Newry Southern Relief Road – Stage 3 Consultation

Date: Monday 13th November 2023

Summary

Logistics UK remains highly supportive of the development and delivery of the Newry Southern Relief Road because of the positive impact it will have on freight transport, traffic movements, trade, the local and wider economy, the environment and residents and local businesses in the City of Newry. Members firmly support delivery of this strategic scheme because it will:

- reduce journey times and operational costs for freight movements.
- improve journey time reliability.
- reduce conflict between strategic and local traffic.
- improve access to Warrenpoint Port.
- improve road safety.
- reduce impact on the environment.

About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, representing the entire logistics industry and supporting, shaping and standing up for safe and efficient logistics. Our membership of more than 20,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning road, rail, inland waterways, sea and air as well as the buyers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers. As an organisation, we deliver services, representation and thought leadership, helping members and policy makers to seize new opportunities for the sector and the economy as a whole, right across the country.

What we represent

Logistics is a sector delivering an increasingly safe, sustainable and efficient system of national infrastructure – creating economic opportunities and linkages to the global trade network. Spanning land, water and air, it delivers for everyone, everywhere, every day.

- Logistics delivers big public value on small margins, ensuring the availability of the products households, businesses and public services rely on. It moves goods more than 200 billion tonne-km within the UK per year and enables the trade of more than £1 trillion of goods, while working hard to avoid adding pressure to the cost of living. This is a challenge with fuel and energy costs at a historic high and restrictions on logistics growing.

- The sector delivers smart, green, resilient growth and jobs. It contributes £163 billion to the economy each year (12% of UK non-financial GVA), employs 2.7 million people (8.2% of the UK workforce), pays £5 billion in revenue to Treasury through Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and Fuel Duty, in addition to other taxes. It is becoming ever more innovative and integrated – within businesses and between logistics sites and transport modes. Its key hubs provide a catalyst for further growth and investment, helping places to thrive.

- Logistics delivers for the future, as an essential system for growth. It underpins the whole economy, with an economic footprint three times larger than its direct GVA contribution, with the public sector and other private sector businesses spending 15% of their total input-related spending on logistics services per year.

Consultation response

The Northern Ireland transport and storage sector added £1.4 billion to the NI economy in 2021. This significant economic contribution, based on feedback from our members, would be boosted by improved strategic infrastructure along key economic corridors, including to and from key trading gateways. Newry is strategically located between Belfast and Dublin. It is a major inter-regional gateway that includes through access to Warrenpoint Harbour, Northern Ireland's second busiest port. In the continued absence of an alternative route for strategic traffic, Newry City is a necessary and inefficient route for the high volumes of freight traffic travelling to and from Warrenpoint Harbour to Belfast and Dublin. With so much strategic, local and visitor traffic competing for through access, this results in delays, congestion, added costs and increased emissions for logistics businesses; a sector already operating under tight profit margins and working hard to reduce its CO2 emissions.

Construction of the Newry Southern Relief Road, a new strategic road link to the south of Newry City between the A1 Dublin Road dual carriageway and A2 Warrenpoint Road dual carriageway, will reduce these negative impacts and deliver multiple benefits to current, and future, logistics businesses operating along this key economic and trading corridor.

Improved transport economic efficiency

The Newry Southern Relief Road Scheme will provide a much needed and long anticipated alternative route for strategic through traffic. By removing up to 5,000 vehicles daily from transiting through the centre of Newry, it will significantly improve transport economic efficiency by improving freight journey times and journey time reliability, reducing business operational costs when it comes to fuel and drivers' hours due to less stop start movements, and reducing the conflict between strategic and local traffic movements in the area.

Stimulating economic growth and trade

Infrastructure is the base upon which economic growth is built. Efficient connectivity reduces the cost of production and transportation of goods and is crucial for facilitating and increasing trade. The Newry Southern Relief Road scheme will link to the Eastern Seaboard (A1/N1 Belfast-Dublin) Key Transport Corridor (KTC), which includes road and rail links between Larne (via the Belfast Metropolitan Area) and the border at Newry, facilitating onward travel to Dublin and improving access to other regional gateways. Crucially, it will improve connectivity and access to and from the Port of Warrenpoint, NI's second largest handler of freight, which processed 3.3m tonnes in 2022 and handles circa 12% of Northern Ireland's port activity, with 45% export and 55% import. Improving journey times and reliability to the port for NI and Republic of Ireland traffic, as well as Greenbank Industrial Estate, will benefit all of our members who regularly transport goods to and from Warrenpoint Port as well as the wider area of South Down. It will also create potential for Warrenpoint Harbour to continue to grow and increase its current contribution of over £10m into the local economy.

Reducing impact on the environment

By providing an alternative route, the Newry Southern Relief Road will create a more economically and environmentally efficient transport corridor for strategic traffic. By diverting an estimated 5,000 vehicles each day from Newry City Centre, the scheme will also reduce congestion, noise and air pollution in the city for residents and local businesses.

Conclusion

As set out in previous consultation submissions and in this response, our members remain highly supportive of the Newry Southern Relief Road because of the positive impact it will have on freight transport, traffic movements, trade, the local and wider economy, the environment and residents and local businesses in the City of Newry. Logistics UK welcomes that the scheme has been successful in securing funding from the Belfast Region City Deal and that it was included in the prioritised list of major road schemes published by the Department for Infrastructure on 14th August 2023. It is vital that progress continues to be made on this strategic scheme and that it moves as quickly as possible to construction.

Nichola Mallon
Head of Trade and Devolved Polic
Logistics UK
nmallon@logistics.org.uk