EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Trunk Road T7 (A26 Dualling—Glarryford to A44 Drones Road Junction) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

S.R. 2013 No. 279

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Regional Development to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under Articles 14(1), 68(1) and (3) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of the order is to allow for the upgrading, to dual carriageway standard, of the stretch of A26 single carriageway between Glarryford and the A44 Drones Road Junction.

3. Background

3.1. The A26 Dualling - Glarryford to A44 Drones Road Junction scheme was identified in the Regional Strategic Transport Network – Transport Plan 2015 (RSTN TP), and is contained within the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) for Roads 2008. The A26 forms part of the Northern Key Transport Corridor and is the main road connecting the major hub towns of Antrim, Ballymena and Coleraine. It provides an important link for businesses, commuters, local residents and tourism.

3.2. The new dual carriageway closely follows the existing road corridor with three new compact grade separated junctions and an at-grade roundabout at the northern end of the scheme, with the section adjacent to the Frosses Trees going marginally off-line, thus protecting the iconic sets of Frosses Trees. There are also proposed bus stop facilities at all four major junctions along with a new Park and Share/Ride facility at the B94 Drumadoon Road junction.

3.3. The proposed scheme will provide approximately 8km of new dual carriageway between the B64 Glarryford crossroads (the end of the existing dual carriageway) and the A44 Drones Road junction. The new dual carriageway will have significant benefits to the road user, reducing congestion and improving journey times and road safety.

4. Consultation

4.1. Public Awareness events were held in November 2006 and June 2007 to introduce the scheme and then to update the public on progress. In July 2008, the Roads Service Board granted Gateway 1 Approval for the Preferred Route to proceed to the statutory process and this was announced to the public through the media in August 2008.

4.2. The Environmental Statement, Notice of Intention to Make a Direction Order and Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order were published in the Press in March 2012 and an exhibition was also held the same month. 20 letters of objection and 8 letters of comment were received. Due to the number and nature of the objections, it was decided to hold concurrent public inquiries to consider the proposals, which commenced in November 2012. The Inspector reported her findings to the Department in April 2013. Having considered the Inspector's report and all other recommendations, the Department proposes to proceed to make the original Order without modifications.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. This scheme is identified as a strategic road improvement in the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) which was the subject of a full EQIA. A relevant section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Analysis was then carried out for this scheme. This determined that an Equality Impact Assessment was not required

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment was not considered necessary.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Funding for this scheme has been secured as detailed in the DRD ministerial announcement of 21 October 2013.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Department has carried out a Human Rights Act Screening Analysis and issues have been identified in relation to people’s right to respect for private and family life as well as people’s right to property. While recognising such impacts, it is, however, felt that the greater public good associated with the project outweighs the disbenefits.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. None

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable