

**INFRASTRUCTURE 2050**

# **The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland**

Draft Consultation Document

[isni.gov.uk](http://isni.gov.uk)



**Northern Ireland  
Executive**

[www.northernireland.gov.uk](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk)



**Investment  
Strategy**  
Northern Ireland



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Northern Ireland

# **INFRASTRUCTURE 2050**

**DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

JANUARY 2022

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## FOREWORD

Investment in infrastructure will play a key part in enabling us to achieve our ambition of a greener and fairer society. Our vision is that we will have the infrastructure that enables everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life; supports sustainable economic development; and protects our environment. Infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals, schools and colleges, energy, water, digital and transport networks, requires careful planning, takes time to deliver and is used for many years. We need to consider our current needs as well as the needs of our children. We also need to make best use of our existing infrastructure and maintain it for the future.

Climate change, the consequences of rapid technological change and an ageing population are the most important issues facing our generation. We must innovate in the ways we design, build and operate our infrastructure systems if we are to solve these problems, while taking advantage of the opportunities they present.

The strategy takes a long-term view, looking forward to 2050. It sets out the current state of our infrastructure, identifies where we need to be and explains what we need to do to get there. It defines our strategic investment priorities and demonstrates how we will make best use of our resources.

The strategy is aligned with the principles of the Executive's other key strategies, some of which are currently in development such as 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy and the Housing Supply Strategy. It embodies an approach to coordination that will ensure government policies and plans are consistent and complementary at every level.

The strategy describes the outcomes we intend to achieve. It will be implemented through a rolling 10-year investment plan that will define and prioritise the individual programmes and projects we need to deliver and will be matched to a financial plan that will show how these will be funded.

The strategy is ambitious. Pressing challenges such as decarbonisation mean that we need to do more, in new ways and quickly. That is why the Executive is focused on delivery – getting things done.

Engagement has been central to the development of this strategy. Many people inside and outside government have already helped in its formation. We want this dialogue to continue, so please review the strategy carefully and contribute your views and ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Givan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**PAUL GIVAN MLA**

**First Minister**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA**

**deputy First Minister**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

High-quality physical and digital infrastructure is the foundation of all modern economies and is required for a fair and just society. Infrastructure is used by everyone every day. It enables the provision of healthcare, education, housing and transport. It delivers the water we drink and the energy that heats and powers our homes. It is needed to protect our environment, support our jobs and connect us to the rest of the world. It touches all our lives and will form our legacy to our children.

The Executive's vision for infrastructure is that it will enable everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life, and that it will support sustainable economic development and protect our environment.

This strategy sets out how the Executive will achieve this vision. It provides a clear framework for planning and prioritising infrastructure investment, defining the outcomes required of that investment and setting out the mechanisms, including greater collaboration that will ensure its efficient and effective delivery.

Over the last ten years, government has invested £14.9 billion in maintaining, upgrading and extending our regional infrastructure – an average of £1.48 billion per year, or £8,000 per person. Nearly three-quarters of this has been directed to the major infrastructure areas of roads, housing, water and wastewater, schools, public transport and hospitals. Over 400 projects have been completed, thirty with a value of more than £100 million. Although this is a record to be proud of, some projects have been delivered late or over budget, and this strategy includes actions to accelerate and improve infrastructure delivery.

Despite this investment, there are significant deficiencies in our existing infrastructure, particularly in health, social and intermediate housing, water and wastewater, roads maintenance and the rail network. Addressing these existing problems is a key element of the strategy. Coupled with this is a recognised need to invest in the increased capacity and skills required to deliver such an ambitious investment strategy.

The region will face significant new challenges in the coming decade and beyond. These include:

- the immediate need to respond to the climate emergency and achieve net zero
- the changing requirements of an ageing population
- our evolving trading relationships with our neighbours in Europe and elsewhere
- the speed of technological innovation and the increasing risks to cyber-security
- the need to invest both capital and resource funding to address historic underinvestment in our current infrastructure
- the need to innovate at pace and develop our approach to delivery.

Our objectives and priorities for infrastructure investment are based on a dispassionate and impartial assessment of where we are now, where we need to be and what we need to do.

We know that our investment must:

- decarbonise our economy and society
- strengthen our essential services
- build a strong, connected and competitive region
- enhance our communities and places
- maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation
- protect and strengthen our natural infrastructure.

Our investment must be prioritised to address proven needs and make the most effective use of the available resources. We will achieve this through the development of a 10-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan and a Medium-Term Financial Plan that will together result in a pipeline of individual projects.

We recognise that the investment needed to achieve the outcomes set out in this strategy will require significantly greater capital and revenue funding than has previously been available. We will explore all possible sources of finance and develop and use innovative funding approaches where these are needed and appropriate.

We will continue to take steps to improve our capacity and capability to deliver projects on time and to budget. We will ensure that those responsible for projects have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources necessary to be successful. We will collect, analyse and publish data on our performance, using it to manage our projects better and informing actions to address the root causes of delay and cost overruns.

We will ensure that when procuring from the private sector, we derive the best possible social value from our purchasing power.

The entire region will benefit from the implementation of this strategy. Infrastructure investment will drive inclusive growth and increase resilience to climate change and economic shocks. It will safeguard jobs, promote skills development and encourage innovation. It will help build a green economy, protecting our heritage and environment. It will help us all to achieve our full potential.

### Investment Strategy

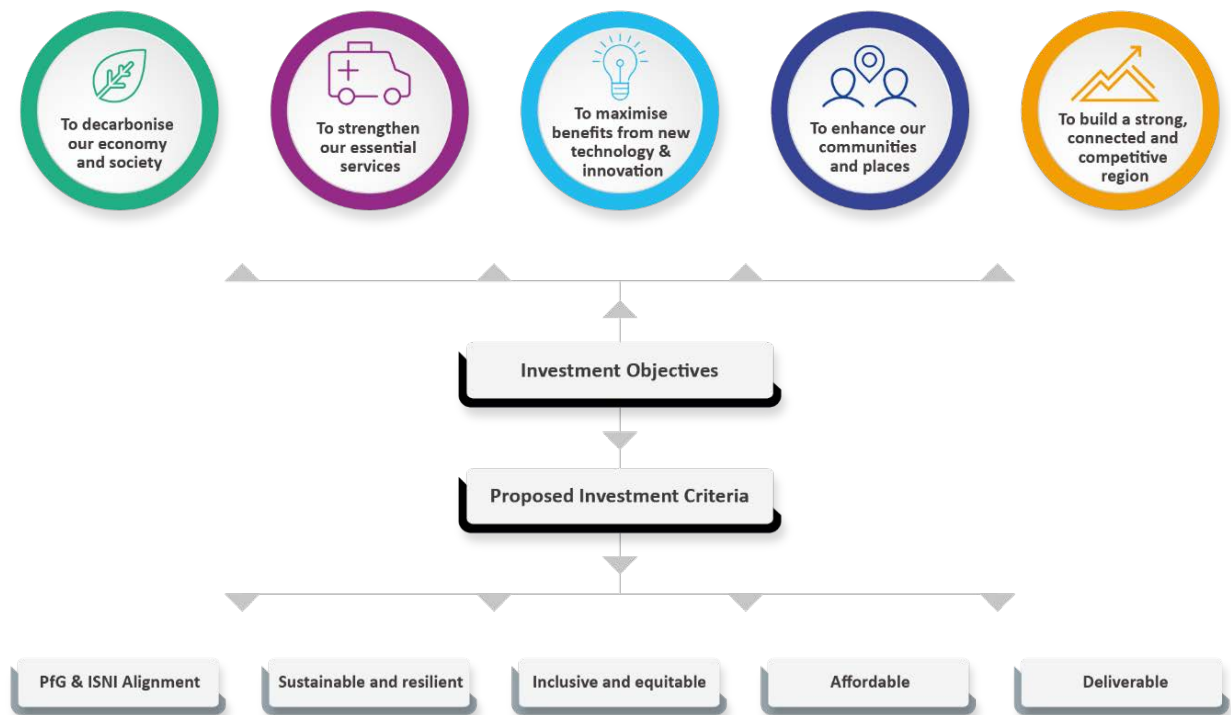


Fig 1: Proposed Investment Objectives and Criteria

## RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

### Why we are consulting

Our infrastructure is critical to our well-being, our success, our prosperity and our future. If we are to invest in infrastructure successfully to address the long-term issues we will face in the coming decades, government must work with citizens and organisations to use their knowledge and expertise to help guide and develop an Infrastructure Strategy that benefits us all.

The ISNI team would like to thank those organisations and individuals who contributed to the extensive engagement during the scoping phase. To ensure our thinking is sound, we want you to tell us what you think of our assessment of the infrastructure needs, and priorities going forward.

### How to respond to the consultation

To make this consultation as accessible as possible, we are using NI Direct's Citizen Space as our response route for collating responses.

You can respond to this consultation online through our survey on Citizen Space (<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dof/infrastructure-2050-consultation-document>).

The survey is straightforward to complete and seeks views on our investment objectives, proposed governance structure and proposed infrastructure planning process.

If you are unable to respond online please contact the ISNI team by email: [consult.isni@sibni.org](mailto:consult.isni@sibni.org). An easy read version of the consultation document will be available online and if you need documents to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know. Responses to this consultation are invited until 11.59pm on 20th April 2022.

Written responses can be sent to us by e-mail at: [consult.isni@sibni.org](mailto:consult.isni@sibni.org) or by post at: **Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, Strategic Investment Board, 5th Floor, 9 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3LP.**

Please note, the Strategic Investment Board will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Please refer to the final section of this document (page 76) which outlines our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act.

### **What happens after the public consultation**

The consultation on the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland closes on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Following consideration of all responses, including the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA), a full analysis report will be prepared for Executive consideration.

## PART A: OUR VISION

### The Role and Importance of Infrastructure

High-quality physical and digital infrastructure provides the vital foundation for a modern, high-performing competitive economy and a fair and just society. It underpins our quality of life, promotes economic and social prosperity and regional balance, and helps to protect our environment for the future. Our transport networks, our healthcare facilities, our schools and colleges, our homes and community facilities, our water and utilities, our communications networks, our justice and community safety facilities and our environmental and heritage assets: these are some of the essential components of our infrastructure that touch on all our lives.

As an Executive, we understand the importance of infrastructure. We are determined to invest in maintaining, upgrading and expanding it to support sustainable economic development and enhance Northern Ireland's attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest for the years ahead.

Although this Investment Strategy primarily relates to the infrastructure that is owned and operated by the public sector, it recognises there is often considerable synergy and integration between public and private infrastructure. For example, key assets such as our airports, ports and the electricity and communications networks are privately/ independently owned or operated, or partly funded by charges levied on users. This Investment Strategy recognises that, as an Executive, we have a significant role too in encouraging and facilitating investment into these sectors from a wide range of sources.

Building and maintaining our infrastructure requires long-term commitment, financial planning (for both capital and revenue) and certainty. This Investment Strategy sets out our long-term vision for high quality infrastructure across the region, our investment priorities and recommends a process for identifying the optimum financing and delivery for all of our people. It also describes how we will address the significant challenges of transitioning our

economy and society to a future based on clean energy, while taking advantage of the opportunities arising from rapid technological advancement.

## The Executive's Vision for Infrastructure

This new Investment Strategy sets out our ambitious vision:

***“We have the infrastructure that  
enables everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life;  
that supports sustainable economic development and  
protects our environment.”***

It provides:

- a clear framework for planning and prioritising our future infrastructure investments
- a commitment to maximise the capital and revenue available to finance our investment needs and accelerate delivery
- a thematic, cross-cutting and coherent approach to enable more responsive, efficient and effective delivery of public infrastructure
- a clear signal to the private sector to enable and encourage infrastructure investment.

The challenges for our current and future infrastructure are fundamental and structural: demographic shifts, digitalisation, new technologies, climate change and the commitment to maintain our current infrastructure. The Investment Strategy provides the longer-term framework needed to prioritise investment to address these challenges and make the most of our opportunities. It sets out clear funding mechanisms and the strong governance and monitoring arrangements needed to manage delivery and assess the impact of our investment over the coming 30 years.

The strategy shows how, as the Executive, we will make the best use of our capital and revenue budgets to meet immediate priorities as we deal with the outworkings of Covid and in light of the UK's withdrawal from the EU and how we will invest for the longer term.

## Supporting the Executive's Priorities

The Investment Strategy is one of the Executive's key strategies that will support the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG). It is consistent with and complements the principles of the 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy, the Housing Supply Strategy and the spatial planning framework set out in the Regional Development Strategy 2035.

The proposed Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland will place targets at a macro level and Climate Action Plans will set out how these will be delivered at a sectoral level. This will require our future investment plans to support these statutory commitments on emissions and our environment.

### **QUESTION 1**

Do you agree with our vision for infrastructure? If not, what would you change?



## PART B: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### Our Investment in Infrastructure

This strategy encompasses all areas of public infrastructure, including health, housing, education, justice, communities, transport, water and wastewater treatment and the environment. As such, the condition, efficiency, effectiveness and safety of this infrastructure affects most aspects of our daily lives.

Over the last 10 years, we invested nearly £15 billion in maintaining, upgrading and extending our regional infrastructure – an average of £1.48 billion per year. This is the equivalent of more than £8,000 per person. Nearly three-quarters of our investment has been in the major infrastructure areas: roads, housing, water and wastewater, schools, public transport and hospitals.

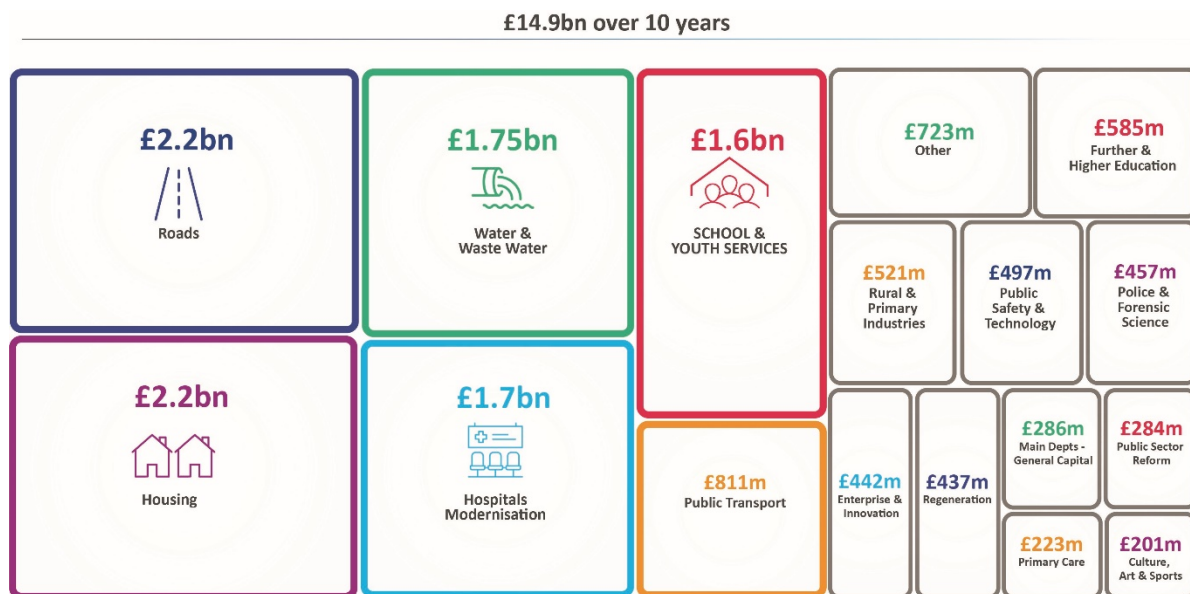


Fig 2: Infrastructure Spend 2011 – 2021

We have also invested in prisons, tourism, flood risk management, telecoms, courts, libraries, heritage, the environment and the arts and tourism.

During this period, more than 400 projects have been delivered across the region. Thirty of these have had a value of £100 million or more. Among these are investments such as the

Belfast Rapid Transit (The Glider), which has transformed public transport within Belfast; and the NI Water Dunore Water Treatment Works Solar Farm, which is saving 2,000 tonnes of carbon per year.

Some projects have, however, been delivered late or over-budget, or in some cases postponed in response to adverse budgetary situations. This strategy takes account of the lessons we have learned from these and sets out actions to improve the way we plan, fund, deliver and manage both our built and natural infrastructure to make smarter, more sustainable and more efficient use of our resources.

## The Strategic Context

Our region faces significant challenges in the coming decades. At present, we are focused on supporting economic and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. But there is an urgent and growing need for us to address global climate change, to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population and to harness technological and digital change to improve lives, protect our environment and to secure jobs for the future. These present major challenges, but also opportunities, particularly as we invest to develop the green economy. The Investment Strategy provides a framework to address these generational challenges.

### **Responding to the climate emergency**

Mitigating and adapting to global climate change will be the defining challenge for the 30-year period covered by the Investment Strategy. In 2019, the UK Government committed to achieving net zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Committee has indicated that we will need to make at least an 82% reduction in our emissions from the 1990 base level. Whichever target is ultimately adopted, the journey to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions must start now and will mean fundamental changes to how we design, build, use and fund our infrastructure, including how we generate energy; the design of, and standards for, our houses and our service delivery assets; our transport networks and vehicle fleets; and how we manage flood risk, coastal erosion and surface water. We will need to adopt a joined-up, whole-of-society approach to deliver integrated solutions, for

example by investing to update our electricity transmission and distribution grid to support mass electrification of transport systems.

### **Our changing population**

Our population has risen consistently over the past century and is projected to continue to grow, although more slowly, to reach a peak of almost 2 million citizens by 2050. However, more than 3,500 new households are being formed each year – a rate that is higher than the rate of population growth and which reflects the trend towards smaller households. Although we have a relatively young population, it is ageing. The number of people over 65 is expected to increase by more than 200,000, and the number over 85 will more than double, requiring our infrastructure to adapt to support healthier, active lives for longer.

### **Our changing trade relationships**

Our trading relationships with neighbouring countries are changing as we adjust to the UK's withdrawal from the EU and implement the new arrangements agreed by the UK Government and the European Commission. As yet, it is unclear what the long-term impact of these changes will be, but it is likely our trade patterns will continue to evolve, a factor that emphasises the need to improve connectivity for people and goods across the island of Ireland, with Great Britain, and to and from continental Europe and beyond.

### **Pace of technological innovation and increasing cyber-risks**

We have experienced significant technological change over recent years, including the rapid development of 4G and 5G communication technologies; improved construction materials; the rise of artificial intelligence; and the increasing proliferation of smart sensor technology. Our ability to take advantage of the opportunities of digital infrastructure and new technology will depend on us having sufficient relevant skills and ensuring all our citizens have access to the technology they need. However, an increasingly digital future brings new and increased risks. As services become ever more interconnected, protecting our data is a priority, drawing on the world-class expertise of our universities and cybersecurity companies.

Over the past 10 years, just over half (54%) of our infrastructure investment has been in new assets. Although we are ambitious to continue to develop our infrastructure, the Investment Strategy recognises that much of the infrastructure we will use in the coming decades has already been built. We know we face challenges as a result of historic underinvestment in maintenance, with backlogs in services such as housing, roads, wastewater<sup>1</sup> and health<sup>2</sup>, even though one-third of our annual capital investment is allocated to these existing assets, for example resurfacing roads or replacing street lighting. These maintenance liabilities require significant revenue as well as capital investment to maintain their condition, safety and effectiveness. Simultaneously, investment requirements driven by ever increasing safety, consumer and environmental requirements, drive a requirement for improvement across our existing assets. These improvement liabilities require additional revenue and capital investment to ensure they remain fit for the future. Over the next 30 years, we will maintain and improve existing assets, adapt them for new socially valuable uses or, where they are no longer required, ensure their timely decommissioning or disposal.

We are determined to get the balance right between investment in new and existing infrastructure. We will only build new infrastructure that we can afford to maintain, and consider not only the cost of construction but also the ongoing costs – much of which is revenue rather than capital expenditure – associated with operating and maintaining new assets.

### Development of the Investment Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement

This Investment Strategy consultation document was developed between the autumn of 2020 and summer 2021. Building on extensive research and analysis, and detailed equality and rural needs impact assessments, it has involved extensive engagement with:

- community organisations, including the Youth Forum and Age NI
- business and industry organisations and representative bodies

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<sup>1</sup> DFI estimates a backlog in structural maintenance for road of in excess of £1bn (NIAO 2019)

<sup>2</sup> The backlog maintenance across the Health Estate is currently £1.2bn (DoH 2021)

- government departments and agencies, their arm’s length bodies and public corporations
- Local Authorities and their representative organisations.



Fig 3: Stakeholder Engagement

Much of this engagement was undertaken online due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Overall, 97 organisations were part of the process, which included one-to-one and 'town hall' meetings, workshops and discussions. Many organisations sought the views of their wider membership and 36 supplemented their meetings with written submissions. Others provided additional supplementary research or evidence.

This engagement has been central to identifying the **key strategic investment objectives, needs and priorities** that we will focus on for the coming decades. Our engagement has emphasised the need for the Investment Strategy to take a holistic and cross-cutting

approach – working across traditional departmental and sector boundaries – to reflect the increasingly interconnected way in which services will need to be delivered.

## Structure of the Strategy

Part C of the strategy sets out our objectives and priorities, based on:

- where we are now
- where we need to be
- what we need to do.

Stakeholder engagement made clear that infrastructure investment must be based on principles of fairness and sustainability. These are set out in Part D of the strategy. This section also explains the new processes, structures and governance arrangements that will strengthen our delivery capacity and capability. We will also establish improved governance and monitoring arrangements to ensure we deliver value for money and can demonstrate the positive impact our investment is making.

## **QUESTION 2**

Do you agree with our assessment of the challenges that we will face with our infrastructure over the next 30 years? If you disagree, why? And what do you think are the challenges and why?

## PART C: OUR INVESTMENT NEEDS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In developing this strategy, we have set five key objectives for our investment in infrastructure over the coming decades. To achieve our vision, we must:

1. decarbonise our economy and society
2. strengthen and protect our essential services
3. build a strong, connected and competitive region
4. enhance our communities and places
5. maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation.



Fig 4: ISNI Investment Objectives

### QUESTION 3

Do you agree that these five key investment objectives address the challenges? If not, what would you consider to be the key investment objectives?

## OBJECTIVE 1: TO DECARBONISE OUR ECONOMY, ASSETS AND SOCIETY

### Where We Are Now

We have made significant progress in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions – more than the Republic of Ireland but not as much as Scotland, Wales, England or other countries in Europe. And we need to do much more.

Our society remains heavily dependent upon fossil fuels. In 2020, for example, less than 1% of our vehicles were electric-powered, compared to nearly 25% in the Netherlands and 74% in Norway. Currently, the majority of our homes meet only Category D or E (the lowest) in terms of Energy Performance, and our extensive public sector estate needs to improve its carbon footprint. Too many of our journeys are taken by private car rather than using sustainable public transport or active travel.

We have a strong record in the development of renewable energy. Around 42% of our energy is generated from renewable sources, which exceeds the 40% target we set for 2020. More than 65,000 homes, however, remain reliant on oil heating. Although the roll-out of the natural gas network over recent years has been a notable achievement, this has been mainly in urban areas. More properties need to be linked to the grid and we must decarbonise the system using bio-gas or natural gas blending with hydrogen. Our gas transmission and distribution infrastructure is relatively new compared to networks in GB, which means we are relatively better placed to manage the transition to a low-carbon gas mix. Net zero choices should be available for all our citizens, and while utilising the gas grid is a key part of this, for those premises off the gas grid then solutions such as heat pumps and hybrid heat pumps will be critical to deliver on our emissions reductions ambitions.

Our recycling rates have steadily increased from 2010, reaching a peak of over 50% in 2020. Waste arisings have also increased, with 2020/21 representing the most significant increase to date, of 3.2%. We have the capacity to reprocess some of the recycling we collect. That which cannot be dealt with here is exported to the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain, Europe and in some cases, to the rest of the world. Too much of our waste is exported each year to



become someone else's opportunity to recycle into higher-value material, generate energy; or unfortunately in some cases, to become someone else's disposal problem.

## Where We Need To Be

We will need to make significant changes to the way we live to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It is anticipated that the proposed Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland will set ambitious targets for the reduction in our emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases. This will require change across every sector of our economy such as transport (land, air and sea), agriculture, energy, housing, and land use. The Executive's Green Growth Strategy and its supporting Green Growth and Climate Action Plans will set out the interim targets and how these can be achieved. Alongside decarbonisation, we need to ensure that other environmental issues which have the potential to adversely affect human health – such as noise, biodiversity and air quality – are addressed. These documents will identify the funding required and show how progress will be measured.

A key aspect for meeting our climate change targets will be decarbonisation – reducing greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. Transport and agriculture are particularly important because together they account for more than half of the region's emissions. To achieve decarbonisation of our economy and society by 2050 will require the use of new technologies, behavioural change and regulation.

However, reducing future emissions will not be sufficient. We will have to build in greater resilience to our existing and future infrastructure and, in some places, constrain building to reduce the potential for harm to people and property, for example where the risk of flooding or coastal erosion has increased substantially.

The draft Green Growth Strategy aspires to a just transition to a greener economy. We need to ensure that this is regionally balanced and provides significant local employment and skills development opportunities across the region.

## What We Need to Do

### **Energy Generation & Distribution**

We will need to reduce the amount of energy we require and change how we produce, store and use it in order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. For many sectors, including transport, moving towards electrification will be essential to decarbonising. Low-carbon electricity will also be required to play a central role in meeting our heating needs in the next decade and beyond. We will therefore need to invest in our electricity-generating capacity; improve the transmission and distribution network; and develop new storage systems. In the case of marine-based projects, the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and the UK Marine Policy Statement must be considered. Clear direction and policies will be required to ensure investment supports such new renewable generation, providing both large-scale and community-based project promoters with greater certainty to take forward projects.

### **Sustainable Travel**

Our dependence on petrol and diesel vehicles will have to end. We need to reduce our journeys and ensure many more of them are taken by sustainable public transport or active travel. More than 40% of vehicles here will need to be electric by 2035 if we are to be on track to meet our transport emissions targets. This will require significant investment across urban and rural areas in rapid charging stations, electricity generation, storage, distribution and battery recycling, plus engagement with consumers and the manufacturing sector.

The public sector can set an example by transitioning its fleet of more than 12,000 vehicles to alternative fuels. Translink has already signed the Climate Action Pledge and committed to halving its emissions by 2030. It intends to provide zero-emission bus and rail services by 2040, and go beyond net zero by 2050. To deliver this will require significant additional investment in rail infrastructure.

### **Decarbonise our Assets**

Investment in housing, water and wastewater treatment facilities and buildings will be needed to improve energy efficiency. However, a significant proportion of the assets we already have will last for many years to come. For example, improved building thermal efficiency and retrofitting will be needed throughout much of our housing and building stock. We will need to exploit opportunities to further decarbonise – by using bio-gas or gas blended with hydrogen. Similarly, we will need to consider how existing assets, which are no longer needed, can be repurposed to meet new and emerging patterns of demand, thereby ensuring the impact of embodied carbon is minimised. Our leadership in energy efficiency should act as a catalyst for new supply chain and job opportunities so that all sectors can deliver.

### **Develop a Circular Economy**

The principles of a circular economy are that we should:

- design out the generation of waste and pollution
- keep products and materials in use
- implement measures to sequester carbon.

Although there is already a commitment to achieve recycling levels of 65% by 2035, we will need to invest in and develop a more coherent, robust and resilient waste management system for the whole of the region.

## **Adaptation and Mitigation**

The Climate Change Committee’s assessment for Northern Ireland identifies flooding as the most significant risk we face, requiring investment in flood mitigation and flood alleviation measures. Over the next decade, more than £155m will be required for new flood alleviation capital works. There will need to be greater emphasis on habitat and green space protection and flood prevention, with a focus on upstream and natural solutions, for example building on the ‘Living with Water’ approach to improve capacity in our drainage and wastewater management systems.

### **QUESTION 4**

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to decarbonise our economy and society? If not, what are the investment priority areas that will help decarbonise our economy?

## Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Decarbonise Our Economy, Assets and Society

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### **We will:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Decarbonise our utilities</b>                | by improving energy efficiency and diversified renewable energy generation, storage and distribution, including solar, hydrogen, off- and on-shore wind   |
| <b>Develop a circular economy</b>               | by establishing a coherent, resilient and robust waste management system and investing in facilities to reduce waste generation, increase recycling and reduce landfill and the export of waste   |
| <b>Transition to sustainable homes</b>          | by ensuring new-build properties are heated sustainably and retrofitting existing properties to ensure as many of them as possible over time reach Energy Performance Category A or better        |
| <b>Decarbonise the transport sector</b>         | by expanding the public rapid EV charging network for cars and other vehicles; investing in public transport and active travel; and transitioning the public sector fleet(s) to alternative fuels |
| <b>Improve our resilience to climate change</b> | by continuing to invest in flood prevention, alleviation and mitigation measures to improve the resilience of our critical infrastructure and to invest in coastal erosion adaptation             |

## OBJECTIVE 2: TO STRENGTHEN OUR ESSENTIAL SERVICES

### Where We Are Now

Strong, efficient and effective public services that are responsive to needs are essential to deliver our ambitions for the region and to meet the expectations of our citizens. Infrastructure such as modern schools and healthcare facilities, social and intermediate housing, digital connectivity, accessible court facilities and good community infrastructure underpin a fair and prosperous society for all.

Good quality infrastructure helps us to promote equality and good relations. It is also essential for our businesses and to support our economy. Transport networks, communications and energy infrastructure and water and wastewater treatment services all need to be fit for purpose.

#### **Water and Wastewater Treatment**

Wastewater treatment facilities are a critical part of our public infrastructure. They treat domestic, commercial and industrial effluents efficiently to make them safe to return to our environment. Across the region, some of our combined wastewater plants that collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage and industrial wastewater into one pipe are nearing or at capacity – especially at times of high demand due to adverse weather. This is now acting as a brake on the planned development of the new homes and businesses we need. The lack of wastewater treatment capacity has also resulted in an excess of small legacy treatment works, often developed privately to enable small-scale housing developments to proceed. This approach is inefficient and costly, with more than 70% of wastewater treatment works serving only 10% of the population. Such a fragmented approach to critical infrastructure is environmentally and financially unsustainable.

#### **Health and Social Care**

We have unacceptably wide variations in health outcomes. Poverty and deprivation have a significant impact on the demand for primary and secondary health and social care services. For example, emergency hospital admissions are 60% higher in our most deprived

communities compared with the least deprived communities. The level of demand for primary care is already higher than in comparable countries. This emphasises the urgent need to plan infrastructure, such as leisure facilities, that enable us all to live longer, healthier lives.

The demands of the Covid pandemic have tested our health and social services as never before. There is now a significant backlog of demand for medical care and treatment. During this period our health and social care services have sought to accelerate transformation, innovating and adopting new technology to improve the way in which care is planned and delivered. The momentum of this change must be maintained and the pace of improvement increased, all of which will require significant investment.

### **Education and Skills**

Our schools, colleges and universities are at the heart of our local communities and are valuable community assets. They provide learning, sports and leisure facilities for adults in addition to being places of education for our children. But our school population is expected to fall over the coming years and there are already more than 40,000 surplus places in our school system. Our schools, on average, tend to be smaller than in other regions, meaning that spending per pupil is below what is typical in the UK. In 2021, more than 30% of schools had enrolments that are below the threshold of what is deemed sustainable by the Education Authority.

### **Justice and Community Safety**

Our justice system is too slow and is delivered from facilities that are often antiquated and use outdated technology. This needs to change, as our communities deserve a justice system in which every element, from preventative services to our courts and prisons, is more accessible, responsive and efficient. The PSNI estate needs to be transformed alongside new approaches to the deployment of people and technology to improve services for victims and criminal justice outcomes.

## Where We Need To Be

How we use our public services will continue to change and we will need to be able to respond to reflect the needs of an ageing population. This will affect the ways in which we will live and work. Our services will need to be fit for the future, meeting citizens' aspirations and able to handle the demands of a rapidly changing climate.

Over the coming 30 years, some of our public sector assets will have to be renewed, some will be repurposed and some will no longer be required. Ensuring the efficient and effective use of the assets we have is understandably less eye-catching than focusing on new developments, but a "right size" of public sector, one that is fit for purpose, will be a key element in the successful delivery of essential public services. This is particularly relevant to Health where 45% of the current estate does not meet Statutory Standards and no significant in-roads are being made to address the estimated £1,241 million backlog maintenance liability. It is cheaper to maintain our assets well today rather than catch up on a backlog of maintenance tomorrow.

## What We Need to Do

The long term strategic plan for health and social care is to provide modern, fit for purpose facilities through the creation or maintenance of sustainable models of care that support communities and contribute to improved health, well-being and quality of life for the people of Northern Ireland.

Over the next 30 years, we will invest in our acute hospitals to provide a better patient environment, improved clinical outcomes for patients and to maintain service delivery. We will do this by strategically analysing data to provide suitable hospital accommodation, emergency departments that are right sized to meet demand and new maternity and children's hospitals.

Now more than ever we need to provide investment to deliver new mental health inpatient units as many of the existing facilities are in poor condition and provide a very unhelpful environment for therapy for patients facing the challenges of mental illness. Similarly, investment is required to provide appropriate support, therapies and a range of



accommodation options for the most vulnerable adults and children in society and their families. Investment in a range of residential respite facilities providing short and long term breaks to support families to meet their caring duties, in new day care facilities to ensure the care is focused to meet the needs of the most complex service users with a learning disability, and in residential care facilities for children and young people who are looked after.

With an ageing society, we will also continue with the Primary Care Infrastructure Development Programme which will provide primary-care hubs as key community facilities going forward, strengthening prevention, social/domiciliary care and outpatient treatment to support our population well within the community. The Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex – which opened in 2017 – provides one example of this, offering a central health hub that has reduced demand on A&E departments.

However, investment in health is much more than delivering new health facilities, it includes investment in new strategies such as the Elective Care Framework and the Cancer Recovery Plan, in research and development which has been vital in the fight against Covid 19 and the specialist equipment required by modern medicine. However, we will still need our acute facilities, and will focus investment on the specialist equipment and facilities modern medicine requires.

We will need to continue to transform our healthcare delivery through investment in digital technology. The Encompass programme will transform patient records management and administration across all our health and social care services, encompassing acute care, community care and eventually extending to cover primary care service delivery. A modern unified and integrated clinical information system will provide more joined-up care for patients and more efficient use of staff time and resources.

Alongside the physical and technical infrastructure there is a drive to understand and exploit the wealth of information collected in the course of delivering health and social care to citizens. This will be used to inform service improvements, drive innovation and inform policy decision making. The work will result in the development of a modern, responsive skills base with the potential to promote growth in the wider economy.

Investment is required to modernise and reform the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service if we are to maintain the high standards of service and improve performance through better facilities, fleet, equipment and technology.

Our schools, colleges and universities must be sustainable – financially, environmentally and educationally. This means each institution must have sufficient numbers of pupils and students to enable the delivery of a wide and balanced curriculum and to get value for money from investment in equipment and facilities. For our universities, delivering on existing commitments such as the innovation investments in our City Deals and the expansion of Magee, will not only support the growth of these institutions but also act as an economic catalyst for the region. Further rationalisation of the education estate will be required. We will focus investment on schools and colleges that are sustainable, ensuring they are well equipped and well-maintained and ensuring that all educational provision available is taken into account when considering the need for new buildings. This will be balanced by our strong commitment to ensuring equality, providing for the differing needs of individual learners, facilitating pupil and parental choice and ensuring adequate access in rural and remote areas.

Investment in IT for the justice system is needed to enable the greater use of remote hearings, improve the online submissions of documents and speed up the payment of fines. For cases that go to court, we need improved buildings that meet the needs of vulnerable witnesses and defendants. The NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) will target investment to deliver a more consistent standard of accommodation, facilities and services for all court and tribunal users. For those in the care of the NI Prison Service, there will be a focus on using digitalisation to improve staff and prisoner safety, enhance prisoner independence and family connectivity and maximise efficiency.

Policing is changing as we move away from the legacy of the past, resulting in the sale of surplus assets such as redundant police stations and housing. New police training facilities are needed to enable and support new policing models and technology. Police headquarters will be rationalised, shared administration systems implemented, and new analytic capabilities developed to meet the needs of policing in the twenty-first century. A major upgrade is planned for the regional communications network, shared across the 'blue light' services and other critical public sector services.

To achieve all of this we will need other essential infrastructure such as public transport and water and wastewater facilities to be fit for purpose. This will require a more collaborative and joined-up approach to planning and investment to avoid sub-optimal or ad hoc outcomes.

#### **QUESTION 5**

Are these the priority areas we need to focus on to strengthen our essential services? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will strengthen our essential services?

## Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Strengthen Our Essential Services

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### **We will:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Strengthen secondary, primary and mental health care</b>             | by investing in acute hospitals, in mental health and social care facilities and in the continued development of primary care hubs to provide high-quality, effective and efficient physical and mental healthcare          |
| <b>Increase the efficiency and responsiveness of our health service</b> | by continuing to invest in the digital transformation of our health services and in our emergency services to improve their efficiency and effectiveness  |
| <b>Invest in sustainable facilities for learning and education</b>      | by a whole-system approach to rationalising and modernising our education estate to provide fit-for-purpose facilities for learning and skills that take account of the needs of our pupils, our businesses and the economy |
| <b>Increase our wastewater treatment capacity</b>                       | by investing in high-quality wastewater treatment facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose, support sustainable development, are efficient and meet rigorous environmental standards                                   |
| <b>Invest in the transformation of our justice system</b>               | by investing in technology and facilities that support the delivery of a modern, responsive justice system  |

## OBJECTIVE 3: TO ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

### Where We Are Now

Our towns and villages are the fabric of our communities and our way of life. They provide a focal point for employment, leisure and the public and community services on which many people depend. They also provide a sense of identity for local people and places.

Too many towns and villages have experienced decline in recent years, with rising retail vacancy rates and under-utilised high streets. The reasons for this are complex. They include an increasing reliance on out-of-town shopping centres; the rise of online retail and services; low levels of residential accommodation; and discrepancies in business rates for high street shops. All these factors have been aggravated by Covid-19 restrictions, which reduced the number of people working in urban areas.

### Where We Need To Be

Our towns and villages need to regain and then retain their vibrancy, purpose and sense of place. High streets of the future should be safe and attractive gathering points for whole communities, where people can live, work, shop, learn, do business, use public services and enjoy their leisure time.

The value of open space, community, leisure and recreation facilities has been highlighted clearly throughout the Covid pandemic. We need to restore and improve the quality of our natural environment for the benefit of all.

Significant intervention will be required to help our towns and villages. In cases of market failure, the public sector may need to re-think the location of service delivery and administration investment or pump-prime regeneration, at least in the short term, to encourage private and community investment. This can support the long-term evolution of our high streets from retail centres, helping them to redefine their purpose, to embrace a broader role servicing local social, environmental, housing and economic needs.

## What We Need to Do

### Regenerate Our High Streets

Our high streets need to be redefined for their future role. They will be anchored with public-sector tenants, providing multi-functional hubs such as libraries, community services, police stations, healthcare, leisure, education, open spaces, housing and sports facilities. We will increase housing in our urban areas – recognising that this will require us to address outdated attitudes to town centre living – as well as ensuring accommodation complies with high standards for space and amenities. Working with private-sector and community organisations also presents opportunities to focus on the reuse, repurposing and refurbishment of existing urban buildings instead of new developments. People rather than vehicles should be the priority to encourage our high streets to be community-focused, attractive environments.

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#### *CASE STUDY: A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres / Town Centre First*

*In response to the challenges facing their town centres, Scotland's communities, local government, businesses and third-sector partners took a collaborative 'town centre first' approach, guided by the internationally recognised 2013 Town Centre Action Plan. This plan emphasised the role of town centres and the need to prioritise and support them. Six themes (town centre living; accessible public services; proactive planning; digital towns; enterprising communities; and vibrant local economies) provided the framework to focus activities to improve town centres. COSLA and the Scottish Government signed an agreement on Town Centre First, promoting town centre development as the primary place of development, and in 2019 adopted the Place Principle (to provide a shared context for place-based work).*

*In June 2020, the Scottish Government launched an independent collaborative review of the progress and scope of the 2013 Action Plan, to build on the town centre-first approach and develop a refreshed vision for towns and the means to achieve it. A key element of the review was to ensure the right measures were put in place to enable towns to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic with more resilience. The Review Group adopted the following vision to guide their work.*

*"Towns and town centres are for the well-being of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone, and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centre successful."*

*The review recognised the Place Principle and town centre planning and visioning has helped generate investment and build a sense of place. It also noted that concepts such as Community Wealth Building including community asset ownership were gaining ground. These and Community Empowerment legislation were recognised as exciting ways to deliver on the growing appetite for localism. The review acknowledged the changing context in the development of the National Outcomes and their linkage to the UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which positioned Scotland as focusing on well-being, inclusive development, climate emergency responses and health and inequalities. It concluded that the approach from the 2013 Action Plan remained sound, but more consistent and rapid progress was needed. The review proposed strengthening the position of town centres to ensure a local embeddedness and focus on working the local community by:*

- *strengthening the formal positions of town in National Planning*
- *reviewing the current tax, funding and development systems to ensure well-being, economy and climate outcomes, fairness and equality are at their heart*
- *expanding and aligning funding of town and town centre demonstration projects.*

*The plans in Scotland have informed the work of the NI Executive’s High Street Task Force, which met for the first time in February 2021.*

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The town centre-first approach taken in Scotland and Wales provides a good model for future decisions. This approach places town centre health at the heart of decision-making processes, driving public sector investment decisions, aligning policies and targeting resources to prioritise the regeneration of town centre sites.

## Sustainable and Active Transport

We are a highly car-dependent society. We must rethink how and when we travel, creating more sustainable, accessible and safer communities through improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and prioritising our public transport. Electric and zero-emissions vehicles (EV/ZEV) will play an important part, especially for longer and rural journeys if public transport is not available. However, the design of our town and city centres will need to encourage and reflect a determined move to sustainable and active travel. Our infrastructure will also have to adapt to meet the needs and aspirations of an ageing population.

### CASE STUDY: 15-Minute City

*The concept of the '15-minute city' is one in which urban residents can fulfil six essential functions – living, working, commerce, healthcare, education and entertainment – within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from their home. Developed in 2016 by Professor Carlos Moreno, a leading urbanist at the Sorbonne in Paris, there are three core tenets to the concept:*



- *the rhythm of a city should follow humans, not cars*
- *each square metre of urban fabric/space should serve multiple purposes through the day*
- *neighbourhoods should be designed so inhabitants can live, work and thrive in them, without having to commute elsewhere.*

*Whilst acknowledging cities are places of economic dynamism and innovation, the '15-minute city' concept recognises that urban life needs to be pleasant, agile, healthy and flexible. The purpose is, therefore, to create an urban environment based on:*

<i>Ecology</i>	<i>Proximity</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>	<i>Participation</i>
<i>...for a green and sustainable city</i>	<i>...living with reduced distance to other activities</i>	<i>...to create links between people</i>	<i>...involving citizens in the transformation of their neighbourhood</i>



*Paris is leading the way, with an all-embracing vision of the model. Under Mayor Anne Hidalgo's aim for 'La Ville Du Quart d'Heure', Paris is focusing on a new economic model for local businesses. Reducing traffic and reclaiming streets as bike lanes and areas for leisure, and transforming existing infrastructure are all priority areas of focus.*

*Other cities around the world are now exploring the potential of this vision of urban living to deliver more resilient and vibrant communities. Many including the C40 cities are also promoting the '15-minute city' idea as a blueprint for post Covid-19 recovery, with the 15-Minute City Project established in 2020 as an information resource and platform to promote relevant and inspiring efforts around the world.*

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Active travel will need to be attractive and practical in both rural and urban areas, not just for leisure travel but for daily mobility and for children to get to school. This will mean investment in footways, and in safe and separate cycle facilities, such as Greenways for leisure and the reallocation and sharing of road space to create Quiet Lanes and Healthy Ways. In urban areas, pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority will have a key part to play.

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#### **CASE STUDY: Path of Health**

*Slí na Sláinte (SnaS) meaning "path of health", is an initiative developed by the Irish Heart Foundation and supported by the HSE to encourage people of all ages and abilities to walk for leisure and health.*



*Slí na Sláinte routes are signposted walkways providing an accessible and inexpensive environment for regular exercise. Yellow signs on blue poles are placed at one-kilometre intervals, allowing walkers to keep track of how far they walk. Signs are not numbered so walkers can start and finish at whatever point they like. International research has confirmed that the development of such community walking trails can boost exercise and improve health at low cost.*

*Trained leaders promote and lead walks in their area and run the "Slí Challenge", helping people calculate their time and distance walked to meet their personal targets. With 230 Slí na Sláinte routes all over Ireland, the programme has expanded internationally with Heart Foundations in ten countries implementing the scheme to date.*

*Each is developed locally by the relevant Local Authority in partnership with the community and (optional) other appropriate commercial organisations. It then becomes part of the approved list of Slí routes. All routes are on Local Authority land or Coillte property, with management and maintenance the responsibility of the Local Authority.*

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## CASE STUDY: Quiet Lanes

*The Transport Act 2000 gave Local Authorities in England the ability to designate country lanes as 'Quiet Lanes'. These are defined as minor rural roads or networks of minor rural roads appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vehicles. The aim is to maintain the character of minor rural roads by seeking to contain widespread, rising traffic growth. They are a sustainable initiative aimed at opening up more of the countryside for leisure and recreation activities and active travel.*



*Quiet Lanes must be rural in character (though not necessarily in a rural area), carry fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day and the 85th percentile traffic speed should be less than 35mph. Narrow, single-track roads are the most suitable for the designation. Community involvement is essential to define which lanes should be considered and encourage a change in behaviour of road users.*

*Typically, a Quiet Lane is hosted by a local, rural community, such as a parish or village group, who recognises that designation can bring benefits to their local quality of life.*

*There are three key elements to a Quiet Lanes scheme:*

- *community involvement to encourage a change in user behaviour*
- *area-wide direction signing to discourage through traffic*
- *nationally prescribed signs to remind drivers that they are entering or exiting a Quiet Lane, a place where they may expect people to be using the whole of the road space for a range of activities.*

*Designation does not bring any enforceable restrictions or prohibit use by any type of vehicles or regulate their speed. However, signage reminds users of the types of traffic they will be expected to see and encourages them to respect each other.*

*Quiet Lanes were initially introduced as demonstration projects in Kent, Essex and Norfolk, and are now widespread across England. There is a growing interest in their further development to support more active forms of travel as the country lives with the Covid-19 virus, as well as contributing to local responses to the climate emergency.*

## **Investing in Housing**

The location and design of new housing and the maintenance and improvement of existing housing will be critical to building sustainable communities. Too often we permit significant housing development on greenfield sites or single dwellings in the countryside, often poorly supported by existing infrastructure and leading to car-dependent lifestyles. This must change to support a sustainable future and alternative sites must be found that are better suited to meeting our needs. We must equally find a way to align long-term supply with demand, repurposing non-residential buildings that are no longer used.

We will prioritise our investment in sustainable housing, maintaining or locating it close to services, where it contributes to tackling climate change, can meet the needs of communities and an increasingly elderly population who require easy and independent access to services including health and social care. Good quality and well-located private and public housing will also be central to place-making and integration, and to addressing well-being, mental health and loneliness.

## **Enhancing Cultural, Arts and Leisure Infrastructure and the Natural Environment**

Our leisure and cultural projects are vital social infrastructure, supporting economic development and contributing to our sense of place. Our creative industry sector is strong and growing. But our museums need ongoing investment in their storage and exhibition spaces to upgrade their attractiveness to citizens and visitors alike.

We need to ensure continued access for all to high-quality and local open spaces, as well as to sporting and leisure facilities.

### **QUESTION 6**

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to enhance our communities and places? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will enhance our communities and places?

## Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Enhance Our Communities and Places

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### **We will:**

**Redefine the purpose of our high streets/urban centres** by regenerating our key urban and rural towns and villages, building on the work of the Northern Ireland High Street Task Force to ensure they are vibrant and thriving

**Promote active travel, prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling for leisure and mobility** by encouraging active travel through the reallocation of funding and road space to prioritise safe and accessible walking and cycling for leisure and commuting; this will include the further development of Greenways, Quiet Lanes/Healthy Ways, and segregated pedestrian/cycle facilities

**Expand social and intermediate housing** by continuing to invest in the building of additional high-quality housing and the refurbishment of existing social homes to meet the needs of communities, including those relating to an ageing population; and reducing the waiting times for social housing

**Develop our sports, culture, arts and leisure facilities and enhance our natural environment** by expanding the provision of high-quality, accessible green space, leisure and sporting facilities; by supporting and enhancing our natural environment and by maintaining our arts and cultural venues

## OBJECTIVE 4: TO BUILD A STRONG, CONNECTED AND COMPETITIVE REGION

### Where We Are Now

Our economy has shown great resilience in dealing with the Covid pandemic. We have numerous strong, world-class, indigenous companies, particularly in advanced manufacturing, agri-food and the creative industries. We are a recognised leader in many specialist areas such as cyber security, data analytics, life and health sciences, and fintech. We are Europe's leading foreign direct investment destination for new software development.

However, our economy has been characterised by long-term structural weaknesses and inequalities, further exacerbated by the pandemic. It suffers from poor productivity, relatively low wages, with too many lacking high-level skills or in need of reskilling; high rates of economic inactivity; and relatively low levels of investment in research, development and innovation.

### Where We Need To Be

Investment in the right physical and skills infrastructure will need to encourage stronger, more balanced and consistent economic growth and enable us to build on our strengths. The Covid pandemic has underlined the importance of improving our resilience against economic shocks, and enable us to achieve greater prosperity, whilst addressing the imbalances and inequalities that have persisted for too long.

Given our geographical location, we need to maintain strong connectivity internationally, nationally and locally. This is critical for our economy to survive and thrive to 2050. With changing working patterns, the need for physical connectivity is also evolving. We must rethink the traditional models of focusing investment primarily on supporting daily peak-hour car travel to work and deliveries into major centres. Instead, we must address the new disparate and dispersed patterns of travel for work, leisure and deliveries.

Rapid changes in working and service delivery prompted by Covid have also emphasised the need to maintain and strengthen our digital connectivity – providing fast, reliable broadband and advances in mobile connectivity for all our citizens and businesses.

For a small, advanced economy such as ours to be competitive, we must overcome the physical barriers and infrastructure constraints that limit our competitiveness. Two critical examples are strengthening our wastewater network and overcoming shortages in the land available for commercial and residential development.

## What We Need to Do

### **Our Strategic Road Network**

Our strategic road network is vital for the effective transport of people and goods within our region, across the island of Ireland and to ensure good and reliable connectivity with Great Britain. The development of the Investment Strategy has coincided with the UK's Union Connectivity Review. An emerging recommendation of the Review is the development of a new UK Strategic Transport Network. This will achieve better management of the flow of people and goods between UK regions and improve the partnership working between the UK government and devolved administrations. As well as strategic links within our region, the Review recognises the importance of the port of Cairnryan and the A75 and A77 in Scotland for our companies taking goods to UK markets and their onward transport to customers in mainland Europe.

There is much potential for further investment in cross-border strategic networks, for example the completion of the A5 Western Transport Corridor as a strategic corridor to the northwest; the Narrow Water Bridge, and the promotion of leisure routes and trails to support our tourism sector.

**Public Transport Services:** We have a relatively small rail network, although there is growing interest in understanding the potential for its expansion and improvement. In particular, the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, when complete, will help to articulate this potential, but only where demand supports such investment and value for money can be demonstrated. The electrification and upgrading of the Belfast-Dublin rail corridor are recognised as being future

developments of strategic importance. 40% of the population on the island lives within 30 minutes of this economic corridor. Focus on such key corridors elsewhere has been shown to encourage economic growth.

Investing in our bus network and developing multi-modal hubs will help create a more connected and accessible sustainable public transport network.

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**CASE STUDY: Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee (GCSC) – Øresund Region**

***Founded in 2015, Greater Copenhagen is a collaboration between local authorities and regions in Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark, encompassing 4.4m citizens and focused on generating growth.***

***The initiative involved the creation of a cross-border functional economy with a new regional brand/name. It builds on the metropolitan area around Copenhagen and, across the sound, southern Sweden following the opening of a fixed-link bridge/tunnel in 2000. The link provides agglomeration benefits, creating a larger metropolitan region with an integrated labour market, helping to overcome the drawbacks of the area’s peripheral location in global terms. The Øresund Region is a technology hub with innovation potential, world-class scientific infrastructure and a good environment for start-ups. Wider policy efforts were needed to connect the assets and capabilities in the enlarged region. Many of the Øresund initiatives have prioritised the creation of business and knowledge networks and collaborative platforms.***



***It believes a successfully integrated labour market will secure more jobs and bring new businesses to Greater Copenhagen. In 2017 the European Commission (EC) named Greater Copenhagen a model metropolis for collaboration across borders, partly linked to the improved integration of the labour market and economy that was kickstarted in 2000 by the completion of the Øresund Bridge. However, the EC also pointed out that this could be improved by expanding public transportation across borders, as a more efficient traffic infrastructure would strengthen the region’s reputation as an integrated and functional metropolis. In response, Greater Copenhagen developed a Traffic Charter which features both regional and cross-border infrastructure projects, including accessibility to cities from rural areas. Using public transport, it should take no longer than an hour to reach Copenhagen or Malmö, no matter from where in the region people are travelling.***

***Greater Copenhagen is building on this work (in 2021) with its vision to “be a global hub for growth, sustainable solutions and innovation”. It promotes cooperation between its members and creates alliances at both regional and international levels, connecting knowledge hubs, businesses***

*and public institutions. It is about breaking down barriers between local authorities, regions and countries and creating a partnership where everyone pulls in the same direction and invests in shared solutions to shared challenges. The area is a hub for knowledge and excellence, boasting approximately 14,000 researchers, 19 research parks and innovation centres and 17 universities. It will focus on five key areas, which it believes are essential to its future growth and welfare.*

*Greater Copenhagen recognised that infrastructural improvements are an essential driver for regional integration and competitiveness. However, these improvements are not sufficient on their own. Wider policy efforts were needed to connect the assets and capabilities in the enlarged region. Many of the initiatives in the Øresund have been to create networks and collaborative platforms.*

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In Belfast the Belfast Rapid Transit Glider service, introduced in September 2018, uses hybrid high-capacity tram-style vehicles and has been highly successful in increasing public transport use at a time of decline elsewhere in the UK. Further enhancement and strengthening of our rural and urban public transport network and services, including a north-south Glider link across Belfast and potentially similar services elsewhere, will be key to developing a more sustainable approach to transport and ensuring easier access to services, especially for the young and older people.

### **Ports, Harbours & Airports**

Our ports, harbours and airports provide vital links for travellers, freight and trade. Each of our three airports serves a distinct market, but between them they offer a strong network of business, cargo and leisure flights. Our ports, harbours and airports need an overall coherent air and port strategy, including investment plans that encourage and enable greater accessibility.

Brexit and the Covid pandemic have demonstrated clearly the importance of ensuring the smooth flow of cargo for imports and exports. Our ports serve freight and passengers, and also increasingly the cruise/leisure travel market in Belfast and Derry. Ongoing investment will be required to meet these demands. Belfast Harbour plans considerable investment in its marine and estate infrastructure, including schemes to deepen the shipping channels and create deep-water quays. We will encourage further investment in our key gateways and provide assistance where there is a need to do so.



## **Efficient Utility and Digital Networks**

Resilient and efficient utility networks are essential to support businesses and citizens. The north-south interconnector, for example, will ensure security of supply and the achievement of strategic renewable energy and decarbonisation targets.

We have a strong communications infrastructure reflecting past and current investments by both public and private sectors. This has provided vital foundations for our thriving digital economy. We will continue to encourage and support investment, as we could quickly fall behind other regions, given the fast pace of technology development and new demands for speed and bandwidth arising from a more connected world. We are determined to maximise the benefits that digital networks offer to create a more regionally balanced, sustainable economy based on the principles of Green Growth. The Shared Rural Network – a joint venture between commercial operators and the UK Government – aims to increase mobile broadband coverage to a minimum of 95% by 2025, addressing the many ‘not spots’ and allowing rural business to prosper and rural communities to thrive.

5G networks will provide the much-needed capacity to underpin increased mobile traffic. This technology will also be a crucial foundation for our post-Covid-19 recovery and future growth in innovation, especially as we adapt to increased home/remote working, smart cities and the growth of the Internet of Things. 5G will also support the proliferation of connected devices and open up new opportunities for business and jobs. Productivity gains to business, equality gains for regions and economic gains for the region as a whole are only as achievable as the networks they can access. Belfast Harbour is already seeing the tangible benefits that disruptive digital technologies can deliver for business and industry, with plans for 5G-enabled applications part of its vision for creating a ‘Smart Port’.

## **Unlock Our Strategic Sites**

There is a legacy of former military or defence and other industrial sites being left vacant. These provide potentially valuable large-scale and usually well-connected brownfield sites in locations where there are often shortages of development land for business and housing – shortages which constrain economic growth. Ensuring the planning regime enables us to unlock these sites for investment should be a key priority, allowing for well planned, sustainable economic development.

### **QUESTION 7**

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to build a strong, competitive and connected region? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will help build a strong, competitive and connected region?

## Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Build a Strong, Competitive and Connected Region

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### **We will:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Improve connectivity on strategic corridors</b>      | by continuing to invest in our strategic transport networks to ensure effective and efficient connectivity within and between regions (rail, road, air, port, active travel and digital/utility) and within key economic corridors such as the Belfast–Dublin corridor |
| <b>Strengthen our public transport networks</b>         | by maintaining and strengthening our inter-urban, urban and rural public transport networks, including the expansion of the rapid transit system within Belfast  |
| <b>Maintain strong utility and digital connectivity</b> | by encouraging and supporting investment in our utility and digital networks to ensure individuals, communities and businesses throughout the region can maximise the benefits networks can offer with world class digital and telecom connectivity                    |
| <b>Leverage key strategic development sites</b>         | by facilitating the development of strategic sites, such as Maze/Long Kesh, to maximise economic opportunities and act as exemplars for sustainable, multi-use developments  |

## OBJECTIVE 5: TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS FROM EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

### Where we are now

Although we have already made a start on transforming and modernising our public services, too much of our public sector is still reliant on paper-based or ageing IT systems that are often fragmented and hard to use. However, our response to Covid-19 has shown that we can use technology to deliver many services more efficiently and effectively.

Our region benefits from a strong communications infrastructure base and is the UK's best digitally connected region, with 65% of homes and businesses (530,000 premises) – including 75% within Belfast – having access to full fibre broadband. Project Stratum is improving this further for the 10% of premises currently unable to access broadband speeds of 30 Mbps primarily in rural areas, which to date have not benefited from commercial investment.

We are starting from a strong base. Our academic institutions and industry partners are recognised leaders in research, development and commercialisation in key technology domains – particularly in cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and software development focused on financial services, insurance, agri-food, medical/pharmaceutical applications and green technologies. The NI Digital Catapult leads the UK catapult network in areas of artificial intelligence, machine learning, virtual reality and augmented reality – helping our companies to grow by harnessing the power and potential of these new technologies.

Already, in the public sector, we are investing in 'smart technologies' to improve accessibility, drive up the quality of our public services, and drive down costs. For example, we are utilising sensors on road surfaces to identify and respond quicker to defects that affect drivers. We are also monitoring livestock using satellite imagery to improve services to farmers and response to disease outbreaks. These are some of many applications that indicate the potential for the future.

## Where We Need To Be

However, technology is continuing to develop rapidly and will profoundly change infrastructure in terms of:

- **embedding technology** into infrastructure assets so that we can monitor and improve their performance
- **system integration and management** – optimising infrastructure networks so that we can improve their utilisation
- **technology affecting how people and businesses use current infrastructure**
- **innovative technology** that will change future demand for and supply of infrastructure, in some cases make existing infrastructure obsolete, in others changing the way infrastructure is designed, built and operated.

To guide our future investment in data and digital infrastructure, we need to ensure:

- no-one will be left behind in the transition to a more digital-focused future. Equality of access to digital technology is an important issue of social equity and fairness. This was demonstrated clearly during the Covid pandemic when a rise in schooling and working from home highlighted the need for affordable, reliable broadband connectivity and access to devices.
- our systems are secured from attack, and that users' data and privacy is protected. Increasingly, our critical infrastructure is connected by digital networks that are themselves interconnected. This raises the level of vulnerability and contingent risks – and necessitates vigilance and investment.
- we adopt a 'digital by default' approach to improve access for all public service users. Our systems will be developed – in ways that ensure ease of use and accessibility for users with different needs.
- we adopt an approach that fully recognises that public sector data is now a strategic asset. Managed in the right way, it will provide a significant return on investment. To this end, we intend to bring forward a NI Public Sector Data Strategy as a priority.

- our investments in data and digital systems will be procured in ways that ensure all our data are fully owned and accessible to the public sector and that new systems do not lock us in and prevent the use of better alternatives in the future.
- that citizens are able to use their own devices when accessing public systems and services. Ensuring sensitive data remains secure will be essential.

## What We Need to Do

### **Digitisation of Public Service Interfaces**

We will continue to invest in upgrading our digital infrastructure and systems to enable citizens to engage and transact effectively with public services – building on the success of NI Direct. Getting information about public services and getting business done will be faster and easier – whether it’s applying for a school place, renewing a license, paying fees or fines. In the future it is likely there will be greater acceptance of technology for more patient/clinician interactions, and these will provide substantial opportunities for efficiencies within the health service.

Under this strategy, investment will be targeted on the digitisation of our public services.

### **Upgrade of Public Sector Data/Digital Infrastructure**

Investment in our public service digital infrastructure will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our public services by reducing processing times, driving up data quality and ensuring that decisions can be made on the basis of accurate, timely and comprehensive information.

Encompass, a Health and Social Care (HSC) initiative, will introduce digitally integrated care records to improve patient safety and health outcomes through regional standardisation and best practice. Major investment is also planned to transform education and justice information systems.

## **New Analytics to Maximise the Value of Data**

The public sector handles vast quantities of data, which could be used better to target services more effectively and make them more responsive to the needs of citizens. Examples of these applications include the deployment of emergency services based on predictive analytics and using usage data to optimise the treatment of drinking water.

In the Belfast Region City Deal, iREACH is an NHS, industry and academic facility, focusing on the innovative design and delivery of clinical trials. Extending this capacity within the Belfast Region will enable the facility to take on larger and more complex trial studies. Building on an established electronic patient record, iREACH will increase access to treatments for patients and signal to industry the expansion of healthcare capability in Northern Ireland, enabling access to growing global markets and creating investment opportunities.

## **Smart Cities/Sensors**

The emergence of Smart Cities and the Internet of Things must be fully integrated across policy areas, ensuring smart technologies play a central role in enabling connected regional and national infrastructure such as transport, energy and water, and linking these technologies and data sets to deliver improved city, region and central government services.

## **Network Risks and Security**

As our core infrastructure becomes more digitally connected, our vulnerability to systems failure, cyber-attack and related disruptions increases. Fortunately, our region is a world-leader in cybersecurity research, development and commercialisation – and we will work in partnership with academia and industry to meet this challenge.

## **Offsite Manufacturing and New Materials**

The development of new materials and changing fabrication techniques will change the way infrastructure is designed and manufactured, and affect the cost of building and maintenance. New applications of smart materials are already being seen in transport infrastructure such as solar roads that generate renewable energy and surfaces that self-detect or charge vehicles at speed. Increasingly, new materials, such as ductile or bendable or self-healing and low-

carbon concrete, will change the design and build of infrastructure, and reduce annual maintenance costs and environmental impact, for example of bridges and tunnels.

Changes to fabrication methods, including 3D printing, will alter the way and location where construction is occurring, offering the opportunity for onsite fabrication (or offsite manufacturing allowing for faster construction and higher quality production) reducing the costs of transport of materials and construction.

### **QUESTION 8**

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to maximise the benefits from emerging technologies? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will maximise benefits from emerging technologies?



## Strategic Investment Priorities: What We Need To Do To Maximise The Benefits From Emerging Technologies

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### **We will:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Digitise public service access points</b>               | by targeting the digitisation of public interfaces to our core public services, where appropriate, in order to use technology to improve accessibility, reduce transaction times, enhance service provision and responsiveness, drive up service quality and meet user expectations |
| <b>Upgrade the public service digital infrastructure</b>   | by focusing investment on upgrading core enterprise systems to reduce operational delivery costs, modernise and streamline workflows and transform service delivery; this will include a heavy emphasis on smart technology, leveraging smart devices and artificial intelligence   |
| <b>Take advantage of data analytics and data science</b>   | by investing in our data management and analytics infrastructure, recognising data as a valuable public sector asset, and strengthening the capacity and capability of our public services to make decisions at all levels informed by evidence derived from analysis of data       |
| <b>Improve information security and network resilience</b> | by working collaboratively with industry and academia to ensure effective investment in strengthening our network resilience and security   |

## PART D: OUR APPROACH TO STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

### Introduction

This Investment Strategy recognises that investment in infrastructure should be based on an evidenced need; should be prioritised to ensure the most effective use of resources overall and to achieve the outcomes we need; and should make tangible, positive differences to citizens' lives.

This means we will develop a balanced investment plan that recognises the funding needs of existing infrastructure (both capital and revenue) as well as the new, enhanced and reconfigured infrastructure requirements set out in this document.

### Embedding infrastructure into Government approval and delivery processes

Delivering infrastructure investment at scale means creating alignment between all departments' investment needs; the Department of Finance as the key funding stakeholder; and the NI Executive as the body that endorses the overall investment strategy.

To ensure that infrastructure investment is embedded into funding and delivery plans, we will develop a comprehensive rolling 10-year Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan. This will be supported by a new Medium-Term Infrastructure Financial Plan and will enable the development of detailed departmental Investment Plans. This approach will seek to take full advantage of collaborative working across public bodies, community and private-sector stakeholders to ensure that strategic, regional and local investments maximise the opportunity for value creation and enhanced inclusion through co-ordination of resources and investment.

These plans will result in the publication of a visible pipeline of projects for the construction industry and other sectors, and create transparency in the delivery of infrastructure against plans.

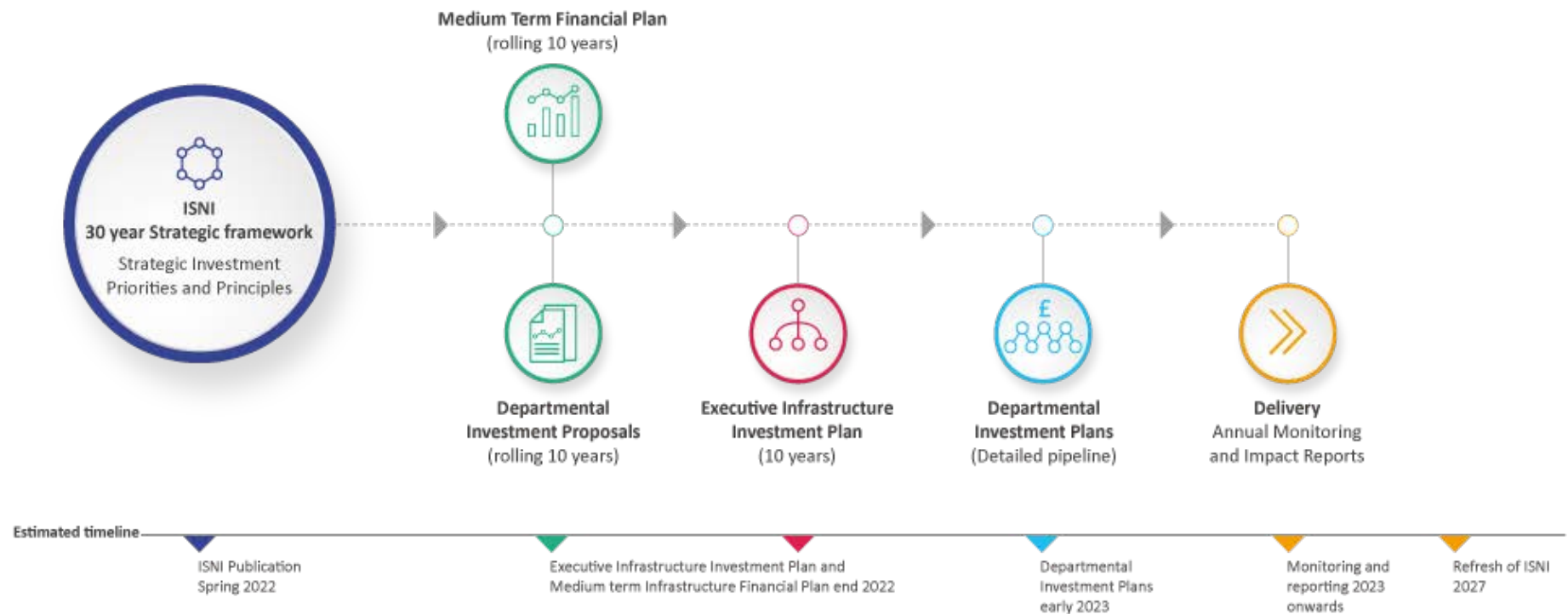


Fig 5: Infrastructure Investment Plan

## Funding and financing

### The Scale of Required Investment

The scale of investment required to maintain our existing infrastructure and provide for our future needs and ambitions will be significantly higher in real terms than the £1.2–£1.4 billion per annum typically invested over the past 10 years.

To optimise our ability to invest in coming years we need to:

- (i) prioritise investment to areas with the most need
- (ii) maximise and co-ordinate the public and private sources of finance to help us deliver our goals
- (iii) ensure that sufficient delivery capacity exists within the public, private and community sectors to ensure that we invest in projects that can be delivered on time and on budget.

### Proposed Investment Prioritisation

A prioritisation framework will need to be developed to help inform the Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan. The following proposals set out some of the criteria that will need to be considered in the development of such a framework.

#### **1. Does the proposed investment support the achievement of the objectives of the Programme for Government and the priorities of the Investment Strategy?**

- There must be a clear strategic fit between the proposed investment and the achievement of the outcomes set out in the Programme for Government and this Investment Strategy.

#### **2. Will the investment be sustainable and resilient?**

- Will the proposal deliver the required outcomes at the right whole-life cost?
- Will the investment result in an improved and more efficient public service?
- Will the investment make best use of public and private infrastructure assets?

- Do they contribute to decarbonisation?
- Does the investment protect/enhance the natural environment and ecosystems?
- Will the new assets be resilient and sustainable in future?
- Does the proposal reflect the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- Does it contribute to climate resilience?
- Are they consistent with the Circular Economy?
- Will the investment impact the marine environment?
- Does the use of technology enable digitisation opportunities and address cybersecurity risks?

### **3. Is the proposed investment inclusive and equitable/equal?**

- Does the proposal address imbalances (for example, urban/rural, social economic, age and gender)?
- Does it promote greater intergenerational fairness?
- Will it support equality and good relations?
- Will it deliver balanced development across rural and urban areas, across sectors and communities?
- Will it maximise Social Value?
- Has it been developed through co-design and stakeholder engagement, and moving forward can it be developed through co-delivery (for example central/local government partnerships, community partnerships)?

### **4. Is the proposed investment affordable?**

- How do we decide between unaffordable projects with the greatest need and affordable projects for which the need is lower?
- What is the right balance of public and private finance required?
- Is there sufficient public finance and can it be deployed more efficiently?
- Have all opportunities to secure alternative funding and finance been explored?

- Is there sufficient capital and resource funding to manage and maintain investments?
- Is there the opportunity to maximise economies of scale?

**5. Is the proposed investment prepared for delivery?**

- Are appropriate governance and accountability arrangements in place?
- Have opportunities for collaboration been identified and exploited?
- Are the appropriately skilled resources in place and are they fully funded?
- Has planning and procurement risk been appropriately mitigated?
- Is there evidence of market readiness to deliver the investment?
- Can progress and risk be transparently monitored?
- Is there evidence of market capacity to deliver the investment?

## Investment Planning

We will set out exactly how we will prioritise, fund and deliver these plans in a **Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan (MTIFP)**.

Infrastructure investment projects and programmes, by their nature, take a significant period of time to plan, procure and deliver effectively. This is often measured in years. Good investment practice dictates that capital budget allocations (or indicative allocations) therefore need to be made on the same timescale. A longer-term perspective on the supply of finance encourages longer-term planning, better coordination between projects and partners and more efficient use of capital. It helps to avoid otherwise more costly and sub-optimal investment decisions. Engagement with the NI Fiscal Council will be key to ensure that all possible means of financing our infrastructure are fully exploited.

In recent years, long-term investment planning has been hampered by immediate-term (1-3 year) budget settlements. This has inhibited our ability to plan on a multi-year basis and has tended to favour smaller and less strategic investments that can be delivered in the shorter timeframe. A Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan will be developed to help inform departmental capital planning. The plan will:

- cover a rolling 10-year period, and be updated each year in line with the NI Budget process
- commence with confirmed Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL) for all departments and related public bodies in line with committed HM Treasury Spending Review allocations to the Executive, and consistent with the NI Budget and this Investment Strategy
- be supplemented by an assumption of indicative capital allocations for years beyond the Budget, up to and including Year 10
- include an assessment of all other sources of public finance, such as Reinvestment and Reform Initiative borrowing, Financial Transactions Capital loan finance or equity, external public funding (UK, RoI and International)

- include an assessment of potential private finance, where this does not unduly impact on the NI Executive budget and risk appetite
- consider the revenue costs associated with pre-development and operational management.

## The Executive's 10-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan

Departmental Investment Proposals will be assessed, in aggregate, against the priorities set out in this strategy, and the available resources set out in the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan.

From this work, we will agree and publish a new Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan, setting out all projects and programmes ongoing, planned or expected to commence within the next 10 years. This will demonstrate the matching of prioritised infrastructure needs and demands with projected financial resources set out in the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan, presented under each of the strategic investment priorities set out in this strategy.

Delivery of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan will be subject to the enhanced governance and oversight arrangements described in more detail later in this document.

We intend that the initial Executive Infrastructure Investment Plan (including the Finance Plan) should be delivered by the end of 2022 and cover the period to 2032, reflecting both existing commitments and new investment programmed for that period.

This approach will ensure investment planning is strategic in addressing the major areas of investment need and effectively coordinated between sectors and across all public sector bodies. Publication of the Plan will provide the construction sector and investors with greater clarity and visibility of proposals, through a published pipeline of future investment that will be regularly reviewed.



## Information Portal and Contracts Pipeline

More granular information on investment programmes and projects will be published on the Executive's ISNI Information Portal. This will be enhanced to include a detailed Contracts Pipeline to ensure our construction industry and its supply chain have the information they need to plan ahead effectively. It will also assist the wider industry and academic institutions to plan ahead to ensure we have the right skills in our local workforce to help deliver our investments on the ground.

### **QUESTION 9**

How should we prioritise between maintaining or upgrading existing assets and new aspirations?

### **QUESTION 10**

How should we communicate with consultees on projects that present affordability challenges, and thus may require alternative funding and financing to be utilised?

### **QUESTION 11**

Do you agree with the proposed prioritisation criteria? If no, then what changes would you suggest?

### **QUESTION 12**

What level of engagement should we have with consultees on project milestones and delivery progress once a project has been programmed for delivery?

## Improving Delivery

### **The Challenge**

Our delivery challenge is considerable. We must respond to fundamental changes to the infrastructure needs documented in this strategy by delivering more projects and by delivering them on time and to budget.

Stakeholder engagement during the development of this strategy highlighted that the planning policy framework and planning process have often been perceived as barriers to effective infrastructure investment: taking too long, or being too unpredictable or inconsistent, with legal challenges an ongoing feature in many planning applications. We know that a strong, sustainable spatial planning framework that is robust and consistently applied can provide certainty for developers and confidence to investors, as well as assurance to citizens and businesses. We need to recognise that all will need to contribute to secure these improvements, including better quality applications and increased upfront engagement, as well as improved efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system.

Construction is one of our major industries. It is experiencing skills gaps and an ageing workforce and there is a need for development of both traditional site-based and vocational skills, adapting to the changing digital delivery of construction and new opportunities in the green economy. Ensuring we invest in skills to support our infrastructure will be essential, and expertise will also be needed in emerging technical areas, for example to manage flood risk and climate change impact.

### **How We Will Improve Delivery**

#### Programme and Project Management

Departments will continue to develop their programme and project management capacity and capability. Working with SIB, CPD and NICSHR, they will ensure staff involved in the delivery of projects have the skills, knowledge and experience required to be successful. This will require significant investment not only in additional resource capacity in the short term but also in a longer term capacity building, recruitment and training programme. Governance

and oversight will be improved and better monitoring and reporting of performance will enable informed decision-making. Delivery collaboration and the breaking down of silos will also improve outcomes and delivery confidence.

#### Procurement and Ensuring Social Value

Building on the work of the Procurement Board, we will continue to strengthen the professional development of procurement and construction staff to support efficient procurement management, and streamline procurement processes to maximise buying power and improve delivery.

Public procurement is an important source of expenditure and social value clauses are included in our construction contracts, building in employment and training requirements such as apprenticeships and providing placement opportunities for the long-term unemployed, as well as work experience and community initiatives. From June 2022 a minimum of 10% of the total award criteria of tenders must be to social value, where the construction contract is valued at over £4.7m, and we will continue this commitment to maximise the social value from our infrastructure investment.

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## **CASE STUDY: Social Value**

***Social value refers to wider financial and non-financial impacts on the well-being of individuals, communities and the environment. Legally, social value outcomes can be included in the procurement process if they are considered at business case stage and relate to the subject matter of the contract or the performance of the contract. The Procurement Regulations specifically refer to incorporating social value into specifications, contract performance clauses, selection criteria and award criteria.***

***The Executive has previously promoted the use of public procurement to deliver social, economic and environmental objectives, including endorsing Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement in 2008 and including 'sustainability' as a component of Value for Money alongside cost and quality in 2011.***

***An important initiative to deliver social value is the Buy Social Model, which the Procurement Board approved in 2015. The Buy Social Model specifically addresses key quality of life indicators such as: personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development. Over this period many public bodies have been highly innovative in their use of public procurement to promote social value, including the scoring of social value criteria.***

***By September 2021, 2,065 New Entrant Trainees had a training and employment opportunity under Buy Social. In addition, 98% of Buy Social participants who completed their NET period remained in employment with the contractor, found alternative employment or returned to education/training (where an outcome has been recorded).***

***Building on this, Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) has recently launched guidance on the policy to evaluate social value as an award criterion (within public procurement contracts) alongside cost and quality. The Executive has approved this policy, so that from 1 June 2022 tenders must include a minimum of 10% of the total award criteria to social value.***

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A jobs model commissioned by SIB will allow assessment of the potential impact (including on long-term unemployed/apprentices) of investment on full-time employment. This model provides a quantitative assessment of the impact of specific investment plans and projects going forward.

## Measuring Progress and Impact

We must make sure that how and what we invest in achieves the objectives we want. Our engagement has shown there is real interest from organisations and citizens in our infrastructure and investment decisions.

Our current delivery tracking system already allows for monitoring of the construction pipeline. This will be expanded and developed to allow for greater interaction and be more accessible to a wider audience. It will include:

**A forward look** – providing information and certainty for the construction industry so they can plan. This will set out:

- What is likely to be invested in, by whom and when. This will be searchable, for example by location, by type of project, scale of expenditure, procurement route, and current status (e.g., business case, planning, design, etc.).
- Users will be able to request alerts, and get clear information on how to bid.

**Performance monitoring** – to ensure we are delivering projects to time and to budget; and, if not, to enable us to understand why so that remedial actions can be taken. We will implement a new portfolio management system that will ensure there is a single, accurate, consistent and timely picture of the state of each major project. This will be accessible to the Executive, Ministers, Assembly Committees, officials, the private sector and citizens. Searchable and downloadable data, complemented by interactive dashboards, will be available through the Investment Strategy website.

**Retrospective impact assessment** – of the infrastructure investment, linking with the PfG outcomes delivery framework (when approved) and other high-level strategic objectives such as the 10x Economic Strategy, Green Growth Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Environment Strategy, the Housing Supply Strategy and Anti-Poverty Strategy. Key performance metrics will be agreed to allow for ongoing monitoring of our infrastructure investment.

Our monitoring will set out to demonstrate a range of impacts including:

- social value
- social impact
- rural needs
- equality and good relations
- environmental impact
- economic impact

We will publish an Annual Monitoring Report that will include a specific Investment Delivery Report.

### **QUESTION 13**

Do you agree that the proposals we have set out will adequately measure progress and impact? If no, then how should we measure progress and impact?

## Accountability and Oversight

### The Challenge

With so much changing quickly in relation to infrastructure, we know that solutions will be increasingly complex, and require a cross-departmental, inter-jurisdictional and more joined-up approach to planning, investment, delivery and monitoring. We will need to ramp up our capability and our capacity to be able to work in a more agile way to manage our infrastructure investment. This will require interim measures to overcome short-term capacity and skills issues, complemented by a programme of recruitment, training and capacity building to provide a more sustainable long-term solution to infrastructure investment.

Accountability for delivery of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan will be sharpened, providing greater clarity of oversight, more transparency and improved monitoring to critical areas of the Executive's spending.

### Accountability and Oversight

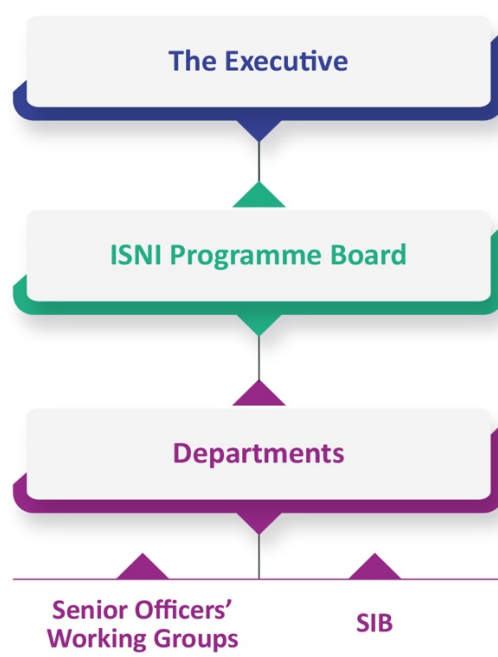


Fig 6: Accountability and Oversight

## Providing Resilient Leadership for Infrastructure Investment

### Strategic Oversight by the Executive

The Executive will exercise strategic oversight on Infrastructure Investment to assure strategic direction and focus on delivery is maintained at the highest level, and to respond to emerging strategic issues, risks and opportunities in the years ahead. The Investment Strategy will be included on the agenda for Executive meetings twice per year, supported and informed by inputs from the ISNI Programme Board.

### ISNI Programme Board

The NICS Board will sit as the ISNI Programme Board **twice per year, or more frequently if needed**. The role of the Programme Board will be to scrutinise delivery of the **Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan and Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan**. The ISNI Programme Board will consider all opportunities to collaborate, innovate, accelerate delivery, address any blockages that arise, oversee risk management and take timely actions as appropriate.

### Departments and Related Public Bodies

Departments and related public bodies will retain principal responsibility for the planning, resourcing, procurement and successful delivery of projects under this ISNI, working closely with other departments as appropriate, and with the Strategic Investment Board and Department of Finance. Normal accounting officer responsibilities and business case approvals processes will apply.

### Senior Officials Group

A Senior Officials Group will meet regularly to ensure departmental collaboration throughout the development of the Executive's Infrastructure Investment Plan and across the delivery phase. This will include senior officers from all key infrastructure departments and SIB, providing consistency with the governance arrangements of the other high-level strategies such as the Green Growth Strategy.



The ISNI Senior Officials Group will, from amongst its membership, appoint lead officers for each of the five investment themes. This will provide appropriate structures to encourage and support the inter-departmental working necessary to deliver the investment required by this strategy.

### Strategic Investment Board

The Strategic Investment Board has the statutory function to develop the Investment Strategy. Consistent with this, it will ensure the ongoing development, application and monitoring, reporting and review of the strategy.

SIB will ensure there is ongoing collaboration and engagement with departments, industry and citizens regarding investment in our infrastructure. This engagement will be critical to the development of the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan and 10-yearly Executive Infrastructure Investment Plans, to effective monitoring, and to ensuring the continued relevance of our Strategic Investment Priorities.

SIB will provide a secretariat function to both the Ministerial Strategic Oversight Group and the NICS Programme Board.

Stakeholder engagement has been central to the initial development of this Investment Strategy and identifying our investment needs and Strategic Investment Priorities. This engagement will continue with the establishment of a wide-reaching forum, facilitated by SIB. This will provide ongoing feedback, identification of needs/gaps and reassessment of priorities and enable ongoing engagement with industry and relevant stakeholders.

SIB will lead a specialist task and finish/working group structure providing critical input into and oversight of the development of the Medium-Term Infrastructure Finance Plan and Infrastructure Investment Plan.

### The Infrastructure Commission

The Executive has made a commitment in its Covid Recovery Plan to establish an Infrastructure Commission. At the time of writing, work is ongoing to determine the precise remit of the Commission and its relationship with the Executive, departments and SIB. This

section of the strategy will, therefore, be adapted to take account of the Executive's decisions in respect of the role of the Commission.

**QUESTION 14**

Do you agree that the proposed accountability and oversight structures will support successful delivery? If no, then what other proposals should we consider?

**QUESTION 15**

Do you agree with the process and the findings of the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)? If no, then please explain why.

**QUESTION 16**

Are there any other issues or inequalities that have not been highlighted in the draft EQIA or RNIA that you believe need to be noted? If yes, then please explain what they are.

**QUESTION 17**

Are there any other comments or suggestions that you think are relevant to help us develop and deliver the Investment Strategy?

## Glossary

CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CODA	City of Derry Airport
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limits
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
EV	Electric Vehicles
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTC	Financial Transactions Capital
GHG	Greenhouse Gas(es)
HSCT	Health and Social Care Trust
ISNI	Investment Strategy Northern Ireland
NDNA	New Decade New Approach
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIE	Northern Ireland Electricity

NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NISRA	Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency
NIW	Northern Ireland Water
PfG	Programme for Government
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
ROI	Republic of Ireland
TEO	The Executive Office
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SPPS	Strategic Policy Planning Statement

## Freedom of Information Act 2000: Confidentiality of Consultations

The Strategic Investment Board will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Strategic Investment Board can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Strategic Investment Board in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Strategic Investment Board cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department (Strategic Investment Board ) should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's (Strategic Investment Board's) functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department (Strategic Investment Board) should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department (Strategic Investment Board) of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

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INFRASTRUCTURE 2050

# The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

Draft Consultation Document

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Investment  
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