



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

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From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure  
**Nichola Mallon MLA**

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19<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Mrs McLornan

## **ROAD SAFETY REVIEW**

Thank you for your letter of 14 October 2021 to Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon, following the Council meeting on 4 October 2021 when a motion was proposed and seconded by Councillors De Faoite and Heading requesting a road safety review in inner-city communities in the City. The Minister has read your letter and has asked me to respond on her behalf.

### **Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan**

The Department is currently developing a new suite of Transport Plans across Northern Ireland. This will include a new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), which will address future plans to 2035 for roads, public transport and active travel within the five councils whose spatial area falls within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA). The BMTP will be integrated with the Councils' Local Development Plan (LDP) processes and many of the issues mentioned in your letter will be addressed through this work.

A Belfast Metropolitan Transport Study (BMTS) has been published on the Department's website. The BMTS sets out an objective evidence-based assessment of current and future transport issues in the context of the Councils' growth ambitions.

The timescales for completing the Draft BMTP and its release for public consultation are still under review due to its integration with the formal LDP processes. However, preparatory work is ongoing and the Minister is determined that the Transport Plan for Belfast will take account of the shared objectives for our towns and cities within the Greater Belfast area and given the climate emergency, will deliver reduced levels of commuting by private car and greater use of sustainable modes of transport including public transport, walking and cycling.

The Minister shares your aspiration for Belfast to be somewhere where people want to live, work and visit; and to be able to do so safely. Various forms of demand management will be considered as part of the BMTP, which will seek to address road congestion and

air pollution while promoting sustainable and active travel as preferred ways in which to move people and goods throughout the Greater Belfast area.

## **Public Transport**

You will be aware that the public transport system in Belfast offers a high level of accessibility on all key corridors through a dense network of bus stops, fully accessible vehicles and high frequency Metro and Glider services. The introduction of a zero-emission bus fleet which is currently in progress, will greatly help to address the issue of air pollution in the city.

## **Active Travel**

The need for better active travel provision in the city at large and in the centre of the city in particular has been recognised in 'Making Belfast an Active City: Belfast Cycling Network 2021' which the Minister published on 4th June this year. This document articulates a vision for the city centre in line with the aspirations of 'A Bolder Vision for Belfast' where walking, wheeling and cycling would be achieved principally by the following means:

- Reduce car parking progressively (particularly on-street car parking and footway parking) over several years;
- Re-organise traffic flows to eliminate through traffic in the city centre (except for sustainable travel and emergency services);
- Reduce speed limits in high pedestrian footfall areas or streets;
- Prioritise pedestrian crossings to minimise waiting time for pedestrians and maximise crossing time; and
- Re-allocate road space for uses other than traffic.

## **Road Maintenance**

To ensure that roads are maintained in a safe and serviceable condition, officials inspect all adopted roads on a monthly, three monthly or six monthly cyclical basis, depending on the volumes of traffic using the road. Any defects identified in the course of these inspections, which meet current intervention levels, are processed for repair on a prioritised basis in accordance with the Department's current road maintenance standards.

Defects such as potholes can be reported directly to the Department through the online reporting system <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets>

This ensures that, even in the current restricted working conditions, locations can be identified and issues properly assessed and dealt with in accordance with our policies and within established timescales.

It should be noted that the Department has been operating in a challenging budgetary position for some time and this has had an impact on all road maintenance activities. Only the highest priority defects are currently being repaired and unfortunately some defects will not be repaired until they meet the required intervention levels.

In addition, the Department also carries out an annual programme of reconstruction and resurfacing works which is implemented on a scheme priority basis, subject to the availability of the necessary financial resource.

## **Road Safety**

Minister Mallon is aware of the challenge road safety presents to all of us in our everyday lives and is committed to the ongoing development of a safe and sustainable transport network system that keeps us free from road traffic harm and meets the needs of all our citizens.

To this end, on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021, the Minister launched a consultation on the new Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland which seeks views on the proposed approach to road safety until 2030 and the issues and priorities that need to be addressed. As part of the consultation development process officials engaged with a wide range of key stakeholders, including the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), and the Committee for Infrastructure, to help build a consensus around the key priorities for the new Strategy. The Department will again be facilitating a number of stakeholder engagement sessions in December to provide an opportunity for all road users to input into the Strategy. The Department will be keen to hear your views which will help to inform the future direction of Road Safety. Details of the consultation, how to register your interest in the stakeholder events, and on how to respond are available at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-proposed-content-new-road-safety-strategy-northern-ireland-2030>

I hope that all of the work which the Department is progressing as outlined above demonstrates that it is putting in place interventions for delivering the improvements suggested by the Council in your letter of 14th October.

I trust that you will find this reply helpful.



**KATHRYN MCFERRAN**  
**Private Secretary to the Minister**