

'Possible Routes' Agricultural Land-Use Assessment

Roads Service recognises that some of the possible routes presented to the public during the May 2008 Community Information Events held in Dungiven and Drumahoe are green field routes away from older road alignments and are likely to have substantial impact on farms. To help understand these impacts, an agri-business specialist will, as far as practicable, visit each farm likely to be affected by the possible routes for the new road to gather information about the farm business. This data-gathering process will help Roads Service and its advisors to understand the likely impact each possible route for the new road may have on farms and to consider what major accommodation works may be required to allow the farm businesses to continue should that possible route be constructed. This information, in concert with the results of a wide range of other surveys and assessments, will assist Roads Service to comprehensively examine each possible route and to announce in Spring 2009 that a 'preferred route' has been selected for the new road.

Planning major roads

Planning major road schemes is a lengthy procedure, starting out with the examination of a number of possible broad corridors for the new road, continues with the examination of a number of possible routes lying within a preferred corridor and concludes with the selection of a preferred route for the new road. Agricultural land-use assessment is vital to the planning process to help Roads Service and its advisors to understand effects on agriculture.

How will farm information be collected?

Data gathering will be carried out by an agri-business specialist, who will consult landowners and inspect farms to determine in broad terms:

- Size, quality and layout of the farm including a brief description of farm infrastructure such as buildings, internal communications etc.
- Type of enterprise(s), husbandry, livestock numbers, and land use.
- Single Farm Payment status.
- Implications of the Nitrates Directive;
- Countryside Management Scheme status.
- Is the farm divided by existing roads and how this impinges on the current management of the farm.
- An appreciation of frequency and type of movement of livestock and machinery.
- Lands either taken in conacre or rented out to others.

The agri-business specialist will also seek to procure a DARD farm map from each landowner.

Checking the farm information report

Each landowner will be asked to quality assure his farm information report. He will be able to adjust the content of the report to ensure that it properly reflects

his farm unit. The landowner should be aware that Roads Service may be required to disclose the farm information report in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2002.

How will the farm information reports be used?

The farm information reports will help Roads Service and its advisors to understand the farm businesses and to assess the likely impact each possible route for the new road may have on farms and to consider what major accommodation works may be required to allow the farm businesses to continue should that possible route be constructed.

How does Roads Service evaluate new roads?

The impacts of new roads are evaluated against the following five strategic objectives:

- **Environmental impact:** reducing the impact of transport facilities on the environment.
- **Safety:** reducing the loss of life and injuries resulting from transport incidents.
- **Economy:** improving the economic efficiency of transport.
- **Accessibility:** ease with which people reach different locations and facilities by different modes.
- **Integration:** ensuring that all decisions are taken in the context of the government's integrated transport policy.

Amongst other things, the environmental impact objective requires Roads Service to consider, at all stages during the planning process, how the road proposal would impact on the countryside and the farming community. Agricultural land-use assessment allows Roads Service, as far as practicable, to take account of farming activities and land usage when fitting a new road into the countryside.