

Title of Report:	Correspondence
Committee Report Submitted To:	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	5 September 2023
For Decision or For Information	FOR DECISION
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council operates as one effective and efficient corporate unit with a common purpose and culture
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Travel (Item 3.0)
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

2.0 The following correspondence has been received:

2.1 Colin Hutchinson, Director of Major Projects & Active Travel, Department for Infrastructure, dated 14 August 2023 (copy attached)

2.2 Dr Julie Harrison, DfI Permanent Secretary has taken a Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 decision on the prioritisation of the major roads programme. This letter sets out the implications of that decision.

2.3 Many of the projects within the current major roads programme enjoy various levels of political commitment including NI Executive Flagship status; are included within City and Growths Deals; or a previous Infrastructure Minister has committed to advance development works.

2.4 The prioritisation of Major Roads Projects is presented in Annex A (attached) and sets out the following hierarchy:

- Closing out projects that have been recently constructed or are under construction – 1A;
- Active Executive Flagship projects – 1B;
- Remaining Executive Flagship projects – 1C;
- Projects within signed City and Growth Deals – 2A;
- Projects under consideration within emerging City and Growth Deals – 2B;
- Projects with previous Ministerial commitments – 3A;
- Projects with cross cutting measures – 3B; and
- Other Projects – 4

2.5 Due to financial and resourcing pressures the Department will only deliver those road projects listed in tiers 1 and 2 of Annex A where there are identified alternative funding streams such as Flagship and City and Growth Deal projects.

2.6 All other schemes continue to be paused and their place on a future major works programme will be informed by the Department's emerging transport plans and a decision by a future Infrastructure Minister should an Assembly be restored.

2.7 Councillors should note the economic and growth deal implications of this decision.

3.0 Karen Smyth, Head of Policy & Governance, NILGA, dated 21 August 2023
(copy attached)

- 3.1 At the NILGA Executive Committee NILGA on 23rd June, it was agreed to form a Strategic Policy Network. A Terms of Reference for this Network (attached) was agreed by the NILGA Executive on 11th August 2023.
- 3.2 Council nominations are therefore now being sought, to complement the NILGA nominated Chair and Vice Chair. No specific party membership is required for these nominations.
- 3.3 NILGA is seeking one (1) elected member from each council (who may or may not be one of its NILGA Full members) to participate in the NILGA Strategic Policy Network. This Network will meet on a bi-monthly basis, and it is anticipated that the first meeting will be either 19th or 26th September 2023, depending on member availability.

4.0 Marie Ward, Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, dated 21 August 2023 (copy attached)

- 4.1 At a meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held during March 2023, the following motion was agreed:
- 4.2 *"Newry Mourne and Down District Council calls for the voting age of 18 to be reduced to 16 and if this motion is adopted seeks the support of the remaining councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Secretary of State calling him to amend the necessary legislation to enable 16 year old and upwards to vote".*
- 4.3 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has since received a response from the NIO stating that the UK Government position remains unchanged.
- 4.4 Council is asked to give this matter consideration.

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the correspondence.



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

From the Director of Major Projects & Active Travel
Colin Hutchinson

Chief Executives
Northern Ireland
Councils

Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST BT2 8GB

Telephone: 028 90 542961

Email: Colin.Hutchinson@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Chief Executives,

As you may be aware, Dr Julie Harrison, DfI Permanent Secretary has taken a Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 decision on the prioritisation of the major roads programme. This letter sets out the implications of that decision.

There are a number of reasons why the prioritisation of projects currently in the pipeline was necessary, including the challenging budgetary position and constrained resources (in terms of finance and staff) and, importantly, the Department's commitments under the Climate Change (NI) Act 2022.

The Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 for Northern Ireland compared to the baseline, along with interim targets for 2030 and 2040. As the Transport sectoral lead, the Department has a requirement to develop and publish a transport sectoral plan setting out proposals and policies on how the transport sector will contribute to meeting its emissions reduction targets.

Transport policies and plans are currently being reviewed and updated to align with these commitments and this work will help define what major transport infrastructure projects should be included within any future major roads programme.

This combination of factors has changed the landscape considerably, meaning the continued 'business as usual' delivery of the major roads programme as it was previously set out is no longer sustainable nor appropriate, not least because it would likely result in development expenditure on some projects that will not move to construction in the foreseeable future.

The prioritisation of the development and delivery of projects outlined in this letter is based on careful consideration of:

- the current status of each project and the work required to complete the current development stage;
- projected profiles of future capital funding; and
- Departmental capacity to effectively and appropriately advance projects.

Many of the projects within the current major roads programme enjoy various levels of political commitment including NI Executive Flagship status; are included within City and Growth Deals; or a previous Infrastructure Minister has committed to advance development works.

The prioritisation of Major Roads Projects is presented in Annex A and sets out the following hierarchy:

- Closing out projects that have been recently constructed or are under construction – 1A;
- Active Executive Flagship projects – 1B;
- Remaining Executive Flagship projects – 1C;
- Projects within signed City and Growth Deals – 2A;

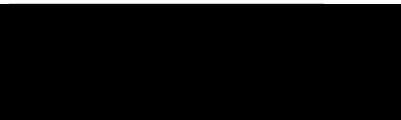
- Projects under consideration within emerging City and Growth Deals – 2B;
- Projects with previous Ministerial commitments – 3A;
- Projects with cross cutting measures – 3B; and
- Other Projects – 4

Due to financial and resourcing pressures the Department will only deliver those road projects listed in tiers 1 and 2 of Annex A where there are identified alternative funding streams such as Flagship and City and Growth Deal projects.

All other schemes continue to be paused and their place on a future major works programme will be informed by the Department's emerging transport plans and a decision by a future Infrastructure Minister should an Assembly be restored.

I will of course continue to keep you updated but in the meantime, you may find the following link to the departmental website useful, which contains more information in an FAQ format.

Yours sincerely



COLIN HUTCHINSON
Director of Major Projects and Active Travel

PRIORITISATION OF MAJOR ROAD PROJECTS

NI EXECUTIVE FLAGSHIP DEAL ROAD PROJECTS		
Priority	Project	Recommendation
1A	A6 Randalstown / Castledawson	Construction complete – Work to continue to close out project.
1A	A6 Derry / Dungiven Phase 1	Construction substantially complete – Work to continue to close out project.
1B	A5 Western Transport Corridor	Development work ongoing – Work to continue to progress towards the next key decision point regarding making of the statutory orders.
1C	A6 Derry / Dungiven Phase 2	Development work currently paused – Future development work to be scoped and programmed, including consideration of whether the current preferred route remains such. Proposed timescales to be considered alongside the timing of Mobuoy Remediation project.
CITY AND GROWTH DEAL PROJECTS		
Priority	Project	Recommendation
2A	Belfast Rapid Transit 2	£35m partial BRCD allocation. Was also to be awarded £20m timebound NI Deal funding (currently paused) – Development work to continue to progress towards the next key decision.
2A	Lagan Pedestrian & Cycle Bridge	In light of recent increasing construction costs a review of the cost estimate is ongoing. The £12.1m BRCD allocation will not be sufficient to cover the full cost of the scheme.- Development work to continue to progress towards the next key decision regarding procurement.
2A	Newry Southern Relief Road	Full BRCD allocation - Development work to continue to progress towards the next key decision regarding publication of draft Orders.
2B	A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass	Under consideration for inclusion in MSW. Was also to be awarded £15m timebound NI Deal

		funding (currently paused) - Development towards the next key decision regarding procurement.
2B	A29 Cookstown Bypass	Under consideration for inclusion in MSW - Development work to continue to progress towards the next key decision regarding publication of draft Orders, subject to inclusion within the MSW Growth Deal.
PROJECTS WITH PREVIOUS MINISTER COMMITMENTS		
Priority	Project	Recommendation
3A	A1 Junctions Phase 2	Development work on contract documents to continue to progress towards the next key decision on procurement of the scheme which will be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP.
3A	York Street Interchange	Development work on the PATR to continue to progress towards the next key decision on subsequent progression of the scheme which will be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP and BMTP
3A	A32 Cornamuck	Subject to availability of staffing resource, development work on contract documents to continue to progress towards the next key decision on procurement of the scheme which will be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP.
PROJECTS WITH CROSS CUTTING MEASURES		
3B	A2 Buncrana Road	Discussions to continue with DoH on the Pennyburn Roundabout element of the project. Development work on the remainder of the scheme paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
OTHER PROJECTS		
Priority	Project	Recommendation
4	A24 Ballynahinch Bypass	Development work complete – Decision to proceed to procurement to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP

Annex A

4	A55 Knock Road widening	Development work complete – Decision to proceed to procurement to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A28 Armagh East Link	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A32 Esker Bog	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A3 Armagh North and West Link	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A2 Ballykelly Bypass	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A2 Sydenham Bypass widening	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A32 Kilgortnaleague	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	M1/A1 Sprucefield Bypass	Development work paused – Decision to recommence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A3 Portadown to Richill Dualling	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A26 Ballymoney to Coleraine	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A26 Nutts Corner to Moira	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	A4 Fivemiletown Bypass	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	M2 / A8(M) Sandyknowes junction upgrade	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	Shaftesbury Link, Belfast	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP
4	M1 Slip Roads at Blacks Road	Development work not started – Decision to commence development work to be considered following confirmation of RSTNTP

**To: Council Chief Executives
Cc. Democratic Services Officers**

14th August 2023

Dear Chief Executive

Formation of new NILGA Strategic Policy Network

Further to my letter of 31st March 2023, highlighting key dates and information needed by NILGA further to the election, thank you for supplying us with the necessary nominees to the NILGA Full membership and Partnership Panel.

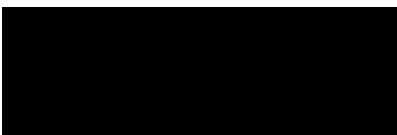
You may have noted in the letter that at that time, NILGA was seeking nominations from councils to one network only (Elected Member Development), with nominations to other policy structures to be sought at a later date.

At the NILGA Executive Committee NILGA on 23rd June, it was agreed that a more streamlined approach would be taken to NILGA policy activity, and to this end it was agreed to form a **Strategic Policy Network**. A Terms of Reference for this Network (enclosed) was agreed by the NILGA Executive on 11th August.

I am therefore writing to seek one (1) elected member from each council (who may or may not be one of your NILGA Full members) to participate in the NILGA Strategic Policy Network. This Network will meet on a bi-monthly basis, and it is anticipated that the first meeting will be either 19th or 26th September 2023, depending on member availability.

Due to the short time frame, I would appreciate your expediting this request. Please feel free to come back to me at any point about the attached ToR or with any other queries about this Network. With thanks for your co-operation and support as always.

Yours faithfully



**Karen Smyth
Head of Policy and Governance**

NILGA Strategic Policy Network Draft Terms of Reference

Role

The NILGA Strategic Policy Network (SPN) exists to provide scrutiny and leadership, democratic accountability, support and challenge in the development of regional approaches to priority policy issues.

Purpose and Scope

The SPN will provide the NILGA Executive Committee and staff team with:

- a) A strategic focus on key policy issues, through a robust policy framework and policy priorities.
- b) Oversight of the NILGA policy service in accordance with NILGA objectives.
- c) Oversight of the work between local and central government, arms length bodies and partners on delivery of priority policy issues impacting on councils, and on which councils can have an influence.
- d) Contribution to NILGA's sustainability, including by supporting NILGA to embrace new income-generating policy opportunities and projects, within the bounds set out in the Policy Framework.
- e) Assurance that NILGA is delivering against agreed NI local government sector policy priorities.
- f) Promotion of good practice and collaboration.
- g) Supporting elected member development in key policy areas.
- h) Lobbying for improvements and for resources to deliver

Membership and nomination (Total 13) – NB NILGA Officer Bearers/alternates can attend any NILGA meeting.

- A chair and vice chair for the full mandate, nominated by NILGA through the d'Hondt process.
- One elected member nominated from each of the 11 member councils, confirmed each June of the mandate.

Advisors

- At least two council CEOs or Strategic Directors, nominated by Solace NI (supported by Solace NI Policy Officer)
- NILGA CEO and NILGA Head of Impact
- Technical specialists and additional expertise to be accessed as required

Advisors will bring a strategic view to bear across the local government portfolio, and to act as 'generous generalists'.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB

Tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA

NILGA Support Officer

- NILGA Head of Policy and Governance

Conflicts of Interest

Members and advisors are required to act in accordance with the requirements of the relevant local government code of conduct. They must declare any personal, private, or commercial interests that might conceivably conflict with the interests of the NILGA SPN and must withdraw from any discussion of topics in which they have such an interest.

Meeting Frequency

Bimonthly.

Deliverables/Reporting

- After each meeting the NILGA Head of Policy and Governance will assist the Chair to prepare a report with key messages, outcomes, decisions taken and next steps, to be delivered to the NILGA Executive Committee before dissemination to the wider NILGA membership.
- The NILGA Head of Policy and Governance will also assist the Network to provide timely responses to relevant government consultations, via the NILGA Executive Committee and in liaison with relevant council officer groups.
- The NILGA support officer will liaise with NILGA Communications staff to ensure the NILGA website is updated appropriately and timely press releases are issued on key pieces of work.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

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Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

Our ref: C/075/2023

21 August 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Notice of Motion – Reduction in Minimum Voting Age

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has extensively discussed the following motion since it was passed in March 2023:

"Newry Mourne and Down District Council calls for the voting age of 18 to be reduced to 16 and if this motion is adopted seeks the support of the remaining councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Secretary of State calling him to amend the necessary legislation to enable 16 year old and upwards to vote".

At its recent Council Meeting on 7 August 2023 dismay was voiced at the most recent response from the NIO stating the UK Government position remained the same.

As a result, it was agreed to write to all the political parties Conservative, Labour, Lib Dems, Greens, the Welsh, Scottish and parties represented at Council and seeking the support of Independents to so the same and copying in the 10 other Councils in Northern Ireland to write to all concerned parties calling for their commitment to reduce the voting age to 16.

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

CC:

Scottish Labour Party
Scottish Conservative
Scottish National Party
Scottish Greens
Scottish Lib Dems
Welsh Labour
Welsh Conservatives
Plaid Cymru
Welsh Liberal Democrats
Conservatives
Labour
Liberal Democrats
10 Northern Ireland Councils

Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

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council@nmandd.org
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Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down
and South Armagh