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Ms Geraldine O'Neill
Sub Regional Transport Plan Team
Transportation Unit
Roads Service
Department for Regional Development
Room 3-29
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
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Dear Ms O'Neill

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SUB REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015

Limavady Borough Council recently considered the draft Sub Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) and noted the proposed packages of measures it contained relating to the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the Belfast Metropolitan Area. The Council noted that the SRTP deals primarily with measures for rail, trunk roads, walking, cycling and public transport for the period up to 2015.

In response to the contents of the draft Plan the Council would make the following comments:

(a) Policy Context

The RPA will allocate new responsibilities to local government in relation to local roads functions and Councils will also have a role in planning local bus services. The Council would question whether local government should therefore not have been more closely involved in the development of the SRTP in order to ensure that this long term Plan is acceptable to Councils for operation by them post RPA.

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The Council is also concerned at the number of different transport plans that are being produced. Councillors hope that there will be a seamless integration between such plans and that there will be no resulting confusion as to what our transport system should actually look like in the future

Funding for the measures in the SRTP will be subject to normal budgetary processes and beyond 2007/08 the ISNI (Investment Strategy for NI) sums for road and public transport development are indicative only. The Council is concerned at the potential impact on the future development of our transport system if appropriate funding does not materialise.

The Council would also wish to see the importance of cross border linkages addressed within the SRTP. For many areas in the border region co-operation with County Councils and other transport planners in the Republic of Ireland are seen to be essential to ensure a seamless linkage between transport plans such as the SRTP and associated transport plans in the Republic.

(b) Characteristics of Other Urban Areas

Limavady is the only town within the Borough listed among the 29 towns and cities the Plan identifies as 'Other Urban Areas.' Particular problems relating to roads, etc., in the Limavady town area were identified by Councillors as being issues associated with:

- Road safety within the town, particularly the need for traffic calming measures in housing developments.
- Congestion within the town and the need for action to alleviate traffic congestion, particularly at peak times.
- Traffic problems arising from the build up of housing developments in particular areas of Limavady town.

The SRTP also identified a number of drivers for change such as road safety, rising car ownership, housing growth, poor air quality, etc., and Councillors would endorse these as being significant issues within Limavady town.

(c) Characteristics of Rural Areas

This section concerned transport issues impacting on the other towns, villages, hamlets and the open countryside area. Some of the issues identified in the Plan concerned access to public transport, limited facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and inadequate investment in roads maintenance. In relation to the situation in rural areas of the Borough Councillors concurred with many of the issues identified but particularly commented on what they viewed as the neglect of rural roads. They also identified issues relating to:

- The provision of footpaths in particular rural locations.
- Flooding of certain rural roads and the need for remedial action
- Provision of traffic calming measures in certain rural areas
- The need for the upgrading of certain bridges in rural areas.

The SRTP also identified a number of drivers for change such as, the link between transport and social exclusion, road safety issues on the road network, growth and development of the rural area, increasing car ownership in rural areas and poor availability of rural bus services. Councillors were of the view that these drivers for change impacted significantly on the rural area within the Limavady Borough but reiterated, in particular, their concerns around the general lack of investment in rural roads throughout the Borough.

(d) Other Urban Areas – Proposed Measures and Costs

Details of the proposals for Limavady town were contained in the Technical Supplement attached to the Plan and Councillors were of the view that the proposals addressed the relevant transport issues that exist within Limavady town to a certain extent.

In relation to Bus Services it is proposed that the minimum daily period of hourly service operation (Monday to Friday) for bus services in Limavady should be 11 hours and that current services will be enhanced in terms of frequency and hours of operation. The Council endorsed this proposal and welcomed the increase in public transport provision within Limavady town.

(e) Rural Areas – Proposed Measures and Costs

The needs of rural areas were considered as two separate sections, ie as 'settlements' and as 'open countryside', and the transport plans developed in relation to each section were based on existing knowledge from earlier studies. Problems common to rural settlements as identified in the SRTP included pedestrian and cycle provision, crossing facilities, traffic calming measures, provision of bus services and highway improvements and the Council would endorse this view.

The Council noted that, in relation to the open countryside, a flexible transport plan is envisaged that will be responsive to the distinctive needs of rural communities with the overall aim of improving travel opportunities to essential services and facilities and improving links to the wider transportation network. The Council welcomed this proposal.

The Council further noted that the SRTP proposed that in future the rural prioritisation procedures would take linkage to the RSTN routes into account as an additional attribute. The Council is of the view that this additional consideration is acceptable and would point to the need for key routes within the Borough to be upgraded, for example the Ballyquin Road (B58) which is viewed as a strategic link road between Limavady and Belfast.

In relation to consideration being given to reducing the minimum level of the demand responsive transport system in open countryside areas from 4 return journeys per month to 2 return journeys per month, the Council is concerned at the impact this may have on isolated rural dwellers, such as those suffering from restricted mobility, and finds this proposal unacceptable.

(f) Proposed Cross Cutting Measures and Costs (OUA and Rural)

The Council welcomed the proposals for spending on the range of measures identified under this heading, particularly the proposals for improved accessibility.

(g) Targets, Monitoring and Review

The Council welcomed the setting of various targets to monitor the achievement of measures on the ground and would suggest the preparation and submission of regular monitoring reports to local Councils on progress towards these targets.

(h) Other Assessments

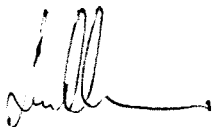
The Council noted that a rural proofing process was used to evaluate the Plan, which highlighted a range of issues the Department believes will be beneficial to rural dwellers, and welcomes the application of this process.

(i) Other Comments

The Council would also wish to once again take the opportunity to highlight the importance to the Borough of the provision of a by-pass for Dungiven and a by-pass for Ballykelly.

Limavady Borough Council fully supports the Department's efforts to develop a high quality, effective local transport system and hopes that the views it has expressed in response to the draft Sub Regional Transport Plan will help further develop the key issues surrounding the future development of our transport network.

Yours faithfully



LIAM FLANIGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE