



DfI Business Plan *2024-25*



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

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It all starts here.

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John O'Dowd MLA MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE



Foreword from the Minister

I am delighted to have returned to the post of Minister for Infrastructure following the restoration of the Executive.

Infrastructure plays such a key role in all of our lives. It delivers for people every day by providing and maintaining the things that we all need to go about our daily lives, the things that make this place work.

Getting infrastructure right and investing in it appropriately can deliver positive change. It can create the foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy; for better rural and urban communities; and for healthier and greener lives.

I am therefore delighted to publish the 2024-25 Business Plan for the Department.

As Minister for Infrastructure, I am keen to invest as much as possible in our transport, water and planning infrastructure and services in order to make a real difference to people and their lives. Ideally, we would have received all the funding that we bid for, however I am keen to deliver as much as we can with what we have. I have therefore focused the actions of this Business Plan around a number of key issues including: delivering positive change, prioritising essential frontline services and addressing regional imbalance.

I want to ensure that our railway and bus networks are properly maintained, accessible and transformed in the future to use zero emission technology where we can. A major step change in this will be the opening of the new Belfast Grand Central station later this year which will enhance all transport options in the city and improve connectivity across the North. I have also

ring-fenced funding for the Coleraine - Derry phase three rail improvement and also protected the concessionary fares scheme.

We have seen, over the last year, the changes in our climate. I want to continue to improve our ability to respond to extreme weather and invest in flood risk management infrastructure to protect people and businesses. The completion of the Belfast Tidal Project this year will provide greater protection from flooding in the city.

I know that, through years of under investment, our Water and Sewerage network has developed capacity issues. Resolving these issues will not be a quick fix and will require the agreement and commitment of the Executive.

I am, however, keen to continue to invest in our Water Assets to help resolve these wastewater capacity issues where I can. This includes introducing a new Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage bill which will allow for the development of new sustainable ways of dealing with stormwater. This will in turn, enable economic and social development opportunities and better protect the environment through the development of a more modern and sustainable water infrastructure.

We have seen how our road network has deteriorated in recent years, including the development of more and more potholes on the network. I want to resolve this legacy issue and want to invest in improvements to support connectivity and enable our economy to grow and our network to be as safe as possible. This will include creating a road network that connects on a North-South and East-West basis and will help frame and open our towns and cities and improve safety on our roads.

I also want to help to improve our planning system to better develop our built environment and enhance our society, while protecting the environment and promoting biodiversity. This will help build a better tomorrow, not just for this generation, but for generations to come.

Finally, resolving many of the above issues will depend on budget allocations. I will continue to bid for additional money through each monitoring round and will work with my Executive colleagues to explore all avenues of investment in our infrastructure.

I am keen, however, not to focus on what we cannot do this year but to focus on working on the opportunities that we do have and how we can make a difference. In other words, it all starts here.

John O'Dowd MLA

MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Infrastructure delivers for people every day by providing for, and maintaining, our daily lives. It delivers positive and transformative change in people's daily lives. Infrastructure makes this place work.

Infrastructure is also an economic driver and a social enabler. It is the foundation underpinning the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of our people and our society; it is the assumption that underpins every public service.

We can create positive change by providing better, decarbonised connections – not just with each other but with our natural environment and resources. By providing more efficient and accessible transport options and removing traffic congestion from our cities, towns and villages; by looking after our natural resources, we can create new opportunities for local people and tourists.

Investment in infrastructure also helps facilitate new housing, better transport connectivity and helps address regional imbalance. Investment in low emission transport improves air quality. Investment in well planned living spaces improves health outcomes.

DfI Ambition

We want to:

- Create a Road Network that connects on a North-South and East-West basis; with a region wide reliable and strategic roads network that will frame, and open, our towns and our landscape, and improve safety on our roads. We will work hard to ensure that this road network is managed to a high standard so that it can sustain the economic and social activity that relies on it.
- Develop our rail networks through considering how to progress the All Island Strategic Rail Review which recommends electrification of rail services; strengthening Belfast-Dublin rail services; creating a new line to the International Airport; as well as new services between Belfast and the Northwest, via Portadown and Omagh. This offers an opportunity to reconnect our people and communities and to continue to support the decarbonisation of our economy.
- Encourage more vehicles to travel on strategic roads, avoiding cities and towns to create a cleaner, greener environment in which people wish to live. We will support local councils in their growth aspirations by developing transport plans that consider how to allocate road space in our urban areas.

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- Enable high quality public and community transport and active travel links and, in turn, help to facilitate town centre and city centre living, a vibrant culture and the development of a connected economy. The transport network will also encourage the movement of people, products, and services across rural and urban areas.
 - Support active travel by enabling and encouraging more people to undertake shorter journeys on foot, bike, or wheeling. This not only reduces our reliance on private cars but can improve our physical and mental wellbeing and help us make the best of our new green spaces and greenways.
 - Encourage even more people onto public transport. We already have a high quality integrated public transport network. But we will be able to improve this even further as more people use the services, by expanding connections, making public transport more attractive and so encouraging modal shift away from the private car.
 - Manage flood risk and develop our water and sewerage systems. This will involve investment in technological solutions, as well as the development of nature-based water conservation and management. The more that

we can live in harmony with our environment, the more we can grow our society in a sustainable way, supporting the development of much needed housing supply.

- Develop predictive flood forecasting systems and enhance responses to climate change events.
- Build on the work of the Planning Improvement Programme in place with Local Government and other stakeholders to ensure that the planning system works for businesses, for people and for the environment.

The Department also continues to prioritise the development of inclusive infrastructure. This means infrastructure which is accessible to all, including older people and people with disabilities, which empowers people to fully participate in society and is more resilient to climate change.

Getting infrastructure right and investing in it, can create the foundations for better communities across Northern Ireland. In other words, it all starts here!

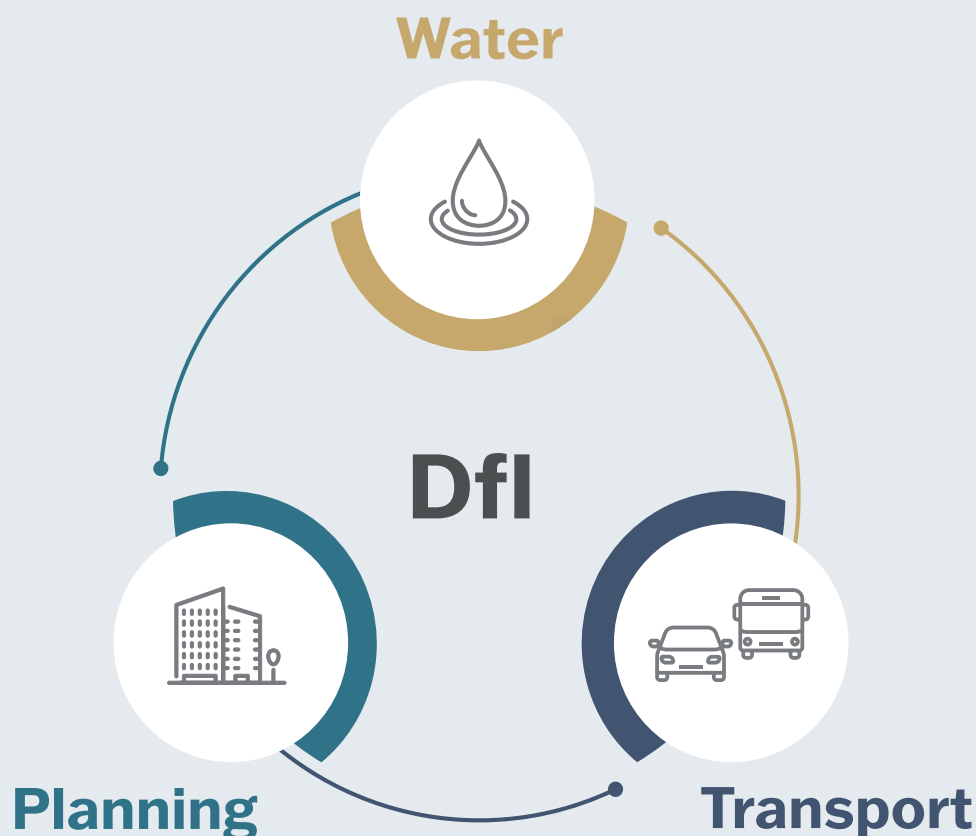
Our Department

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. The Department seeks to manage and protect over £37 bn of public assets that improve people's quality of life, reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainability and decarbonising key services, and building prosperity by driving inclusive productivity.

Those assets include 26,000+km of roads, 5,900 bridges, 10,000km of footways, approximately 300,000 streetlights, 426km of raised flood defences and flood walls, 26km of coastal defences and approximately 366km of below ground culverts.

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



TRANSPORT



The Department is responsible for the management, oversight and decarbonisation of surface transport in Northern Ireland.

We maintain road and rail networks to enable daily travel and transport of goods. We are responsible for the development of transport policy, and management of the road network asset.

The Department sponsors the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC), the parent company of the publicly owned bus and rail companies in the region that delivers over 80 million passenger journeys each year.

We work to ensure that everyone has access to safe and accessible travel and have a statutory responsibility to promote good road safety, reduce road fatalities and people being injured on our roads.

We are responsible for the development of a Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland which will set out the Department's new vision for the transport system in Northern Ireland with a clear focus on responding to climate change and connecting people.

Through the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA), the Department's only agency, we oversee driver and commercial transport licencing, vehicle and driver testing, compliance and roadside enforcement.

WATER



The flood wall at Ormeau, part of the Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme

Access to a safe supply of drinking water and a good waste water infrastructure is essential for the wellbeing of our people and our planet, to allow us to prosper and enable development and future economic and housing opportunities.

The Department has a number of responsibilities in relation to water, waste water and drainage policy in addition to being the sole shareholder in Northern Ireland Water.

Northern Ireland Water is independently regulated, and provides over 605m litres of drinking water every day to 910k households and businesses and treats 362m litres of waste water before returning clean water to the environment.

We are also responsible for the Living with Water Programme, which is a multi-agency initiative to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast and Derry to support economic growth, protect the environment and address flood risk.

The Department actively maintains river and sea defences, constructs flood alleviation schemes, develops flood maps and provides flood risk information.

We are the lead government department for the strategic co-ordination of the emergency response to weather events, including flooding, emergency plans and processes alongside multi-agency partners. We sponsor the Drainage Council, which determines which watercourses and sea defences should be maintained at public expense.

We also sponsor 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 promotion of over 1,100 km of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes.

PLANNING



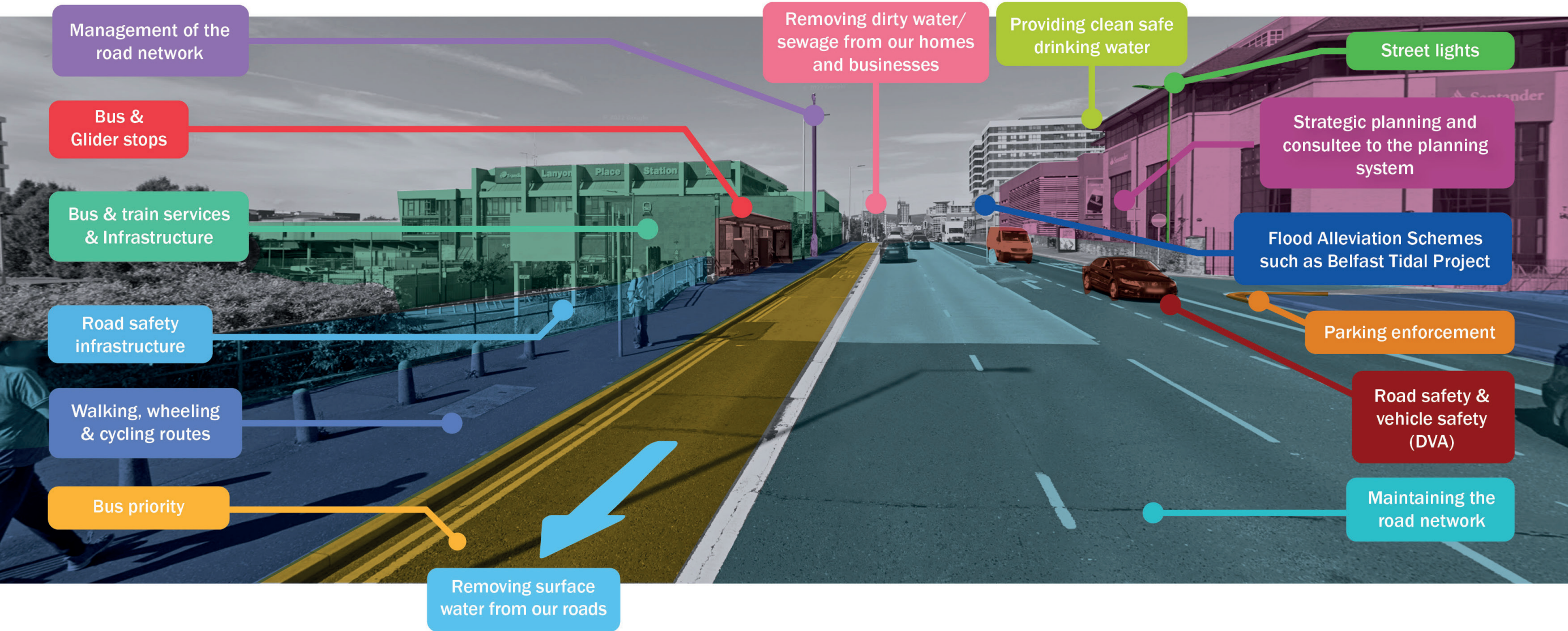
The Department is responsible for the strategic direction and production of regional policy for land use planning.

We develop planning legislation, provide oversight of the 'two tier' planning system and work with partners in local government and the wider community to create healthy living places. We also process a small number of regionally significant and called in planning applications.

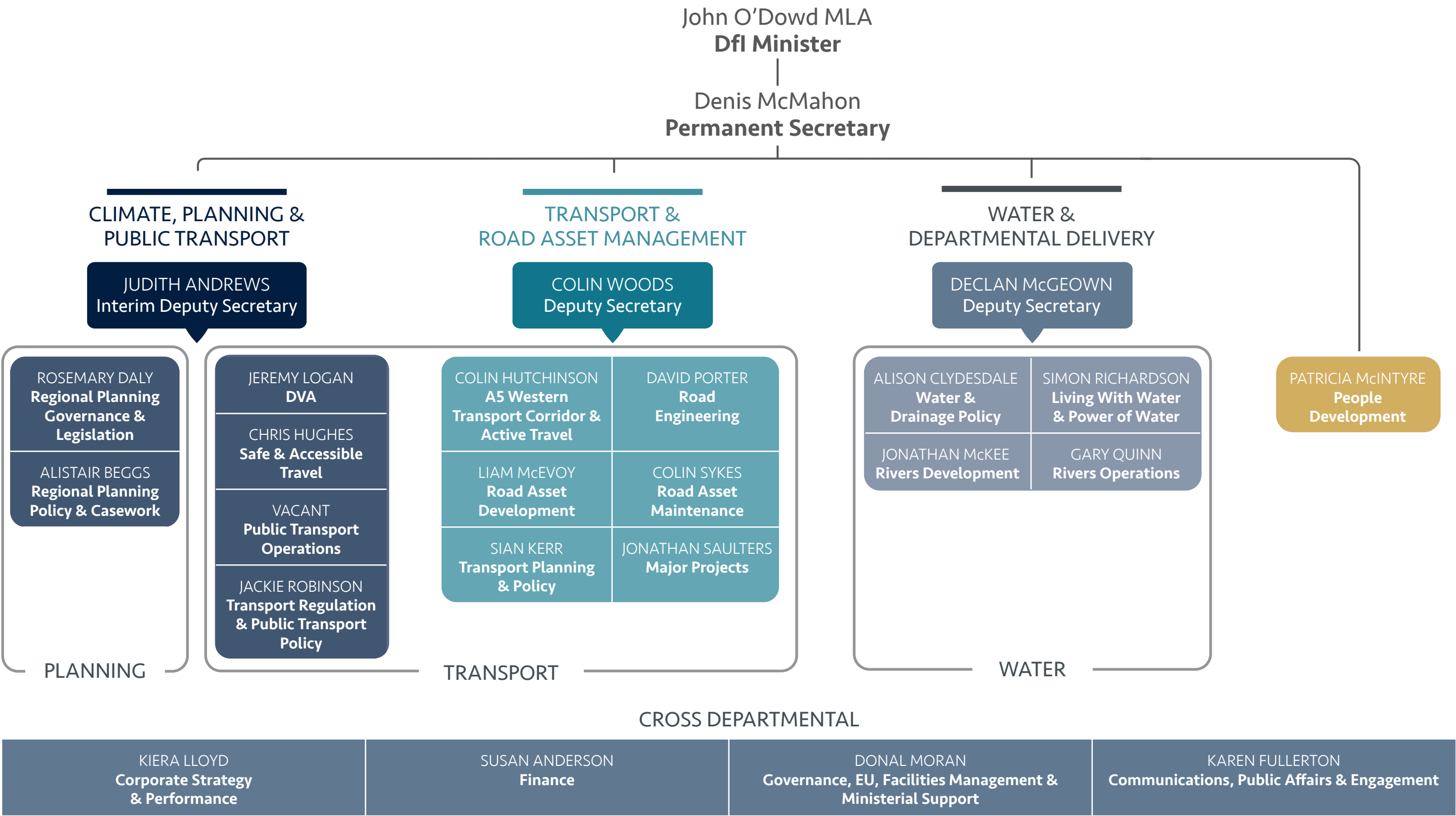
The Department, with local government and stakeholders, is also taking forward a Planning Improvement Programme. An interim Regional Planning Commission has been established to provide advice and support, and the programme for change and improvement focuses on a wide range of work areas including legislation, policy, practice, resourcing and governance.

We also promote sustainable transport and are working with local government as councils prepare their local development plans and local transport plans that have an important role in carbon reduction and the development of sustainable communities.

Our Responsibilities



DfI Leadership Team



Opportunities and challenges across the DfI family

The Department for Infrastructure is an economic driver and social enabler, and the services we provide underpin every public service.

Our focus is on delivering key infrastructure and services to people and business here, while taking positive action to improve our environment for future generations. There is a real opportunity to help shape a better and healthier future for everyone by decarbonising key services, investing in climate adaptation measures including increasing resilience and the longevity of our assets, promoting biodiversity, and by encouraging and facilitating active travel for all.

We will therefore continue to ensure that any approach taken to travel prioritises environmentally friendly and accessible travel for all citizens, including the promotion of active travel through walking, cycling and wheeling, as well as the promotion of decarbonising our cars, taxis and public transport.

New business and leisure opportunities for local people and tourists can also be created by providing more efficient and accessible transport options and removing traffic congestion from our cities, towns and villages. We must also look after our natural resources - our water, our rivers and our lakes.

For our economy to grow and help tackle climate change we also need a planning system that delivers high quality, sustainable and inclusive living places. A number of initiatives to improve our planning system are being taken forward through the Planning Improvement Programme, which aims to improve current processes by increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

While there are opportunities that can and will be grasped in the year ahead, there are significant challenges too - not least funding. Years of underinvestment and cuts, mean maintaining the level of service that we can deliver and want to deliver has been a struggle and, in some cases, has not been possible. This lack of funding has impacts across the whole Department from pothole repair to having the staff capacity to deliver essential public services.

While current MOT waiting times have presented a challenge, solutions are being sought and implemented. The DVA is currently delivering more MOT tests than ever before, and the Minister has announced the introduction of one-year temporary exemption certificates (TECs) for 115,000 cars. The opening of the new testing centres at Hydebank and Mallusk will also provide an additional 200,000 vehicle testing capacity per year, which will help to improve the situation.

Another area impacted by the challenging budget is the water and wastewater network and there are resultant capacity constraints in towns and cities here. A sustainable water and wastewater infrastructure network will benefit everyone across our society and will be required to enable our potential economic growth and enhance social wellbeing. The Minister is of the view that the solution to this problem does not lie in charging for what is an essential public service. The funding of our water and

sewerage services is clearly a complex matter and will require a collaborative approach to find a solution from across the Executive.

Other ways to future proof income streams, raise additional revenue and identify funding opportunities are being looked at across the Department as we continue to strive to deliver public services and positive change for our citizens.

Strategic Context

A planned and phased approach to the management and maintenance of our public assets and to transport, water and planning services is paramount to facilitate sustainable development, begin to address regional imbalances, reduce dangerous emissions and help to grow our economy.

In order to help us deliver and ensure that we have a well-rounded approach in delivering results a number of documents have been created to work in parallel alongside each other. This includes the Strategic Framework and the DfI Business Plan 2024-25.

Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework outlines the main aspects of the Department's work and the challenges it faces in delivering its essential public services. With a clear focus on transport, water and planning we are clear on what we need to do, why we need to do it and how we will prioritise the use of increasingly precious public money.

Business Plan

This Departmental Business Plan outlines the initiatives that the Department will undertake during the year 2024-2025 to maintain and manage our public infrastructure. It sets out the Department's main challenges and key priorities for the year ahead set against the allocated budget.

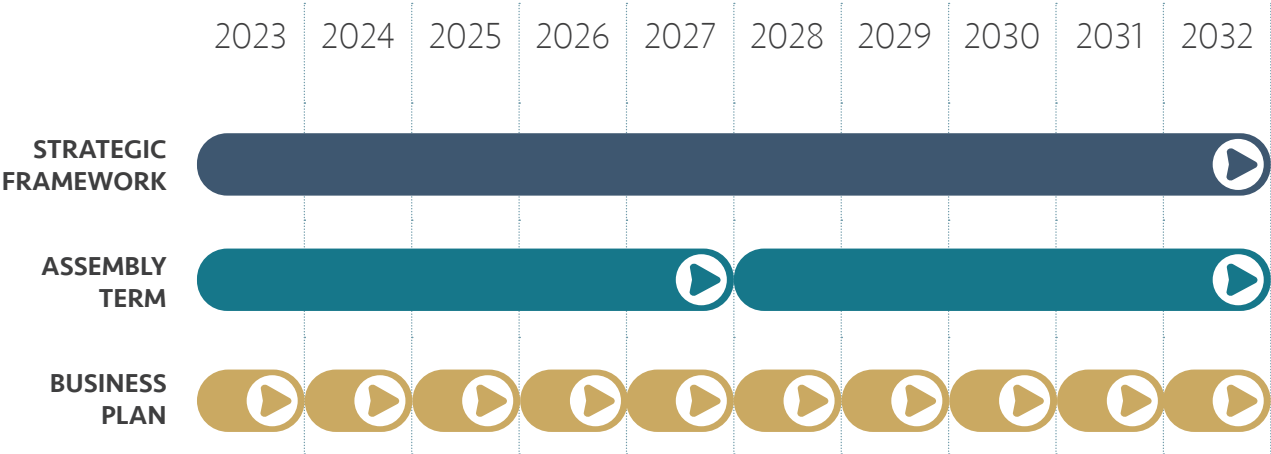
Programme for Government

The draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-27 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' was launched for an eight-week public consultation on 9 September 2024. The PfG outlines the priorities for the Executive to make a real difference to the lives of people here.

The PfG proposes nine high level immediate priorities. Four of these priorities relate to DfI including: Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy; Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing; Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment; and Reform and Transformation of Public Services.

The PfG will be finalised following the public consultation exercise and will help shape future programmes and business planning within departments for the remainder of the Assembly mandate.

PROPOSED DFI CORPORATE SUITE OF DOCUMENTS





Resource Budget 2024-25

The Executive agreed the 2024-25 Budget, which provided each Department with a resource and capital budget allocation.

The Department's 2024-25 resource budget allocation is £559.5m, which when set against the Department's forecast requirement is a shortfall of some £117m. The capital allocation is £820m, however the Department submitted capital bids of £1.12bn to progress delivery of capital schemes and enhancing infrastructure.

On 11 June 2024, the Department launched a consultation process on the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the spending proposals for the 2024/25 financial year with a commitment to prioritise essential front-line services and addressing regional imbalance.

Consultation responses received on the EQIA before 10 July 2024 have been used to inform the Departments capital and

resource allocations. Any views received between 10 July and 6 September will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocations of any additional funding received during 2024-25.

NI Water is to receive £137.7m resource and £323.6m capital plus a ring-fenced amount of £875k for EU Peace Plus projects.

Translink will get £245.8m and includes £80m ring-fenced for the Belfast Transport Hub, £6.4m EU peace plus funding for the Enterprise replacements and £4.7m ring-fenced for Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry Track Renewal.

DfI Business Plan 2024-25

The Business Plan for 2024-25 reflects the Department's three distinct delivery areas and how they are supported through central Departmental actions.

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

No	Action	Area	Action Owner
SECTION 1 - <i>Selected Transport Actions for 2024-25</i>			
1	Take a Statutory Decision on Progress of A5 Western Transport Corridor by 30 September 2024.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Colin Hutchinson
2	Publish the Road Safety Strategy and associated action plan by 30 September 2024.	Safe and Accessible Travel	Chris Hughes
3	In conjunction with Department of Transport in Ireland, publish the All-Island Strategy Rail Review by 30 September 2024.	Transport Regulation and Public Transport Policy	Jackie Robinson
4	Open the new Belfast Grand Central Station by Autumn 2024 and the refurbished York Street Station by 30 April 2024.	Public Transport Operations	Public Transport Operations Director
5	Address the condition of the Road Network through best application of available resource by 31 March 2025.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Colin Sykes
6	Publish a draft Transport Strategy for public consultation by 31 December 2024.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Sian Kerr
7	Review our Major Roads Projects Prioritisation by 31 August 2024 and publish details of the resulting capital programme.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Jonathan Saulters
8	Publish an Active Travel Delivery Plan for public consultation by 30 September 2024.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Colin Hutchinson
9	Progress a range of City and Growth Deal Projects in the Belfast and Mid South West Regions.	Transport and Roads Asset Management	Colin Hutchinson

No	Action	Area	Action Owner
SECTION 2 - <i>Selected Water Actions for 2024-25</i>			
10	Work with water sector stakeholders to best facilitate an operating environment that protects the quality of our drinking water and the ability to connect to the wastewater network, within the budget available.	Water Drainage Policy Division (WDPD)	Alison Clydesdale
11	Introduce the Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Bill by 31 March 2025.	WDPD	Alison Clydesdale
12	Further commence the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 during 24/25.	WDPD/ Rivers	Alison Clydesdale Gary Quinn
13	Undertake stakeholder engagement on the draft "Living with Water in Derry" Plan by March 2025.	Living with Water and Power of Water	Simon Richardson
14	Develop an outline business case for a flood forecasting system by December 2024.	Rivers	Gary Quinn
15	Complete the construction and handover of the Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme by 31 March 2025.	Rivers	Jonathan McKee

No	Action	Area	Action Owner
SECTION 3 - <i>Selected Planning Actions for 2024-25</i>			
16	Deliver the Planning Improvement Programme in line with agreed target dates.	Regional Planning, Governance and Legislation	Rosemary Daly
17	Bring forward amending legislation to introduce statutory validation checklists for Councils during 24/25.	Regional Planning Governance and Legislation	Rosemary Daly
18	Publish new Regional Strategic Planning Policy on renewable and low carbon energy by December 2024.	Regional Planning and Policy	Alistair Beggs

No	Action	Area	Action Owner
SECTION 4 - <i>Departmental Actions for 2024-25</i>			
19	Support the Executive's work on a Climate Action Plan with a particular focus on the Transport and Infrastructure Sectors	Transport Regulation and Public Transport Policy	Jackie Robinson
20	Develop and implement DfI Strategic Digital & Data Implementation Plan for 24/25 by 31 March 2025.	Corporate Strategy and Performance Directorate (CSPD)	Kiera Lloyd

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. The Department will therefore undertake quarterly monitoring of the Business Plan. These will be undertaken:

Reporting Period	Time Period	Indicative Timing for progress reports
Quarter 1 - 2	April - September	October 2024
Quarter 3	October - December	TBC February 2025
Quarter 4	January - March	TBC June 2025

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.



Ballywalter, County Down

DfI Business Plan *2024-25*



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