



# DfI Business Plan *2023-24*



Department for  
**Infrastructure**

An Roinn  
**Bonneagair**

Department für  
**Infrastruktur**



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*Dr Julie Harrison* DFI PERMANENT SECRETARY



# Foreword from the Permanent Secretary

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Since becoming Permanent Secretary last year, I have been struck by the skill and dedication of the DfI family in the work they do - both operationally and behind the scenes - to deliver essential public services. I have also been aware of the level of criticism that the Department and its staff receive on a daily basis and the impact this has. As we set out our objectives for the year ahead, it is clear the budgetary situation requires a renewed focus on how to best deliver services within our three core areas of responsibility: water, transport and planning.

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Overcoming challenging situations is nothing new to the DfI team and I am proud of the effort and innovative thinking that helped us achieve a lot in 2022-23 despite its many challenges. We agreed street lighting contracts in a number of council areas which will see the Department continue to reduce electricity consumption through the use of energy efficient LED street lighting units, launched a new approach to verge management to enhance biodiversity, invested in 100 zero emission buses and construction of A6 Dungiven to Drumahoe dualling scheme was also completed early in April.

One of the statistics that I now share widely is that the Department is responsible for the management and maintenance of public assets worth over £37bn. We deliver services which are so embedded in the fabric of daily life that they can easily be, and often are, taken for granted. Historically, there has been a reliance on 'in-year' funding to look

after these public assets and deliver core services - like water and wastewater treatment, safe surface travel routes, the bus and rail network, winter service and flood risk management.

I am mindful too of the risks associated with the inability to fully resource core functions in relation to infrastructure assets. One obvious example is that a 'limited' roads maintenance service has been in place since 2014, which means that only the most critical defects and those posing risks to public safety can be addressed. When you think about the cumulative impact of this on physical assets that are now visibly degrading, we all need to understand what it will mean in future as these assets continue to degrade and the maintenance backlog grows. The Department has prepared a draft Asset Management Strategy for consultation this year in order to outline the tools, principles and future activities that will inform the optimal blend of asset management activities at an operational level.

# Foreword from the Permanent Secretary

There is no doubt that the operating environment for delivery of public services in 2023-24 will remain very challenging. The Department is facing a 14% cut to its resource budget when compared to last year on a like for like basis. Despite having already taken significant action to reduce spending and to increase fares and charges to help sustain essential services, a significant funding gap remains against the resource budget allocation of £523.4m. In July 2023, following the conclusion of a public consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) the Department announced a range of areas where services would be stopped or reduced due to the budget pressures. This also highlighted that some decisions that would need to be taken to live within budget allocations are not within the power of Senior Officials to take under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act 2022 in the absence of an appropriate minister and as a result the Departmental resource spend for 2023-24 will exceed the current allocations.

We have looked closely over the past year at how we deliver our services and have identified the specific challenges in relation to water, transport and planning that need to be met. We know too what will be needed to allow us, along with

our delivery partners NI Water, Translink and Waterways Ireland, to maintain our roads, rivers, water and wastewater infrastructure, to deliver services of the standard required to positively underpin and drive the economy, to improve the effectiveness of the planning system and to plan for the future in the context of the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022.

I would like to place on record my thanks to every person across the Department and in each of our delivery partners. We are vehicle testers, engineers, architects and planners. We are the people who work through grim weather conditions to keep people safe by ensuring the road network is gritted and cleared and to prevent flooding. We are people working in offices and out in communities every day designing schemes, managing operational programmes, or developing policies and advice to meet future challenges.

I am fortunate to lead such a diverse team providing services that we all use every day and I am indebted to you all.

*Dr Julie Harrison*

PERMANENT SECRETARY  
FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

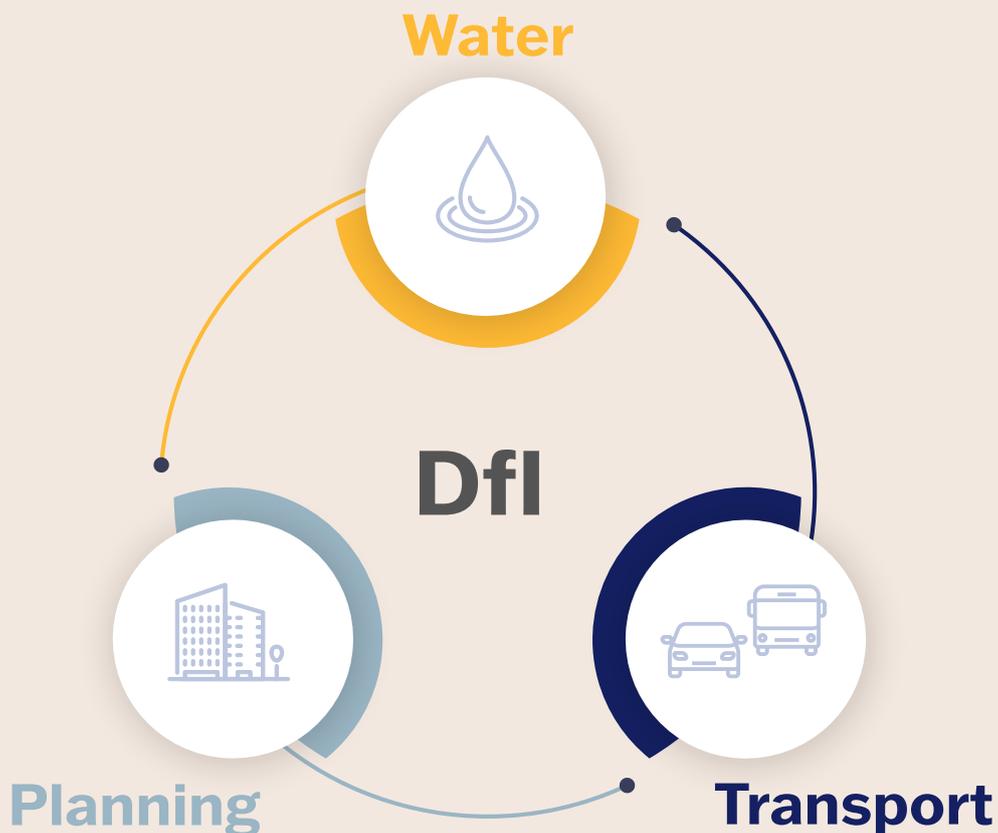
# Our Department

## Who we are and what we do

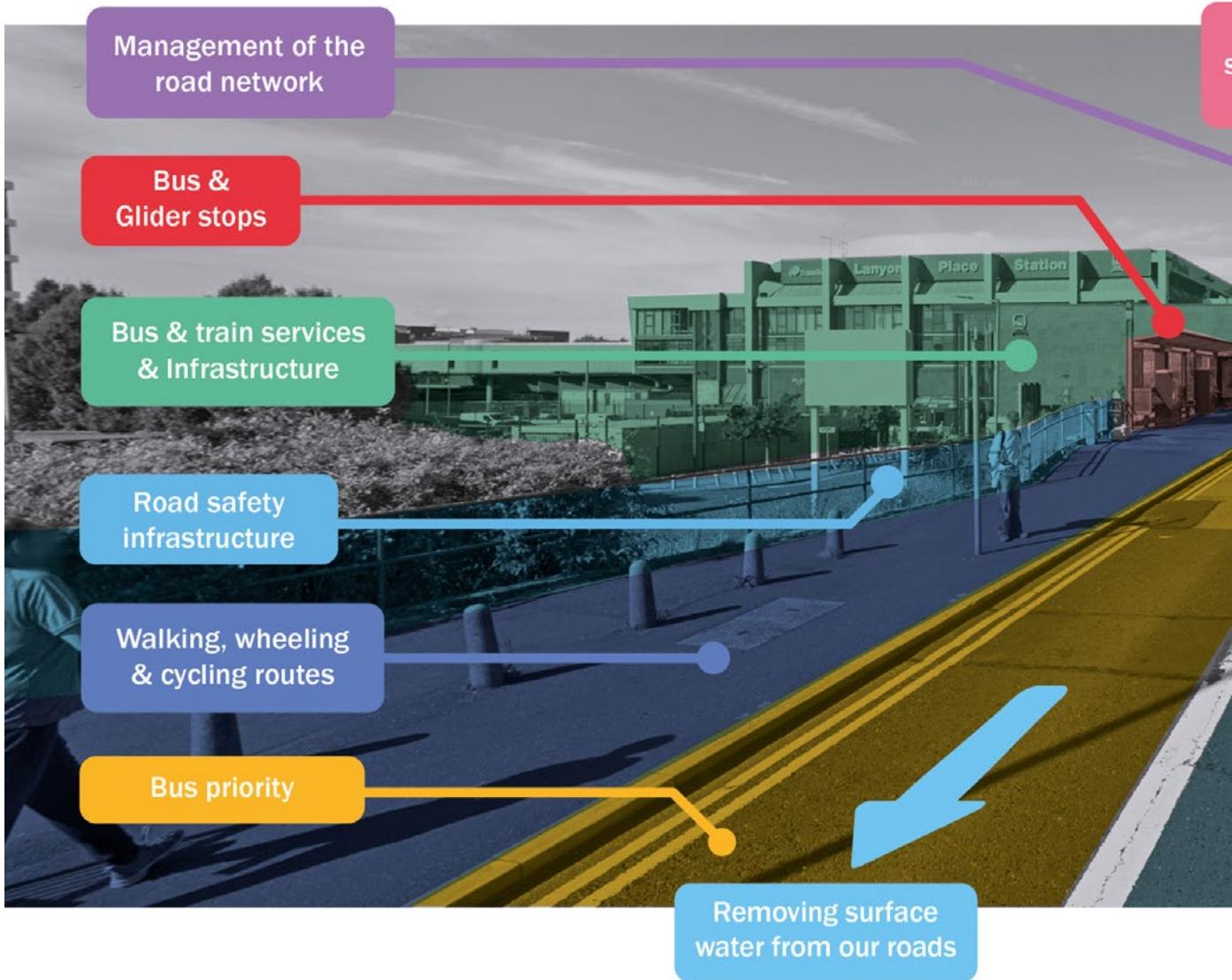
The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the maintenance, development and planning of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Through its focus on water, transport and planning, the Department is seeking to manage and protect over £37bn of public assets that improve people's quality of life, reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainably and decarbonising key services, and building prosperity by driving inclusive productivity. Those assets include 25,000+km of

roads, 5,800 bridges, 9,700km of footways, approximately 300,000 streetlights, 426km of raised flood defence embankments and flood walls, 26km of coastal defences and approximately 364km of below ground culverts.

The Department has a vast and wide-ranging remit. Its responsibilities are grouped into three key delivery areas: Water, Transport and Planning.

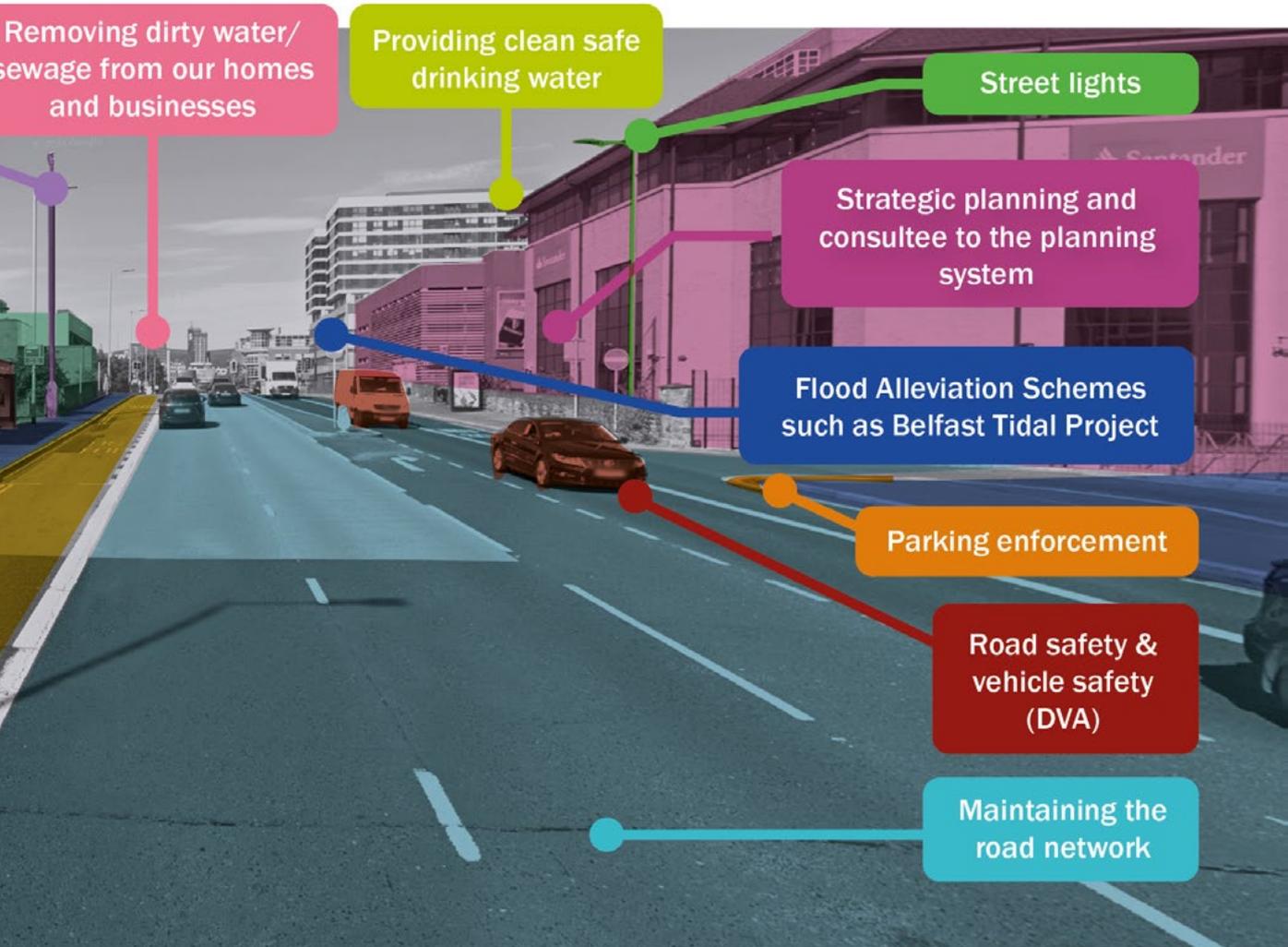


**Examples of some of our Responsibilities:**



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**The responsibilities of the Department are wide ranging and impact each of us, every day.**



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# Water



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Having access to good water and wastewater infrastructure is essential for our citizens across Northern Ireland who need a reliable supply of clean and safe drinking water and to be able to live and work in areas where flood risk is appropriately managed.

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We need to ensure that any water we use is moved, stored and treated sustainably and returned safely to the environment so that our planet's wildlife habitats and ecosystems can flourish.

Our economy needs water and wastewater infrastructure to increase prosperity, so that manufacturing, farming, tourism and recreation can operate and grow and that our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses can function properly and sustainably.

The Department is responsible for setting the strategic direction for water, wastewater and drainage policy across Northern Ireland including developing water, flooding and sustainable drainage legislation as well as the sponsorship of NI Water.

NI Water is an arm's length body (ALB) of the Department and a Government Company under the Companies Act 2006 with the Department as sole shareholder. NI Water is the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for Northern Ireland. It costs around £680m each year to deliver these water services in Northern Ireland. NI Water provides 605m litres of drinking water every day to 900k households and businesses and treats 373m litres of wastewater from homes and businesses before safely returning it to the rivers and sea.

The Department is also responsible for the management of flood risk which includes the maintenance of our river and sea defences, construction of flood alleviation schemes, informing development decisions and developing flood maps. Approximately 5% of properties here are in areas at risk from flooding, which is set to increase by 33% to 59,800 when 2080 climate change projections are taken into consideration. The Department is accelerating investment in our flood risk management infrastructure and expertise to, amongst other requirements, bring approximately 95 km of failing flood defence assets up to required standards whilst also developing new flood alleviation schemes.

DfI is the lead government Department for the strategic coordination of the emergency response to severe weather events, including flooding, emergency planning and processes, which are developed in conjunction with our multi-agency partners.

The Department also sponsors Waterways Ireland, one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, to promote the recreational and navigational use of our waterways. Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways primarily for recreational purposes.

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# Transport



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The Department is responsible for the oversight and facilitation of surface transport in Northern Ireland. The main tools available for the delivery of the Department's transport vision are the development of Transport Policy, the management of the Road Network Asset (including the promotion of road safety) and providing funding and sponsorship of Translink which delivers the public transport network.

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The Department is developing a new Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland (TSNI) which will set out the Department's new vision for our transport system in Northern Ireland, placing climate change and connecting people at its heart. The TSNI will signal the future direction of transport, provide the context in which decisions, within and beyond government, will be made and set out the strategic framework for future transport investment decisions.

The TSNI will form the basis for the first Transport Sectoral Plan required by the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 which is one of the primary drivers of the strategy. Delivering a net-zero transport sector will require policies and delivery interventions focusing on reducing journeys, delivering modal shift and switching to zero carbon fuels.

The Department also sponsors the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) which is the parent company of Northern Ireland's only publicly owned bus and rail company, Translink. We are responsible for ensuring the delivery of

the Strangford ferry and the management of the Rathlin ferry. The Department also has responsibility for some aspects of the governance of Trust Ports and the development of airports.

The Department has a number of key responsibilities to ensure that everyone has access to safe and accessible travel. For this to happen we have a statutory responsibility to promote good road safety, reduce road fatalities and people being injured on our roads.

Another key part of this is done through the Department's only agency - the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) which contributes to road safety, law enforcement and a cleaner environment by promoting compliance of drivers, vehicles and transport operators through testing, licensing, enforcement and education. The DVA has its own business plan.

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# Planning



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Planning helps to shape how Northern Ireland looks and functions, both now and for future generations. The Department's role is to guide the planning system, and it works with partners in local government and the wider community to create healthy-living places. This enables us to live, work and play in inclusive, well-planned communities, whilst ensuring that our planet is protected and that any development taking place is modern and sustainable and allows us to create jobs and grow our economy.

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We are responsible for the strategic direction and production of regional policy for land use planning. We also develop planning legislation and process a small number of regionally significant planning applications and those applications which may be 'called in', along with having a statutory consultee role for roads and rivers to provide specialist advice in relation to the consideration of planning applications by councils.

The Department works together with the councils in managing the two-tier planning system and has a statutory consultee and an oversight role in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which set out councils' long-term visions, objectives and growth over the plan period. The Department, with local government and stakeholders, is also taking forward an ambitious Planning Improvement Programme. An interim Regional Planning Commission has been established to provide advice and support, and the programme for change and improvement focuses on a breadth of work areas including legislation, policy, practice, resourcing and governance.

We also have a regeneration role with Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast and have ownership of lands at the former St Lucia Barracks, Omagh.

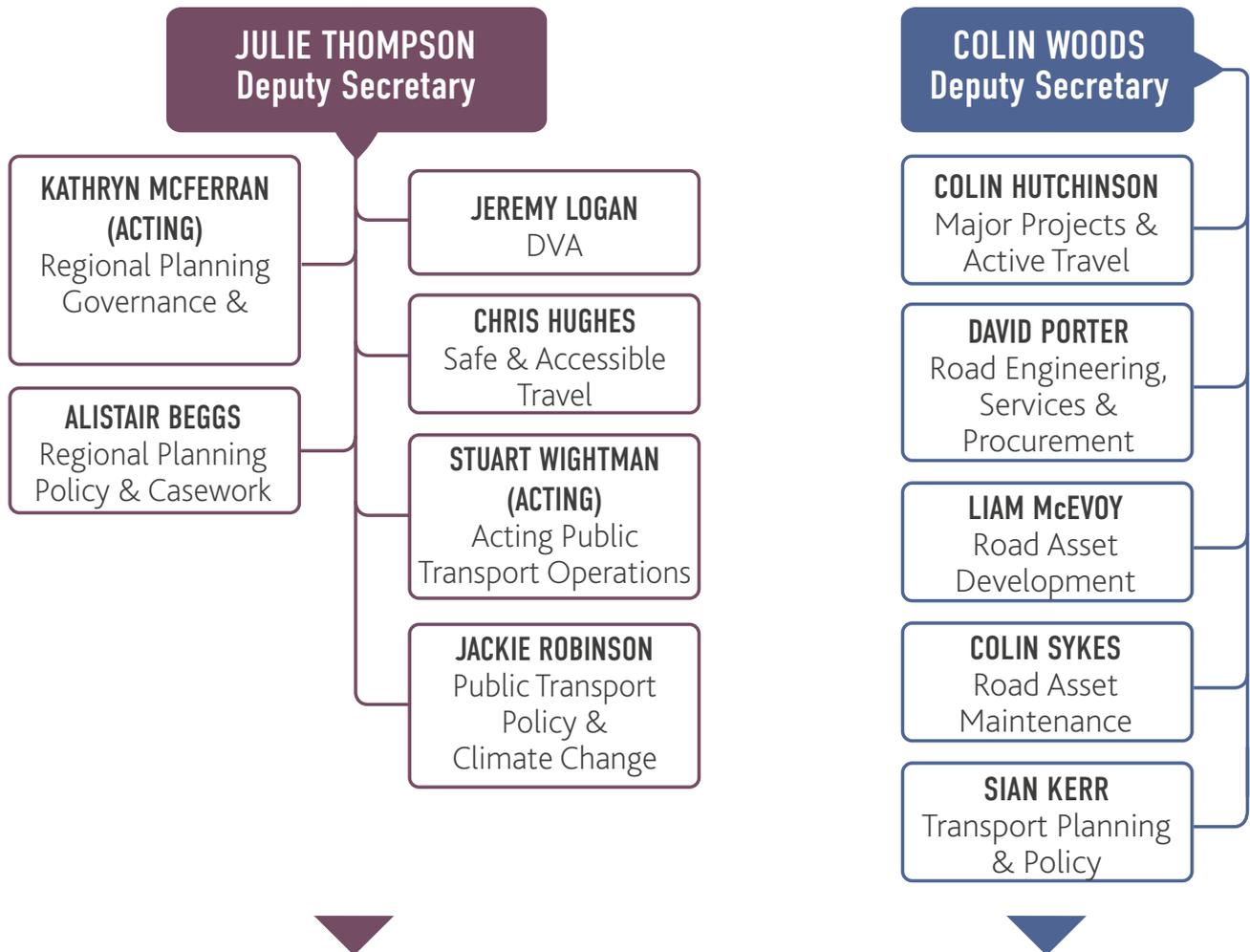
By focusing on water, transport and planning we are clear on the current state of our infrastructure in these key areas, what we need to do, why we need to do it and how we will prioritise the finite public resources available to address the issues within each delivery area.

# Senior Management Team Organisation Chart

**JULIE HARRISON** .....  
Permanent Secretary

## CLIMATE, PLANNING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

## TRANSPORT AND ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT



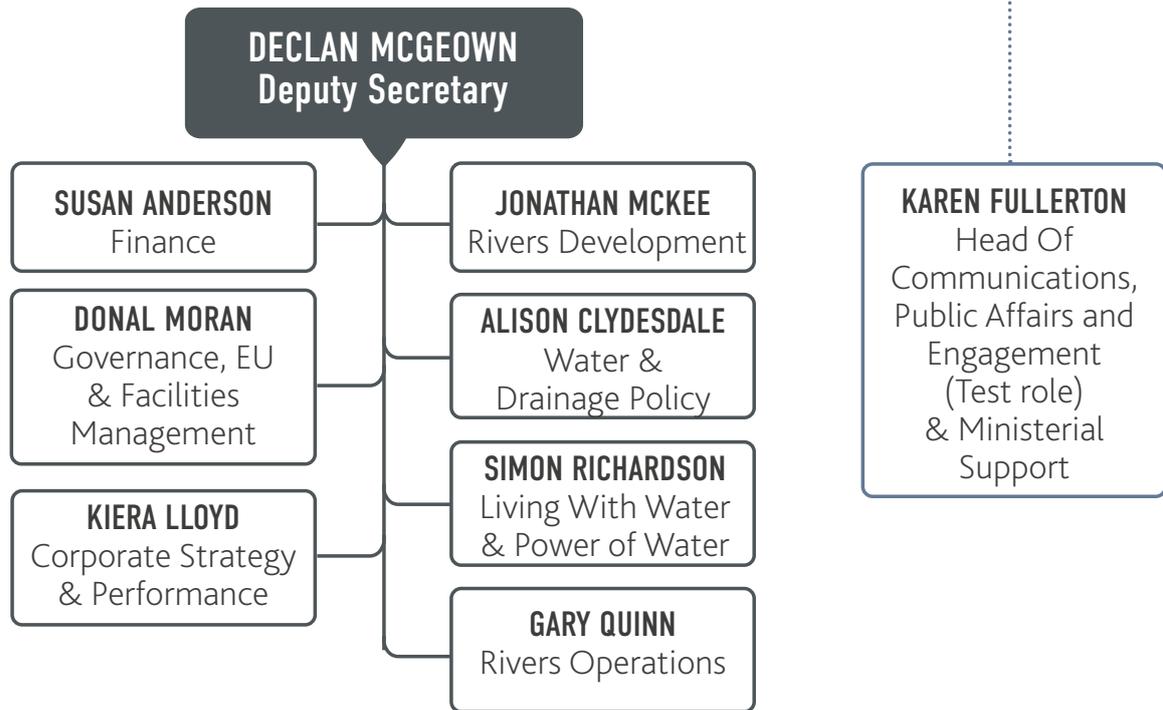
### KEY DELIVERABLES

- Leadership of DfI Climate Response and mitigation (and production of DfI Climate Action Plan)
- Updated and relevant planning and transport legislation
- Enhanced public transport network (bus and rail) to support modal shift
- Modernisation of DVA incl capital programme

### KEY DELIVERABLES

- DfI Asset Management Strategy
- Road Asset Development incl Active Travel EV infrastructure
- Road Asset Maintenance
- DfI Capital Programme
- DfI Infrastructure plan (carbon reduction)
- Transport Strategy (roads, rail, public transport, ports and airports) incl Transport Sectoral Plan (carbon reduction)

## WATER AND DEPARTMENTAL DELIVERY



### KEY DELIVERABLES

- NI Water - delivery plan and oversight
- Departmental Flood Risk Management
- Living with Water
- Water and Flood Risk Management capital programme
- Contribution to Climate Change Agenda - Adaptation
- Power of water decarbonisation projects
- DfI delivery plan (incl data dashboard on water, transport and planning)
- Financial performance, budget, resource management

# Strategic Context

There has been a sustained under funding of infrastructure assets in Northern Ireland for many years with much of the transport and water infrastructure aging and in need of upgrading. This sustained underfunding creates a number of additional risks for the Department associated with owning and operating aging infrastructure.

There is a diminished organisational capacity within the Department arising from carrying a high vacancy rate for multiple years and challenges competing with the Private Sector for scarce talent.

Climate change is also leading to increasing occurrences of severe weather including heatwaves, sea level rises, floods and droughts, putting pressure on our assets and emergency response teams.

Finally, there is a need to ensure an efficient, effective and equitable planning system trusted to deliver high quality, sustainable, prosperous, inclusive and healthy places.

Along with the above issues both Water and Transport infrastructure currently have a number of challenges which include:

## **Water**

- Wastewater capacity constraints currently identified in 100 of our towns and cities are a barrier to economic growth.
- NI Water is the biggest electricity user in NI and is impacted by energy price volatility and general inflationary increases but has not yet been able to deliver the potential of the 'Power of Water' ideals.
- Allocations of funding to maintain and upgrade of our ageing water infrastructure are often less than required for the regulated utility; this increases the risk to the delivery of essential water and wastewater services and increases the risk of environmental pollution incidents.
- 5% or 45,000 of all properties here are located in areas at risk from flooding. This figure is projected to increase to 59,800 by 2080.

## Transport

- Allocations of funding to maintain our roads have been less than required for many years; DfI has relied on in-year monitoring rounds to try to fund a limited version of essential maintenance and also our Winter Service.
- Rising inflation and energy costs impacting services - we are able to deliver less for our money.
- Infrastructure assets getting older and not being maintained to adequate standards.
- Translink passenger numbers down from pre COVID levels.
- Reduced budget has required Translink to raise their fares and exhaust reserves to cover unfunded losses.
- Translink needs long term funding to ensure ongoing viability of the company.

Sufficient investment together with a planned and phased approach to the management and maintenance of our public assets and to water, transport and planning services will facilitate sustainable development, help address regional imbalances, reduce dangerous carbon emissions and help to grow our economy. Without this, our assets will continue to decline, in a downward spiral.

## Essential Service Delivery

The vast majority of the work undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure is focused on delivering critical infrastructure and services in Northern Ireland to the public. During the year 2023-24 the Department will continue to deliver these essential services which include:

1. Oversight of a number of Delivery Partners including:
  - the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) which trades as Translink;
  - NI Water which is the statutory water and sewerage provider;
  - the Drainage Council which determines which watercourses and sea defences should be maintained at public expense; and
  - co sponsoring Waterways Ireland along with The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Ireland.
2. Maintaining the £30billion road network asset to enable daily travel and transport of goods and deliver statutory duties and services within the available budget; including working to reduce road fatalities and injuries; and the licensing of drivers and vehicles through the Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA).

# Strategic Context

3. Prioritising and promoting travel choices and development of related infrastructure which minimises our impact on the planet including: reducing travel volumes; promoting a shift towards walking, wheeling, cycling, and the use of public transport; funding community transport; and switching to the use of zero emission vehicles.
4. Managing our road network to ensure it is safe and accessible by: providing low energy LED street lighting; managing parking enforcement; processing blue badges; undertaking transport regulation; running the Strangford ferry and processing roads claims.
5. Progressing major capital infrastructure projects across our water and transport systems including the three Executive Flagship Projects of: A5; A6; the Belfast Grand Central Station; and the Executive endorsed 12 year Living with Water programme.
6. Supporting the preparation and delivery of the City and Growth deals and related infrastructure projects including: Newry Southern Relief Road; Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle bridge; and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2.
7. Responding to extreme weather through: the management of flood risk and maintenance of our river and sea defences; co-ordination of the strategic emergency response to severe weather events; and provision of winter services on our road network.
8. Ensuring governance and policy oversight of the planning system, including: responsibility for regional planning and regionally significant planning applications; and providing expert transport and flood risk management response to local councils on planning applications.
9. Ensuring the effective governance controls of the Department are being followed through: the Departmental Board and Audit and Risk Committee; and that the Departments budget of approx. £1.3billion per annum is spent in compliance with Managing Public Money, Corporate Governance Framework and Risk Management procedures.

The Department is currently developing a performance dashboard which will help track the performance of many of the above measures.

### **Decision Making in the Absence of Ministers**

In addition to the current financial constraints, the Department has been without a Minister since 28 October 2022. To help facilitate decision making in the absence of Ministers, the UK Government introduced the [Northern Ireland \(Executive Formation etc\) Act 2022](#) (EF Act) which became law on 6 December 2022 and amended by the [Northern Ireland \(Interim Arrangements\) Act 2023](#). The Department has produced specific procedures to be followed to ensure that any decisions that are taken in accordance with the Act take account of the Secretary of State's guidance and are appropriately recorded. These decisions are made public, via the Northern Ireland Office, at the following [link](#).

### **Resource Budget 2023-24**

The Department has, for many years, operated within a constrained resource budget, with the opening baseline insufficient to meet minimal service levels, and has relied on in-year funding to deliver its services. This has become increasingly difficult with the unprecedented increase in energy and inflation prices, which are continuing into 2023-24.

The Secretary of State provided NI Departments with 2023-24 budgets on 27 April 2023, through his [Written Ministerial Statement](#). This budget fell short of what the Department needed for the year and the Department is currently facing a 14% cut in its resource budget compared on a like for like basis with 2022-23. This is before additional funding which is needed to meet energy and inflation costs to front line services. Therefore, when set against the Department's 2023-24 forecast requirements, £167m of savings are required to manage within the resource budget provided for the year.

# Strategic Context

In light of the extremely challenging financial position the Department has undertaken a number of decisions using the EF Act to reduce 'discretionary' spending and increase revenue, including:

- Increasing Translink fares;
- Increasing on-street car park charges in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry;
- Increasing non-domestic water and sewerage charges (approved by the Utility Regulator);
- Increasing Rathlin Ferry fares;
- Continuing to deliver limited essential road maintenance service (meaning only the highest priority defects get repaired and flood management services (which includes clearing blockages in rivers));
- Reducing expenditure on day-to-day administrative costs;
- Reducing 'discretionary' spend in a number of areas including road safety programmes;
- Significant staff vacancy control;
- Additional savings being delivered by Translink and NI Water;
- Increase in planning fees;

- Consulting on changes to the Concessionary Fares scheme; and
- Consulting on increases on driving and vehicle test fees.

Following these decisions, the Department was still left with a remaining funding gap of approximately £112m. In June 2023 the Department launched a public consultation of an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on a range of budget options available to it. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July the Department outlined its [final budget allocations](#) following analysis of the first four weeks of the consultation returns. In this, the Department highlighted the actions taken as outlined above and set out the range of other decisions taken which include:

- Stopping Departmental spend on road safety advertising and other programmes;
- Ending the Cycling Proficiency Scheme (which supports teachers to develop children's cycling skills);
- Reducing the grant to Community Places (which provides independent planning advice to communities);
- Providing a reduced allocation to the Active Travel School Programme;

- Dial-a-Lift services and the Disability Action Transport Scheme will be funded from 1 August at 95% of the level allocated for April to July;
- Funding for the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) will continue at current levels;
- Community Transport provision for the longer term will be reviewed, to ensure that we are maximising both value for money and outcomes through these key services;
- Reductions to ALBs of £53.4m from their originally assessed requirements.

The Department also stated that it will continue to assist Translink and NI Water as they work through the decisions that will be needed to meet their contractual and regulatory responsibilities within the funding that is available to them. It is recognised that some decisions that would need to be taken to live within budget allocations are not within the power of Senior Officials to take under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation Etc.) Act 2022, amended by the Northern Ireland (Interim Arrangements) Act 2023 in the absence of an appropriate decision maker.

These include:

- Stopping waste-water treatment;
- Reducing essential road maintenance to emergency response only;
- Reducing winter service to snow clearance only;
- Stopping the community transport programme;
- Switching off streetlights
- Stopping flood prevention programmes.

As the Department has made clear throughout, if decisions are not taken during the year to increase budget allocations or to implement the measures listed above, spend in 2023-24 will exceed the current allocation.

# Strategic Context

## **Stabilising Public Services**

Investing to keep our £37bn of public infrastructure assets 'fit for purpose' is not a luxury but a necessity. To further reduce or stop essential maintenance due to financial pressures will result in accelerated asset deterioration, increased repair costs, safety hazards, service disruptions, higher life cycle costs, and negative economic consequences. Regular and proactive maintenance is essential to preserve the functionality, safety, and longevity of all of our infrastructure assets. Modern and sustainable water, wastewater and transport infrastructure underpins every Department's ability to deliver Executive objectives, particularly those set out under the Climate Act, supported by an efficient and effective planning system.

For many years the Department has not been receiving adequate funding to ensure that our public infrastructure is maintained at a sufficient level. Much of our infrastructure is ageing and needs upgraded. Only sufficient investment together with a planned and phased approach to the management and maintenance of our public assets and to water, transport and planning services will facilitate sustainable development, help address regional imbalances, reduce dangerous carbon emissions and help to grow our economy. Without this, our assets will continue to decline, in a downward spiral.

# DfI Business Plan 2023-24

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The Business Plan for 2023-24 reflects the Department's three distinct delivery areas and how they are supported through central Departmental actions.

- **SECTION 1** - *Water Actions*
- **SECTION 2** - *Transport Actions*
- **SECTION 3** - *Planning Actions*
- **SECTION 4** - *Departmental Actions*

## Departmental Actions for 2023-24

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 1- Water Actions for 2023-24</b>			
1	<b>Water and Drainage Policy</b>	We will update the Department's Technical Flood Risk Guidance in relation to the Allowances for Climate Change in Northern Ireland by end March 2024.	Alison Clydesdale
2		<p>We will take forward a programme of policy and legislation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- publishing the consultation response on the water, flooding and sustainable legislation consultation by 31 July 2024.</li> <li>- introducing the necessary legislation to facilitate the key elements of the reservoir safety framework provided by the Reservoir Act by end Mar 2024.</li> </ul>	Alison Clydesdale
3	<b>Power of Water decarbonisation projects</b>	We will work with NI Water and the Department for the Economy to develop Power of Water schemes to reduce NIW's electricity costs, generate green energy and contribute to NI's overall target for carbon reduction. We will complete an Outline Business Case and Full Business Case for the NI Water Wind Farm scheme by end March 2024.	Simon Richardson
4	<b>Living With Water Programme</b>	We will develop drainage and wastewater management schemes, as part of the 12-year Living with Water in Belfast Plan and publish an annual report on progress within 3 months after the end of the financial year.	Simon Richardson
5	<b>Flood Risk Management capital investment</b>	We will construct infrastructure to offer enhanced flood protection to 1000 properties and invest approximately £21m to reduce public safety risk from flooding or asset failure by April 2024.	Jonathan McKee

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 1- Water Actions for 2023-24</b>			
6	<b>Water Charging Options</b>	We will produce a draft paper on options for revenue raising through water charging – domestic, non-domestic and septic-tank emptying by September 2023.	Kiera Lloyd

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 2 – Transport Actions for 2023-24</b>			
7	<b>Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland</b>	We will issue a draft Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland for Public Consultation by 30 September 2023.	Sian Kerr
8	<b>Concessionary Fares</b>	We will review the Concessionary Fares Scheme and issue a consultation to seek views on options to amend the Scheme by June 2023. Following the consultation, responses will be analysed and recommendations developed for consideration by Minister or the relevant decision maker with decisions expected to be taken in the Autumn.	Jackie Robinson
9	<b>Public Transport Decarbonisation &amp; Modal Shift</b>	We will work with Translink to decarbonise public transport and encourage modal shift by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reducing emissions from the public transport fleet by expanding the fleet of zero emission buses in service from 103 in service to 147 by Summer 2023; and</li> <li>- introducing contactless ‘Tap On Tap Off’ projects for rail services by end of 2023-24.</li> </ul>	Stuart Wightman
10	<b>Active Travel Delivery</b>	We will develop a new delivery model for the delivery of Greenway and Cycling Schemes by 31 July 2023 to make the development of greenways more effective.	Colin Hutchinson

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 2 – Transport Actions for 2023-24</b>			
11	<b>A5 Western Transport Corridor</b>	We will complete the statutory processes for the A5 WTC Scheme to enable a formal decision to be made on the initiation of the Project within 2 months of receipt of the Planning Appeals Commission Report.	Colin Hutchinson
12	<b>Strategic Management of the Road Network Asset</b>	We will issue a Draft Strategic Asset Management Plan for the Road Network for Public Consultation by 30 September 2023.	Colin Hutchinson
13	<b>Road and Rail Safety</b>	We will complete a Rail Safety Review and publish the outcome by December 2023.	Chris Hughes
14		We will implement the Draft Road Safety Strategy 2030 Action Plan by reviewing and updating the highway code in early 2024, making two statutory rules around careless driving that are operational by May 2023; and undertaking public consultations on mobile phone use in a vehicle and disqualification for low-level alcohol offences by December 2023.	

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 3 – Planning Actions for 2023-24</b>			
15	<b>Development of planning policy and legislation work programme</b>	We will take forward a programme of planning policy and legislation including: developing legislation to revise permitted development rights for low carbon technologies and consulting on the draft Regional Strategic Planning Policy for Renewable and low carbon energy by June 2023.	Julie Thompson
16		We will, by the end of November 2023, issue a call for evidence to inform the options for taking forward a review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) in relation to climate change.	Alistair Beggs

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 3 – Planning Actions for 2023-24</b>			
17	<b>Planning Improvement</b>	<p>We will take forward relevant actions in the Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) in line with the dates in the work programme including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce in statute, a local validation checklist;</li> <li>- Determining if secondary legislation should be amended to prevent the late submission of information in the planning process; and</li> <li>- Undertake a public consultation to review proposed changes to development management categories and thresholds, pre determination hearings and pre application community consultation procedures</li> </ul>	Kathryn McFerran

No.	Area	Action	Action Owner
<b>SECTION 4 – Departmental Actions for 2023-24</b>			
18	<b>Climate Response</b>	We will develop DfI's input to the first carbon budget (2023-2027) to be published by DAERA by June 2023 and provide DfI input to the Carbon Action Plan (CAP) by Autumn 2023.	Julie Thompson
19	<b>Digital Strategy</b>	We will drive forward innovation within the Department by agreeing a Digital and Data Strategy 2023-28 to focus on ways that the Department uses Digital and Data technology and develop an action plan by September 2023.	Declan McGeown

# Our Progress / Monitoring of the Plan

As part of the business planning cycle it is crucial that the Business Plan is monitored through the year. DfI will therefore undertake quarterly monitoring of the Business Plan. These will be undertaken:

Reporting Period	Time Period	Indicative Timing for progress reports
Quarter 1	April – June	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2023
Quarter 2	July - September	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
Quarter 3	October - December	TBC February 2024
Quarter 4	January - March	TBC June 2024

This monitoring will require business areas to update the current status of delivery of the plan, including any updates to the performance measures and actions, and also any revision in anticipated delivery date. They will also be required to include a RAG status for each area. These updates will be provided to the Minister, the Senior Leadership Team and the Departmental Board.

## Equality

The Department is committed to complying with its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 in all that we do. The Department's Equality Scheme sets out how we will ensure equality of opportunity and good relations when carrying out our functions.

An equality screening has been undertaken on this Business Plan. It is likely that many of the actions contained within the Plan will require equality assessments to be undertaken by the relevant business areas.



# DfI Business Plan *2023-24*



Department for  
**Infrastructure**

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Department for  
**Infrastructure**

[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)