



Subject:	DfI Call for Evidence on a potential Infrastructure commission for NI - draft response
Date:	9 th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director Place and Economy
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<i>After Committee Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>After Council Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Some time in the future</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to update members on the current status of the potential Infrastructure Commission as proposed by DfI Minister Nicola Mallon in July 2020, and to provide detail on the draft response to the Call to Evidence regarding the establishment of an Infrastructure Commission for NI.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the Minister for the Department for Infrastructure’s intention to undertake a review of the need for an Infrastructure Commission for NI, and the ongoing process to provide recommendations to the Minister on the role and scope of a potential Infrastructure Commission; • Note that the Belfast Commissioner for Resilience, the Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner and Solace will provide evidence to the Call for Evidence currently underway by the panel established to undertake the review and report. • Agree the draft response for Belfast City Council to the Call for evidence that was uploaded to the panel on the 3rd September, subject to committee approval and council ratification.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>In July 2020 the Minister for the Department for Infrastructure, Nicola Mallon, announced the establishment of a panel to advise her on the specific row and value of an Infrastructure Commission and how it might be established and operate.</p>
3.2	<p>The role of the panel is to undertake a short, sharp, focused exercise to reflect the hard infrastructure that falls within the remit of the DfI; drainage and inland waterways, public transport, roads and cycling infrastructure. A final report, including a number of recommendations is to be presented to the minister by the end of September 2020.</p>
3.3	<p>Council were notified on the 28th of August that the panel is now established and that a call for evidence would be held between the 3rd and 7th September. The panel members include senior representatives from the following organisations; Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE); Confederation of British Industry (CBI); Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT); University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre; Infrastructure Commission for Scotland; Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL).</p>
3.4	<p>Given the timeframes set by the panel council officers provided a draft response to the Call for Evidence, subject to committee and Council approval. Members should also note that the Belfast Commissioner for Resilience, Grainia Long, the Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner, Jayne Brady, and that Solace, represented by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council CX) provided evidence to the panel on the 7th September.</p>

3.5	<p>The draft response for Belfast City Council as updated on the 3rd September is as per attached Appendix 1 of this report.</p>
3.6	<p>The draft response supports the establishment of an independent, expert-led Infrastructure Commission, accountable to the executive and reporting to either the Minister for Infrastructure or the Minister for Finance. A recommendation is made that the Infrastructure Commission should be involved in the early process of strategic planning and the prioritisation of strategic project delivery, and that the commission should also have a challenge/oversight role in the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure adherence to, and delivery of green, sustainable and inclusive infrastructure in the delivery of the longer-term aspirations and outcomes.</p>
3.7	<p>The draft response recommends that the commission should have the authority to challenge and to provide advice on infrastructure delivery and prioritisation, and to ensure that infrastructure delivery is not undertaken in a siloed approach, but should take into account community and place making focused infrastructure to enable the long-term sustainable development of the city's social, environmental and economic inclusive growth.</p>
3.8	<p>The response also identifies the need for Belfast, as the region's economic driver to have a strategic role in influencing, leading and delivering cross-cutting infrastructure requirements based on community planning, and enabling enhanced greener, sustainable and inclusive infrastructure. It identifies Global cities as taking on a greater role in leading economic and place making provision, and collaborative working such as the Bolder Vision for Belfast as shown how local authorities in NI can lead and influence the direction of travel for the city residents and users across economic, social and sustainable provision.</p>
3.9	<p>The draft response also identifies the role of the potential Infrastructure Commission in ensuring that infrastructure delivery is focused on the challenges of changing climate and decarbonisation of the economy, on increasing recognition of the value of the environment to the economy and social well-being and the importance of improving air quality, increasing efficiencies of infrastructure behavioural change, as well as the realisation of benefits with increasing digitalisation.</p>
3.10	<p>A recommendation is also made that when considering stakeholder engagement the commission should take into account the importance of the role of local communities when considering infrastructure provision, ensuring that communities are adequately</p>

	represented, informed and enabled to take part in the formation of infrastructure planning, design and decision making.
3.11	Members are asked to note that further updates and reports from the panel and the potential Infrastructure Commission will be brought back to committee when made available from the Department of Infrastructure.
3.12	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> There are no financial implications at this time.
3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> It will be the role of the DfI to consider the Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	Appendix 1: Draft Response to the DfI Call for Evidence on a potential Infrastructure commission for NI