



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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**From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
Nichola Mallon MLA**

Sara Steele
Democratic Services Officer
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Our reference: CORR-0296-2021
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Dear Ms Steele,

ACCESS TO THE BELFAST HILLS

Thank you for your letter of 10th February to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the motion passed by Council to create better access to the Belfast Hills. The Minister has asked me to reply on her behalf.

The Minister has made it clear that she is keen on improving access for walking and cycling and getting people to do so rather than driving. The Belfast Hills have proven to be very popular destinations for many but unfortunately most people arrive there by car. She would like to see better active travel access to this destination, particularly for the benefit of the 33% of Belfast residents who do not have access to a car.

The Minister believes that greenways and similar community paths will ultimately create public spaces that will enhance our quality of life and leave an enduring legacy to be enjoyed by future generations. The actual development of greenway projects is, in general terms, the responsibility of local Councils rather than the Department but the Department is keen to work closely with you and other stakeholders to support the development of active travel routes.

The Minister has committed £20 million for blue / green infrastructure and to working with Councils and other partners in identifying and delivering active travel and greenway projects. £750,000 from that fund has already been allocated for the development of the Forth Meadow Community greenway, which will provide part of an important active travel link to the Belfast hills.

In addition, in January, the Walking and Cycling Champion, Liz Loughran, had initial discussions involving the National Trust and Belfast City Council about the potential for developing better walking and cycling access to this area, particularly for the benefit of the nearby communities of North and West Belfast.

The parking situation on the Divis Road highlights the importance of developing better ways of travelling to the Belfast Hills. In the meantime the Department, at the Minister's request, continues to work with the National Trust and other partners to try to address congestion difficulties.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KMcFerran', written in a cursive style.

KATHRYN McFERRAN
Private Secretary for the Minister for Infrastructure