

DfI Strategic Framework



Department for
Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department für

Infrastructure

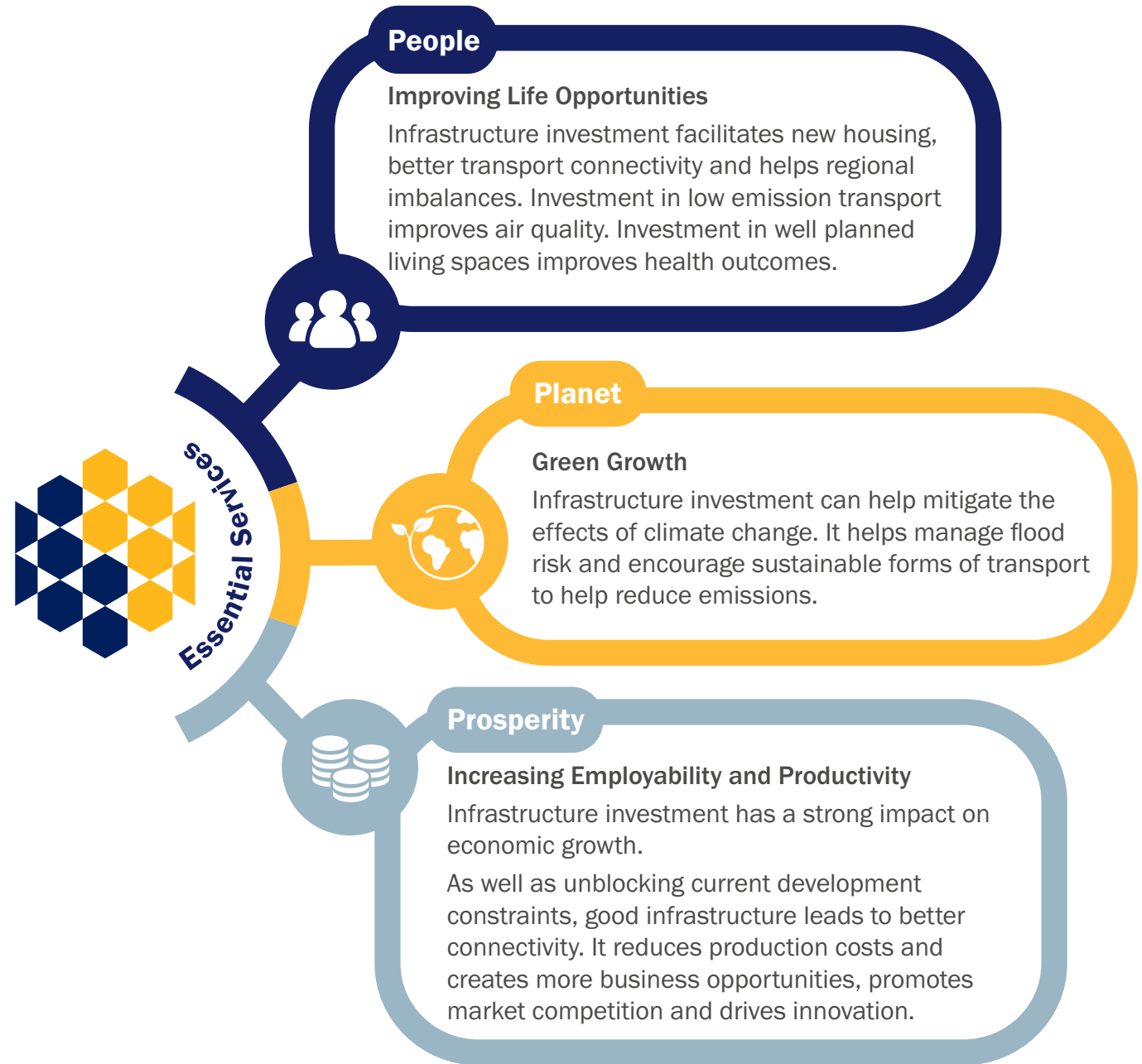
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk



Strategic Context

The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the maintenance and development of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Through its focus on water, transport and planning public services, the Department is seeking to manage and protect £32 bn of public assets that: improve people's quality of life, reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainability and decarbonising key services, and building prosperity by driving inclusive productivity.

This document outlines the main aspects of the Department's work and the challenges it faces in delivering its essential public services. By focusing on **water, transport and planning** we are clear on what we need to do, why we need to do it and how we will prioritise the use of increasingly precious public money.



The solutions to the issues outlined within this document are well understood and evidence based. A planned and phased approach to the management and maintenance of our public assets and to transport, water and planning services over the next five years would facilitate sustainable development, begin to address regional imbalances, reduce dangerous emissions and help to grow our economy.

To create the right conditions for delivery, we are focused on:

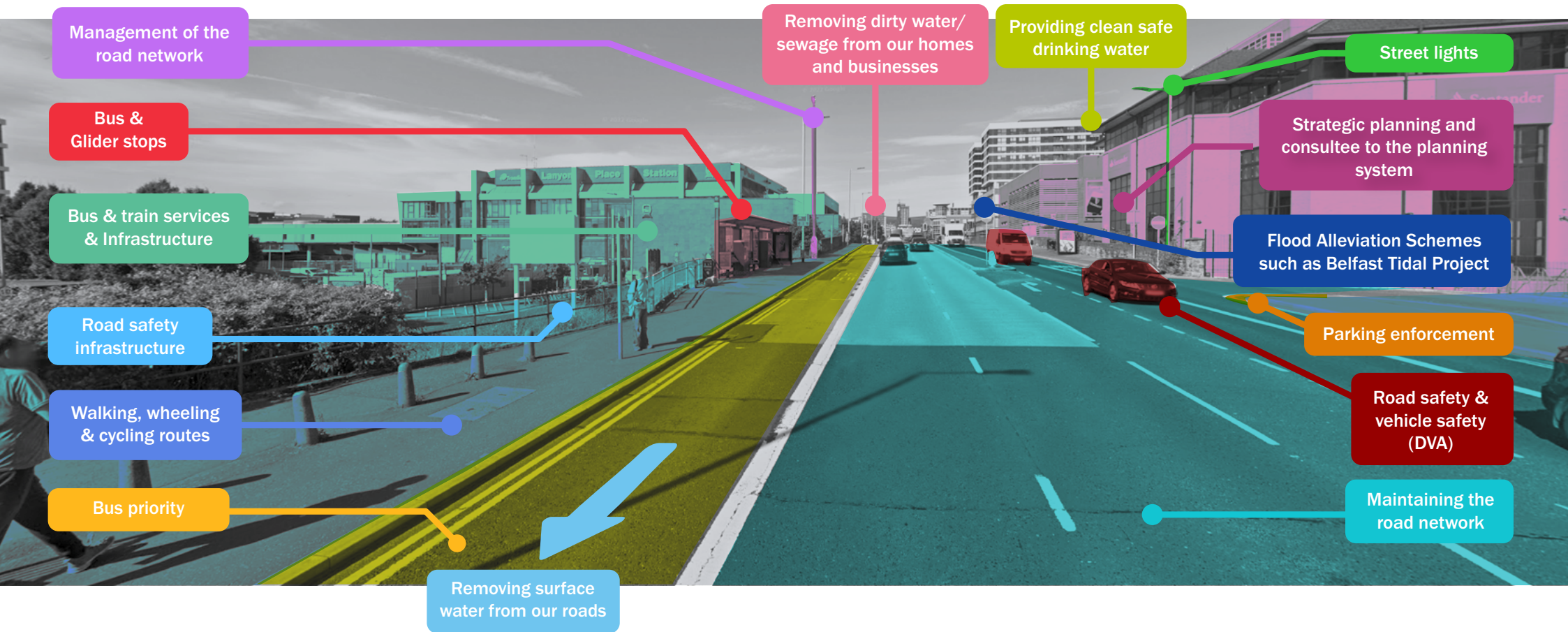
- ✔ Prioritising our work to focus on the delivery of our core services and the sound management of our assets;
- ✔ Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system;
- ✔ Considering how to transform our services and plan for the future in the context of the Climate Change Act(Northern Ireland) 2022 and other policy and legislation priorities;
- ✔ Building capacity in these priority areas; and
- ✔ Communicating more effectively with our delivery partners and the public.

However, it is acknowledged that the current fiscal environment and legacy of underinvestment means progress will be constrained. Very difficult decisions will be required.

The Department's Business Plan, available on the DfI website, provides further detail of our deliverables for the current financial year.



Examples of some of our Responsibilities:



The responsibilities of the Department are wide ranging and impact each of us, every day.

Water

Water is a precious asset. We all use water everyday whether it is to drink, wash or cook or when we flush the toilet. Our homes, businesses, schools and health care services all rely on having access to clean drinking water and wastewater facilities while we all also rely on our infrastructure and expertise to reduce the risk of flooding. We also use our inland waterways for navigation and recreational purposes.

The Department for Infrastructure and its delivery partners have an essential role in using and managing water supply through the storage, movement and treatment of water and wastewater to ensure that:



Our **people** have a reliable supply of clean and safe drinking water and that they can live and work in areas where flood risk is appropriately managed;



Any water we use is moved, stored and treated sustainably and returned safely to the environment so that our **planet's** wildlife habitats and ecosystems can flourish;



Our economy has flood risk managed and the water and wastewater infrastructure it needs to be **prosperous**, so that manufacturing, farming, tourism and recreation can operate and grow and that our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses can function properly.



NI Water - Our Publicly Owned Water Utility

NI Water was established in 2007 and provides 605million litres of water and treats 373m litres of wastewater per day to 900k households and businesses. It is the Executive's policy not to directly charge domestic water users. This results in duty to fund water and wastewater services. The independent Utility Regulator agrees with NI Water the required level of funding as part of the ['Price Control'](#) process.

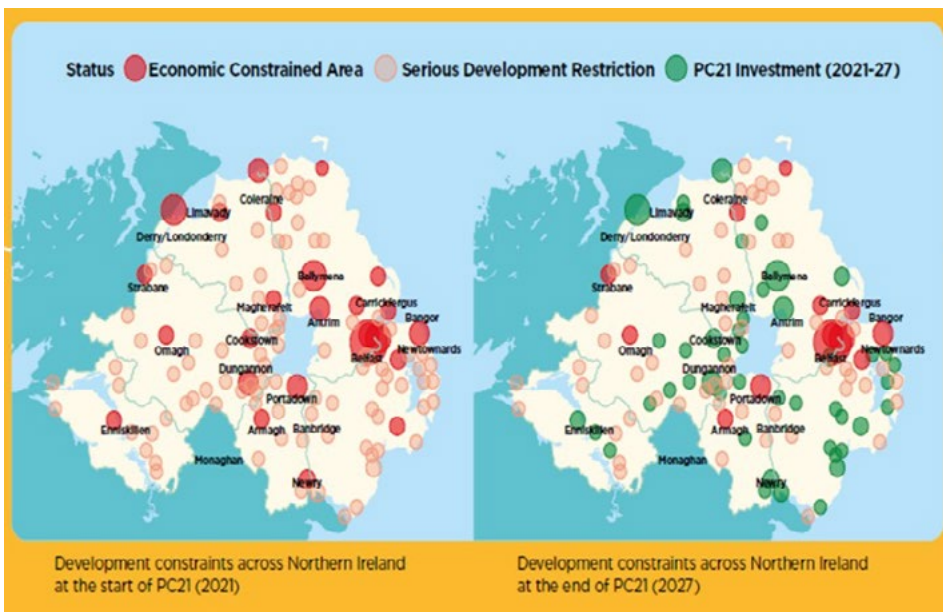
Much of the infrastructure is aging and needs upgraded, including drainage and wastewater infrastructure in Belfast and at least 100 other locations in Northern Ireland. This historic underfunding is constraining economic growth and means a requirement for significant and sustained future investment to ensure a fit for purpose network.

The PC21 investment profile requires a total of some £2bn to be invested up to 2027 with similar levels of funding required for future Price Controls (compared to £950m during PC15).

NI Water is NI's largest electricity user with £62.2 million spent in 2021/22 on electricity, up from £32.5 in 2020/21. Publicly owned assets provide an opportunity to decarbonise the energy system.

Examples of our Water Responsibilities:





Flooding and Drainage

The Department is responsible for the management of flood risk including river and sea defence maintenance, the construction of flood alleviation schemes and the provision of flood maps and other flood risk information to inform emergency response and community resilience activities. Approximately 45,000 or 5% of all properties here are located in areas at risk from flooding, which increases by 33% to 59,800 when 2080 climate change projections are taken into consideration. The Department is accelerating investment in our flood risk management infrastructure to, amongst other requirements, bring approximately 95

km of failing flood defence assets up to required standards whilst also developing new flood alleviation schemes.

The Department is also leading the development of sustainable drainage solutions as part of the Living with Water Programme in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

Inland Waterways

Through its sponsorship of Waterways Ireland, one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, and its work with partners such as the Lagan Valley Regional Park and the Councils, the Department helps to promote the recreational and navigational use of our waterways.

At an operational level, Waterways Ireland is responsible for a vast range of infrastructure assets including navigation channels, embankments, towpaths, adjoining lands, harbours, jetties, fishing stands, bridges, culverts, aqueducts, overflows, locks, sluices and lock houses along with buildings and archives.

Transport

Each of us rely on the transport network every day - whether it is helping us to commute to school, work, or to access healthcare, or for our goods being moved to and from our businesses, shops or to our front door. Our transport network is critical to the health and well-being for both our people and our economy.

The Department and its service providers have an essential role in maintaining and enhancing our transport networks to ensure that:



Our **people** have a safe and accessible transport network that gets them to where they need to travel;



We prioritise and promote travel choices which minimise the impact on the **planet** including reduction in travel volumes, a shift towards walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and using zero emission fuels;



We sustain a well maintained, resilient and reliable transport network which supports the economy and which will increase **prosperity** for all.



Examples of our Transport Responsibilities

REGULATE



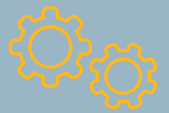
**RUN
STRANGFORD
FERRY AND
SUBSIDISE
RATHLIN FERRY**

**PLAN, SUPPORT
AND ENCOURAGE**
active travel



*Manage our
Road Network*

**PROCESS
ROADS CLAIMS
THROUGHOUT
THE YEAR**



Fund
**COMMUNITY
TRANSPORT**
providers

MAINTAIN APPROX
**3 HUNDRED
THOUSAND**
street lights



MAINTENANCE
25,000km+
OF ROADS
5,800
BRIDGES
9,700km
OF FOOTWAYS



**UNDERTAKE
TRANSPORT
REGULATION
ENFORCEMENT**

**PROCESS
APPROXIMATELY**

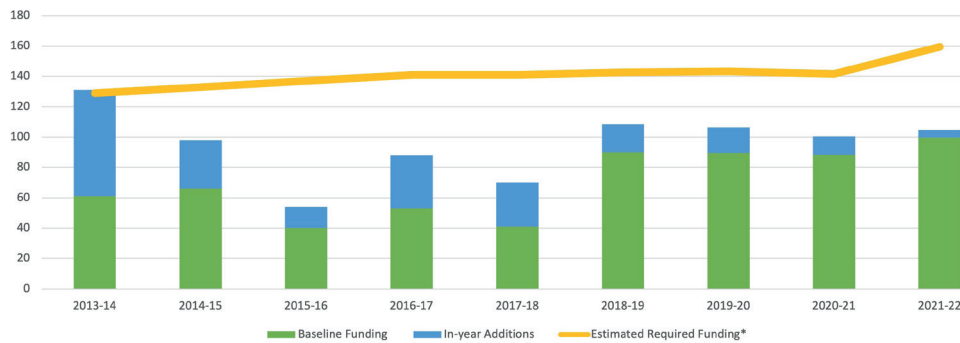
42
thousand
**BLUE BADGES
PER ANNUM**

Provide
WINTER SERVICES
on our road network



*Manage
Parking
Enforcement*

Roads Structural Maintenance: Baseline & In-Year Funding vs Funding Requirement 2013-14 to 2021-22 (£ millions)



*The 2018/19 funding requirement figure is taken from the 2018 Barton review and recalculated in subsequent years using Baxter indices for account for inflation.

Roads

The Department currently maintains 25,000km of roads; 9,700km of footways; 5,800 bridges; 290,000 street lights (£30bn assets). The independent Barton report states that we need to spend **£143m** per annum (17/18 prices) to maintain our roads, with the current backlog being **£1.2billion**: The Department is also responsible for progressing major road schemes, such as the A6.

Public Transport

The Department sponsors Northern Ireland's only publicly owned transport provider, Translink. DfI currently subsidises Translink to run the current public transport network. However, funding constraints

have meant that the Department finds it difficult to fully fund this subsidy each year. Public transport passenger numbers are lower than pre Covid rates, meaning there are fewer fare paying passengers on our buses and trains than previous years. To expand Translink's public transport services would require more money to subsidise the purchase of more vehicles and to support running the services. The Department also funds the Rathlin ferry and a number of Community Transport providers.

DVA

The DVA is an agency of the Department. It contributes to road safety, law enforcement and a cleaner environment by promoting compliance of drivers, vehicles and transport operators through testing, licensing, enforcement and education.

Road Safety

The Department has a role to play in reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. The Departments approach draws on the international 3 Safe System areas of people, roads and vehicles.

- **Safe People** – education and training, working with partners, promoting active and sustainable travel and enforcement.
- **Safe Roads** – roads maintenance and design, including to take account of new technologies.
- **Safe Vehicles** – existing and emerging technologies, including EVs, regulation, and through DVA maintaining vehicle checks.

Planning

Planning helps to positively shape how Northern Ireland looks and functions, both now and for future generations. The Department's role in this is to guide our planning system to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. In doing so it can ensure that:



People live, work and play in safe, inclusive and well-planned communities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.



Sustainable development minimises environmental impacts, protects what we cherish and positively seeks to address climate change while unlocking the potential to create jobs, attract investment and grow our economy.



We make the best use of our infrastructure and promote successful vibrant **living places** where communities and economies can thrive.

The vision is to create an efficient, effective and equitable planning system trusted to deliver high quality, sustainable, inclusive and healthy places.

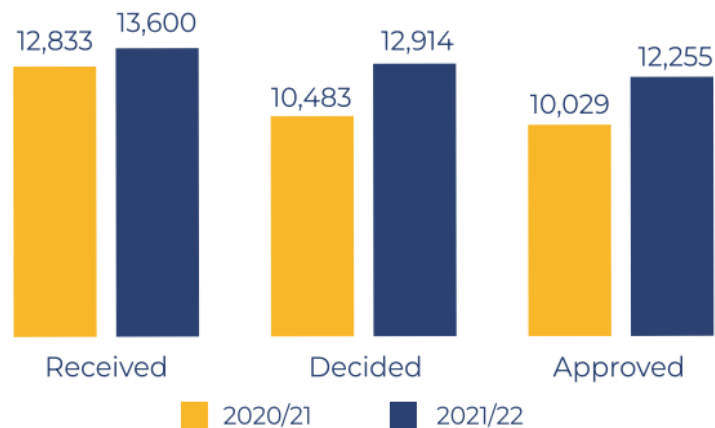


The Department sets out the strategic direction and regional policy for land use planning. We also provide planning legislation and process a small number of regionally significant planning applications or those applications which may be 'called in' (councils are responsible for 99% of planning applications received).

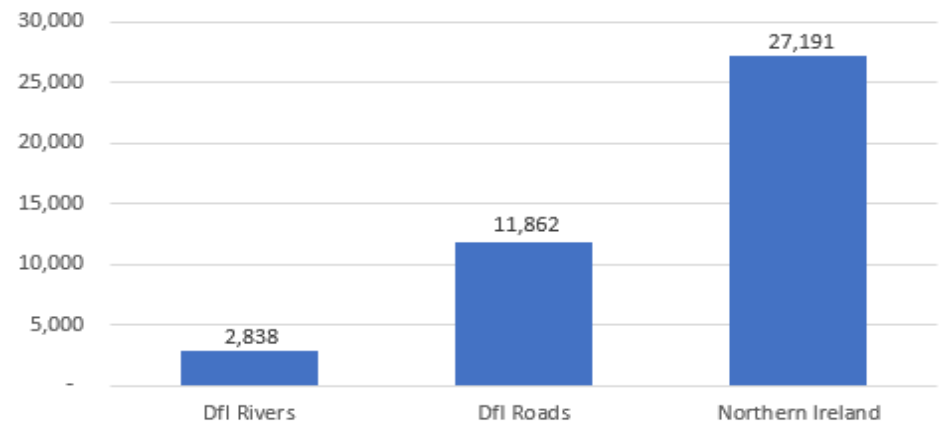
The Department works together with the councils in managing the planning system and has a statutory consultee and an oversight role in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which set out councils' long-term visions, objectives and growth over the plan period. Looking forward, it is important that this work ensures that the planning system helps to address the climate emergency, with policies and plans which support sustainable development in the appropriate places.

We are also a key statutory consultee (Roads and Rivers) to the development management system. DfI Roads receives c. 45% of all statutory consultations for planning applications on an annual basis.

Applications received, decided and approved



Statutory Consultations Received 2021/22



Planning Improvement

An ambitious Planning Improvement Programme is being delivered in collaboration with the councils to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system. An interim Regional Planning Commission has been established to provide advice and support to this important work, which will involve focused improvement in a range of areas including legislation, policy, practice, resourcing and governance.

Managing our Assets

The Department is responsible for the management of significant public sector assets.

Road Network Assets

With over 26,000km of roads, 9,700km footways, 5,800 bridges, 290,000 street lights and a total value of approximately £30.8bn, the road network is Northern Ireland's largest and most valuable strategic infrastructure asset. Its presence and quality is an implied assumption in all public services but has not been given priority or appropriate resources even for essential maintenance. This is a strategic risk to our future prosperity, safety and well-being.

Road maintenance expenditure is consistently below the required levels. For example, road surface structure improvements (i.e. structural maintenance) expenditure over the past decade has totaled almost £1bn; however, this amounts to less than two-thirds of the expenditure and has led to a road maintenance backlog of more than £1.2bn. This leads to an asset that deteriorates more quickly and results in more costly and complex interventions in the future. Put simply, it is better value to maintain the asset well and in a timely fashion. The failure to properly maintain the roads asset is a strategic risk to our future prosperity, safety and well-being.

Flood Protection Assets

As well as managing approximately 426 km of raised flood defence embankments and flood walls, 26km of coastal defences, and 12 control structures, the Department maintains an extensive below ground drainage network of over 364km of culverts. In addition, it is responsible for managing and maintaining 136 hydrometric stations used to measure and record water levels. To maintain or upgrade this infrastructure to acceptable standards will require an additional investment compared to previous years of £13million per year, to avoid increased numbers of failing assets and increased flood risk to life and property.

In addition to those assets managed by the Department, our Arms Length Bodies, via funding from the Department, are responsible for the management of public transport assets such as our railways, trains, bus fleet, stations; our waterways and associated weirs, locks, quays and jetties; and our water and waste water assets such as Waste Water Treatment Works and reservoirs.

Each of these built assets requires regular, routine, maintenance. Ongoing investment, on an annual basis, is required if the lifespan of our assets is to be maximised. However, it has not always been possible to fund the level of maintenance required. Addressing the backlog of maintenance and avoiding further degradation will require increased investment. We need to be able to maintain our existing infrastructure before we expand it.

Typical Lifespan of our Infrastructure



Train 25 years



Sewer 200 years



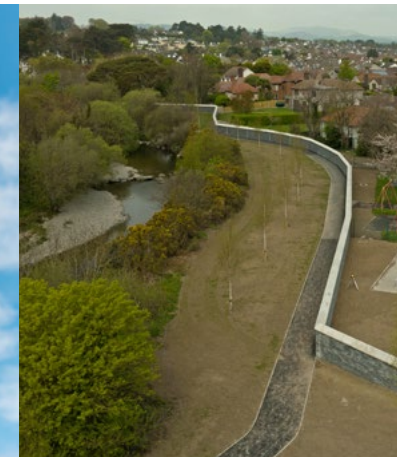
Mains water 100 years



Road Surface 15-20 years



Traffic lights 20 years



Flood defence 100 years



Footpaths 25 years



Railway Track 30 years



Vehicles 9 years



Bus 15 years



LED Street light 20 years



Bridge 120 years

The Ripple Effect

The Need for Long Term Planning and Investment

Given the nature of the Department's work, particularly in relation to managing, maintaining and developing our transport and water infrastructure, we need to be able to balance ongoing maintenance with the development of new assets. Some of these major projects can take a number of years, if not decades, to go from conception to delivery. To maximise our human and financial resources and retain the strategic capability we need, a long term, strategic approach to both maintaining public assets and managing and funding new projects across the NICS, and indeed the wider public sector, would be of considerable value.

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland provides an opportunity to proactively promote and engage with stakeholders and the wider public to outline the choices that are required to maintain and develop our infrastructure in line with wider Executive and public aspirations, meet climate change commitments and live within budget. It also provides an opportunity to demonstrate how projects could be prioritised and provide a timeline for this strategic investment.



**Underinvestment in Infrastructure -
The Ripple Effect**

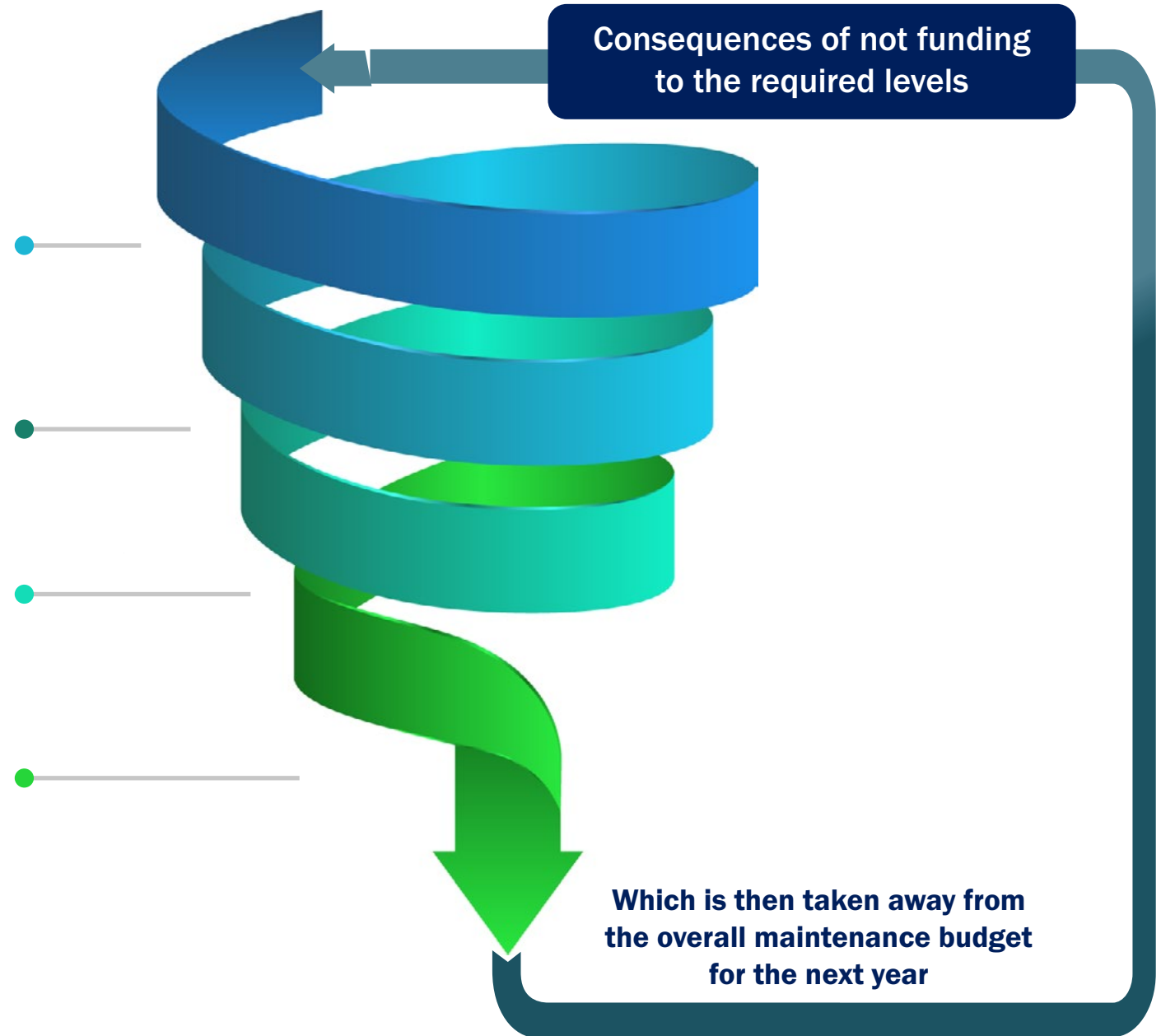


Not funding our infrastructure to the required level means that maintenance is delayed or reduced in scale.

Infrastructure becomes more unreliable and can expose the public to greater health and safety risks or a reduction in services and requires more short term repairs.

These repairs often take longer to complete, are more expensive or occur more regularly leading to more delays and disruption or closures.

The infrastructure is then in place for longer than it is designed for and when required to be replaced costs more to undertake.



Consequences of not funding the Department to the correct level



On People

More leaks

More potholes

More collisions & injuries

More flooding

More bursts

More water outages

More delays



On the Planet

More damage by extreme weather

More congestion

More pollution

Higher carbon footprint



On our Economy

More money required to fix infrastructure in the long term

Less capacity for new development

More claims

Less investment

Climate Change

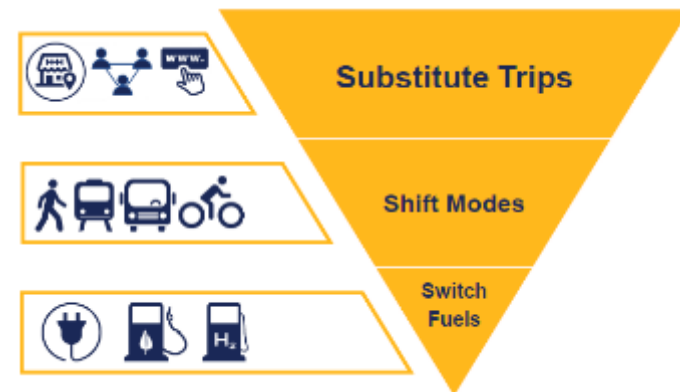
The Department for Infrastructure has an important role to play in how we collectively respond to the challenges presented by climate change and protect our natural environment. The Department is working collaboratively with the other Departments and key stakeholders to develop a Climate Action Plan including Transport and Infrastructure Sectoral Plans which are a requirement of the recently introduced Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.



Transport

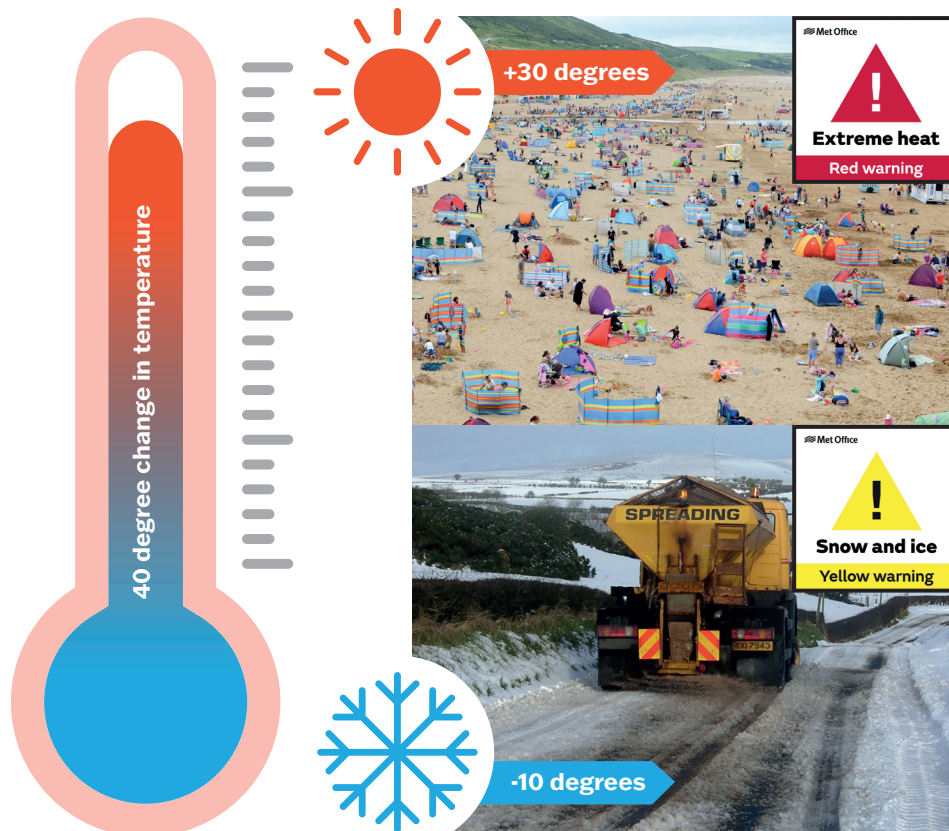
Using a hierarchical approach to transport provision we can encourage modal shift from private cars and reduce carbon emissions by:

- **Substituting Trips** - Removing the necessity for travel by encouraging digitisation, delivery of online services, working from home and car share schemes.
- **Facilitating Active Travel Options** - prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling schemes.
- **Investing in Public Transport** – Providing clean, affordable public transport, improving integration between active travel and public transport, providing better information on transport options and introducing smart and integrated ticketing.
- **Switching Fuels** – Implementing an EV Infrastructure Action Plan, decarbonising our Public Transport Passenger Bus Fleet, Rail Services and Public Sector Fleet.



Reducing Energy and Resource Usage

- We are also improving energy efficiency and recycling measures across the DfI estate and replacing streetlights with lower energy LED's.
- Using cleaner energy – we are working with NI Water to develop wind and hydro power for our water and sewerage infrastructure.



Based on figures taken from 2022

Other key interventions

- We are reviewing existing **regional planning policy** to take account of the climate emergency, as well as other policy and technology developments in respect of Climate Change and carbon reduction, renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Sustainably managing **the water** in our rivers, lakes, and loughs to help us use water more efficiently in our homes and businesses so we take less from our natural environment.
- Using a Strategic **Drainage Infrastructure Plan**, **Flood Risk Management Plans** and Sustainable Drainage Systems to provide adaptation measures and reduce energy use.
- **Decarbonising** buildings across our estates.
- **Grass cutting and verge management** to ensure a greater emphasis on environmental protection and enhancement – cutting less grass where safe to do so and promoting 'Don't Mow Let it Grow' sites and biodiversity enhancement projects on the NI road network.
- **Reducing our carbon emissions** in our approach to infrastructure by improving the energy efficiency and adaptability of buildings; increasing the use of low or zero carbon energy sources, re-using land, buildings and materials and reducing carbon emissions in construction processes and techniques.

Way Forward

This document outlines the main aspects of the Department's work and the challenges it faces if we are all to have access to the infrastructure related essential services required to underpin our economic and societal well-being. Through focusing on our three pillars of water, transport and planning we are clear on what we do, why we do it and how we spend public money.

The solutions to the issues outlined within this document are well understood. A planned and phased approach to the management and maintenance of our public assets and to transport, water and planning services over the next five years would facilitate sustainable development, begin to address regional imbalances, reduce dangerous emissions and help to grow our economy.

To achieve this, we are focused on:

- prioritising our work to focus on the delivery of our core services;
- enhancing the effectiveness of the planning system;
- considering how to transform our services and plan for the future in the context of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022;
- building our delivery capacity in these priority areas; and
- communicating more effectively with our delivery partners and the public.

However, it is acknowledged that in the current fiscal environment, we must work within the financial envelope provided to the Department. This will inevitably constrain the Department's progress and difficult decisions in relation to prioritisation will be required. The Department simply cannot meet the expectations currently placed on it within its current budget.

The Department's Business Plan, available on the DfI website, provides further detail of our deliverables for the current financial year.

Contact

Any queries related to this document and its contents should be sent to info@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

Alternative versions of this document can be sought from the Strategy and Business Planning unit by post: Room 402, Clarence Court, 10-18 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8GB Telephone: 02890 540540 (for text relay service start with 18001) Email: info@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

The Department is committed to complying with its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 in all that we do. The Department implements its Equality Scheme by promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

If you wish to highlight a problem with a road or street please log this via the NI Direct website [Problems with roads and streets | nidirect](#). This site has been developed to ensure the reporting of road defects is as efficient as possible by removing the need for people or their political representatives to write or email the Department.