



**Roisin Kelly,
Committee Clerk,
Room 402,
Parliament Buildings,
BELFAST BT4 3XX**

31 August 2009

**COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – INQUIRY INTO
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT**

Dear Ms Kelly,

This evidence to the Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into Sustainable Transport is being submitted on behalf of Parker Green International (PGI). It is in response to a recent public notice advising that an Inquiry was to be held and requesting submissions from interested organisations and individuals.

PGI is a Newry-based privately-owned property development company. It is and has been committed to delivering city centre urban regeneration and championing sustainable development projects. In Northern Ireland, its main focus of development activity is Newry City Centre in and around the Quays development area. PGI therefore welcomes this opportunity to submit evidence given its many years of developer experience in a small expanding city situation.

To demonstrate its city centre regeneration and development commitment, PGI has sought and recently been granted permission for a major city centre retail development as well as a major city centre office development. This was achieved despite local concerns about traffic issues in and around the centre of the City. It is primarily because of this experience that it considers that the Inquiry should be made aware of and will derive benefit from understanding the inherent difficulties associated with seeking to achieve sustainable transport objectives outside the larger cities.

This recent experience also demonstrates that as the smaller cities such as Newry continue to develop and expand, their expansion cannot be held back because of the lack of traditional transport infrastructure. However, the main public sector bodies with regulatory responsibility for requesting operational transport improvements locally such as roads and car-parking, still operate a traditional 'tried-and-tested' approach and demand the provision of these traditional improvements to facilitate new developments. Private sector efforts to bring forward more sustainable less traditional transport improvements are not yet received as credible solutions despite the fact that

adopted Government policy which these bodies also have responsibility for is intended to deliver sustainable transport solutions.

In response to this, PGI has unilaterally decided to bring forward its own additional operational measures as part of its private sector-led initiative. The primary objectives are to manage travel patterns generated by the Quays development area, to deliver a modal shift in transport mode and to set the standard for and lead on the management of travel patterns throughout Newry City.

Specific measures include for example:

- the provision in liaison with Roads Service of an enhanced traffic management system linked to the local traffic lights system (SCOOT);
- the management of on-site car parking;
- the provision of off-site parking for staff;
- the provision of park and ride / park and walk facilities;
- provision of park and ride bus;
- provision of additional motorcycle /cycle parking facilities;
- enhanced public transport links (NIR/ Ulsterbus); and
- improved pedestrian access.

If successful the outcomes of this initiative will be:

- new focus for resolving traffic issues in Newry;
- delivery of more sustainable travel patterns;
- contribute to city regeneration; and
- position Newry in terms of its future development.

While these measures will be carried out in liaison with all relevant public agencies it is regrettable that such efforts have so far had to be led by the private sector albeit with tentative support from public bodies. In this respect, PGI however does greatly appreciate the on-going advice and support it is receiving from Travelwise (NI).

It is equally regrettable that the initiative has had to be pursued against a background of a public transport system that is not yet able to deliver in a co-ordinated manner public transport accessible to all, convenient and suitably priced.

The success of sustainable transport solutions is also dependent on operational measures that the private sector cannot provide. These include new forms of transport such as trams, quality bus corridors, integrated timetabling, and reduced parking requirements at major new city centre developments, more flexible approach to working hours and the more proactive provision of local park and ride facilities.

Financing new transport infrastructure is also vital to successful transport initiatives. PGI considers that novel approaches to the development of innovative investment solutions need to be pursued.

In this respect the findings of the PwC Report – Bridging the Gap-Transforming Public Transport in Northern Ireland are noteworthy.

While as the Report indicates there have been significant developments in Northern Ireland's public transport network in recent years these have been of no direct benefit to the smaller rural cities such as Newry outside the Greater Belfast area. As the Report says ...*"we have still yet to adopt an integrated approach to the design, delivery and operation of our transport system"*

Public transport initiatives have so far not been fully co-ordinated with land use development and needs and as such they do not yet have any of the features of an integrated system. While existing planning policies can deliver city centre development and regeneration, they will only really be successful if they are able to be implemented alongside sustainable transport solutions. These of course include both new and/or enhanced infrastructure together with non-infrastructure transportation initiatives.

Travelling by public transport rather than by car is not yet attractive except on some rail routes nor is it yet value for money. Public transport needs to be financed not just in terms of securing company profits alone but also in terms of a much-needed public service.

Alongside this it is imperative that Government becomes increasingly more proactive in promoting the concept of sustainable transport so that public attitudes and habits change, there is an increase in the use of public transport and a real shift in transport mode results. Of course these also need to be actively supported by the business community and especially major employers.

In conclusion, PGI trusts that your Inquiry will not only focus on the Greater Belfast area but become familiar and understand the need to extend sustainable transport concepts and practical solutions to the smaller cities outside that area and the necessity for all public agencies and public transport providers to seriously seek to achieve what are in effect common Northern Ireland wide objectives.

Yours faithfully,

Pat McBride
Planning Advisor

On behalf of Parker Green International