

## **Committee for Regional Development**

### **End of Session Report 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015**

The Committee for Regional Development is a Statutory Departmental Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of strand one of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48 of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Regional Development and has a role in the initiation of legislation.

The Committee has the power to:

- Consider and advise on departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on matters brought to the committee by the Minister for Regional Development.

The Committee is appointed at the start of every Assembly, and has power to send for persons, papers and records that are relevant to its inquiries.

## Membership

The Committee has 11 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Mr Trevor Clarke MLA (Chairperson) <sup>1</sup>
- Mr Sean Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Joe Byrne MLA <sup>3</sup>
- Mr Adrian Cochrane-Watson MLA <sup>4</sup>
- Mr John Dallat MLA
- Mr Alex Easton MLA
- Mr Chris Lyttle MLA <sup>2</sup>
- Mr Declan McAleer MLA
- Mr David McNarry MLA
- Mr Stephen Moutray MLA <sup>3</sup>
- Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

<sup>1</sup> *With effect from 23 September 2014 Mr Trevor Clarke replaced Mr Jimmy Spratt as Chairperson*

<sup>2</sup> *With effect from 29 September 2014 Mr Chris Lyttle replaced Mr Kieran McCarthy*

<sup>3</sup> *With effect from 06 October 2014 Mr Stephen Moutray replaced Mrs Brenda Hale*

<sup>4</sup> *With effect from 30 June 2015 Mr Adrian Cochrane-Watson replaced Mr Ross Hussey*

## **End of Session Report for 2014-2015**

This report covers the work of the Committee for Regional Development during the parliamentary year from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015.

During this period the Committee for Regional Development held 36 meetings. Where possible meetings were held in public session but on 10 occasions it was necessary for the meeting to go into closed session, constituting 5.59% of meeting time.

The majority of these meetings were held in Parliament Buildings; however the Committee held 7 external meetings in the following locations:

1. Hillsborough Castle
2. NI Waste Water Treatment Plant, Belfast
3. Corrs Corner Hotel, Newtownabbey
4. Park Avenue Hotel, Belfast
5. Lough Erne Hotel, Enniskillen
6. Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim
7. City Hotel, Londonderry

### **Primary Legislation:**

#### ***Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill***

*A Bill to transfer to district councils certain functions in relation to off-street parking places; and for connected purposes.*

The [Off-Street Parking \(Functions of District Councils\) Bill](#) was introduced on 13 October 2014 and the Committee completed its scrutiny of the Bill on 9 December 2014.

The Committee received 8 oral briefings from a range of organisations, including 5 Local Councils. The Committee also undertook a site visit to examine the condition of car parks in Enniskillen.

Amongst its recommendations, the Committee sought an assurance from the Minister that all car parks would be brought up to an acceptable standard, preferably in advance of the point of transfer.

Click [here](#) to view the Committee Report.

#### ***Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill***

*A Bill to set a maximum speed limit on residential roads of 20 miles per hour.*

The [Road Traffic \(Speed Limits\) Bill](#) is a Private Members Bill, sponsored by Mr Pat Ramsey MLA. The Bill was introduced on 9 December 2013 with the Second Stage taking place on 17 February 2015.

To date, the Committee has received 5 oral briefings from a range of organisations, including Sustrans, PlayBoard NI and 20's Plenty for Us.

The Committee is due to complete its scrutiny by 16 October 2015.

### ***Water and Sewerage Services Bill***

*A Bill to amend, and to confer power to amend, the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006; and for connected purposes.*

The [Water and Sewerage Services Bill](#) was introduced on 16 June 2014 with the Second Stage taking place on 29 June 2015.

The Committee has received pre-legislative Departmental briefings on the Bill on 5 November 2014 and 3 June 2015.

The Committee is due to complete its scrutiny by 17 November 2015.

### **Subordinate Legislation:**

The Committee considered 113 proposals to make subordinate legislation and 24 Statutory Rules during this session. The Committee was content with the majority of the intended Subordinate Legislation.

In October 2014, the Committee took oral evidence from Departmental officials on [The Penalty Charges \(Prescribed Devices\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2014](#) and [The Penalty Charges \(Additional Contraventions\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2014](#). This Subordinate Legislation introduced proposals to improve the enforcement of bus lanes and other bus priority measures; namely through cameras in bus lanes.

Members pressed the Department to embark on both a consultation process and an awareness campaign in respect of these proposals.

The legislation came into effect in June 2015.

In April 2014, the Committee took oral evidence from Departmental officials on [The Public Passenger Transport \(Service Agreements and Service Permits\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#). This Subordinate Legislation enabled the Department to enter into a directly awarded Service Agreement with the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) for the provision of a network of public passenger transport services. The Committee raised concerns in relation to the length of this directly awarded Service Agreement, with the Department favouring a 10 year contract. However, following the Committee's scrutiny and advice, the Department agreed to a 5 year contract, with the option to extend for one year.

## **Inquiries:**

### ***Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy***

In January 2014, the Committee commenced its inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy. The Committee received oral evidence from the following organisations:

1. Department for Regional Development
2. Department of the Environment
3. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
4. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
5. Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
6. Sustrans
7. CTC – The National Cycling Charity
8. Key Stakeholders from Great Western Greenway
9. Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
10. Connswater Community Greenway
11. Northern Ireland Environment Link
12. Sport NI
13. NI Assembly All Party Group on Cycling

The Committee also undertook three study visits in the duration of the Inquiry:

1. Maximising the Potential of Walking and Cycling Infrastructure in Touristic Areas Seminar (Clifden, Co Galway)
2. Great Western Greenway (Mulranny, Co Mayo)
3. Chain Reaction Cycles Headquarters (Doagh, Co Antrim)

The Committee considered and agreed its final report on 14 January 2015. Click [here](#) to view the Committee Report.

The Committee Report was debated in Plenary Session on 23 March 2015, with the Assembly approving the Report and calling on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with the relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations. A transcript of the debate can be viewed [here](#).

### ***Inquiry into the Coleraine to Londonderry Rail Track Phase Two Project***

On 3 November 2014, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy MLA, made a Statement to the House in connection with the Coleraine to Londonderry Rail Track Phase 2 Project. The Minister indicated that the project had been grossly underestimated from its original budget of £20m - £22m to a new estimate of £40m.

At its meeting on 5 November 2014, the Committee agreed to commence an Inquiry into the Coleraine to Londonderry Rail Track Phase Two Project. The Committee wrote to a number of organisations, identified by Members, inviting them to make written submissions based on the terms of reference of the inquiry. Members received oral evidence in formal session from the following organisations:

1. Department for Regional Development
2. Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company/Translink

As part of its Inquiry engagement, the Committee travelled on the Coleraine to Londonderry train on 27 January 2015, where Members took the opportunity to speak to members of the public about the service. Passengers were also given the opportunity to input into the Inquiry by completing a Committee survey.

The Committee followed this up by hosting a stakeholder event in the City Hotel, Londonderry. Members heard oral evidence from a number of organisations including:

1. Into the West
2. Consumer Council
3. Derry Farm Cottages
4. Headhunters Railway Museum
5. Royal National Institute of Blind People

The Committee considered and agreed its final report on 1 July 2015.

The Committee Report is due to be debated in Plenary early in the new Assembly session and will be available at the commencement of the debate.

### **Budget Scrutiny:**

During this session, the Committee received regular briefings on the Departmental monitoring rounds.

A major area of work for the Committee throughout this period has been the Department's Budget Allocations for 2015/16. This work led to a series of briefings from the Minister, Departmental officials, Translink and other key stakeholders.

On the back of this, the Committee tabled two motions to call on the Department to re-evaluate its allocations.

The Committee scrutinised the Price Control 15 process, receiving a number of briefings from NI Water, the Utility Regulator and Consumer Council.

The Committee also raised financial concerns during the industrial action by NI Water personnel which led to large areas in the west of the province losing water supply.

In May 2015, a delegation from the Committee met with Ukrainian officials to discuss economic and regeneration issues.

## **Policy Scrutiny:**

During this session the Committee considered a number of important policy areas, including:

- Integrated Transport
- Accessible Transport
- Safety Barrier Replacement Policy
- Taxi Rank Policy
- Translink Fare Increases

The Committee has also used its scrutiny powers to ask the Department to re-evaluate the policies around the awarding of a Public Transport Contract and the establishment of Enforcement Cameras in Bus Lanes.

## **Engagement:**

### ***Hillsborough Castle***

On 10 September 2014, the Committee for Regional Development held its weekly meeting in Hillsborough Castle.

The Committee received a briefing from Historic Royal Palaces regarding its vision for Hillsborough Castle.

The Committee also received briefings in relation to the issue of HGVs Using Small Towns and Villages as Arterial Routes.



*Members of the Committee for Regional Development with representatives of Historic Royal Palaces at Hillsborough Castle.*

### ***NI Water Treatment Works, Belfast***

On 17 September 2014, the Committee for Regional Development held its weekly meeting at NI Water Treatment Works in Duncrue, Belfast. Members received a briefing from NI Water regarding Water and Sewerage Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, before undertaking a tour of the treatment works.



*Members of the Committee for Regional Development visiting NI Water Treatment Works in September 2014*

### ***A8 Belfast to Larne Dual Carriageway***

On 1 October 2014, the Committee for Regional Development visited the newly constructed A8 Belfast to Larne Dual Carriageway. As well as receiving a briefing from Transport NI officials, Members took the opportunity to travel along the new road scheme.





*Members of the Committee for Regional Development at the site of the newly constructed A8 Belfast to Larne Dual Carriageway.*

### ***Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim***

On 14 January 2015, the Committee for Regional Development held its weekly meeting in Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim.

The Committee met with representatives from the Department for Regional Development, Department of Education, Department of the Environment, Public Health Agency and Sustrans in relation to the Active School Travel Programme.

The Active School Travel Programme improves pupils' general cycling skills and road awareness, with over 120 schools currently involved.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee took the opportunity to meet a number of pupils involved in the Programme.



*Members of the Committee for Regional Development get involved in the Active Schools Travel Programme in Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim.*

### ***eCar Demonstration***

On 17 June 2015, the Committee for Regional Development received a demonstration from the Department for Regional Development's eCar team. Members took the opportunity to test drive a number of vehicles and find out further plans for expanding the eCar network.



*Committee Chairperson, Mr Trevor Clarke MLA, during the eCar Demonstration at Parliament Buildings.*

### **@Comm\_RegDev**

This session saw the Committee for Regional Development take its first steps into social media with its own Twitter account.

People can keep track of the Committee forward work programme, upcoming briefings and even snapshots of Committee meetings.

Follow what is happening in the Committee at the following link:

[https://twitter.com/comm\\_RegDev?lang=en-gb](https://twitter.com/comm_RegDev?lang=en-gb)

### **Committee Motions:**

During this period the Committee for Regional Development tabled three motions for debate.

The Committee tabled a motion on its Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy and a debate took place in the house on 23 March 2015. Click [here](#) to view the transcript of the debate.

The Committee tabled a motion regarding Disability Action and Community Transport budget reductions.

The motion was as follows: *“That this Assembly condemns the disproportionate reduction of the Disability Action and community transport budgets; notes the very*

*negative impact the severe reduction of departmental budgets is having on people with disabilities and the most vulnerable and isolated people in our society; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development to urgently reinstate this essential funding.”*

A debate took place in the House on 8 June 2015 and the transcript of the debate is available [here](#).

The Committee also tabled a motion regarding DRD budget management.

The motion was as follows: *“That this Assembly notes that the Committee for Regional Development has lost confidence in the Department for Regional Development’s ability to effectively manage and maintain its budgets, as a result of an over-reliance on in-year monitoring, Translink’s statement that it will cease to trade within the next two years, the potential for infraction proceedings arising from a lack of investment in waste water treatment plants and the risk of the Department exceeding its 2014-2015 budgetary control limits; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development to explain how he intends to negate these risks and to set out his financial strategy for the next financial period.”*

A debate took place in the House on 9 June 2015 and the transcript of the debate is available [here](#).

### **Likely Key Priorities for the Next Session:**

The Committee currently has a busy legislative programme with two Bills completing Committee Stage early in the new session:

- The Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill
- The Water and Sewerage Services Bill

Budget and saving delivery plans will continue to be a priority focus of the Committee, particularly in respect of Translink.

A major area of work for the Committee will be the change to Departmental structures. The Department for Infrastructure will gain the existing responsibilities from the current DRD and gain a range of functions from other departments including:

- Vehicle regulation, road safety and DVA functions (from DOE)
- Rivers Agency (from DARD)
- Inland waterways (from DCAL)
- Strategic investment unit and regeneration sites (from OFMDFM)

ANNEX A

Committee for Regional Development

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	7 External Meetings and visits to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hillsborough Castle</li> <li>• NI Waste Water Treatment Plant, Belfast</li> <li>• Corrs Corner Hotel, Newtownabbey</li> <li>• Park Avenue Hotel, Belfast</li> <li>• Lough Erne Hotel, Enniskillen</li> <li>• Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim</li> <li>• City Hotel, Londonderry</li> </ul>	£4697.79
Printing of committee reports	Includes the cost of committee reports on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry on Benefits of Cycling to the Economy</li> <li>• Inquiry into the Coleraine – Londonderry Rail Track Phase Two Project</li> <li>• Off Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill</li> </ul>	£1433.52
Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of public notices in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill</li> <li>• Inquiry into the Coleraine – Londonderry Rail Track Phase Two Project</li> <li>• Inquiry on Benefits of Cycling to the Economy</li> <li>• Consultation into the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill</li> </ul>	£1903.99
Specialist Advice - the cost of specialist advisers appointed by the committee and commissioned research, also the cost of drafting Standing Orders		£0
Refreshments & Hospitality	Refreshments for 36 meetings, hospitality for seven visits/external meetings.	£3087.44
General expenses	Room hire for external visits/meetings, staff seminar and witnesses expenses for attendance at Committee meetings.	£660.98

<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£11,783.72</b>
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**Notes:**

1. It is not necessary to break down costs for individual visits, reports etc. These should be described under “details”, with only totals included in the “expenditure” column.
2. It is not necessary to include budget areas on which there has been no expenditure.