

Press Release

15 November 2016.

Infrastructure Minister outlines next steps for York Street Interchange scheme

Infrastructure Minister Chris Hazzard has accepted the outcomes of the Public Inquiry for the £130million York Street Interchange Scheme and has confirmed the scheme will now progress in readiness of funding becoming available.

A public inquiry was held in November 2015 into proposals to separate strategic traffic from the local streets by providing direct vehicular links between the Westlink, the M2 and M3, the construction of underpasses and the construction of a new bridge to carry York Street over the junction.

The Inspector reported his findings to the Department in January 2016 and following a thorough examination of the issues raised, the Minister has accepted the Report's recommendations and has confirmed the scheme should progress, subject to refinements to reflect the Inspector's recommendations relating to mitigation measures adjacent to residential areas, increased local community liaison and consideration of further provisions for cyclists.

Minister Hazzard said: **“This is an important step in the development of the Interchange which is seeking to address the traffic delays at this heavily congested location. There is no doubt that a scheme of this scale represents a significant investment in our economy. By removing the traffic bottleneck, the new interchange will improve journey time reliability and road safety for motorists, including freight transport, and support the competitiveness of the Port of Belfast with improved links to the strategic road network.**

“I welcome the positive outcome from the Inquiry and consultation will now begin with key stakeholders including local communities, in line with the recommendations in the Inspector's Report.

In relation to funding, Minister Hazzard continued: **“Plans to deliver the scheme are well advanced. However, the £130million funding remains a major challenge with a number**

of competing priorities across the Executive. The project could have attracted up to 40% EU funding, but since the referendum vote this funding opportunity is now in doubt. I will need to consider this project together with other priorities as part of my Budget 2017-21 however, the York Street Interchange remains a priority for me and I am committed to do all that I can to deliver the scheme within the current financial context, working with the Finance Minister and other Executive colleagues.”

The Department will now publish the formal Notice of its Intention to Proceed and the making of the Designation Order for the scheme.

Notes to editors:

1. The Inspector appointed to chair the inquiry concluded that the case to replace the existing York Street Junction Gyratory System has been demonstrated and that the Environmental Statement prepared by the Department containing proposals for provision of a grade separated junction at York Street should be used as a basis for taking the scheme forward through both the detailed design and eventual construction stages.
2. The recommendations include the implementation of the associated Designation Order and Vesting Order, mitigation measures adjacent to residential areas, increased local community liaison and consideration of further provisions for cyclists.
3. The Department will now publish the formal Notice of its Intention to Proceed and make the Designation Order for the scheme. The associated Vesting Order will remain in Draft until finance becomes available to build the road.
- 5 The Departmental Statement, Inspectors report and associated documents are available for viewing at the York Street Interchange website. A link to the site is attached below.

[York Street Interchange - Scheme Homepage](#)