

Women's Policy Group NI

Key Briefings for Ministers: Minister for Infrastructure

6th February 2024

Introduction

The Women's Policy Group (WPG) is a group of policy experts and practitioners who advocate collectively for women and girls by promoting gender equality through an intersectional feminist lens. We challenge systemic injustice and discrimination affecting women and girls by informing society and influencing policy and law. Our work is informed by women and girls' lived experiences and rooted in international human rights law.

There are a number of issues that we have spent several years lobbying for and working towards, that could not be progressed because of the absence of government. Now that the Assembly has returned, we would like to outline our key priorities to every Minister, explain why these issues are important, and highlight what can be achieved if we begin early and focus on the long-term benefits of these actions.

Policy Issues: All Island Strategic Rail Review, Concessionary Fares & Climate Change priorities

- Ensure that the All Island Strategic Rail Review and the work that flows from that is implemented swiftly
- Concessionary Fares must support those who need access to public transport the most - especially rural women
- The Department of Infrastructure should work closely with DAERA to ensure that the commitments of the Climate Change Act can be met and that climate commitments are not sacrificed.

Why are these measures important?

Accessible and reliable public transport must be a priority for the Department of Infrastructure. Increasing the accessibility and reliability of public transport would not only bring significant benefits to those who use public transport, it would also help us to meet our commitments as enshrined in the Climate Change Act.

To this end, the Strategic Rail Review will both connect more people - particularly West of the Bann - to rail travel options, and increase use of public transport as a whole. Women are more likely to rely on public transport and less likely to own a car than men, and additionally are more likely to live on a lower income and to live in poverty. They also tend to carry the burden of care in the home, and tend to make multiple short trips a day, for example, doing multiple school runs as well as travel to their own work, to appointments and more. For this reason, it is important that the over 60s SmartPass is protected, if possible, and that if not it is at least protected for rural women, whose options for transport tend to be fewer.

What are we asking for?

- Prioritisation of the All Island Strategic Rail Review.
- Protection of concessionary fares for rural women over the age of 60.
- Working closely with DAERA to ensure that infrastructure projects are compatible with environmental concerns where possible and work towards ensuring our climate change commitments are met.

Further information

If you have any questions or queries regarding this briefing, please contact:

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