



## **A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5 WTC)**

### **Appendix TNI – Theme Report: Scheme Phasing**

**16 July 2016**

## Appendix TNI – Theme Report: Scheme Phasing

1. At its meeting on 17th July 2007 the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) noted the Irish Government's intention to make available a contribution of £400m to help fund the major roads programme within Northern Ireland, providing dual carriageway standard on routes serving the North West Gateway (and on the Eastern Seaboard Corridor between Belfast and Larne). The Northern Ireland Executive confirmed its acceptance in principle to taking forward these two major road projects.
2. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory processes and availability of the necessary funding it had been anticipated that construction of the A5 Western Transport Corridor Scheme (A5 WTC) would commence in 2012 and be completed in full by 2015.
3. The Irish Government however announced the deferral of its £400 million contribution in November 2011. Following a review of spending priorities the NI Executive subsequently announced in February 2012 revised budget plans for a £330 million investment in the A5 which would allow two sections to progress: the section from New Buildings to the north of Strabane and the section from south of Omagh. Given this decision by the Executive, these sections of the scheme were subsequently referred to as Phase 1 of the scheme.
4. In support of the Executive's decision on phasing, it is noted that:
  - a. The section from New Buildings to Strabane (Phase 1a) is one of the heavier trafficked sections of the A5 route and the proposed works would provide bypasses of a number of small urban settlements. It improves access to Londonderry, the main centre of population in the North West, with port and airport facilities and also improves access to Strabane with important cross border links to Lifford and County Donegal;
  - b. Dualling the section from Ballygawley to Omagh (Phase 1b) is a natural continuation of the A4 dualling project. It would improve access

between Omagh and Belfast with motorway/dual carriageway provision over the entire length of the route, making Omagh, which is identified as a Main Hub in the Regional Development Strategy 2035, more attractive to potential investors. It would also improve access in a north / south direction;

- c. Major improvements have been carried out over recent years to the stretch from south of Omagh to north of Strabane (Phase 2) including the Omagh Throughpass, Strabane Bypass and Newtown Stewart Bypass; and
  - d. The stretch between Aughnacloy and Ballygawley (Phase 3) has the lowest traffic volumes on the route and improvements to this stretch have been made in recent years as part of the A4 & A5 Improvements Project, which included the A4 dual carriageway and realignments of the A4 at Annaghilla and the A5 at Tullyvar both near Ballygawley.
5. The Inspector's Report from the Public Inquiry of 2011 recommended that the section of the scheme between Ballygawley and the border at Aughnacloy not be taken forward until details of the link with the N2 at the border with the Republic of Ireland have been clearly identified. In its subsequent Statement on the Report on the Local Enquiries the Department agreed with this recommendation. This section of the scheme is now recognised as the final section of the scheme to be completed, and therefore referred to as Phase 3.
6. In order to progress design and development of the new draft statutory Orders and Environmental Statement after the Court ruling of 2013, it was necessary to make certain working assumptions relating to the phasing and timeframe for the construction of the project. Given the above, the following phasing and timeframes were identified as working assumptions for use in the updated environmental assessment of 2013 / 2014:
- a. Phase 1: New Buildings to north of Strabane and south of Omagh to Ballygawley; Construction period 2017 to 2019; opening year 2019;
  - b. Phase 2: north of Strabane to south of Omagh; Construction period 2021 to 2023; opening year 2023; and

- c. Phase 3: Ballygawley to the Border at Aughnacloy; Construction period 2026 to 2028; opening year 2028.
  
7. In November 2015, through '*A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan*' the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government agreed that, subject to the necessary statutory procedures, construction of the first section of the route, i.e. New Buildings to north of Strabane, would commence in 2017 with a view to completion by 2019. This section of the scheme is now referred to as Phase 1a, with the section from south of Omagh to Ballygawley referred to as Phase 1b.
  
8. In February 2016 the Department commenced consultation on the following:
  - a. Three new draft Vesting Orders:
    - i. Phase 1a - from New Buildings to north of Strabane;
    - ii. Phase 1b - from south of Omagh to Ballygawley; and
    - iii. Phase 2 - from north of Strabane to south of Omagh.
  
  - b. A new draft Direction Order for the length between New Buildings and Ballygawley (Phases 1a, 1b and 2); and
  
  - c. A new Environmental Statement, covering all phases of the scheme (with phasing as outlined in paragraph 5 above).
  
9. In its Budget 2016-2017, the Northern Ireland Executive identified a number of flagship projects, including the A5 WTC, where it recognises the importance of providing funding certainty beyond the immediate budget period. It therefore agreed an indicative funding package of £229 million for the scheme up to financial year 2020/21.
  
10. Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, this would allow Phase 1a to progress through to completion as envisaged in '*A Fresh Start*' and would also allow work to commence on Phase 1b of the scheme.