

DFI Budget 2023/24 EQIA Consultation

RCN Zoom Workshop

31.05.23

Background

- Secretary of state set the budget in absence of an Executive 27.04.23
- Civil servants in NI Departments are now releasing Equality Impact Assessments to consult on impacts on S75 groups
- Short presentation on the budget and some of the cuts proposed.
- Discussion on impact on S75 groups in rural communities, mitigation and any other comments

Dfl budget 2023/24

- Dfl funding gap in its resource budget is £167M
- Dfl wide ranging remit for maintenance/development & planning of critical infrastructure
- Grouped under 3 key areas of Water; Transport & Planning
- Historic reliance on in-year monitoring rounds to provide essential services in relation to Water, transport & Planning
- 2022/23 Translink used reserves to maintain services
- EQIA consultation comments 12.06.23 to inform allocation of funds
- Comments open until 07.08.23 to inform further mitigation measures

Dfl Cuts & Revenue Raising already being Implemented

- Increasing Translink fares;
- Increasing on-street car park charges in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry;
- Increasing non-domestic water and sewerage charges (approved by the Utility Regulator)
- Increasing Rathlin Ferry fares;
- Limited essential road maintenance service
- Reducing expenditure on day to day administrative costs;
- Reducing spend in a number of areas including road safety programmes;
- Significant staff vacancy control
- Additional savings being delivered by Translink and NIW.

After these decisions Dfl funding gap of £112M remains

Dfl Cuts being Proposed

Dfl considering further actions, including;

- Further cut in limited day to day expenditure across the Department;
- Ceasing road safety advertising and other road safety schemes for the second year;
- Ceasing the Active School Travel programme;
- Ceasing grant to Community Places planning advice services
- Reducing maintenance at Crumlin Road Gaol.
- Arm's Length Bodies, including NI Water and Translink will also be required to make significant cuts to live within their budget allocations

Dfl Further Cuts being Considered

Dfl is considering the following scenarios to reduce resource spend:

- A reduction in Public transport provision;
- Water and wastewater services further reduced;
- Road maintenance and flood risk management operational activities are reduced to emergency-only services;
- Community transport services not funded;
- Streetlights switched off; and
- No road gritting service provided this winter

S75 Impacts identified by DfI EQIA

- EQIA states that there is not enough robust data to determine significant and adverse impact on all S75 groups.
- Services provided by DfI generally universal in nature so difficult to assess impact on S75 groups.
- Older people & Disabled people impacted by cuts to public transport provision and Community Transport services
- Women more reliant on public transport so will be impacted by cuts also higher percentage of community transport users are female

Rural Issues of Concern

- No rural needs impact assessment. DfI have an RNIA is being undertaken on budget and will be published on their website before deadline for comments

Big concerns from a rural POV on

- Cuts to Community Transport
- Any further cuts to public transport likely to impact rural routes more than urban
- Proposed cuts to road gritting service
- Further reductions in road maintenance will impact roads with lower traffic volumes – inevitably in rural areas.

Feedback/Discussion

- Consultation Questions in EQIA are:
 1. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 categories that have not been identified in the EQIA? If so, what are they and can you provide details?
 2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups that have not been identified If so, what are they?
 3. What action could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in allocation of the Department's budget?
 4. Any other comments?

Next Steps

- Responses should be submitted by 12 June to inform Dfl allocation of 2023-24 funds.
- Responses received between 12 June and 7 August 2023 will inform further mitigation measures and reallocations of any additional funding in 2023/24.
- We will write up notes of our conversation this morning and circulate to everyone.
- We will share our draft response to the consultation.