



Network Development Branch  
Roads Service Headquarters  
Clarence Court  
10 – 18 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GB

By email to [jonathan.saulters@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.saulters@drdni.gov.uk)

## **EXPANDING THE STRATEGIC ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2015**

### **Quarry Products Association's Response**

Thank you for consulting the Quarry Products Association NI (QPANI) on the proposals on expanding the strategic road improvement programme. The QPA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals within the consultation document.

The QPANI is the principal trade association representing the Northern Ireland aggregates and quarrying industry. Our members produce over 95% of aggregates quarried in Northern Ireland – sand and gravel and crushed rock. They also produce agricultural and industrial lime, silica sand and marine dredged sand and gravel, as well as secondary and recycled aggregates, ready mixed concrete and asphalt products for roads.

#### **The QPA makes the following comments:**

The further investment of £400 million in the capital schemes set out in the consultation document is welcomed by the Quarry Products Association ( NI ). It is vitally important that investment is made where it will be of most benefit and deliver measurable economic success both to the local area and Northern Ireland as a whole. Roads should be viewed as “**economic corridors**” and should be planned in consultation with local business and other relevant Government Departments such as Planning Service, Invest NI and Department of Finance. The vision of this programme should be to ensure that Northern Ireland will remain competitive in the global international marketplace and that the fruits of our economic success will be shared more equally at regional level and throughout society.

One of the major obstacles to progressing schemes faster is our current planning system. The QPANI would recommend that a board similar to An Bord Pleanála in the Republic of Ireland be set up in Northern Ireland. On the 16th February 2006 Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. Dick Roche T.D., published the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure ) Bill 2006. The Bill is intended to provide a better service for all stakeholders, infrastructure providers, State bodies and the general public alike by providing for the introduction of a one step strategic consent procedure for certain types of major infrastructure. A new Division will be established within An Bord Pleanála to handle decisions on all major infrastructure projects - major local authority projects and motorways which are already the responsibility of the Board, strategic infrastructure consents, major electricity transmission lines and railway orders.

It is our belief that a body established in Northern Ireland with similar powers will undoubtedly ensure better service and delivery of the proposed programme, and indeed the entire Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Having reviewed the schemes set out in annex B the Association would make the following comments.

### **Eastern Seaboard Corridor**

We welcome all the listed schemes as strategically important. However we are puzzled that the A8 from Corrs Corner to Larne is not listed for upgrading to dual-carriageway. This is a recognised European Route and would recommend that it is incorporated within the new programme.

### **Northern Corridor**

Welcome the proposals as key strategic corridors.

However we would highlight the omission of the remainder of the A26 from the Ballycastle turn-off to Ballymoney from Annex B and C. This is a key strategic route and at the very least should have been considered for the provision of 2+1 carriageway widening schemes.

### **Western Corridor**

Welcome the proposals

### **South Western Corridor**

We welcome the proposals but would highlight the omission of the remainder of the route from Ballygawley to Enniskillen. This is a key strategic route and at the very least should have been considered for the provision of 2+1 carriageway widening schemes.

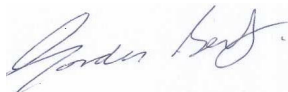
## Conclusion

The schemes identified in the consultation document will no doubt, if delivered, contribute significant to economic development at both a local and regional level. However before embarking on a major infrastructural investment such as this it is essential that Government identifies and secures longer term funding for structural maintenance of the roads network. Over the past number of years allocations for structural maintenance has fallen way short of what all expert opinion says is required. This has resulted in our existing roads network, worth some £20 billion, deteriorating to a level that will eventually lead to much higher reconstruction costs.

Therefore we would strongly recommend that in conjunction with the Strategic Road Improvement Programme that a Strategic Structural Maintenance Programme that will involve the “ring fencing” of maintenance budgets for a 3 to 5 year timescale be developed and implemented.

We would also strongly recommend that with the implementation of the Review of Public Administration and the subsequent reduction in Council numbers that adequate funding is given to the new Councils to address the significant under spend in the rural roads network.

Yours sincerely



Gordon Best

Regional Director QPANI