

APPENDIX 1

Draft Response

Road Safety Strategy and Research Branch
Road Safety Division
Department of the Environment
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

Dear Sir / Madam

Consultation on preparing a new Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010 – 2020

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the above document. Belfast City Council is fully supportive of the vision articulated in the strategy to “. . . make Northern Ireland’s roads as safe for all road users as anywhere in the world”.

The key challenges identified in the document are realistic and are supported by detailed evidence presented in the introductory sections of the report.

Our response highlights issues and actions that are particularly relevant to the urban nature of the Belfast City Council area. The response has been informed by the consultation seminar hosted jointly by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and yourselves. It is, however, forwarded separately from the collective views expressed in the NILGA submission.

General comments

1. Paragraph 5.3 of the report commits to working with any new local authorities, when the structure has been finalised, to explore ways to build capacity to reduce casualties at local level, identify local road safety issues and objectives and determine how we can work together to address local needs and priorities. Irrespective of agreement on new structures, Belfast City Council would wish to progress discussion on how road safety may be improved at both a city and at community level within the city. Belfast has the highest number of fatal and serious collisions amongst the existing 26 authorities. The Council is intending to pursue the development of a community planning approach to collectively develop and address key issues for the city. The issue of road safety would fit within this framework
2. In relation to the comments above, the measures relating to “lower level” Road Safety plans, allowing local government to link with and influence the overall government framework, are welcomed (Actions 115, 117). The report acknowledges links between deprivation and higher levels of accidents. The localised approach advocated is deemed beneficial to address specific community circumstances in Belfast.
3. The Council welcomes the inclusion of performance indicators and targets within the draft report. It is understood that a supporting Action Plan will be

developed to add detailed specification to the proposed action measures. It is critical that the resource consequences of each measure are clearly articulated and sources of funding are identified. It should be noted that without the power of 'wellbeing' (to be given to councils as part of the RPA process) there is no legal vices for councils to incur expenditure on road safety. Additionally, Local Authorities are facing significant cost reductions.

4. Action Measure 119 outlines the need for better understanding and co-ordination of road safety roles and initiatives. Belfast City Council is strongly supportive of the need for clear lines of responsibility to be agreed and adhered to. Leadership of the Roads Safety strategy needs to be clear as does accountability for delivery of respective actions.

Specific comments

Safer Roads - Speed

5. Belfast City Council would wish to support pilot schemes regarding 20mph speed limits in residential and other urban areas and other urban speed reduction initiatives (Action 5, 10, 12). We would note, however, that air quality obligations residing with Local Authorities may be impacted by speed limits in urban locations. It is assumed that appropriate environmental assessment of the consequences of lower speeds and associated increases in vehicle emissions will be conducted.

Road Treatments (Marking)

6. Belfast City Council would wish to be consulted on pilot schemes to consider removal of pedestrian guard railings (Actions 23, 30) and would support measures to reduce illegal road side trading and advertising to reduce the risk of collisions caused by driver distraction.

Pedestrian / Walking

7. In addition to the measures outlined, Belfast City Council would wish to have more prominent reference made to accommodating people with disability, particularly those with visual impairment (Actions 37 – 39, 108 – 109).

Walking and Cycling

8. Belfast City Council is committed to promoting cycling as a means of sustainable travel in the City. We would seek reassurance that all available measures are put in place to enhance safety for cyclist road users. The Council endorses the proposal for the establishment of an Active Travel Forum and would seek to be represented on the forum. (Actions 40 – 41, 107, 153).

Working with Others

9. Belfast City Council welcomes the commitment to work with representatives and associations to promote and assure road safety. In particular we recognise the need to support migrants who comprise an increasing proportion of the local population. We would seek involvement in the ambition to work with sporting associations given Council's role in sports development. (Actions 113-114)

Vehicle Use

10. The proposal to develop measures to educate on legal and safety issues regarding vehicles not normally used on public roads is important. Belfast City Council is currently addressing the unlawful use of vehicles such as quads on Council open spaces. We would welcome the opportunity to have input to the development of this measure (Action 143)

Miscellaneous

11. A possible additional action in the Safer Vehicles section of the draft might make reference to new vehicle technologies. Belfast City Council is working with officials from DoE and DRD on a proposal to promote the use of electric powered vehicles. It is important that all road safety consequences of such vehicles are considered.