



Strabane District Council

COMHAIRLE CEANTAIR
AN tSRATHA BÁIN

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
Belfast
BT2 8GB

22 June 2006

Re: Consultation Response

Dear Ms Geraldine O Neill,

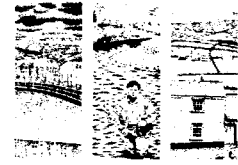
Please find attached Strabane District Council's response to the Draft Sub Regional Transport Plan. I trust that this leaves everything in order, however; in the meantime, if you have any more queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,



Philip Faithful
Chief Executive





Strabane
District Council
COMHAIRLE CEANTAIR
AN ISRATHA BAIN

**Draft Sub- Regional Transport Plan 2015
- Consultation Response.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Strabane District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Sub – Regional Transport Plan and commends the Department of Regional Development for providing detailed consultation documents in relation to local proposals. The regeneration and redevelopment of Strabane town centre is a priority for Strabane District Council so we seek to engage positively and constructively in this consultation.
- 1.2 Strabane District Council acknowledges the proposed £3,157,000 investment in transport in Strabane town. Proposals currently aimed at increase the cycle network, walking routes, three junction improvements in the town centre and proposed new highway scheme on the Urney road are welcomed. Further plans also to refurbish Strabane bus station, extend bus services and introduce a new taxi rank are supported and endorsed. Notwithstanding these welcome proposals, Strabane District Council urge the department to allocate further resources to Strabane District. Enhancing accessibility and reducing social exclusion are challenges that local and central government are committed to addressing.

2. Local Demography

- 2.1 Strabane District is a regionally significant transport hub within the Northwest region. Strabane District Council is committed to promoting regional transport investment and major economic development. The Strabane District Council area covers 922 square kilometres making it the fourth largest district council area in Northern Ireland. It is also the most rural district and has the lowest population density in Northern Ireland of 41 persons per square kilometre.
- 2.2 It is notable that the proposals relate only to the Strabane town centre – albeit with the exception of improved bus services. Special consideration should be given to the economic and social needs of the rural areas also. Investment and renewal in rural areas is also encouraged to help provide and maintain a range of local services, cultural facilities and employment opportunities for the local community.
- 2.3 The proposals herein leave a clear need to give greater focus on the development of locally based innovative public transport solutions to promote rural access. It is clear that, for the foreseeable future, the car will be the dominant mode of transport in the rural area, and that programmes such as that of the Rural Partnership Easilift should be further supported to deliver flexible and responsive transport services in our diverse rural communities.

3. Deprivation

- 3.1 Strabane District suffers from high unemployment and deprivation. The NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2005, shows that Strabane District is the Local Government District with the most deprived mean rank (173). Strabane District Council would stress that its needs for central government investment are particularly acute given its largely rural nature and low earning population structure.
- 3.2 The economic competitive capacity of the North West region is seriously disadvantaged by the lack of transportation corridors. There exists general inaccessibility of both fundamental and special amenities from health care and international access, as well as to major local and national and social events. Balanced regional development will not be possible without major transportation investment within the Strabane District Council area.
- 3.3 Research shows that 71% of people living in Strabane District are employed within the Strabane District Council area. These statistics support the need to develop a more polycentric structure within the region. This approach encourages a rebalancing of the transport system to favour investment in modes and infrastructure other than the private car.
- 3.4 Strabane District Council have cited concerns regarding the availability of parking spaces within Strabane town centre and urge DRD to ensure that this issue is adequately addressed within future investment programmes.

4. Overall Methodology

- 4.1 Strabane District Council will not challenge the integrity of the methodology employed in the overall transport resource allocation to other district council areas. Whilst Strabane District Council recognise that said information is available on the Internet, the department should be in a position to openly demonstrate the equitable allocation of resources to the areas of most need. This openness would further uphold the RDS intention to balance the sphere of development across Northern Ireland.
- 4.2 Strabane District Council supports the general RDS objective of encouraging decentralised growth with a focus on the North West main towns - particularly those in key and link transport corridors. Enhanced investment in transport will promote growth performance and balance the spread of development. This will aid social inclusion and help to eradicate inherent deprivation. Strabane District Council trust that the department consider the proposals within this framework and ensure that when allocating such they are not leading Strabane District further into the periphery.

5. Strabane 2000

- 5.1 Strabane District Council endorses the submission by Strabane 2000 regarding the regional transport plan – particularly requests for a bus passenger terminus with facilities for waiting and buying tickets. DRD have already noted the level of congestion in Strabane town centre, most of which is caused by buses in Abercorn Square, especially during term time.
- 5.2 The inherent objective to improve taxi facilities in Strabane District is endorsed. Strabane town centre currently has 130 taxis with limited parking space. This has led to ongoing congestion and marked concern for residents and taxi operators. Strabane District Council urge the Department to consider the positioning and space allocated to taxis within Strabane town in this context.

6. North West Region Cross Border Group

- 6.1 The Sub – Regional Transport Plan does not comment on the relationship, nor consultation with the North West Region Cross Border Group and Irish Central Border Area Network who have most recently released a North West Transportation Strategy. Strabane District Council stress that it is important that DRD liase with aforementioned bodies to ensure that local and regional organisations are not working in isolation. It is most important that all stakeholders are involved in this consultation and planning proposals for investment in this unique area.

7. Summary

- 7.1 Strabane District Council urges the Department to reconsider the allocation of resources to the Strabane District Council area. Further investment in terms of taxi provision, parking space, provision of a bus terminal and footpath improvements (circa Strabane 2000 ref) are proposed. Strabane District Council also stress the need for further investments aimed to reduce social exclusion and isolation of rural dwellers.

22.06.2006