

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
John O'Dowd MLA

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Adrian, a chara,

VERGE MANAGEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT

Today I am announcing a new approach to verge management across the entire road network and have attached the press release for your reference.

As you are all aware, the introduction of the Climate Act and the need to future proof how we deliver our services means we all have to look at alternative ways to do what we do but also protect the environment around us. I hope, like me, you too will understand the need to protect and create important habitats for wildlife and bees.

These new measures along with the planting of wildflowers will help nature, protect the environment, promote biodiversity and enable my Department to deliver on our commitments in support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and is consistent with the aims of the National Pollinator Strategy.

We must do all that we can to address this very real climate emergency and I hope that as a council you too will support and adopt this change in direction.

Is mise le meas,



JOHN O'DOWD MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

Enc

O'Dowd announces new approach to road verge management to protect the environment

Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd has announced a new approach to verge management across the road network to protect the environment.

The Department has a duty to maintain the road network and to cut grass to prevent overgrowth onto footways and carriageways, and to prevent the obstruction of sightlines and traffic signs.

The new approach increases the Department's focus on protecting wildlife and promoting biodiversity when managing roadside verges, and will support the actions needed to comply with the Climate Change Bill passed by the Assembly earlier this year.

From next year a single swathe will be cut along the verges on the strategic road network twice per year. Other areas that are needed for road safety purposes, such as for sight lines at junctions, will also be cut at least twice each year. A similar approach will be introduced on heavier trafficked rural roads and on lighter trafficked rural roads, one cut will be carried out late in the growing season.

John O' Dowd said: **"We all have a responsibility to protect the environment and it is something I take very seriously. My Department is responsible for the maintenance of the public road network and annually cuts about 45,000km of grass verges.**

This new approach aims to maintain the right balance between road safety and the control of weeds while achieving a greater focus on environmental protection.

I am determined to do all that I can to protect and create important habitats for wildlife, and the change that I am introducing will deliver on the commitments of my Department in support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and is consistent with the aims of the National Pollinator Strategy. The introduction of these new measures along with leaving suitable areas of grass uncut and the planting of wildflowers will help nature and protect the environment. We must do all that we can to address the very real climate emergency.

It is well known that many other people and organisations cut roadside grass and I would take this opportunity to encourage them to consider if this is necessary, and where possible they should adopt a similar approach to what I have introduced for the benefit of the environment."

Jennifer Fulton from the Ulster Wildlife Trust said: “With many pollinator species in decline, roadside verges can provide a home and important food source for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and many other species. If managed sensitively, our verges have the potential to create a valuable nature recovery network making a positive contribution to the biodiversity and climate crises. Management is key – cutting less and cutting later. Some road verges need to be cut for safety but it is important not to cut more frequently than necessary. Most verges are cut in summer but where possible cutting should be left until autumn when flowers have set seed and pollinators are less active. It is very encouraging to see DfI take positive steps to manage their land for nature. ”

Notes to editors:

1. Additional cuts at specific locations may be required, to maintain sightlines for road safety purposes.
2. The delivery of new major road projects, such as the A6 Dungiven to Drumahoe Dualling scheme includes the provision of approximately 200,000m² of wildflower seeding.
3. The Department is keen to replicate the ‘Don’t Mow Let It Grow’ project which has been delivered in conjunction with Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and others across more areas. The three-year pilot ‘Don’t Mow Let It Grow’ project involved the management of 20 road verges along with 18 Council park grassland areas.



Department for

Infrastructure

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Your reference:

Our reference:

12th October 2022

Dear Councillor Corry,

DFI ROADS ANNUAL REPORT

Thank you again for the opportunity to present DfI Roads Annual Report to Council Members on the 29th September. Could you also pass on my thanks to all members for their kind words of welcome to Western Division.

At the meeting I undertook to follow up on a number of queries that were raised. Please find below a response to those queries that were not addressed at the meeting.

If you have any further questions regarding the responses below please contact Lesley, Neil or myself.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Healy
Divisional Roads Manager
Western Division

Cllr Cuthbertson

Housing Estates in need of resurfacing not included in Report. Other previous requests for resurfacing still not listed

While I agree that the condition of roads in housing estates require attention, they do not tend to rank highly enough to be allocated the limited resource available to the Department for resurfacing. All roads not resurfaced during the current programme will remain on the prioritisation list for consideration in future resurfacing programmes.

All previous requests for resurfacing are considered when compiling the annual resurfacing programmes. Unfortunately, those previously requested resurfacing schemes not appearing on the current programme do not rank highly enough for inclusion in the current year. These issues will be addressed at local DEA meetings.

Cllr Kerr

Completion of a Roundabout scheme in Clonoe

Clonoe Roundabout was hit by vehicle earlier this year. DfI Roads Contractor repaired it following the accident. Unfortunately, within days it was hit by another car. The damage to the roundabout has been assessed and is not currently a hazard for road users. DfI Roads do not have any plans to carry out any further remedial work to it this year. However, the repair of the roundabout will remain on our list of outstanding non-critical repairs to be completed when resources allow.

Request for Biodiversity scheme at Clonoe Roundabout.

DfI are committed to protecting biodiversity and would be happy to liaise with council to facilitate a scheme that is consistent with the Departments policy for planting at roundabouts. Please contact Lesley Maxwell to advance this initiative.

Cllr McGuigan

Request for active travel schemes to be more integrated with council schemes

Council officials liaise with DfI Roads Green Blue Active Travel section on a regular basis to ensure there is a joined up approach to the schemes that are taken forward. However, I agree that cooperation on a more strategic masterplan of how these projects are integrated would be beneficial. To this end DfI Roads will continue to engage with Council on the active travel infrastructure development aspects contained in the Community Plan.

Cllr McFlynn

King St, Magherafelt request for crossing to be progressed

DfI Network Development are currently considering a further assessment and consultation exercise for the controlled pedestrian crossing on King Street following a request for a change of location from the junction of Fair Hill to the entrance for the school.

Network Development section will contact the Councillor McFlynn directly in relation to the outcome of the assessment and consultation exercise.

Cllr Graham

Query over why a tunnel under the road at (The Old Inn On The Park site) A29 Moy Road was infilled

These works were undertaken by NIW with the consent of DfI Roads to facilitate the laying of two sewers required to service the housing development approved for the Old Inn on the Park site.

The work was undertaken following consultation with MUDC, Planning and NIEA Historic Environment Division (HED) and complies with terms specified by those bodies.

The work has been undertaken in such a manner that the infill material can be removed at a later stage without damage to the fabric of the tunnel should any relevant body wish to put in place the infrastructure necessary to make use of the subway in the future.

Cllr Graham

Granville Road resurfacing extent

The extent of the resurfacing is from the Old Ballygawley Road junction (At Murdochs) for a distance of 1700m towards Granville but not including the stretch past Granville at this time.

Cllr Quinn

Query relating to delays in response times to queries issued to SO's

A brief review of the response times issued by Section Office staff has identified that a number of responses have fallen outside the timeframes contained in the DfI Roads Customer Charter. There are currently significant staffing pressures, particularly in Mid Ulster South Section Office, which are impacting on our ability to meet response times. There are steps being taken by DfI senior management to address the staffing issues; however, these are likely to take some time to fully implement. In the meantime staff will endeavour to answer all queries within the required period for response.

Cllr Quinn & Cllr Kerr

Mountjoy Road – can a LTSM scheme at this location be reviewed following recent spate of accidents

This request has been passed to my Network Development team to assess. Should a scheme be identified it will need to compete against other similar LTSM projects across the division for prioritisation and funding.

Cllr Burton

Caledon Road - check the source of standing water – surface water or NIWater?

I have asked DfI Inspectors to review the cause of standing water on this road. Should they determine the cause to be due to surface water then a works order will be issued to rectify the defect. The progress on this query will be addressed at the next DEA meeting.

Cllr Burton

Mill St Caledon road condition

Clogher Main St road condition/potholes

These queries have been passed onto DfI inspectors for follow up investigation. This and other issues raised will be addressed through the next DEA meeting.

Cllr Burton

Contact List update to councillors

An updated Mid Ulster contact list was sent to the Council on 05-10-22 for distribution.

Cllr McKinney

Tobermore Rd/A6 junction request for a review of recent accidents and LTSM scheme MUN

I have asked my Network Development Team to assess whether a left turn lane at the mini roundabout for traffic turning left from the A29 Maghera direction towards Magherafelt is feasible. A preliminary assessment would indicate that any dedicated left turn lane at this location would require demolition to frontage buildings which will impact significantly on the overall cost benefit ratio for any proposed scheme.

DfI Network Development section will assess the site under the criteria in RSPPG_E032 – for a minor improvement scheme and contact Councillor McKinney directly in relation the results of the assessment.

Cllr McKinney

Aughrim Rd hill section request for a review of accidents and LTSM scheme

Aughrim Rd/Gracefield Rd Junction upgrade. My LTSM team is aware of the accident history of this junction and has received previous requests to introduce an accident remedial scheme at this location. Unfortunately PSNI collision data currently only confirms two separate collisions at this location, one was recorded in 2020 and one in 2021, both were recorded as slight.

DfI Network Development section will assess the site under the criteria contained in RSPPG_E032 – for a minor improvement scheme and contact the Councillor McKinney directly in relation the results of the assessment.

Cllr Molloy

Resurfacing of Parks and Estates and smaller villages.

While the resurfacing of roads in parks, housing estates and smaller villages are no doubt necessary, they do not tend to rank highly enough to be allocated the limited resource available to the Department for resurfacing. All roads not resurfaced during the current programme will remain on the prioritisation list for consideration in future resurfacing programmes. These issues will be further addressed at the next DEA meetings.

Cllr Molloy

Interest in finding some kind of urban regeneration schemes for villages and small town and funding from DFI/DFC/ DAERA

The Department is happy to liaise with all stakeholders to help identify and develop plans for the regeneration of villages and small towns. Please contact Lesley or Neil for DfI representation on any groups bringing forward proposals in this area.



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSrátha Báin
Derry Cíttie & Strábane
Deistrick Council

Our Ref: TJ/C399/22

17 October 2022

Mr Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council

Adrian.McCreesh@midulstercouncil.org

Dear Mr McCreesh

At a Meeting of Derry City and Strabane District Council held on 29 September 2022, the following Motion was passed:

That this Council writes to the British Secretary of State Chris Heaton-Harris to cancel the Public Interest Immunity Certificate that was issued in the case of Noah Donohoe. We need full truth and transparency into the death of this 14-year-old child. PII's have been known to hide truth and transparency in the past. That this motion be sent to the 10 other Councils in the North.

Furthermore, this Council supports the Donohoe family's call for Noah's inquest to be heard in front of a jury.

I would appreciate your consideration in this important matter and would be grateful for a response at your earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

John Kelpie
Chief Executive