

## **Minute of the Northern Ireland Freight Council**

**Clifton House**

**19 October 2023**

### **Introduction**

- The chair welcomed members and reminded them of the need for competition law compliance.
- Members were informed about the new arrangement with the policy reports and asked for feedback.

### **External Presentation and Q&A Session**

#### **Eugene Heaney – Green Economy Team, Invest NI**

- Green Economy Team is a new team established late in 2022 to explore market opportunities for local indigenous businesses in external markets and to attract investment and expertise where there are gaps in the NI market.
- NI still has a long way to go, contributing 5.2% of UK Green House Gases (GHG) with only 3% of the UK population. With Climate Act targets, NI needs to do as much in the next 7 years as it has done in the last 33 years.
- Agriculture is the largest contributor to GHG emissions – 31%. NI feeds 10m people (5 times its own population). Transport makes up 17% of GHG emissions.
- Estimates indicate Hydrogen demand could be 20-35% of UK final energy consumption by 2050.
- With wind, water and land capacity, NI has huge potential for green hydrogen.
- Invest NI is keen to work with Logistics UK and members to gain a better understanding of operational needs and insights (e.g.) locations for hydrogen fueling infrastructure to best meet the needs of the logistics sector.
- Invest NI focus is not exclusively hydrogen. It is open to biomethane etc. if it better suits the sector.

### **Members discussion**

- Members asked about the timescales involved for provision of hydrogen infrastructure. Eugene said suppliers advise that infrastructure can be in place 18 months from planning permission.
- Members cited infrastructure as an obstacle to transition, but the biggest barrier is cost. Green vehicles can cost up to 3 times more than diesel. Significant investment is also needed for charging infrastructure, and this isn't always viable, especially on leased land. Greater storage in the NI Network is also needed. In short, the business case doesn't stack up.
- Members asked if there is any support from Government for operators to transition to alternatively fueled vehicles? Answer – nothing available now but Invest NI is talking to the Department for Economy about this.

**Action: Invest NI slides and Eugene's contact details to be circulated for members to reach out directly – [eugene.heaney@investni.com](mailto:eugene.heaney@investni.com)**

**Action: Eugene to share with NM Hydrogen Vehicle Case Study for circulation to NI members for feedback.**

**Action: Eugene to provide some high-level questions for circulation to members by NM to gather logistics industry information & insights.**

#### **Chris Tubridy – Employability and Skills Officer, Belfast City Council**

- Chris highlighted the criteria and processes for the Transport and Logistics Academy run by Belfast City Council and encouraged members to get involved if they have driver shortages or need to upskill workers.
- Almost all local councils have Transport Academies, so members are encouraged to get in touch with their council's Labour Market Partnership for details and information on how to become involved.
- The Employability & Skills Team & Labour Market Partnership in Belfast City Council want to work more closely with, & provide more support to, smaller/micro logistics businesses. As part of this they are looking at producing an Employers' Navigation Tool/App to direct employers to what provision is available to meet their business' specific needs.

#### Members discussion

- Members who have used the academy have benefited. One suggestion for improvement was ensuring participants go on site visits to understand the breadth of roles and responsibilities in logistics to help better prepare them for the workplace. **Action: Chris agreed to take this back to Workforce the training provider.**

**Action: Chris is compiling a new Transport and Logistics Employer Survey to identify current workforce and skills gaps in the industry. NM to circulate to NI members once completed. To ensure the needs of the industry are best met, NM encouraged all members to fill out this survey.**

#### **Northern Ireland Items (pg. 20-21)**

- NM gave an update on each item

#### Members discussion

**Action: NI Manifesto asks – members also added:**

- **extending the derogation for electric vans to NI.**
- **parity with the UK on legislation to increase the weight limits for ZEV by 2 tonne.**
- **parity in NI on the waiver of a driving test for car and trailer licence requirement code B+E.**
- **need for awareness-raising among van drivers of speed limits and the need to adhere to them.**
- **more driver welfare and rest facilities. Apple Green stations are the only facilities in NI, and they are not adequate.**

#### **UK Modal Councils & Secretary report**

- NM have an overview of the report and encouraged Council members to attend Road Council, and other councils and WGs where they have an interest to ensure the NI experience and voice is heard in discussions and policy making.

### **Parking restrictions**

- J Fenton gave an overview of this item.

### **Members discussion**

- What about the sole trader (ie plumber) whose van is their livelihood and has no access to a yard?
- Restrictions will impact out-of-hours contract services if contractors do not have on-call access to their van and equipment and can't respond within contracted timescales (i.e., respond within 4 hours) leading to surcharges or a loss of contract.
- Consensus - A proper definition of commercial vehicle is needed and a proportional response rather than a blanket one which harms businesses and industry.

### **Statutory role for fleet engineers**

- J Fenton gave an overview of this item.

### **Members discussion**

- This is a good thing to explore. Will it be a Competent Person or qualified person? What is the definition of a Fleet Engineer?
- How much will this cost?
- Viability depends on the size of fleet. It will be too costly if you have a very small fleet.
- With automation – is it an IT expert that will be needed or a Fleet Engineer?
- Increasingly the knowledge base of Transport Managers applying for jobs is very low. It seems many just pass the exam but don't have detailed knowledge or continue to build on their knowledge. Before this move to introduce another statutory role into the industry, the first step should be to get the TM (who already is on a statutory footing) right and ensure drivers are competent. There should be a legislative requirement for a refresher course for TM's CPC.

### **Schengen immigrations restrictions**

- J Fenton gave an overview emphasizing that this does not apply to NI.

### **AOB**

- NM reminded members of the dates for the next two meetings – **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February and Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**

**Action: NM reminded members of the NI Lunch on 3 November and to submit nominations for the Rising Star Awards which will be presented at the lunch.**

**Action: The Chair, Gary Barnes, asked members to consider hosting a Freight Council meeting as we aim to move to one Council meeting at a members' business each year.**

**Action: NM asked members for suggestions for speakers for future Freight Councils**

**Action: J Currie asked members if they would like to see a Van event next year. Members said yes.**

**Action: J Currie and NM asked members for their view on us holding a further Decarbonization Event next year. Members felt this would be useful. Members were asked for suggestions on speakers.**

**The Chair closed the meeting.**

### **Attendance**

Gary Barnes, Briggs Equipment

Fergal McGorman, Bryson Recycling

Andrew Wilson, TransLink

Andrew Weir, Sysco

Victor Carson, Almac Pharma

Ronnie Millar, Almac Pharma

Lynda Gregg, Antrim and Newtownabbey BC

Jeff Shaw, Ards and North Down BC

Ian Waide, Allied Bakeries (online)

Damien McKenna, Mannok Build (online)

Jayne Currie, Logistics UK

Josh Fenton, Logistics UK

Nichola Mallon, Logistics UK

### **Apologies**

John Purdy

Sarah Hards

Maire-Claire Reid

Stephen Thompson

David Hurley

Mark Lorimer