

**From the Permanent Secretary  
 Dr Julie Harrison**

Councillor Córa Corry  
 Chair  
 Mid Ulster District Council  
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 BT80 8DT

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 Email: [Julie.Harrison@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Harrison@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

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

Your reference: C200/22  
 Our reference: SINV-0045-2022  
 24 November 2022

Dear Councillor Corry

**MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL – PLANNING DELAYS – REQUEST FOR MEETING**

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 2022 on behalf of your members expressing concerns about delays in consultee response times and requesting a meeting. Apologies for my slow response.

I am very conscious of the Department’s responsibility to respond to planning consultations within the specified timeframes and can assure the members that staff endeavour to give a full response within the 21 day return period. However, given the volume and complexity of applications, this is not always achievable.

For information, the table below shows consultation response statistics for Mid Ulster District Council area covering the last four year period:

Planning consultations in year	No of applications to DFI Roads	Response rate within 21 days
2019/20	1519	75.1%
2020/21	1430 ( Covid)	79.8%
2021/22	1425	71.4%
2022 – 6 months to 30 Sept	600	60.5%

While I appreciate that this is not a comfort I would highlight that the Department is carrying a significant number of vacancies which adversely affects our ability to meet the response timescales.

You will be aware that the Council decided not to be part of the new online system which will go live for other Councils on 5 December. The temporary shutdown of the

online planning portal to allow for the introduction of Mid Ulster's revised, standalone, system has also had a detrimental effect on the response statistics during the current year. During this period, no consultations were received by DfI for approximately six weeks. When the new portal became operational, the backlog of consultations issued over a short period, meaning two months work to complete within two weeks. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, we were unable to respond to such an influx of planning consultations in a timely fashion. However, we are working hard to address the backlog and will endeavour to raise the consultation response statistics to at least similar levels as in previous years by the end of the reporting period.

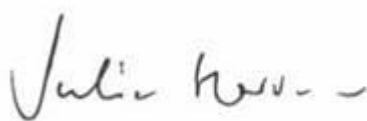
Re-consultations are necessary when the application either lacks sufficient detail to be assessed, or does not meet the required standards. These are issues that are out with DfI's control but which also have a detrimental impact on our response timescales. You may have noticed that the outgoing Minister agreed to consult on statutory validation checklists which are intended to help improve the quality of applications that Councils and DfI have to deal with <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/odowd-announces-consultation-improve-quality-planning-applications>

On a more positive note, following publication of the NIAO report, *Planning in Northern Ireland*, our senior management team reviewed the staffing structure within Network Planning and agreed to increase the staff complement within the network planning function. The review recommended 28 new posts in Network Planning sections across DfI to improve consultation response rates.

While this is welcome, I am sure you appreciate it will take some time for the process of recruiting, training and utilising these additional staff to bear dividends so unfortunately it will have limited impact on the response timescales in the short term. However, I am confident that it will lead to an improvement in consultation response timescales in the longer term.

I trust you find this explains the situation and agree that my attendance at a meeting would be of limited benefit at this time. However, should you wish to discuss the matter further I suggest that you contact Gordon Noble, the Principal Officer for Network Planning in Western Division, at [Gordon.Noble@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Gordon.Noble@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) who will be happy to help.

Yours sincerely



**JULIE HARRISON**



Cllr Cora Corry  
Mid Ulster District Council  
[Eileen.forde@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:Eileen.forde@midulstercouncil.org)

Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Gasworks Business Park  
Malone Lower  
Belfast  
BT7 2JA  
Telephone: 028 9056 9210

Email: [paul.donnelly@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:paul.donnelly@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Your reference:  
Our reference:  
CEQ 45 -22

Date: 21 November 2022

Dear Cllr Corry

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 2022 in which you have highlighted the concerns expressed by Council surrounding the significant delays in NIEA consultee response times.

Between 01 April 2022 and 14 November 2022, the Department received 159 cases from your district council area and responded to 151 cases within this same time period. There are currently 28 cases with NIEA for consideration. Three of these cases are subject to consideration under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (NI) 1995 which are within the power of the planning authority to determine without further advice from the Department.

The remaining 25 planning consultations are either still within our statutory target date for response or are of a more complex nature. In some circumstances additional information has been requested to enable case officers to fully assess and advise on the proposed development.

The Department is continuing to experience a very heavy workload of planning casework with 3000 planning consultations received between 1 April 2022 and 31 October 2022; this has resulted in delays to planning consultation responses. I am aware of the frustrations caused by these delays. NIEA is focusing resources and processes to provide robust environmental advice that supports sustainable development and to meet the consultation demands we have across the 11 district councils and the

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Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Actions taken include engaging with stakeholders on the consultation processes and maximising the use of existing published information and guidance. We are also working with the DfI cross-governmental Planning Forum to identify improvements to the planning system.

To facilitate continued improvements in the process I believe the most beneficial meeting would be between Mid-Ulster Council and NIEA officials involved in the planning process through dedicated client liaison officer meetings. If your officials wish to engage in such a meeting please ask them to contact the NIEA's Planning Response Team at [planningresponse.team@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:planningresponse.team@daera-ni.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



**PAUL DONNELLY**  
Chief Executive

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**From the Agricultural Policy Director  
Dr. Rosemary Agnew**



**Cllr Cora Curry  
Mid Ulster District Council  
Dungannon Office  
Circular Road  
Dungannon  
Co Tyrone  
BT71 6DT**

Room 413, Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB  
Telephone: 028 9052 4074  
Email: [Rosemary.Agnew@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Rosemary.Agnew@daera-ni.gov.uk)

**Our Ref: STOF-0073-2022**  
Date: 22 November 2022

Dear Cora,

### **Mid Ulster District Council - Motion - CAP Single Farm Payments**

Thank you for your letter of 9 November 2022 requesting detail on what replacement funds will be put in place to support farmers and the wider agricultural sector

I can assure you that the objective, through the policy decisions announced by Minister Poots in March 2022, is to provide schemes that are designed in Northern Ireland to address our local needs and support farmers and growers to continue to produce high quality, nutritious food whilst importantly, reducing their environmental impact and ensuring we continue to have a vibrant rural economy.

Four outcomes were identified for the agricultural industry which DAERA is seeking to pursue. These are an agricultural industry that:

- Pursues increased productivity;
- Is environmentally sustainable;
- Displays improved resilience; and
- Operates within an effective functioning supply chain.

In October 2021, the HM Treasury Spending Review and Autumn Budget announced that Northern Ireland would be provided with almost £1.0 billion for farmers and land managers over the next three financial years. This ring fenced budget is a direct allocation from HM Treasury and must be used for farmers, the environment and the rural economy.

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Yours sincerely

R. Agnew

**ROSEMARY AGNEW**  
**Director of Agricultural Policy Division**

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**From:**  
**To:** [Eileen Forde](#)  
**Subject:** CEO 1795-11-22 : Correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council  
**Date:** 01 December 2022 20:28:16  
**Attachments:** [image005.png](#)

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SENT ON BEHALF OF EVE BREMNER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT

Dear Ms Forde

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 2022 regarding concerns expressed by Council relating to communication with the Transport Service.

I would take this opportunity to apologise for any difficulties council members faced when contacting the transport service and can assure you that while the beginning of term is naturally extremely busy for communication and correspondence, we endeavour to ensure that all communication is responded to as soon as possible.

I would also advise that the answers to many queries, including for example while a child may not qualify for transport assistance, can be found on our web page at <https://www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/home-to-school-transport> and we would encourage members to avail of this page as much as possible. This includes an eligibility checker whereby they can input a child's address and school attended and be provided with a preliminary indication of eligibility. Information on the process of, and grounds for, appeals are also available on the website.

The Transport service is currently restructuring and when completed, transport for the schools in the Mid-Ulster Council area will be managed by our Locality South West Team. We are in the process of transitioning to this new structure and updated contact details will be shared on our website once completed. In the meantime, queries and correspondence can be directed to the following managers within this Locality.

**Eugene McDermott, Senior Transport Operations Manager**

[eugene.mcdermott@eani.org.uk](mailto:eugene.mcdermott@eani.org.uk)

transport office phone number – 028 8241 1347 or 028 9598 5959

mobile number – 07825054528

**Gary McNamee, Transport Operations Locality Manager**

[gary.mcnamee@eani.org.uk](mailto:gary.mcnamee@eani.org.uk)

transport office phone number – 028 8225 3018 or 028 9598 5959

Finally, I would advise that like all transport operators the Education Authority is impacted by an industry-wide decline in drivers and operators. EA has a series of contingency measures in place, however this has meant our ability to provide cover - particularly for temporary periods or at short notice – is curtailed. Thanks to the hard work of our teams the impact on pupils is minimised however this is a live, operational challenge that we continue to face given the scale and complexity of the school transport network.

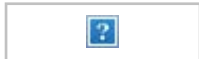
We will continue to work hard to maintain our services and are committed to the highest

standards of safety. I trust therefore that this information proves helpful.

Kind regards

Eve

**Eve Bremner (she/her)** | Assistant Director of Transport



Education Authority

Grahamsbridge Road, Belfast BT16 2DB

Tel: 028 9598 5959

: [eve.bremner@eani.org.uk](mailto:eve.bremner@eani.org.uk) | Web: [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)

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**From:** Eileen Forde <[Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org)>

**Sent:** 03 November 2022 14:34

**To:** Sara Long <[Sara.Long@eani.org.uk](mailto:Sara.Long@eani.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Education Authority. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**

Good afternoon

Please find attached correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council for your attention.

The matters were raised at the October meeting of Council and relate to

- St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown
- School Transport Issues
- Substitute Teachers Payments

Best regards

Eileen

**Eileen Forde**  
**Member Support Officer**  
**Dungannon Office**  
**Telephone 03000 132 132 Ext 24004**  
**Telephone 07825140198**



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2 December 2022

Your Ref: C200/22

Councillor C Corry  
Chairperson  
Mid Ulster District Council  
36 Church Road  
Moneyreagh  
BT23 6BB

Dear Ms Corry

Thank you for your letter to Sara Long, dated 1 November 2022, in respect of the future of St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown.

Currently, the Education Authority is engaged in pre-publication consultation with affected schools on the Development Proposal submitted to the Education Authority by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools for the proposed discontinuance of St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown.

The Education Authority notes the Council's concerns and will include these, along with affected schools comments, in the final Case for Change to be taken to the Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee in January 2023, prior to publication in the local newspapers in February 2023.

In taking forward the Development Proposal for St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown it should be noted that the Education Authority is not the proposer, therefore, the Council may also wish to make its comments directly to the proposer, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

The non-payment of supply teachers were caused by a number of factors many of which were not as a result of EA/DE processing errors or system errors please see below:

- DE/EA processing errors – 327 teachers impacted
- Schools not signing off supply teachers by the payroll cut-off date – 432 teachers impacted
- DE not having supply teachers bank details – 30 teachers impacted
- Teachers who are non-compliant i.e. do not have AccessNI clearance and therefore not live on NISTR but recruited outside NISTR by schools – 41 teachers impacted
- Schools changes days worked to hours resulting in supply teachers being underpaid – 242 teachers impacted

The EA has made interim emergency payments to all 1072 teachers above. The payment was the gross salary due minus 40% deduction. If a teacher has been over/under paid as paid of this interim emergency paid this will be rectified by the Department of Education Teachers Pay and Pension Team in their next months salary. EA rang each school to request either:

- a) They signed off staff who worked
- b) To ascertain if teachers recorded for hours rather than days were correct
- c) To advise of teachers not live on NISTR (Pending)

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**Education Authority**

**40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ**

**T: +44 (0)28 9056 4000 F: +44 (0)28 9033 1714 W: [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)**

The DE rang each teacher to

- a) Obtain their bank details

The processing errors referred to above are not NISTR system issues, but rather an administrative error caused by staff intervention in preparing the file for issue to DE. The staff intervention will no longer be required an update is being implemented to the system to automate the process for payroll file production.

EA cannot at this juncture guarantee teachers will be timely in future months as a result of schools not signing off i.e. authorising their booking however EA will continue to process interim emergency payments as detailed above until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 to minimise the impact on teachers.

Yours sincerely



**Dale Hanna**

**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND ESTATES**

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Tel: 0345 7440088



Chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org

30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Adrian

**RE: NI WATER TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAST, DUNGANNON**

Thank You for your letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022, regarding the Telecommunications mast located at Castlehill, Dungannon.

I would like to reassure you that we fully appreciate your concerns regarding the visual aspect of the Mast and its impact on your vision to promote the area as a tourist destination steeped in ancient history.

However, as discussed previously, the mast provides a vital service to PSNI and blue light emergency service's which include the ambulance and fire service. They are dependent on the position of the Mast to service the local community, as are the mobile operators supporting the communities in Dungannon and surrounding area for personal and business purposes.

In your letter you point out that while PSNI would be open to discussions regarding location, they would still need to retain their services on the hill. The mobile network operators had previously rejected relocation as this is also an important communication site for them.

Therefore, we are not in a position to consider removal or relocation of the Telecommunications Mast at Castlehill. Should this change, we will be in contact.

Yours sincerely



**Sara Venning**  
Chief Executive





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**Cora Corry**  
**Mid Ulster District Council**  
*By email: [Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org)*

24 November 2022  
Our reference: TO/22/382

Dear Ms Corry,

Thank you for sight of the Mid Ulster District Council's motion regarding the Public Interest Immunity (PII) certificate in relation to the inquest into the death of Noah Donohoe. We are responding on the Secretary of State's behalf.

This is a very tragic case and our thoughts and sympathy are with the Donohoe family.

The Secretary of State's predecessor carefully considered the application for PII and, after close scrutiny of the information, considered that the balance of the public interest was in favour of the information being subject to PII. That decision was not taken lightly and we are confident the redactions do not detract from the substance of the case.

On 8 September the Presiding Coroner, Mr Justice Humphreys, made his decision in relation to the PII application having considered all of the information. In delivering his ruling, Mr Justice Humphreys said: "Disclosure of the redacted material would give rise to a real risk of serious harm to the public interest". He went on to say that the redactions applied for are "no more than the minimum necessary to ensure the real risk of harm is mitigated" and that "the representatives of the next of kin can be assured that nothing has been redacted which shows that any third party was involved in Noah Donohoe's death, nor that would suggest there has been any cover-up in the course of the investigation."

Mr Justice Humphreys full ruling is available, on the NI Judiciary website [www.judiciaryni.uk](http://www.judiciaryni.uk)

I hope that the close scrutiny given to the information provided in the PII application signed by the previous Secretary of State and the Coroner's remarks go some way to alleviating your concerns and those of your Council members.

As you may be aware, the inquest into Noah's death, which the Coroner has now confirmed will be heard by a jury, is due to begin on 28 November 2022. During the inquest, the Coroner will hear evidence relating to the circumstances surrounding Noah Donohoe's death. It is hoped that the outcome of the inquest will provide the Donohoe family with the answers they are seeking.

Yours faithfully,

**NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE**