

Department for
**Regional
Development**
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12 APR 2010

CENTRAL ADMIN

Dear Mark

STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS FOR BELFAST

Thank you for your letter of 3 November 2009 and apologies for the delay in replying. I have now had the opportunity to consult with colleagues on the SRF proposals.

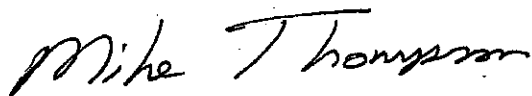
In response to the questions you posed can I say that on a general front we are willing to work with you and others in helping to deliver regeneration framework initiatives. We are content with the description of the policy / strategy cited in relation to transport. However, it strikes me that the SRF proposals should not be viewed in isolation. Transport is only a means to an end and other regeneration aspects need to be borne in mind, e.g. employment and investment opportunities and their location, availability of a skilled labour force, physical development and land use, community cohesion, etc. These will all have a bearing on whether any SRF proposal will be accepted.

You will be aware that we are presently reviewing the Regional Development and Regional Transportation Strategies. Their primary focus is aligning with the Programme for Government on growing the economy, and the SRF proposals must be seen within that wider context. In relation to Belfast, both Strategies will recognise that the City is the economic driver for the region, and projects and schemes need to be incorporated and structured into cohesive and inclusive plans that contribute positively to growing the economy. The sense I have on the SRF proposals is the need for overall community cohesion which, if absent, drives out investment and adversely affects our economic well being.

We envisage the current suite of transport plans, including BMTP, continuing to expiry in 2015. As to the specific SRF proposals, a number are included in BMTP and, as such, are already in our process of consideration. Others outside of BMTP will have to compete for funding with other works programmes, / priorities focussed on the delivery of BMTP.

As to informing our planning and budget setting there is certain flexibility for considering new proposals. I realise there may be a certain expectation from communities, but it must be tempered with realism in a continuing difficult economic climate. I am inclined towards using the existing mechanisms that are available for promoting the proposals, many of which, but not all, feature in DSD Area Masterplans. In order to avoid any duplication of effort I suggest that the masterplanning process is utilised for all these proposals and a consensus reached on the priority and delivery of proposals. I should, however, suggest that DRD transport divisions are included in any consultation, as well as Roads Service, to ensure that we all have the opportunity to fully respond. Further opportunities may occur as we start to implement the new RTS through developing Integrated Transport Plans where local communities are likely to have a greater involvement in their design.

I hope these comments are helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MIKE THOMPSON
Director