

DfI Business Plan 2025-26

The Business Plan for 2025-26 reflects the Department's three distinct delivery areas and how they are supported through central Departmental actions.

- Section 1 - Water Deliverables
- Section 2 - Transport Deliverables
- Section 3 - Planning Deliverables
- Section 4 - Departmental Actions for 2025-26

Each action has been assigned a RAG status based on the following:

- This action was delivered in full during the reporting year
- This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late
- This action was not delivered

Whilst an Equality Screening has been undertaken for the Business Plan as a whole, please note that it is the action owner's responsibility to ensure that Equality Screening is undertaken where appropriate. An update on the current status of each action's equality screening is included below including a request to link to the publication of Equality screening forms.

No	What we will do and by when	Timescale	Owner	RAG Status	Position as of 31 March 2026
Section 1 –Transport Actions for 2025-26					
1.	Progress delivery of the A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) between south of Strabane and Ballygawley.	Spring 2026	Colin Hutchinson	This action was not delivered.	Court proceedings ongoing.
2.	Progress delivery of: A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass	Spring 2026	Jonathan Saulters	This action was not delivered.	All delayed in light of the judgment, appeal and forthcoming decision of the Court of Appeal in the Alternative A5 Alliance case. Tenders received and assessed.
	Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge	Winter 2025			Tenders received and are being assessed. Tender validity period has been extended.
	A1 Junctions Phase 2 Road Improvement Scheme	Spring 2026			Prequalification submissions received and assessed. Prequalification list confirmed. Restricted list extended for one year.
3.	Continue Development of: A29 Cookstown Bypass – Make Direction Order, approval Business Case.	Spring 2026	Jonathan Saulters	This action was not delivered.	Inspector's Public Inquiry report received and reviewed. Development of Outline Business Case commenced.
	Newry Southern Relief Road – Determine way forward post consultation	Autumn 2025			Consultation responses reviewed. Minister to consider.

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	Derry Riverfront – Appoint consultants, commence detailed design.	Autumn 2025			Consultants appointed
	Strabane Footbridge – Appoint consultants, commence detailed design.	Autumn 2025			Consultants appointed
	A24 Ballynahinch Bypass – Recommence development work	Summer 2025			Consultants appointed
	York Street Interchange – Explore alternative funding	Autumn 2025			Brief issued to consultants on 26 February 2026. Study to be complete in Summer 2026.
4.	Continue to implement the Road Safety Strategy by: Introducing 20mph speed limits and part time speed limits at 40 schools	March 2026	Liam McEvoy	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	The Department is taking forward a speed limit review that includes 20mph speed limits, national speed limits on rural and dual roads, and HGV speed limits. Consultation is open from 14 January 2026 to 22 April 2026. Development and legislative work on the programme of part-time 20 mph schemes is continuing with 8 schools completed by 31 March 2026 and the remaining 32 schools scheduled for completion by 31 August 2026.

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	Developing the Graduated Driver Licensing scheme; and	March 2026	Chris Hughes		Work is progressing well on the operational planning required before GDL can be implemented. Target date of 1 October 2026 achievable subject to the passage of the subordinate legislation through the Assembly.
	Publish an Action Plan to support the Road Safety Strategy	September 2025			The Action Plan to 2027 was published on 27 January 2026.
5.	Advance the development of Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 (BRT2) by: Securing approval for the Outline Business Case;	Autumn 2025	Jonathan Saulters	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	OBC was approved in Mid-December 2025.
	Beginning detailed design work.	Autumn 2025			Detailed design work commenced in early 2026.
6.	Prioritise the recommendations and interventions in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.	July 2025	Brenda Burke	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	A Project Prioritisation Strategy was published in December 2025. This shortlists major projects from the Rail Review for progression by the medium to long-term.
	Conclude the feasibility studies into: - Reopening of Antrim-Lisburn (with a link to Belfast International Airport); - Armagh-Portadown; - Electrification of Belfast to the Border and Portadown-Derry.		Peter Rice		A summary report of the main findings of the 3 Feasibility Reports was published in December 2025.
7.	Publish the Active Travel Delivery Plan	October 2025	Colin Hutchinson	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Delayed. Comments from Committee for infrastructure received 3 March 2026. Aiming to present final plan to Minister for approval in April 2026.

No	What we will do and by when	Timescale	Owner	RAG Status	Position as of 31 March 2026
8.	Delivery of active travel infrastructure improvements including: Construction of at least four schemes on the Belfast Cycling Network and completion of design of at least five more.	March 2026	Colin Hutchinson	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Partially Achieved. 3 schemes currently in construction and 4 schemes with design complete.
	Construction of at least fifteen other active travel projects and commencement of design of at least ten priority schemes from the Active Travel Delivery Plan.				Partially achieved. 14 active travel schemes constructed.
	Commencement of design of six major Active Travel Signature Projects.				Design has commenced on 5 signature schemes. Commencement of design on remaining scheme on track for April 2026.
9.	Delivery of active travel education and promotion programmes in schools including: At least 5000 young people trained through the Cycling Proficiency Scheme.	December 2025	Colin Hutchinson	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Partially achieved 3966 pupils trained through CPS.
	Engaging at least 15 new schools to participate in Pedestrian Road Safety Training.	December 2025			Achieved 20 schools commenced the 3-year programme in September 2025.
	Delivering Sustrans Active Schools Travel Programme in 180 schools through our partnership with Public Health Agency.	March 2026			Achieved 180 schools on the programme
10.	Launch public engagement on the Belfast City Transport Plan section of the Eastern Transport Plan.	September 2025	Sian Kerr	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Ministerial Approval Provided and a launch date is expected in May.
11.	Complete phase 1 of review of taxi policy and legislation – review of ‘Class C’ taxi licensing.	March 2026	Brenda Burke	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Review being finalised with options to be with Minister by end of May 2026.

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12.	Maintain the road network within the resources available through new focused approaches and higher quality targeted interventions.	March 2026	Colin Sykes	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Road maintenance delivery in accordance with policy and available resources.
Section 2 –Water Actions for 2025-26					
13.	Develop an Outline Business Case for Flood Forecasting Centre to provide timely and accurate flood forecasts which are critical for effective incident response to flooding, particularly in the context of managing an increased risk due to climate change.	March 2026	Gary Quinn	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Development of a Flood Forecasting Service is a multi-faceted programme with several interdependent projects. A Programme Outline Business Case is underway, with a draft due for completion by May 2026. The Programme OBC will then be subject to the necessary review and approvals processes. Funding has been allocated for Year 1 development in 2025-26, and several workshops have been conducted involving DfI and consultants.
14.	Commence the Newry Phase 2a flood alleviation scheme in conjunction with the Council regeneration project.	March 2026	Owen McGivern	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Design phase commenced following appointment of a contractor in January 2026, and works are expected to begin on site by summer 2026.
15.	Commence procurement of the Portadown flood alleviation scheme.	March 2026	Owen McGivern	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Procurement of the Portadown Flood Alleviation Scheme which will reduce flood risk to 300 properties commenced in September 2025 with the publishing of the UK3 Pre procurement notice. Participation stage documents published in December 2025. Assessment of Participation Stage documents is currently ongoing.
16.	Develop a Rivers Digital Roadmap to enhance the ability to predict, prevent, and manage flood risks, ultimately protecting lives and property.	June 2025	Gary Quinn	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Rivers developed a Digital Roadmap and have established a Digital Steering Committee to oversee delivery. Departmental Digital Governance Board to formally approve Rivers Digital Roadmap.
17.	Publish the final LWW in Derry Plan following public consultation	December 2025	Stuart Wightman	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Living With Water in Derry Plan published on 11 February 2026.

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18.	Develop draft Policy Proposals on SuDS (design, approval, operation and maintenance)	December 2025	Stuart Wightman	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	The initial consultation on policy proposals has been completed. There will be further detailed consultation during 26/27 year.
19.	Introduce the Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill to the Assembly, enabling the Department to issue future guidance on the design, maintenance, and adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems.	September 2025	Alison Clydesdale	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Bill introduced on 23 June 2025 and Second Stage completed on 16 September 2025.
20.	Bring forward secondary legislation to further commence the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015.	December 2025	Alison Clydesdale	This action was not delivered.	Executive approval of secondary legislation received October 24. Infrastructure Committee scrutiny process commenced November 24 and remains ongoing.
Section 3 –Planning Actions for 2025-26					
21.	Continue to deliver (in collaboration with local government) Phase 2 of the Planning Improvement Programme.	March 2026	Rosemary Daly	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	The Department is continuing to work in collaboration with local government to deliver positive planning outcomes on the actions in the Planning Improvement Programme.
22.	Bring forward subordinate legislation to complete Phase 1 of the review of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015, introducing online engagement into the Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC) process and making Pre-Determination Hearings (PDHs) discretionary for councils.	August 2025	Rosemary Daly	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Phase 1 complete. Phase 2 – Detailed proposed amendments to the Development Management Regulations are due to go out to public consultation by the end of Quarter 1 2026/27.

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	Progress Phase 2 of the review of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015 by preparing subordinate legislation to update the Schedule of classes and thresholds for local, major, and regionally significant development.	March 2026			
23.	Launch the Trainee Planner Scheme.	January 2026	Rosemary Daly	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Interviews for trainee planner positions were completed in December 2025 with 6 successful candidates taking up position in January 2026.
24.	Produce an Annual Report on the regional planning system; and continue to develop a Planning Performance & Improvement Framework	October 2025	Rosemary Daly	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Initial work and discussions have commenced on these workstreams, with the Department and local government continuing to work collaboratively to progress and deliver these joint actions.
25.	Deliver key actions to streamline the Local Development Plan process.	March 2026	Kathryn McFerran	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Work is ongoing in relation to the review and update of Development Plan Practice notes and the review of the LDP regulations.
26.	Bring forward subordinate legislation to introduce charging for 'non-material changes' and 'discharge of conditions' applications.	March 2026	Rosemary Daly	This action was partially delivered within the timescales or will be delivered late.	Work is ongoing to progress the necessary legislative changes.
27.	Progress the preparations for holding inquiries and appointing Independent Inspectors for Local Development Plans and 'hear and report' work in 2026-27.	March 2026	Kathryn McFerran	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	Preparatory work to support the appointment of Independent Inspectors has progressed as planned and remains on track to support Inspector appointments in early 2026–27.
28.	Publish new Regional Strategic Planning Policy on renewable and low carbon energy, following Executive Committee agreement.	September 2025	Kathryn McFerran	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), Edition 2, incorporating revised regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy, was published on 11 December 2025.
Section 4 – Cross Cutting Actions for 2025-26					

No	What we will do and by when	Timescale	Owner	RAG Status	Position as of 31 March 2026
29.	Develop a draft DfI Inclusion Strategy following engagement with key stakeholders.	September 2025	Brenda Burke	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	First Draft of DfI Inclusion Strategy has been completed. A plan to progress the Strategy to the next stage is being developed.
30.	Procure and deliver Disability Equality Training for DfI SCS.	June 2025	Kiera Lloyd	This action was delivered in full during the reporting year.	This action has been completed with 5 training sessions having been delivered and a planned schedule to deliver 4 sessions yearly.