**

## IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Because the provisions of the Westminster Private Member's Bill do not extend to Northern Ireland, **we must develop a separate Bill that will enshrine the same protections into law for people living in NI.**

The Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 could serve as a useful model. Westminster introduced legislation for parental bereavement leave and pay, which came into effect in GB in April 2020. NI's Department for the Economy then issued a public consultation on the issue of bereavement leave and pay, which was completed in summer 2020. The Department developed a small, single-issue Bill that mirrored its Westminster equivalent. The Bill received cross-party support, enjoying a relatively smooth passage through the Assembly and came into effect in April 2022.

It is currently unclear whether the Neonatal Care legislation could be introduced in NI via an Executive bill or whether it will have to be introduced in the form of a Private Member's Bill, as it was in Westminster. It is anticipated that the Westminster Neonatal Care Bill will be implemented 18 months after receiving Royal Assent, providing enough time for businesses to update their policies and for HMRC to update their IT systems.

**For further information, please contact: Alison McNulty, CEO at [alison@tinylife.org.uk](mailto:alison@tinylife.org.uk) or Rebekah Corbett, Policy and Public Affairs Officer at [rebekah@tinylife.org.uk](mailto:rebekah@tinylife.org.uk)**



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Tiny Life is registered as a company limited by guarantee in N.Ireland



**From the Permanent Secretary  
Dr Julie Harrison**

Councillor Cora Corry  
Chair  
Mid Ulster District Council

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Your reference:  
Our reference: SINV-0068-2023  
13 April 2023

Dear Councillor Corry

**CURRENT FUNDING POSITION FOR OUT AND ABOUT COMMUNITY  
TRANSPORT AND MID ULSTER SHOPMOBILITY**

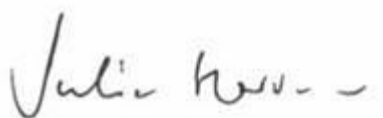
Thank you for your recent correspondence related to the current funding position for Out and About Community Transport and Mid Ulster Shopmobility and your concerns in that regard.

I fully acknowledge the difficulties presented to all the Community Transport Providers and Shopmobility Schemes by the current budget uncertainty and that at this time, funding can only be confirmed until 30 June 2023. I recognise the efforts being made to continue to provide services and I remain committed to working with all the Community Transport Providers and Shopmobility Schemes to address the situation we find ourselves in.

The position still stands that further funding decisions for the remainder of the year will be subject to the budget provided by the Secretary of State for NI, in the event that we remain without Ministers.

When the overall budget position is clearer, I will be happy to update you and Mid Ulster Council.

Yours sincerely



**JULIE HARRISON**

**From the Permanent Secretary  
and HSC Chief Executive**



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Your Ref:

Our ref: SCORR-0414-2023

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Dear Cora

Thank you for your letter, dated 30 March 2023, in which you convey the Council's motion in relation to Community Pharmacy services.

I share with Council, the appreciation that community pharmacy services provided during COVID-19 and welcome your recognition of the collaboration that took place in exceptionally challenging times to put in place new services for our population. An example of a valuable ongoing legacy is that community pharmacies are now a major provider of vaccination services.

I am sure you are aware that funding is constrained for not only the Department of Health (DoH), but all Departments, and savings are being sought or funding cut right across the entire public sector. No budget has yet been set for the DoH for 2023/24, but the expectations is that there will be no uplift in funding levels.

I can assure you that the DoH is in regular contact with Community Pharmacy NI (CPNI) regarding the provision of services to ensure sustainable access to, and continuity of, community pharmacy services to the public within their current funding envelope.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter May".

**Peter May**