



**Community
Transport
Association**

**Written briefing by CTA to the Committee for Regional Development
on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Draft
Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 - 2021**

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1. About CTA

CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA member organisations are involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services. Our membership consists of 1400 organisations.

2. CTA's Written Evidence

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to provide both written and oral evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 – 2021.

The following written evidence forms the basis of the oral evidence that will be provided by Kellie Armstrong, Director for NI on Monday 12th December 2011.

3. Contact Details

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4. Introduction

- 4.1. The CTA welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee for Regional Development on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and the Draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland 2011-2021.
- 4.2. The following document provides in detail the items that will be covered in oral evidence by the CTA on Monday 12th December 2011.
- 4.3. In sections 5 and 6 below CTA provides a synopsis of both the Draft Programme for Government (section 5) and the Draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (section 6). The evidence then provides the CTA's response to the questions posed regarding any gaps in the PfG/ISNI, considerations on the milestones and outputs and suggests how the PfG can be monitored.

5. Summary Draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015

- 5.1. The CTA acknowledges the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 (PfG) contains high level strategic aims that go towards the stated goal of 'a shared and better future for all'. However it is disappointing that Section 3 'Our Approach' is quite muddled in terms of the goals, aims and challenges and principles – terms which are used almost interchangeably. This makes it unclear exactly what the PfG is trying to achieve.
- 5.2. The Priorities identified in the PfG raise questions as to how they could be achieved within the timescale, current budget framework and in the changing NICS environment
- 5.3. The CTA appreciates the commitment given in Section 1 'Commitments' to the development of effective partnership working with the Voluntary and Community sector to deliver tangible outcomes. This approach is more positive and proactive than previous PfG.
- 5.4. The CTA welcomes the commitment to invest in social enterprise and for the inclusion of social clauses in public procurement contracts.
- 5.5. The PfG aims to take a fresh look at the Executive's policies and programmes. However the document has been written after the NI Budget 2011 – 2015 has been set. While the Departmental Spending plans have been put in place following the NI Budget 2011-2015 the detail of these spending plans are not

published and therefore it is not possible to link resource allocations to the actions which will deliver the strategic aims of the PfG.

- 5.6. Responding to the PfG is difficult as all the Building Blocks (policy and strategy documents) are not located in one central area and therefore difficult to access.
- 5.7. The milestones/outputs provided are very strategic and therefore more akin to outcomes than measurable targets or outputs.

6. Summary Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011 – 2021

- 6.1. The draft Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI) updates the Executive's 2008 programme. It continues on the same strategic direction as before.
- 6.2. The CTA commends the ISNI aim to coordinate investment plans and to develop collaborative working. There are however no tangible targets to task proactive cross departmental working in order to achieve aims.
- 6.3. The ISNI highlights the need for improved infrastructure through good transport and telecoms links. The benefits are cohesions, sharing and integration at all levels and further a united community.
- 6.4. However the ISNI confirms the ratio of investment for road building compared to public transport services for 2011/12 -14/15 will be 6:1 (£1190m: £196m) and proposes for the period 2015/16 - 2020/2021 it may be 4.5:1 (£1281m¹: £280m). This indicates a continued preference to develop and create new roads rather than invest in sustainable transport. This appears contrary to the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy 'Strategic Objective 2: Use road space and railways more efficiently' which seeks to achieve modal switch.
- 6.5. In the 'Networks' section the ISNI recognises the need for improved public transport links yet proposes further development of the road network enabling more vehicular movement. While there is demand for road maintenance and improvements required to the existing road network, there is a growing requirement to address movement of people through sustainable transport options. The continued emphasis on road building moves the limited budget away from the development of a sustainable and effective public transport

¹ Dependent on outcome of A5/A8 road project changes.

system. This is not in line with the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy that places importance on moving people rather than vehicles.

- 6.6. The ISNI will be monitored through reports provided on the www.isni.gov.uk website.

7. Gaps in the Programme for Government

- 7.1. Transport impacts all areas of life in Northern Ireland. Transport takes us to work, to school, to the local GP surgery, to hospital, to church, to shops, to our recreation of choice and provides access to the South and across to GB. Transport delivers goods to shops; it takes our waste away and is a major component of the construction, agriculture, tourism and leisure industries. Access to services depends on transport. Transport is an integral part of everyday life in Northern Ireland.
- 7.2. The need for car use will remain for a large number of households across Northern Ireland. However due to rising fuel costs the populous need to be able to access a more affordable method of travel. In 2009 up to 9.75%² of the household budget was spent on transport costs. Due to the rapid increase in fuel it is expected that percentage for 2010 will be over 10% and for 2011 closer to 11%. **For every £1 earned around 10p is spent on car fuel.** The time has never been more right for the Executive to concentrate efforts in achieving a modal shift from car to public transport.
- 7.3. The PfG aims to achieve a more sustainable transport system for Northern Ireland. The content of the document therefore supports the aims of the Draft Regional Transportation Strategy. Sustainable transport provides a real and measurable way of creating a cleaner, greener environment. It takes time to achieve but by targeting a modal switch from car to public transport there is an opportunity to meet environmental targets and reduce congestion in larger towns and cities.
- 7.4. **There is no Strategic Transport Plan for NI:** this role was fulfilled by the previous Regional transportation Strategy (2002-2012) but the proposed Draft Regional Transportation Strategy will be no more than a statement of objectives. The current 2011-2015 budget is already skewed towards road building making it easier to move vehicles and little to promote use of public transport. The Public Transport Agency, envisaged under the Public Transport Reform, is yet to be realised. Therefore there is a planning vacuum in transport. Translink as the prime public transport provider is left to deliver cost-effective solutions focusing on commuter and school children and whatever resources it can spare for socially necessary rural service and inter-peak services.

² NISRA NI Housing Statistics 2010-2011 (average household expenditure on transport costs based on 2009 figures)

- 7.4..1. The cut to Translink's budget reduces its capacity for innovative public transport delivery and communication systems to support a modal shift/switch.
- 7.4..2. Support for the Community Transport Sector has been reduced and is now restricted to a small number of CT organisations that can access the DRD's Rural Transport Fund. This means the majority of Community Transport providers receive no support and therefore their capacity to develop as social enterprises or to meet PfG aims are removed.
- 7.4..3. The CTA receives a DRD grant through the Rural Transport Fund that limits support to only those CT operators who can access the RTF funding stream. CTA's ability to develop the majority of the CT sector is therefore reduced in Northern Ireland. This means the capacity and best use of resources available from within the Community is not being considered.
- 7.4..4. The Rural Transport Fund's priorities are effective in that the 'Dial a Lift' service does provide access for older people and people with disabilities living in rural areas who are unable to access conventional transport options (a private car, taxi, public or private transport) to local services. The Rural Transport Fund was not cut as part of DRD's Departmental Savings Plans. The CTA thanks the Committee for Regional Development for their input to the review of the Departmental Savings Plan that resulted in the RTF being protected³. However the DRD's Rural Transport Fund and those few CT operators who access that fund are being pressurised to deliver non-emergency Health transport without any investment or consideration from DHSSPS.
- 7.4..5. DRD officials have approached DHSSPS to support the provision of Health related transport; there has been no evidence of an open approach to partnership working. Outside DRD other Departments take the approach that transport 'is not in our statutory remit'. PfG should include clear targets to ensure partnership working to address transport issues between Departments.
- 7.5. The indicative funding figures in the ISNI show that there will be a continued lack of appropriate consideration for public transport until after 2021. Given the social context of an ageing population and lack of rural proofing the ISNI does not address the gap between older people and active citizenship and rural / urban access to services. This gap in terms of a Strategic Transport Plan for Northern Ireland which includes cost allocations by mode of transport and area puts at risk the coherent planning and delivery of public transport over the PfG period to 2015 and potentially the ISNI period to 2021.

³ The CTA has received email correspondence outlining the verbal confirmation from the Executive of the removal of proposed cuts to the RTF. The CTA anticipate the publication of a final DRD Work or Budget Expenditure Programme where it will confirm the amount available for the RTF and TPPD for 2011-2015

- 7.6. **The exclusion of consideration for transport access to services** in the investment strategy and PfG, (other than 'Networks in the ISNI) is a fundamental flaw. The lack of a coordinated approach will lead to further costs rather than savings. There is a need for the Executive to consider how people will be able to get to Education, Employment and Health. Without '**transport accessibility planning**' as forms the basis of the Local Transport Plan process in England, Northern Ireland will continue to deliver a fragmented transport system provided through silo Departmental expenditure. This approach will continue to see Education's 'Yellow Buses' underutilised for part of every day and maintain Health's provision of exclusive transport services. The population must be encouraged to make use of the exiting public transport network and not depend on Departmental specific transport services. Transport is a cross-cutting theme that needs to be planned horizontally across Departments to create efficient use of resources and budgets.
- 7.7. **The investment priorities for the ISNI excludes investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector** in the current plan and forecast budgets. The CTA is concerned the ISNI will not realise the aim of working in partnership with the Sector if there is no targeted commitment or consideration of financial support. In this respect there appears to be no explicit 'follow through' on the PfG commitment to the development of effective partnership working with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 7.8. **There is no plan to review the public procurement system:** transport is a cross-cutting theme yet there is no Strategic Transport Plan for Northern Ireland to ensure all Department's transport expenditure and needs are holistically considered. By integrating budgets and pooling transport resources the Executive has an opportunity to improve utilisation of vehicles and staff, improve quality and standards and reduce costs. Through appropriate strategic planning of transport services the Executive can create partnership opportunities, deliver effective services for the benefit of everyone, create sustainable transport solutions and improve the economy.
- 7.9. **In its 'Productive' section the ISNI varies from the PfG** in that social enterprise and social clauses are mentioned in passing with no tangible evidence of commitment to progress either. There is no framework to consider review of the procurement system to enable effective social clauses to be included. A review of the procurement system would reveal that the only way the Voluntary and Community sector can deliver contracts is through application as a commercial profit making enterprise. Transport procurement is the one

area in NI that excludes any entry by the Voluntary and Community Sector to contracts (by not allowing the S10b CT minibuss operating permit or volunteer car schemes to be included and forcing CT to move to being fully commercial transport provider before being able to make application). This is contrary to the DSD Volunteering Strategy and PfG's proposal to work in partnership with the Sector.

7.10. The PfG mentions a commitment to social enterprise however there are no commitments to deliver opportunities for the Sector. The only Key Commitments are

- At page 31, 'to invest in social enterprise growth to increase sustainability in the broad community sector' but with no specific measurable outputs;
- At page 52, 'to include social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction' but with no specific measurable outputs.
- Clearly there needs to be appropriate infrastructure development for transport social enterprises.

7.11. Proposed Actions:

- 7.11..1. CPD should work with DRD, DOE and CTA to identify the barriers which currently block transport social enterprises from tendering for contracts.
- 7.11..2. CDP to review the number of social enterprises that made application and how many were successful in their applications for public tenders and contracts. At a previous CPD conference the Welsh equivalent provided evidence that by removing barriers WAG was able to increase the number of social enterprises delivering contracts from 4% to over 30%. The positive impact created investment in local jobs and development of sustainable community businesses (this was important as it helped create and improve local employment in rural areas).
- 7.11..3. CDP to standardise transport procurement across all Departments (and Departmental procurement agencies) to ensure value for money and quality of delivery
- 7.11..4. DETI and CPD should work with CTA to establish a transport social enterprise development framework that will deliver a number of community transport suppliers who are able to access procurement opportunities. A targeted approach would meet the PfG strategic aim of developing social enterprise. A similar programme has been adopted through the CTA's Rural Social Enterprise Initiative in England which is funded through the DfT and other partners. That programme has developed social enterprise activities of CT operations creating more sustainable rural businesses while retaining a focus on re-investment within the local community.

- 7.12. **There are no targets to ensure partnership working becomes reality:** In order to be an active partner CTA and the CT sector need financial and partnership commitments from DRD and other Departments. The DSD Concordat between Government and the Voluntary & Community sector confirms a commitment to effective partnership working. The PfG should include an output target for each Department to work in partnership with each other, the private sector and the Voluntary & Community sector to achieve its Priorities.
- 7.13. **The Benefits of Working in Partnership with the Community Transport Sector:**
- 7.13..1. The Community Transport sector is perfectly positioned to provide an effective partner to work with each Department or with a 'Transport Cross-Departmental team' to provide access to services for older people, people with disabilities and people living in isolation (either because of location or limited mobility). CTA and the CT sector have already proved to be an effective partner:
- 7.13..2. Over the past 12 years Community Transport has delivered locally led transport solutions and helped to achieve DRD's rolling aim to reduce social and rural isolation through the continued investment into the Rural Transport Fund.
- 7.13..3. Community Transport has enabled DARD's Assisted Rural Travel Scheme to be delivered across NI. This enables SmartPass holders' to use that benefit on a mode of transport that is suitable to need and is available in the local rural community.
- 7.13..4. Community Transport helps to increase the number of Translink passengers by providing a link from the home to the local bus stop or depot (we would welcome future support to develop this approach).
- 7.13..5. Community Transport maintains access to services in the 'rural to rural' context by providing transport to local employment, health, education, to local shops and businesses (therefore ensuring the sustainability of some local retailers).

8. Comments on the Milestones and Outputs

- 8.1. The milestones or outputs are high level strategic outcomes rather than time-specific measurable actions.
- 8.2. The CTA suggests Outputs should be more tangible and specific – how else can performance be measured?
- 8.3. The milestones are set against an annual timescale that excludes year one of the PfG.
- 8.4. In order to achieve progression the CTA suggests milestones should be considered relative to the timescales of each Key Commitment and Departmental work programme.
- 8.5. An update report should be provided by the Programme Board annually. There are no milestones set for the PfG to provide review or update on the progress of the programme
- 8.6. Each Key Commitment is linked to only one Government Department. While that Department has the lead Operational responsibility it is disappointing the PfG does not consider listing areas where other Departments should be considered and included.
 - E.g. Under Priority Two: Implement an Integrated and Affordable Childcare Strategy (OFMDFM). Access to childcare is often dependent on transport. Education Transport is not permitted to deliver a child to a different address on the return journey (to childcare including Kinship care or community/private child care). This has an impact on working mothers, families and sustainability of the Childcare sector. The new Childcare Strategy should consider transport and access. Potential partners for OFMDFM include DE, DEL, Community Transport, Translink and DSD. It should not be assumed other Departments will respond to consultation or be proactively engaged in another Department's Key Commitment.

9. What is the best way to monitor progress?

- 9.1. The PfG Programme Board should present an annual update report to the Executive to confirm progress to date and achievements against targets.
- 9.2. The Delivery level must ensure updates/reports are provided to the Programme Board stating the progress to date and confirm when targets have been met and the progress on any outstanding items.
- 9.3. Where a Department is not achieving its Operational objectives the relevant Minister should be tasked with providing an explanation to the Executive.
- 9.4. Each Department should be tasked with evidencing how they are working in partnership with other Departments, private and Voluntary & Community sector. This report should be produced in February of each year. This will allow time for the relevant Departments to amend operations for the following year to ensure appropriate and effective partnership working is taking place.
- 9.5. The CTA encourages that cross-Departmental work should start on the issue of transport in the first year of the PfG (2011-2012). There is a strong case for an immediate audit of transport expenditure for DHSSPS, Education, Employment and Learning, Regional Development and Agriculture and Rural Development. By identifying the cost savings that could be made through better integration of budgets the PfG could actually save the Northern Ireland budget rather than continue needless 'silo' expenditure.
- 9.6. In the economic climate the people of Northern Ireland will be the most affected. In order to monitor progress it is vital the views of the public are known. The Programme Board should adopt an open and transparent dialogue with the people of Northern Ireland to ascertain if the Priorities are actually effective and delivering benefit across our communities. The CTA propose a rolling workshop of outreach clinics across Northern Ireland where the public can comment on how their lives are being improved, made more difficult or where Priorities are not being realised. This proactive framework will help in the future planning of the next NI PfG.
- 9.7. The next NI PfG must be written in advance of the next Northern Ireland Budget. This will ensure Departmental budgets are focused on the best programme for Northern Ireland and not on the best way to spend what budget is available.