
Draft Budget 2025-26

Equality Impact Assessment

February 2025

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1. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department of Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Department’), in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- people with different religious beliefs;
- people from different racial groups;
- people of different ages;
- people with different marital status;
- people with different sexual orientations;
- men and women generally;
- people with or without a disability;
- people with or without dependants; and
- people with different political opinions.

1.2 In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.

1.3 The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 January 2007, introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

1.4 Equality Scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to do an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

1.5 The Department has carried out equality screenings on the draft Budget outcome for the Department, for both resource and capital, and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment. These can be viewed on:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/dfi-draft-budget-2025-26-equality-impact-assessment-consultation>

1.6 Both the resource and capital screening forms screened out the requirement to carry out an EQIA, given the improved draft budget outcome in comparison to previous years. However, as this draft Budget outcome for the Department did not provide funding for everything that the Department wanted to do, prioritisation will be required. This EQIA focuses on the spending areas where the draft budget outcome would not allow the Department to deliver at the level it wanted to and seeks the equality impacts of those.

1.7 To request an alternative format please contact:

Department for Infrastructure
Financial Planning and Management Branch
1st Floor James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA
Email: budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

2. Equality Impact Assessment

2.1 The process of setting Budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young or older people, etc. In distributing the resource and capital budgets, the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts.

2.2 To comply with its Section 75 obligations, the Department has completed equality screenings, on both the resource and capital budget, which given the improved draft budget outcome in comparison to previous years, was screened out for the purposes of carrying out an EQIA. However, in recognising that prioritisation of spending areas will be required, it is carrying out an EQIA on the spending areas where it may not be possible within the draft budget outcome to deliver at the level the Department wanted to.

2.3 The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any subgroups within those categories.

2.4 When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in April 2001 (revised 2005) which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

Step 1 Defining the aims of the policy.

Step 2 Consideration of available data and research.

Step 3 Assessment of impacts.

Step 4 Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Step 5 Formal consultation.

Step 6 Decision and publication of the EQIA results.

Step 7 Monitoring for adverse impact.

3. Policy Aim

Draft Budget 2025-26

- 3.1 The Executive agreed a draft 2025-26 Budget, which provided each Department with a resource and capital draft budget allocation subject to equality consideration and final decisions by the Executive.
- 3.2 The draft budget agreed by the Executive, is presented at an overall departmental outcome level. Following agreement by the Executive on the Final Budget 2025-26 the Department will consider the equality impact of this outcome for the Department before any decisions are taken by the Minister.
- 3.3 Departments are required to screen proposed draft budget outcomes in line with Equality Commission Northern Ireland guidance and should an EQIA be required, this will be published to support the consultation process.

The Department for Infrastructure

- 3.4 The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the maintenance, development and planning of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Through its focus on transport, water and planning, the Department manages and protects in the region of £37bn of public assets (excluding NI Water and Translink) that improve people's quality of life. These assets include over 26,000km+ of roads, around 5,900 bridges, around 10,000km of footways, approximately 300,000 streetlights, 426km of raised flood defence embankments and flood walls, 26km of coastal defences and approximately 366km of below ground culverts. NI Water manages a further £4bn of assets and Translink £1bn.
- 3.5 The Department has a vast and wide-ranging remit. Its responsibilities are grouped into three key delivery areas: Transport, Water and Planning.

Transport

- 3.6 The Department is responsible for the oversight and facilitation of surface transport in Northern Ireland. The main tools available for the delivery of the Department's transport vision are the development of Transport Policy, the management of the Road Network Asset (including the promotion of road safety) and providing funding and sponsorship of Translink which delivers the public

transport network. The Department is developing a new Transport Strategy which will set out the new vision for our transport system here, placing climate change and connecting people at its heart. The Transport Strategy will signal the future direction of transport, provide the context in which decisions, within and beyond government, will be made and set out the strategic framework for future transport investment decisions.

- 3.7 The Department sponsors the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) which is the parent company of Northern Ireland's only publicly owned bus and rail company, Translink. The Department is also responsible for ensuring the delivery of the Strangford ferry and the management of the Rathlin ferry. The Department further provides grant funding to support the delivery of Community Transport and advisory services including rural Dial-a-Lift, urban Disability Action Transport Scheme, Shopmobility services and the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC).
- 3.8 The Department also has responsibility for some aspects of the governance of Trust Ports and the development of airports.
- 3.9 The Department has a number of key responsibilities to ensure that everyone has access to safe and accessible travel. For this to happen, the Department has a statutory responsibility to promote good road safety. An Executive approved Road Safety Strategy and accompanying action plan has been developed by the Department and stakeholder partners, to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads.
- 3.10 Another key part of this is done through the Department's agency - the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) which 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.

Water

- 3.11 The Department is responsible for setting the strategic direction for water, wastewater and drainage policy across Northern Ireland including developing

water, flooding and sustainable drainage legislation as well as the sponsorship of NI Water.

3.12 NI Water is an arm's length body of the Department and a Government owned Company with the Department as sole shareholder. NI Water is the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for Northern Ireland. NI Water provides approximately 605m litres of drinking water every day to 920k households and businesses and treats approximately 360m litres of wastewater from 750k homes and businesses before safely returning it to the rivers and sea.

3.13 The Department also sponsors Waterways Ireland, one of six North South Implementation Bodies, established to manage, maintain, develop, and restore specific inland waterways, principally for recreational purposes.

3.14 The Department is responsible for the management of flood risk which includes the maintenance of our river and sea defences, construction of flood alleviation schemes, informing development decisions and developing flood maps.

3.15 DfI is the lead government Department for the strategic coordination of the emergency response to severe weather events, including flooding, emergency planning and processes, which are developed in conjunction with multi-agency partners.

Planning

3.16 The Department is responsible for the strategic direction and production of regional policy for land use planning.

3.17 DfI develops planning legislation, provides guidance and oversight of the 'two tier' planning system and works with partners in local government and the wider community to create healthy living places. The Department also processes a small number of regionally significant and called in planning applications.

3.18 The Department, with local government and stakeholders, is also taking forward a Planning Improvement Programme. An interim Regional Planning Commission

has been established to provide advice and support, and the programme for change and improvement focuses on a wide range of work areas including legislation, policy, practice, resourcing and governance.

3.19 DfI also promotes sustainable transport and are working with local government as councils prepare local development plans and local transport plans that have an important role in carbon reduction and the development of sustainable communities.

Transformational Initiatives

3.20 As part of delivering its responsibilities for Transport, Water and Planning, the Department is taking forward transformational initiatives across a number of key policy areas. These include Embedding Inclusion within the Department; Climate Change; Intelligent Road Maintenance; Blue-Green Water Management; Planning and Major Projects Programme.

4. Draft Budget 2025-26

Draft Resource Budget

- 4.1 The Draft Resource Budget outcome for the Department of £633.3m is an increase of £73.8m (13% increase) from the Department's opening 2024-25 resource budget, and an increase of £22.5m (3.7% increase) from the Department's current 2024-25 resource budget position.
- 4.2 This is a welcome increase in the Department's draft resource budget allocation and is reflective of the historic underfunded baseline that the Department has faced for many years, however, this does not fully meet the requirements of the Department and therefore decisions on prioritising the budget will be needed.
- 4.3 This allocation will enable the Department to meet its highest priority measures and could allow an increase in the level of service that has been provided in its essential services such as an increase from the limited level of service for essential road maintenance and flood risk management.
- 4.4 The Department expects that exceptional costs, outside of its control will be funded centrally, such as the increase in employers NIC to be introduced from 1 April 2025 and Bear Scotland (holiday pay) liabilities. Transformation projects will be progressed if additional funding is provided from the Transformation Fund.
- 4.5 The impact of the increased employers NIC and increased minimum wage on service providers, such as community transport providers, will need to be considered as part of any budget decisions, recognising the strong support for this service from the Department's 2023-24 Budget Equality Impact Consultation, as any reduction in services could have negative impacts on all S75 categories especially Age, Disability, Dependants and (Men and) Women.
- 4.6 Given the increase in the Department draft resource budget outcome, when compared to previous years, the Department is proposing the options below in allocating its draft resource budget outcome.
- Increase the level of funding for essential road maintenance, to allow the level of service to ramp up towards a standard level of service, which is an increase

in the limited level of service that the Department has been delivering for many years;

- Increase the level of funding for flood risk management towards a standard level, which is an increase in the limited level of service that the Department has been providing for many years;
- Increase the level of funding for road safety advertising, and to include transport decarbonisation communications;
- Increase the opening resource budget for NI Water, an increase of £11.5m (8% increase);
- Increase the opening resource budget for Translink, an increase of £7m (5% increase);
- Provide DVA with its 2025-26 subsidy in full;
- Fund Waterways Ireland to its approved 2025 Business Plan; and
- Fund business as usual climate action plan enabling actions.

4.7 Proposed outcomes from the draft 2025-26 resource budget, compared to opening 2024-25 resource budgets by key spending area within the Department are set out in the table below.

Business Area	2024-25 Opening Budget	2025-26 Draft Budget Proposed options outcome
	£m	£m
ALBs		
NI Water	137.7	149.2
Translink	143.95	151.1
Driver Vehicle Agency (subsidy only)	-	8
Waterways Ireland	5.2	4.6
Total	286.9	312.9
Department		
Transport and Road Asset Management	125.5	155.3
Water and Departmental Delivery	39.9	46.9
Climate, Planning and Public Transport	4.8	5
People Directorate	0.4	0.9
Salaries	103.3	112.3
Total	273.9	320.3
Overall Total	560.7	633.3

4.8 No decisions have been taken by the Minister on the distribution of the Department's budget, this is based on a scenario of proposed options following the outcome of the Draft budget allocation. Decisions will be made following Executive agreement on the final budget and consideration of responses received from this Consultation.

4.9 The spending areas which under this scenario would not be funded to the level that the Department wanted to are detailed below:

- Essential road maintenance will not be delivered at the total level identified to allow ramping up to a standard level of delivery, although the level of delivery would be higher than in previous years where it was a limited service level;
- Flood risk management would not be delivered at the full standard service level, although the level of delivery would be higher than in previous years where it was a limited service level;

- Transformative projects would not be progressed unless additional funding is provided;
- The Department's 2025-26 pay award will need to be managed in-year through staff vacancy management;
- Emergency response costs if required would require additional funding;
- Climate Action plan enabling actions which are over and above business as usual requirements are not funded, however this will still allow the Department to progress a significant element of these; and
- NI Water and Translink to deliver efficiencies/reductions to manage any shortfall against requirements identified.

Capital Budget

4.10 The agreement of a capital budget for the Department will allow progress to be made on key infrastructure schemes and capital maintenance of vital infrastructure, which will benefit all S75 groups. However, this progression will be subject to the budget outcome, which limits the scale of what can be achieved. This means that there will be a prioritisation of which schemes progress in this financial year.

4.11 The Department's 2025-26 Draft Capital Budget outcome is £932.7m, of which £390.7m is ringfenced for specific schemes and £542.1m for general allocation. However, it still falls short of the overall requirement of £1.4bn.

4.12 This is the largest capital budget ever received by any NICS Department, and the third highest combined draft capital and resource budget across all departments. This draft budget is an increase on last year of £112.6m representing an increase of almost 14%, highlighting the important role infrastructure has in our society.

4.13 In line with previous years and good financial management the Department over plans against its capital budget allocation. This reflects that capital schemes can face delays and therefore costs can reduce in year; and DfI has historically

benefitted from additional in-year capital allocations through the monitoring round process. For the purposes of this consultation, an overplanning amount of £42.8m has been added to the draft budget figure to give a total draft figure for allocation of £975.5m. By overplanning the Department seeks to maximise the budget outcome to effectively spend in-year.

4.14 Proposed outcomes from the draft 2025-26 capital budget, compared to opening 2024-25 capital budgets by key spending area within the Department are set out in the table below.

	Opening 2024-25 £m	Proposed 2025-26 £m
Ringfenced Allocations (provided for specific schemes)		
Flagship - A5	88.5	189.8
Flagship – A6	6.4	5.9
Flagship - Belfast Transport Hub	79.9	39.9
City Deal – Lagan Bridge	0.5	2.7
City Deal – Belfast Rapid Transit 2	5	20.0
City Deal – Newry Southern Relief Road	1.3	1.3
City Deal – A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass	0.9	16.7
City Deal – Strabane Footbridge	-	1.2
City Deal – Derry Riverfront	-	1.1
EU Matching Funding (Enterprise Rolling Stock)	6.4	6.4
EU peace Plus NIW	0.9	
RRI Borrowing - NIW	-	105.7
Ringfenced Total	189.8	390.7
General Allocation		
NI Water	323.7	244.3
Translink (includes earmarked funding for Coleraine to Derry track renewal)	159.4	195.0
Driver Vehicle Agency	0.4	-
Waterways Ireland	2.4	2.7
Arms' Length Bodies Total	485.9	442.0
Transport and Road Asset Management	143.1	121.8
Rivers	21.4	15.4
Living With Water Programme	4.0	3.0
Water and Departmental Delivery	0.9	0.6
Climate, Planning and Public Transport	1.1	2.0
Department Total	170.5	142.8
General Allocation Total	656.4	584.8
Overall Total (including overplanning)	846.2	975.5

- 4.15 No decisions have been taken by the Minister on the distribution of the Department's budget, this is based on a scenario following the outcome of the Draft budget. Decisions will be made following agreement on the final budget by the Executive and consideration of responses received through this consultation.
- 4.16 In the proposed options outcome above, NI Water would receive £350m, Translink £241m and TRAM £360m (reflecting the increased spend on the A5). This would allow key infrastructure schemes to progress e.g. the A5, A1, City Deal schemes including Belfast Rapid Transit 2, the Enniskillen Bypass and the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge and also Phase 3 Derry to Coleraine track improvements, the Transport Hub, essential rail and bus safety works; and some structural maintenance of our road network as well as investment in water and wastewater treatment works and the public transport network.
- 4.17 As is usually the case, the scenario would not facilitate the high level of investment initially identified and therefore would likely result in the delay on progress for some schemes. However, these schemes would have to be considered in future years depending on priorities and budget availability, eg Park and Ride sites, Local Transport Safety schemes, reduced replacement of TRAM, Rivers and Translink fleet and reduced safety related works. There would also be a shortfall for NI Water of £188m compared to the Mid Term Review figure, but an increase of £26m compared to the 2024-25 opening budget. NI Water has advised previously that it will prioritise safe drinking water, resulting in less investment in wastewater works, including for new homes. It would also mean less capital maintenance spend on the road network and street lighting column replacement.
- 4.18 The draft budget allocation for NI Water will allow investment in water and wastewater treatment works including assisting with housing supply. However, it would not fund all of the Price Control (PC) 21 requirements, and it will be for NI Water as a Non-Departmental Public Body and Company to prioritise projects.

4.19 Translink would be able to progress key schemes including Phase 3 Derry to Coleraine track improvements, the Transport Hub and essential rail and bus safety works. Translink will however, not be able to progress all schemes, replace the required fleet and carry out all health and safety related work and so will be required to prioritise schemes within the draft general allocation of £195.8m, an increase of £36.4m compared to the 2024-25 opening budget.

5. Consideration of Available Data and Research

5.1 In assessing the impact of the 2025-26 Draft Budget policy against obligations under Section 75 of the 1998 Act the Department concluded that in relation to the overall draft resource budget position it is anticipated that the improved financial position will have a minor positive equality impact, and for the draft capital budget position a positive impact for priority schemes progressing this year, and a potentially minor negative impact due to schemes not able to be progressed this year.

5.2 However on the basis that the Department would not be able to deliver all it wanted to from the draft budget outcome, an EQIA is being carried out on the spending areas where the Department would not be able to deliver at the level it wanted to as set out in Section 4.

5.3 Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of monitoring of the impacts of the 2024-25 budget on Section 75 groups as well as available data, derived from (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- DfI Budget 2023/24 & 2024/25 Consultation Reports
- NISRA 2021 Census data
- The Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report
- The Gender Strategy Expert Advisory Report
- 2021 Travel Survey NI
- NIHRC Report – Social Housing
- THE TRANSPORT TRAP – How transport disadvantages poorer people
- The relationship between transport and loneliness - [Sustrans.org.uk](https://www.sustrans.org.uk)
- The impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland – NIHRC
- IMTAC publications
- AGE NI Lived Experience 2021
- OUTstanding in your field: Experience of LGBT people in rural areas
- NI Rural Women's Network

- Funding water infrastructure in Northern Ireland – NIAO
- DfI Audit of Inequalities
- Hate Motivation statistics (PSNI) 2023/24
- Inequalities in Mobility and Access in the UK Transport System
- Resilient Infrastructure for Northern Ireland – Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE)

6. Assessment of Impacts

Religious belief

- 6.1 The 2021 Census breakdown of religious belief in NI showed that 44% of the population are Protestant, 46% Catholic, 1.5% other religions and 9% no religion.
- 6.2 Data from the 2021 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland shows there are no differences between Protestants and Catholics when considering the percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport. Those who are other/none/refused to answer were more likely to make journeys using those travel modes.
- 6.3 The DfI Audit of Inequalities cites anecdotal evidence that religious belief may have some relevance in the provision of public transport services – particularly in respect of safety.
- 6.4 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's (NIHRC) on report on the impact of public spending shows that the social housing stock is also highly segregated by religious community background, with around 90% of social housing estates being single identity. Therefore, where social housing developments are restricted in areas of deprivation due to wastewater and sewerage constraints, this may impact on religious belief linked to economically deprived areas.
- 6.5 The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) in its recent report on funding water infrastructure has pointed out the inadequate investment in water infrastructure as a long-term issue in Northern Ireland. When deciding how best to use the available resources, statutory responsibility to ensure the water delivered to consumers is safe is at the forefront. This means that projects related to safe water delivery have tended to be prioritised over investment in the sewerage and wastewater infrastructure. This has the potential to restrict society in general in broad economic terms, environmentally and socially.

Political Opinion

- 6.6 In Census 2021, 42.8% living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'British', 33.3% 'Irish' and 31.5% 'Northern Irish'.

6.7 As a result of underfunding to the Department in previous years some difficult decisions and prioritisation of spending had to be taken. This has impacted on services and projects the Department has taken forward for example the impact of the prioritisation of water quality over investment in sewerage and wastewater infrastructure. As such this would likely have had an impact on people from different political opinions related to economically deprived areas where social housing development is restricted. However, there has been a focus in 2024-25 on releasing capacity constraints, with the previous Minister ring-fencing £19.5m for NI Water following the October monitoring round to enable 2,300 new properties to connect to the water and sewerage infrastructure.

Racial Group

6.8 The DfI Audit of Inequalities suggested that there is evidence that racial groups may have some relevance in the provision of public transport services. The report highlighted evidence that safety and perceptions of safety against racial hate crime on public transport is a particular consideration for those from minority ethnic groups. The Audit also highlighted evidence that asylum seekers and migrant workers may be more heavily reliant on public transport, citing evidence that a high proportion of this cohort is reliant on benefits or employed in low-paid jobs, so affordability of transport is a particular factor. The Audit identified language issues as a potential barrier to usage of public transport for new migrants and asylum seekers.

6.9 Since the introduction of the Immigration Act 2014, there have been restrictions on the ability of migrants to hold or obtain a driving licence. Additionally, asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they cannot work or receive benefits and rely on their Asylum Support payments from the Home Office. There are also impacts due to lack of rural services for asylum seekers, particularly to travel to Home Office appointments, health appointments, school etc. There has been a particular impact on children who when granted refugee status must move from Home Office supported accommodation lose the EA bus pass and can't afford to travel to sit exams at their schools.

Age

- 6.10 The 2021 census indicated that 17% of the 1.9m people resident in Northern Ireland are 65 and over.
- 6.11 Per the 2023-24 passenger analysis, older people make up approximately 17% of Metro passengers, 16% of NIR passengers and 11% of Ulsterbus passengers which equates to an overall 14% of Translink's 78.2m total passenger journeys. This evidence is based on the journeys taken by people over 60 years old who hold concessionary fare passes. This overall percentage compares to the percentage of older people (60+) in Northern Ireland which is 24% of the population based on NISRA population statistics.
- 6.12 The Concessionary Fares Scheme was established to promote access to public transport for members of the community who are most at risk of social exclusion, through providing free and discounted travel on bus and rail services. As of June 2024, 369,478 Smart Passes were held by older people. Comparing this to the 2023 mid-year population estimate of those persons aged 60 and over (461,430 persons), there was an approximately 80% uptake of these Smart Passes. The number of passes used by older people in 2023-24 was 224,919, which represents approx. 61% of active passes held by this demographic.
- 6.13 Translink carries around 109k school children to school every school day, representing just over 28% (21.7m journeys) of its total 2023/24 passenger journeys. This is comparable with the 2023 NISRA population statistics indicating that those aged up to 19, make up 25% of the NI population.
- 6.14 Children and young people make the majority of their trips by bus, to get to school or college, leisure facilities and work. Therefore, affordability can be a barrier for older children and young people. Lack of provision in rural areas particularly affects young people who cannot drive.
- 6.15 Road fatalities for 2022-23 were 61 compared to 73 for 2023-24. The number of fatal and serious casualties i.e. the number of KSI casualties overall stood at 995

in 2023-24, this was 60 more KSIs or a 6% increase on the previous year. In comparison with ten years ago, the number of fatal and serious collisions for 2023-24 was 178 more than 2014-15, with 188 additional KSI casualties. In 2024 nearly half (42%) of all people killed or seriously injured in road collisions were aged 34 or under; therefore, reductions to road safety may impact disproportionately on younger people.

6.16 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a particular difficulty to older people's ability to get out and about. There is also substantial anecdotal evidence from the Department's own advisory body, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), whose members typically identify poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure to be a major barrier to older people's ability to get around on foot.

6.17 Where social housing developments are restricted due to wastewater and sewerage constraints this may impact elderly people and children on social housing waiting lists.

Marital Status

6.18 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, in 2021 there were 7,921 marriages in Northern Ireland.

6.19 The 2017-19¹ Travel Survey for Northern Ireland data shows that compared to those who are married or in a civil partnership, single people were likely to make a higher percentage of journeys by walking or public transport. Similarly, those who are divorced or widowed were also more likely to use these travel modes than married people.

¹ The 2017/19 survey is the latest data available with sufficient achieved sample to analyse by marital status.

6.20 The NIHRC' report on the impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland highlights that single parents are more likely to be on benefits, and therefore, more likely to rely on public transport or social housing and to be women. The report also outlines that single working-age applicants make up 45% of the social housing waiting list, and a similar proportion of housing applications. Restricted provision of wastewater and sewage services is constraining social housing developments which may impact on people of differing marital status who are on social housing waiting lists.

Sexual Orientation

6.21 The Department's provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, the Continuous Household Survey 2022 records 0.7% of participants as gay/lesbian, 0.6% bisexual, 0.3% Other, 1% undetermined and 97.3% heterosexual.

6.22 The DfI Audit of Inequalities highlighted that LGBTQI+ people living in a rural area were three times as likely not to access services they are aware of because it is too far to travel compared to those living in an urban area. Seven in every eight LGBTQI+ people living in a rural area feel that it is important to have access to an LGBTQI+ support service in their local area. Therefore, cuts to public transport can negatively impact on the LGBTQI+ community.

Men & Women generally

6.23 The Department's services provide benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the draft resource budget on this group, of the responses to the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) in 2021 there were 1,520 respondents interviewed of which 712 (47%) were male and 808 (53%) female.

6.24 The 2021 TSNI results show that cycle usage is higher among males: 35% of males had cycled in the last 12 months compared with 25% of females. Therefore active travel spend promoting cycling may benefit men more. NISRA population statistics indicate that males and females make up roughly equal

parts of NI's 1.9m population. The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2021 showed there is no real difference in how frequently males and females use public transport: 21% of males and 25% of females said they travel by bus or train at least once a month.

6.25 Looking at journeys taken by the 16+ age group using any form of transport, on average men made a similar number of journeys (830) to women (868) in 2021. However, men tend to travel further, averaging 5,846 miles per year, compared to 4,725 miles for women in 2021. Women tended to use grant funded Community Transport services in 2023-24 more than men, Dial-a- Lift (69%), the Disability Action Transport Scheme (54% of new members) and Shopmobility (58%). This highlights the importance of these services to women.

6.26 In respect of public transport usage, the Department's Audit of Inequalities cites evidence that fewer women than men hold driving licences and may, thus, be more reliant on affordable public transport than men. The Gender Equality Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report also notes that greater dependence on public transport puts women at an economic disadvantage to men and highlights cost and availability of public transport services (in rural areas in particular) as a barrier to women's participation in society and civic life. The Department's Audit also highlights that safety and perceptions of safety against gender-based crime on public transport is more of a barrier to use of public transport for women than men. The Audit also notes that women are also more likely to have care-giving responsibilities that can necessitate multiple short journeys during a day. The Audit highlights that the typical "hub and spoke" design of public transport systems which may present challenges to these travel patterns. This may also have implications for general affordability and development of suitable ticketing options.

6.27 The Expert Advisory Panel Report to the Social Inclusion Gender Strategy identifies that women are more likely to be on benefits and low paid insecure work, or not work due to caring responsibilities.

6.28 The Report also highlights that women are generally more likely than men to live in poverty across their lifetimes. Lone parents (the majority of whom are women) are even more vulnerable to poverty. Welfare reform and austerity measures introduced over the last decade have hit women harder than men and Universal Credit has tended to have more negative impacts for women than men. Women have lower financial wellbeing, are less likely to save and are more likely to be poorer pensioners than men. Lone parents are particularly vulnerable to debt and are over-represented as clients of debt advice agencies compared to the general population.

6.29 The NI Rural Women's Network note that "Women are much less likely to have access to their own private transport than men. This means that women depend much more on public transport and are at an economic disadvantage to men.

6.30 The accessibility of education, training, work and childcare provision, and the cost of public transport, are factors in determining women's participation, especially in rural areas. The economic disadvantages of lack of access to transport is compounded by the impeded ability to access basic services and social isolation".

6.31 Men, particularly young men are heavily represented in road traffic fatalities and are a key target audience along with other vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, children and older motorcyclists.

6.32 PSNI Road Fatalities statistics shows that of the 71 people killed on Northern Ireland's roads in 2023-24, 52 were male and 21 were female.

Disability

6.33 The 2021 Census indicates that nearly 45% of households in Northern Ireland with one or more people in the household with a disability (40% for 2011 Census).

- 6.34 Results from the DfI Travel Survey in 2021 show that 20% of respondents said they had some difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem. There was no difference between men and women (both 20%).
- 6.35 Difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem increases with age: 6% of 16-34 year olds had difficulty with travel compared to 35% of those aged 65 and over.
- 6.36 In 2021, there was no real difference between those with and those without a disability when considering the percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport (26% for those with a disability, 27% for those without a disability).
- 6.37 21% of adults in Northern Ireland are classed as having a disability (NISRA). People with a disability are key users of the grant funded Community Transport services in 2023-24 and Shopmobility (100%). A key condition of membership of the Disability Action Transport Scheme is that an individual finds it difficult or impossible to use mainstream public transport. This highlights the importance of these services to those aged over 60.
- 6.38 The Western Health and Social Care Trust report on Audit of Sensory Support Services (2010) showed that access to transport is particularly important for people with disabilities who live in rural areas, as they are less likely to have access to a car than other households.
- 6.39 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a particular difficulty to disabled peoples' ability to get out and about. There is also substantial research and anecdotal evidence from the Department's own advisory body, IMTAC, whose members typically identify poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure to be a major barrier to disabled people's ability to both walk and wheel.

6.40 Unrepaired defects could lead to tripping hazards which would be especially dangerous for those with a mobility-related disability or visual impairment; therefore, this group would have a greater need for roads and footpaths to be kept in good repair to make it easier for this group to safely access the walking environment.

6.41 The Disability Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report outlines how access to transport is a long-standing issue which can have a direct impact on the ability of d/Deaf and disabled people to exercise their rights to, for example, independent living, education, employment, health, and access to culture, arts and leisure. The Report also outlines that the physical inaccessibility of public transport has been recognised by the CRPD Committee as a major factor in the ongoing marginalisation and exclusion of both disabled children and adults. While there have been improvements to public transport, many of the improvements have benefitted people travelling in the Greater Belfast area the most, with travel by public transport more challenging for people living in other areas.

Dependants

6.42 The 2021 NI Census indicated that 34% per cent of households in Northern Ireland contained dependent children and 40% contained at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability; made up of those households with dependent children (9.2%) and those with no dependent children (31%).

6.43 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a difficulty to all pedestrians but the latter highlights particularly the negative impact on those with young dependents who are reliant on using pushchairs or wheelchairs. There is also substantial research and anecdotal evidence from the Department's own advisory body, IMTAC, that poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure is a major barrier to people who use pushchairs for dependants to get around on foot.

- 6.44 As highlighted in the gender section women are more likely to be a single parent and claiming benefits, or to be earning low incomes working in insecure employment. As such this presents challenges for expectant mothers or parents with young children with regards to affording public transport and/or the availability of public transport, as well as limitation in transport choice when travelling with a young child. These are similar experiences to disabled people and older people, the accessibility and design of physical spaces can also affect parents' ability to travel freely with small children, especially if using pushchairs (DfI Audit of Inequalities).
- 6.45 The cost-of-living crisis can have a particular impact on families, with rising household costs, particularly childcare, meaning that more people may rely on benefits and public transport. This is evident in the [Women's Regional Consortium Report on 'Women's Experiences of the Cost-of-Living Crisis in Northern Ireland'](#), citing that: "Younger age groups were more likely to say that they had to turn the heating down or off – these are the households more likely to have children."
- 6.46 The DfI Audit of Inequalities evidenced some of the key challenges experienced by expectant mothers or parents with young children can include the lack of availability of public transport, as well as limitation in transport choice when travelling with a young child. Similar to disabled people and older people, the accessibility and design of physical spaces can also affect parents' ability to travel freely with small children, especially if using pushchairs.

Overall Assessment

- 6.47 The Department, in considering the evidence outlined above with the improved draft budget outcome for the Department in comparison to previous years concluded from its equality screening that there was a minor positive equality impact from the draft resource budget outcome. For the draft capital budget position the Department has concluded that there will be a positive impact for priority schemes progressing this year, and a potentially minor negative impact due to schemes not able to be progressed this year.

6.48 However on the basis that the Department would not be able to deliver all it wanted to from the draft budget outcome, an EQIA is being carried out on the spending areas where the Department would not be able to deliver at the level it wanted to as set out in Section 4.

7. Consideration of Mitigations / Alternative Policies

- 7.1 In considering the allocation of the Final 2025-26 Budget for the Department, deliberation will be given to the views sought in this EQIA, specifically the spending areas which may not be delivered at the level the Department would want, along with any mitigations that can be put in place within the funding envelope provided.
- 7.2 Where possible mitigations are required to be implemented, including capital schemes, prioritising health and safety and continuation of the Department's essential services will be a key consideration.

8. Consultation, Publication and Decision

- 8.1 The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its Capital and Resource budget. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implication of the proposed spending areas where the Department may not be able to deliver at the level it wanted to and about any mitigations that the Department could put in place.
- 8.2 Decisions on budget allocations cannot be taken until the Executive agrees a final budget.
- 8.3 The Department will consult over a 12-week period. Responses will help inform the Minister's decisions on the allocation of funds once the Executive agree a Final 2025-26 Budgets. These will also be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.
- 8.4 The Department would welcome your views on the equality impacts of the Department's 2025-26 Capital and Resource Draft Budget outcome and specifically on the areas of spend which may not be delivered to the level the Department would like. Screening assessments have been completed for both the resource and capital draft budget outcome and are available on the Department's website at:
- <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/dfi-draft-budget-2025-26-equality-impact-assessment-consultation>
- 8.5 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 5 June 2025, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2025-26 funds and to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2025-26.

8.6 Further consultations and equality screening will be considered, as appropriate, as plans to live within our Capital and Resource Budget 2025-26 are considered.

9. Monitoring

9.1 In keeping with this Department's commitments under its Equality Scheme, any adverse differential impact on equality of opportunity or good relations that may be identified through this consultation process will be taken into account in informing the Department's Budget 2025-26 distribution for services. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised Budget distributions and in-year bids.

10. Confidentiality

10.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this consultation, including information about identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

10.2 This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

10.3 For further information regarding confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office at:

Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland

10th Floor Causeway Tower,

9 James Street South

Belfast BT2 8DN

Telephone: 0303 123 1114

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

11. Consultation Questions

11.1 In consulting on both the Department's 2025-26 Capital and Resource Draft Budget outcome options views are welcomed on the following:

1. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 5 and 6 of the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they? Please provide details.
2. Are there any impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 6 of the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?
3. Please provide any adverse equality impacts on the spending areas that the Department may not be able to deliver at the level it wanted to as outlined in Section 4 of this document.
4. Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to the consultation process generally?

11.2 Comments can be submitted using the online survey which can be accessed at <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/dfi-draft-budget-2025-26-equality-impact-assessmen> on the NIdirect website.

11.3 If you are unable to respond using the online consultation facility, you can email your response via email to:

budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

11.4 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 5 June 2025 which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2025-26 funds when final budget allocations are agreed by the Executive.

The deadline for responses is 5 June 2025