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COMMUNITY, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS**

REPORT ON RURAL TRANSPORT PROVISION

JANUARY 2010

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1. Introduction

Until relatively recently in our history, Ireland was a predominantly rural country. The movement of people from the countryside to the large towns and cities is largely a phenomenon of the 20th century and this has left the countryside, which was once densely populated (up to 8 million people in the nineteenth century) now more sparsely populated.

Almost every large town in Ireland has experienced enormous growth in recent decades. As happens everywhere, large centres of population facilitate the easier and more cost-effective provision of public services and accordingly people living in these areas have relatively easy access to the conveniences of modern existence. The majority of urban dwellers live in close proximity to their place of work, to the essential services they require and to the leisure facilities they engage in. They have ready access to a wide range of shops and are well-served by regular bus, train and taxi services, complemented by an effective road-network.

The situation of people living in small villages and rural areas is not so advantageous in this regard. Here, access to public transport is more limited and local secondary road networks can often be in need of improvement. This reduces their ease of access to the same services and facilities mentioned above. It impinges upon their ability to benefit fully from modern society. Accessing employment, educating their children or visiting a hospital can incur increased cost, time and inconvenience over the national average. Engaging in community activities and accessing a wider range of shops are also subject to more limitations than in urban areas.

In modern society, the ability to communicate easily with others is essential. Mobile phones and the internet allow us to communicate with each other and television and radio update us on national and international events. But we also need to be able to move easily from point to point and this ability is limited in rural Ireland due to the lack of an adequate provision of rural transport. This has been a recognised problem for many years. It needs to be rectified. The flow of public transport and alternative private-transport provision along Ireland's secondary road routes remain limited and in some places are extremely deficient. This Report identifies these limitations and deficiencies. It outlines how this situation can be addressed and how a transport system, meeting the needs of rural and semi-rural communities throughout Ireland can be put in place.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Deputy Ring who prepared and presented an initial report on this subject to the Committee. The Committee have examined this report and have agreed to adopt it as a Report of the Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Tom Kitt TD
Chairman

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 An effective integrated rural transport policy should be agreed beginning with an initial 5-year Rural Transport Programme.
- 2.2 All Government departments and State agencies should be instructed to co-operate with each other and with community-led initiatives in the creation of an integrated rural transport network with a high standard that is uniform across the country. This should lead to the establishment of a specific statutory authority responsible for the delivery of a sustainable Rural Transport Programme.
- 2.3 Every possible alternative and method for the provision of an effective and sustainable service should be considered, with especial attention being given to meeting the needs of particularly vulnerable groups including:-
 - 2.3.1 Providing vouchers to allow the elderly to more easily avail of private taxi services;
 - 2.3.2 Extending the Free Travel Pass to include the various modes of transport available in rural areas;
 - 2.3.3 Re-deploying CIE school buses outside of their normal school-run periods;
 - 2.3.4 Providing a special service for the elderly on pension payment day with off-time loop services also provided on that day where this is feasible.
- 2.4 A quality fleet of vehicles should be provided and maintained to service the provision of rural transport throughout the country.
- 2.5 The provision of a rural transport service and the Authority charged with delivering it should be adequately funded from the central exchequer by way of the allocation of a dedicated percentage of the carbon tax that has been introduced in the 2010 budget.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 UK research shows transport as the single most important concern of rural dwellers.
- 3.2 Different rural communities have different transport needs.
- 3.3 Various rural transport strategies developed.
- 3.4 At the broader European level authors on the integration of Rural Transport Services demonstrate the necessity for innovative and different approaches to satisfy different needs.
- 3.5 ARTS Project developed different models on eight different sites.
- 3.6 Barriers to the effective development of sustainable rural transport solutions (under the ARTS Project) are identified as economic/socio-economic, legal and regulatory, organisational difficulties, physical barriers, as well as cultural and political issues.
- 3.7 The need to transfer the potential of independent tests in Europe for innovative action was clearly identified, in a cross – site evaluation process.
- 3.8 Similar problems have been identified in Ireland, but with significant local differences.
- 3.9 Reviews of the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) launched in 2001 backed the benefits of the scheme and argued for its extension and improvement resulting in an improved Rural Transport Programme (RTP) being launched in 2007.
- 3.10 The case has been made for improved rural transport provision, as follows:-
 - 3.10.1 Reduces social exclusion;
 - 3.10.2 Improve people’s quality of life (including mental health);
 - 3.10.3 Strengthen social networks, reduce isolation and prevent social segregation;
 - 3.10.4 Reduces the burden of care on families;
 - 3.10.5 Allows people to shop in their local communities;
 - 3.10.6 Helps keep rural life alive and generates better levels of security in people’s lives.
- 3.11 The specific success of a local transport initiative of Meitheal Mhaigh Eo is highlighted. The case for an improved and expanded Rural Transport system is clearly established (2 million passenger journeys made 2003-2006).
- 3.12 Rural transport problems are not unique to Ireland.
- 3.13 Options for rural transport methods can be a mix of modes.

- 3.14 There are better social benefits from better public transport provision including environmental emission reduction, greater social inclusion and other rural development opportunities and integration.
- 3.15 Given that a door-to-door rural transport service can be provided to most households, we need to be innovative in the mix and provision for rural transport from buses to hackneys and taxis.
- 3.16 Existing initiatives are too narrowly focused.
- 3.17 More research measuring the qualitative detail of existing services is needed.
- 3.18 There is no effective integrated rural transport policy.
- 3.19 There a lack of adequate funding available to properly maintain rural transport networks.
- 3.20 There is a lack of integration and co-operation among the many government departments and state agencies. Thus there is a need to put rural transport policy on a proper strategy footing.
- 3.21 Use of the Free Travel Pass should be standardised on the same basis as it is used on Bus Éireann.
- 3.22 There should be a dedicated fleet resource for the RTP with an ongoing vehicle maintenance and upgrade programme in place.
- 3.23 There should be a medium term policy RTP of say five year duration with funding projection attached.
- 3.24 Out of hours dedicated CIE school buses should be re-deployed into the RTP.
- 3.25 There should be targeted initiatives to particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. taxi voucher provision for the elderly for a specified annual amount).
- 3.26 At least a one-day-a-week service on pension payment day should be provided for the elderly with off-line loop services on that day provided to the utmost amount possible.
- 3.27 Update current legislation on public transport generally making statutory provision for the delivery of a sustainable RTP.
- 3.28 In tandem with legislative reform, create a responsible authority for the co-ordination and delivery of Rural Transport.
- 3.29 Continue to encourage community-led initiatives and be pro-active in the expansion of services.
- 3.30 Given that the 2010 budget has introduced a carbon tax the Committee proposes that a dedicated percentage of that tax should be ring-fenced to adequately fund and effective sustainable Rural Transport network.

4. The Experience of Rural Transport in the United Kingdom and Elsewhere in Europe

The Committee acknowledges the debt it owes to the many organisations that have carried out research on this topic. The Committee acknowledges the use it has made of this information and the influence which this has had on this report. The comparative list of documentation and research is set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report. The Committee commends their activities, in particular the Irish based organisations whose activities and reports have a deep relevance to the development of a sustainable Irish Rural Bus Transport System.

Rural transport is a complex issue and the fact that different rural localities have different needs cannot be overstated. Politicians, pressure groups and the media, however, often tend to represent rural areas – and their transport problems – as a single homogenous entity. The diversity of the rural transport ‘experience’ and the fact that rural transport planners and users in different local authorities, individual rural communities and dissimilar rural households will be constrained by a different combination of factors, is rarely considered.

4.1 United Kingdom

Research carried out in the U.K. in the earlier part of this decade found that transport is the single most important concern of people living in rural areas. Later studies also carried out in the U.K have identified transport as a major barrier to social inclusion in rural areas. The position in this country is no different where public transport has been increasingly unable to meet the needs and expectations of modern communities.

In ‘Rural Transport: an Overview of the Key Issues’ (2001) prepared for the Commission for Integrated Transport by Dr. David Gray, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen the major issues for a proper rural transport system in the U.K are summarised as follows:

4.1.1 Background

4.1.1.1 Research by The Countryside Agency (2000) found that transport is the single most important concern of people living in rural areas. A number of other studies have identified transport as a major barrier to social inclusion in rural areas.

4.1.1.2 Recognising these trends, U.K. Government policy aims to reduce dependence on the car by supporting local provision of shops and services and improving the effectiveness of public transport by increasing subsidy levels, whilst encouraging innovation and flexibility.

4.1.2 Rural Journey-Making

4.1.2.1 Rural areas are often presented as single homogenous entities, but in reality; the diversity of the rural transport ‘experience’ cannot be overstated.

- 4.1.2.2 Rural households rely more on the car, own more cars, make more journeys over longer distances and spend more per week on motoring than those from more densely populated localities.
- 4.1.2.3 Greater reliance on the car in rural areas is likely to be partly a function of people living further away from basic shops and services and having less access to public transport.
- 4.1.2.4 More efficient travelling means that travel costs are not that different to urban.

4.1.3 Car Dependence

- 4.1.3.1 Reliance on the car in rural areas has increased dramatically in recent years across the U.K whilst the use of public transport, walking and cycling has been decreasing, both nationally and in rural areas.
- 4.1.3.2 However, car ownership has been growing more slowly in rural areas than nationally.
- 4.1.3.3 Increasing reliance in rural areas is inter-related with a slow decline in access to rural shops, services and public transport provision (until recent revival of rural houses).
- 4.1.3.4 Reliance on the car is greater in isolated areas and among high-income households.
- 4.1.3.5 The car is a more important source of mobility for non-car owners in rural areas than local bus services.
- 4.1.3.6 It has been cautiously estimated that around a quarter of rural journeys are entirely dependent on the car.
- 4.1.3.7 Despite a significant increase in rural car use, the proportion of journeys without an alternative to the car is increasing relatively slowly.

4.1.4 Road Safety and Rural Traffic Growth

- 4.1.4.1 The majority of road deaths are on rural roads, and although casualty rates nationally are falling, this is happening at a slower rate on rural roads.
- 4.1.4.2 Levels of traffic are increasing faster on rural roads than in urban roads.

4.1.5 Alternatives to the Car

- 4.1.5.1 Up until 1997, rural bus services were in steady decline.
- 4.1.5.2 Since 1998, the U.K government has sought to improve rural transport through the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant Scheme, the Rural Bus Challenge

- 4.1.5.3 The U.K government has set a target for the proportion of the rural population living within about 10 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service to increase from 37% to 50% by 2010.
- 4.1.5.4 Rural transport spending was projected to increase from £155m in 1998/1999 – 2000/2001 to £239m in 2001/2001 – 2003/2004.
- 4.1.5.5 Variations in rural transport services can be partly explained by variation in the density and distribution of the rural population, while the varying commitment of local authorities is also a significant factor in explaining regional disparities.
- 4.1.5.6 Growth on train operators serving rural lines is currently around 6% per annum.
- 4.1.5.7 Initiatives designed to optimise rural rail services include Micro-franchises, Community Rail Partnerships and Rail Passenger Partnerships.
- 4.1.5.8 Only 1.4% of rural journeys are made by bicycle. This proportion is also in decline.
- 4.1.5.9 Support to safeguard local shop and service provision may help halt further decline in walking and cycling, as will measures designed to improve road safety and reduce traffic impacts.

4.1.6 Developing a Framework of Analysis: Rural Transport Strategies

- 4.1.6.1 Rural transport opportunities and constraints vary across different localities.
- 4.1.6.2 Developing a strategy for rural areas and a range of optimum transport policy making.
- 4.1.6.3 Various rural transport strategies have been devised based on geographical conditions and dominant transport concerns.
- 4.1.6.4 The strategies included two peri-urban rural areas, three contrasting market towns with hinterlands and three remote areas with different characters.

4.2 Elsewhere in Europe

At the broader European level, the Committee has been greatly informed by the ARTS project. ARTS (Action in the Integration of Rural Transport Services) is a project within the fifth framework programme of the European Union – competitive and sustainable growth. ARTS tests innovative systems that guarantee transport services at reasonable costs. Two years of trials in the earlier part of the decade reveal possible concepts for the future through the functioning of rural transport systems at European test sites with priority being given to

the transferability of these demonstration results to other rural areas within Europe, including Ireland.

Improving transport systems in rural areas has proved to be essential since it provides rural communities with the capacity to face their mobility problems assisting them in their efforts to reach a sustainable mobility pattern. It helps people living in rural areas to improve their quality of life, providing accessibility to user groups which are not able to reach standard patterns of mobility (young people and students, people working at home, retired people without access to a private car). The development of minor transport systems in rural areas can be seen as a way of improving mobility of captive groups and increasing accessibility to activities and services. It can be linked to the rural decline-development and can be seen as an active policy for local development and social redistribution.

Aware of the effects of the lack of public transport in low density rural areas, mainly due to the unattractive market for conventional transport operators, ARTS seeks to implement actions of innovative rural public transport for common users by both making use of services originally designed for other activities (make them both flexible) and implementing new services in a context of efficiency and cost saving. ARTS demonstrations cover a wide range of non-conventional transport using both current local services and infrastructure (school and health buses, on-demand taxis etc) or new systems based on volunteers, on-demand service rail and bus links etc.

The main goal of ARTS is to test and demonstrate innovative transport services in the rural environment. The ARTS demonstrations are small scale realisations of rural transport systems that seem successful where regular transport service cannot be financed. The demonstrations include a variety of transport types: on-demand rural transport systems, multi-purpose rural transport systems, taxi-based rural transport systems, transport systems operated by volunteers, passenger good combinations and systems supported by applied transport telematics.

The systems are tested in typical rural areas in several European countries to ease transferability to the rural regions in Europe. The specific framework conditions, the identified barriers that may inhibit the development of such services and the possible ways to overcome these barriers are documented carefully – ARTS produced a practical tool for followers that will provide flexible guidance on the planning and implementation of rural transport services based on the latest experiences. The demonstrations sites were in Austria, Hungary, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Greece, Italy, U.K., including Ireland (Conamara).

The ARTS ‘Rural Transport Newsletter No. 1’ identifies a number of barriers for rural transport which are worth listing.

“The main characteristic of rural areas, namely low population density, is at the same time a major problem for public transport. Low population is one reason for poor demand and thus helps to prevent cost-effective operation of existing public transport services. Low population density is worsened by high migration rates in many regions. A further problem for public transport in rural areas is the on average low-income of people living in rural areas. People who need transport most can least afford it”.

The car has not only become a necessity in rural areas due to the lack of public transport services, but has also become a component of lifestyle and prestige. Moreover, public transport in many countries has a poor image. People often feel that public transport is only

for elderly or disabled people or for those without a car. The image is sometimes made even worse by old, uncomfortable, outdated vehicles of low-quality.

All these problems contribute to the decline of an already low demand, ending in a vicious cycle: migration and the poor image of the existing public transport system result in decreased numbers of possible users, leading to less revenue in fewer services.

The barriers to the effective development of rural transport services can according to the newsletter be summarised as follows:-

- (i) Economic and socio-economic barriers;
- (ii) Legal and regulatory barriers;
- (iii) Organisational barriers;
- (iv) Physical barriers;
- (v) Cultural and political barriers.

Essentially, under the ARTS project the functioning of innovative rural transport system on eight European Test sites was demonstrated, including Bealach, “Coordination of new flexible local bus service” in Conamara, Co. Galway.

A cross site evaluation process across the eight sites was carried out. The cross site evaluation analysed the results of the individual demonstrations.

In relation to integration of services into the public transport network, physical accessibility, the effectiveness of telematics, the degree of intermodality, the accessibility for the rural population to centres of social activity, to shopping and health services, the role of rural transport provisions for tourists. The cross site evaluation process was done in 4 steps:-

- (i) Establishing an evaluation framework to get indicators of impacts relevant to the measures of all demonstrations;
- (ii) Assessing the expected results of the demonstrations including the analysis of national barriers to identify probable impacts to avoid risks of ill design of the demonstrations;
- (iii) Assessing the actual impact of the demonstrations after they have been implemented. The actual results of the demonstrations have been assessed, based on data collected following implementation;
- (iv) Cross-site comparison of the results of the demonstrations has also established the criteria and favourable environmental conditions for the successful implementation of measures to improve mobility in rural areas.

The ARTS demonstrations were quite successful: the individual demonstrations were 6 to 12 months. All together about 58,000 passenger trips were covered by ARTS transport services: 19,569 passenger trips on the demand-responsive services, regular passengers made 7,458 trips on former school transport services, 30,744 passenger trips were covered by the new school transport service.

Demand response-services including services which integrate school and regular transport:-

- (i) Are mainly used by persons having no access to a car;
- (ii) Make passengers more independent;
- (iii) Give passengers more social contact.

Table: Summary of Demonstration Sites

Type of Service	Name of Demonstration	Area (km ²)	Pop. Density (inh/km ²)	Duration (mon)	Users of the Service
Demand-responsive services	Leppavitra (FL)	1,519	7.3	12	Daily service: 9,161pass.trips
	Samkom (SE)	3,100	10.2	12	3,642pass.trips
	Bealach (IE)	2,273	5.3	8	2,232pass.trips
	Alama (AT)	108	10.9	12	3,288pass.trips
School Transport Service	Development (H)	108	63.1	10	30,744pass.trips
Integration of school and regular transport	Ruto (SP)	852	2.7	6	Non-students 5,380pass.trips
	Messara (GR)	63	36.9	6	Non-students 2,078pass.trips
Real-time information by SMS, phone servers	Cymru (UK)	2,548	45.8	7	1% of the bus users tried at least once the SMS service; 3% the line service

4.3 Conclusion

The purpose of the transferability study was to assess the potential of measures tested during the process. The rural transport system realised in the ARTS demonstration sites have been virtually implemented in 27 rural areas in 11 European countries. Barriers exist to the implementation of some of these systems in Ireland.

However, here in Ireland we can learn from these demonstrations as well as from the detailed analysis of the key issues and problems detailed in the U.K. study as outlined earlier.

In the next chapter therefore the report outlines the background to the rural transport system in Ireland before examining the case for a rural bus transport subsidy in the country.

5. Rural Transport Ireland

The RTI arose from a commitment by the Department of Transport in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, where a provision for up to €4.4 million was earmarked to support the development of pilot public transport initiatives in rural areas. The aim of this funding was to encourage innovative community-based initiatives to provide transport services in rural areas, with a view to addressing the issue of social exclusion in rural Ireland, which is caused by lack of access to transport' (Department of Transport, 2000).

The initiative was launched in 2001 following an intensive consultation process and a public information campaign. 34 projects participated in the initiative, 26 of which graduated from the pre-development phase. There was at least one project in every country with the exception of County Louth, from which there was no application. ADM (now known as Pobal), who managed the initiative on behalf of the Department of Transport, provides ongoing training, monitoring and support to groups.

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of the programme are:-

- 5.1.1 To promote and support the development of innovative pilot community-based public transport projects in rural areas;
- 5.1.2 To use local knowledge and expertise in the development of public transport services;
- 5.1.3 To improve utilisation of existing transport assets;
- 5.1.4 To develop models of collaboration and partnership at local level by encouraging different sectors, e.g. voluntary and community organisations, statutory bodies, etc. to participate in the initiative;
- 5.1.5 To gain experience of the use of new technologies in the co-ordination and development of transport systems;
- 5.1.6 To encourage innovative approaches to meet local needs, including those of the disabled and mobility impaired;
- 5.1.7 To develop models of best practice that meet identified needs;
- 5.1.8 To contribute to the development of rural public transport policy.

5.2 Principles

The principles of the programme are:-

- 5.2.1 The transport needs of the community, both social and economic should be addressed;

- 5.2.2 The proposed service provision must be available to the public generally within a given geographical area and should not be confined to any particular target group;
- 5.2.3 The proposed initiatives should seek to complement rather than complete with the existing public transport services provided either by CIE companies or by private operators;
- 5.2.4 The potential to enable the provision of services for the mobility impaired should be explored and promoted;
- 5.2.5 Innovation solutions using IT technology would be considered for funding;
- 5.2.6 Locally-sourced co-financing elements are encouraged and expected;
- 5.2.7 Voluntary and community organisations and community partnerships are participating, some in conjunction with their Local Authority and/or Health Board.

5.3 Organisational Structures

It was a requirement of the Initiative that all of the 34 participating projects must be administered by a limited company.

Each of the projects was unique in terms of their:-

- 5.3.1 Management, operational and organisational structures;
- 5.3.2 Responses developed / transport models adopted;
- 5.3.3 Innovations;
- 5.3.4 Transport needs;
- 5.3.5 Local circumstances and operating environment;
- 5.3.6 Strengths and capacities.

All groups participating are community based and may have developed a partnership response by encouraging the community, statutory and transport sectors locally to come together for the purposes of implementing the initiative. The partnerships take place at either the board, sub-committee or advisory group levels and in some cases, a combination all three.

The development of sub-structures such as advisory groups and user-fora, have been strongly encouraged to stimulate greater ownership over the process and harness local knowledge, energy and ideas. Each project employed a co-ordinator on either full or part-time basis, depending on the size and scope of the project. Ten projects received further funding under the FÁS Social Economy Programme, which enables them to provide worthwhile training for local people eligible to participate.

Additional financial and non-financial support, guidance and mentoring have been provided to projects by many local development companies, statutory agencies, authorities and individuals in a voluntary capacity.

In 2003, the Department of Social and Family Affairs provided a contribution towards the costs of enabling passengers entitled to free travel passes to travel free of charge. This development made a significant impact on the availability and affordability of services for many rural dwellers.

5.4 Service Delivery

Services provided within in the R.T.I were a combination of the following:-

- 5.4.1 Semi-flexible with deviation radii;
- 5.4.2 Partially demand-response;
- 5.4.3 Fully demand-responsive;
- 5.4.4 Conventional fixed route, where another alternative is not available.

79% of services introduced under the RTI provide door-to-door transport for passengers who may be disadvantaged because of their location, age, mobility or income levels. The majority of services provide either semi-flexible (from the point of view of stopping points where deviations can occur within geographical radii) or are completely responsive to demand. In the latter, the actual bookings define the distance that will be travelled and the service schedule.

The majority of services prioritise social needs and access to essential facilities and public services.

Although all services were available to the public generally, there are some very innovative examples of services that specifically target access to:-

- 5.4.5 Mainstream schools and third-level education;
- 5.4.6 Employment, education and training opportunities;
- 5.4.7 Childcare, pre-school and after-school activities;
- 5.4.8 Mainstream public transport services;
- 5.4.9 Tourists.

For many passengers the projects represented the only opportunity to use public transport to access essential public services. For many others it gave them the option of having an alternative to the private car.

In 2004 ADM commissioned an external evolution of the Rural Transport Institute which was prepared for ADM by Fitzpatrick Associates (Economic Consultants).

Notwithstanding the short period that the RTI was up and running the report concluded that the RTI had achieved good progress since its inception, including:-

- 5.4.10 Established the provision of rural transport services in 34 rural areas across 25 countries;
- 5.4.11 Involved the provision of 305,000 passenger trips in 2003;
- 5.4.12 Improved access to services, social activities and employment for the 16,000 rural residents that regularly use RTI assisted services;
- 5.4.13 Provided direct employment for 90 people and supported an additional 200 bus drivers.

The main qualitative achievements of the RTI had been:-

- 5.4.14 Increased levels of independence and reduced isolation for mostly excluded rural residents who used its services;
- 5.4.15 Improved access for users to other important public services such as healthcare, training and education;
- 5.4.16 Higher quality standards in rural public transport through the use of passenger assistants, improved vehicle accessibility and higher vehicle standards;
- 5.4.17 Learning and capacity-building at local level regarding local transport provision, planning and management and awareness raising amongst the community and statutory sectors, of the transport needs of rural dwellers;
- 5.4.18 Improved co-ordination in rural public transport provision, and between transport and other public services.

As is inherent in a pilot learning-orientated initiative, difficulties and barriers were experienced by the RTI groups. Some of these occurred prior to commencement of services and resulted in later than planned commencement of service delivery, while others impacted on the on-going effectiveness of the RTI.

The main difficulties experienced prior to service start-up included recruitment of staff; tendering processes; service planning; engaging suitable commercial operators; and legislative and insurance issues. These difficulties were largely overcome through the commitment of group staff, volunteers and ADM staff.

The main difficulties groups have experienced since commencement of services include problems in linking with other public service providers; lack of availability of fully accessible vehicles; and lower than anticipated demand for commuter services. In relation to the latter, this is a problem perceived by Groups, but it is not a specified RTI objective. Uncertainty in relation to funding for the RTI has also caused difficulty for groups.

From a management and administration perspective there were also a number of difficulties at the outset of programme delivery. Given the varying levels of delivery

experience across groups, ADM was required to provide considerable assistance to many groups. This involved the provision of development and financial staff, including a full time financial trainer.

The report identified a number of significant challenges which continued to impact on the overall effectiveness of the initiative. The most important of these are:-

- 5.4.19 ***Achieving economies of scale*** – smaller groups delivering RTI assisted services without the support of existing local development agencies experienced particular difficulties in relation to reporting and administration requirements;
- 5.4.20 ***Developing links with other public service providers*** – the perceived lack of support from some (non-transport) public service providers was a significant obstacle for the RTI. The effective integration of rural transport and wider public service provision is a central objective of the RTI;
- 5.4.21 ***Better use of existing vehicles*** – the RTI has not been successful in utilising the existing vehicles of other local organisations such as community groups, health boards, and disability groups;
- 5.4.22 ***Administration costs*** – the proportion of total RTI expenditure allocated to administration costs is high compared to the delivery of local development programmes generally;
- 5.4.23 ***Vehicle accessibility and service standards*** – while the RTI has clearly resulted in improved standards in rural public transport further progress is required.

5.5 Value for Money

The evaluation also demonstrated a number of positive aspects in relation to the level of value-for-money delivered by the RTI. The most significant of these were:-

- 5.5.1 It had been in a start-up phase, some one-off costs will not need to be repeated, and average unit costs as likely to continue to fall;
- 5.5.2 It had provided considerable social benefits and resulted in a real improvement in the quality of life for some 16,000 rural dwellers for relatively small levels of investment;
- 5.5.3 It had resulted in substantial cost savings for other public service providers, particularly in the area of health care. These have included reduced transport costs, savings as a result of older people being able to continue to live independently in their own homes, reductions in missed medical appointments and savings in medical prescriptions as a result of improved general health and well-being of passengers;
- 5.5.4 It had improved the effectiveness of public expenditure in areas such as health, education and local development. Rural residents now had improved access to public services and training and public expenditure in these areas

- 5.5.5 It provided services targeted at isolated persons in rural areas where costs are inevitably relatively high as against more urban areas.

The report recommended the continuation of the RTI initiative (at the time to 2006). Other recommendations included:-

- 5.5.6 ***Continued focus on inclusion*** – groups should retain the core RTI focus on promoting social inclusion and avoid over - extending their resources into wider commuter services;
- 5.5.7 ***Role of community and voluntary sector*** – the RTI groups have demonstrated that the community and voluntary sector can successfully deliver rural transport services. Future rural transport policy initiatives should therefore build on the experience of the community and voluntary sector;
- 5.5.8 ***New strategies:*** should be developed for the remainder of the RTI period;
- 5.5.9 ***Facilitate extension of services*** – where possible the existing RTI projects should be extended to new geographical areas currently not serviced;
- 5.5.10 ***Experiment with additional forms of delivery*** – a key lesson emerging from the experience of the RTI was that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to selecting the most appropriate model for rural transport provision in Ireland;
- 5.5.11 ***Review transport service types*** – door-to-door semi-scheduled services have been most effective in addressing the unmet transport needs of rural residents. Door-to-door services are likely to provide the optimum solution to rural transport provision for the target groups involved;
- 5.5.12 ***Improved local level co-ordination*** – in order for the RTI to achieve its full potential in relation to delivering effective value for money, improved co-ordination was required with local public service providers;
- 5.5.13 ***Central policy co-ordination*** – in order to enable the development of fully integrated rural transport services, greater levels of policy co-ordination and support were required at central level.

In addition the report went on to provide specific recommendations to key stakeholders (Department of Transport, ADM, RTI Groups, Department of Social and Family Affairs).

In 2006 the Department of Transport invited submissions from interested parties about the future development of the RTI and commissioned a report.

This report presents the findings of a study for the Department of Transport by Fitzpatrick Associates, assisted by Steer Davies Gleave, on options for progressing

rural public transport in Ireland. The report was prepared in the context of the Minister for Transport's decision to:-

- 5.5.14 Put the pilot RTI on a permanent financial footing from 2007, making it part of the Department of Transport's normal annual current financial allocation;
- 5.5.15 Increase the Department's core funding for RTIs, from €4.5 million in 2005 to €9 million in 2007, with funding thereafter increasing gradually to about €18 million;
- 5.5.16 Extend the geographical coverage of rural transport services to a nationwide basis covering all rural areas where genuine unmet needs exist;
- 5.5.17 Roll out this national coverage on a phased basis, with full geographical coverage built up over time but with a significant expansion of activity in 2007.

The objective of the report is to develop options for the future roll-out of a national rural public transport within these parameters and to identify the consultants' preferred option.

Transport is a serious unmet need for many people living in rural Ireland and it has been identified as a key factor underlying levels of exclusion in rural areas.

Estimates derived from the 2002 National Rural Transport Survey suggest that as many as 380,000 people in rural areas perceive themselves as having unmet transport needs. Certain key target groups are also especially vulnerable to a lack of transport, including older people, young people, people on low incomes, and people with mobility, sensory or cognitive impairments. Combined, these groups alone account for an estimated 200,000 people of the persons reporting unmet needs.

Demographic trends, in particular overall population growth and changes in the age profile, suggest that the numbers of people with unmet rural transport needs are likely to persist. Projections indicate that an estimated 450,000 rural dwellers could have unmet transport needs by 2021, for example, including 250,000 people in key target groups.

5.6 Rural Transport Services in Ireland

Rural public transport services have two main elements – 'conventional' services and 'non-conventional' services. In rural context conventional bus-based scheduled services, typically link rural areas to important urban centres while also serving rural areas situated on their routes. Conventional services operate on fixed routes, with fixed departure and pick-up points, which can often be inaccessible for people who have difficulty getting to these points, e.g. people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and older people.

Non-conventional services, on the other hand, generally provide more demand-responsive or semi-scheduled alternatives, using smaller vehicles, which can collect rural residents directly from their homes, bring them to local service centres or

transport hubs, and return them home afterwards. Unlike conventional services, these services are also more easily accessible to a wider range of user groups because of their ability to facilitate door-to-door service, passenger assistance etc.

The level of service that conventional services provide in rural areas is patchy, and can vary widely both in terms of geographical coverage and service frequency. Conventional services in Ireland are also constrained by the country's low population density and by its highly dispersed population, which limits the commercial viability of scheduled services and contributes to very high levels of car dependence in rural areas.

Non-conventional services in rural areas are also limited, though there have been definite improvements in recent years. In particular, the lack of conventional services and the growing evidence of unmet transport needs stimulated increased interest in non-conventional services, to the extent that they are emerging as an increasingly significant element of rural transport services in Ireland. The most tangible evidence of this to date has been the emergence of the RTI.

6. The Findings of This Report

6.1 Key Findings

- 6.1.1 Nearly 1.6 million people in Ireland live in rural areas, or 40% of the total population. Population density in rural areas is low and very widely dispersed and the rural share of the population has also been declining slightly in recent years.
- 6.1.2 About 200,000 rural dwellers in Ireland are aged 65 and over, while another 350,000 people in rural Ireland are aged 14 and under. People aged 65 or over are also expected to increase quite significantly as a share of the total population in the next 10-15 years (from about 11% to 15%).
- 6.1.3 Females are another often cited group with unmet transport needs, and about 750,000 rural dwellers are women. Older women are a particularly vulnerable group with transport needs, and their share of the population is expected to increase from 6% to 8% in the next 10-15 years.
- 6.1.4 The rural share of the population can vary widely from county to county, ranging from as low as 35%-45% in some counties to as high as 75%-80% in others. Local variation in levels of car availability and age profile are also common.

6.2 New Rural Transport Programme

A new RTP was commissioned in February 2007, building on the success of the RTI and put the former pilot scheme on a permanent mainstreamed basis. Pobal formerly known as ADM, developed and managed the pilot RTI on behalf of the Department of Transport. Pobal was asked to manage the new RTP on behalf of the Department of Transport.

6.2.1 POBAL

As an intermediary body, Pobal has responsibility for establishing systems and the tasks associated with:-

- 6.2.1.1 Overall programme development;
- 6.2.1.2 Policy learning and development;
- 6.2.1.3 Support for RTP funded rural community transport groups (for strategic planning, financial planning, transport planning, business process and general management purposes);
- 6.2.1.4 Operational delivery;
- 6.2.1.5 Monitoring, research and evaluation;
- 6.2.1.6 Financial management and auditing;

6.2.1.7 Information exchange and the development of good practice;

6.2.1.8 Raising the profile of the programme.

6.2.2 Mission Statement of the New Programme

The Mission statement for the New Programme is:-

“To provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs”.

6.2.3 Principles of the New Programme

The following key principles underpin the work of the programme.

- 6.2.3.1 Equality of access for rural communities in terms of availability, accessibility (having particular regard to ‘Transport Access for All’, the Department of Transport’s Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005) and affordability.
- 6.2.3.2 Continued focus on combating social exclusion and meeting the needs of communities and individuals that do not have access to public or private transport.
- 6.2.3.3 Ongoing community involvement, local representation and ownership; Operation of community development principles; and High level of voluntary input including Board membership.
- 6.2.3.4 Diversity of learning approaches and transport models; and flexible, responsive and needs based solutions.
- 6.2.3.4 Quality standards in terms of organisational and operational; processes, service delivery and customer care.
- 6.2.3.6 Integration and co-ordination with other services; and complementary rather than competitive services.
- 6.2.3.7 Value for money through efficient and effective service delivery and co-ordination.

6.2.4 Revised Aims of the Rural Transport Programme

- 6.2.4.1 To provide, enhance and sustain a nationwide community based public transport system in rural areas.
- 6.2.4.2 To maximise existing transport assets and to utilise new technology where necessary in the co-ordination and development of transport.

- 6.2.4.3 To act as a catalyst in providing models of partnership at all levels where key sectors actively engage in transport provision.
- 6.2.4.4 To ensure equality of access for all, including older people as well as people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.
- 6.2.4.5 To maintain, provide and develop models of good practice.
- 6.2.4.6 To continue to contribute to rural public transport policy.

6.3 Comment

This report has outlined in some detail the development of rural transport in Ireland because it is important to chronicle its development from small humble beginnings to where it is at today. The next chapter of this report makes the case for a rural transport system properly subsidised and giving rural Ireland a service that the Committee considers essential.

The information that was gathered from the U.K. and Europe for this report, when examined against the information outlined in this chapter, shows many common features and difficulties. However, local conditions and differences here in Ireland are also highlighted which show that we must continue to evolve our own specific policies to rural transport provision in the country. We must therefore continue to build the case for a rural transport system.

7. The Case for a Rural Transport System

The Committee is fortunate in having had access to many fine publications and studies undertaken in Ireland. These are listed comprehensively in Appendix 2 to this report.

The following documents in particular have greatly informed this chapter:-

- (i) Social Impacts on Improved Public Transport (Heinrik Rau, Department of Political Science, NUI Galway 2007);
- (ii) On the move – Developing Rural Transport (Irish Rural Link Conference 2007 RTP Programme);
- (iii) Meitheal Mhaigh Eo RTI Annual Reports;
- (iv) Comhar Sustainable Transport Council – Briefing Paper and to “Public Consultation on Sustainable Travel and Rural Transport Policy”;
- (v) Irish Rural Transport Link (IRL) – Towards a Sustainable Rural Transport Policy, “Let Them Eat Cake” – what An Bord Snip Nua means for Rural and Regional Development, as well as that organisation’s Pre-Budget Submission 2010.

The principles of sustainable transport require interpretation of economic, cultural and environmental factors. They are also guided by social factors which are crucial to the success of transport projects (e.g. public attributes, access, costs etc).

7.1 Social Factors

Social factors include:-

- (i) Social inclusion / exclusion;
- (ii) Quality of life;
- (iii) Social networks;
- (iv) Time use.

In rural Ireland households / individuals without a car encounter difficulties accessing (among others):-

- (i) Jobs;
- (ii) Education/training opportunities;
- (iii) Suitable accommodation;
- (iv) Service (e.g. health care, social support).

Improved access to transport can and will alleviate some of these problems. Understanding the social dimensions of transport and mobility is crucial to planning and developing a sustainable rural transport system. Improved rural transport provision can help:-

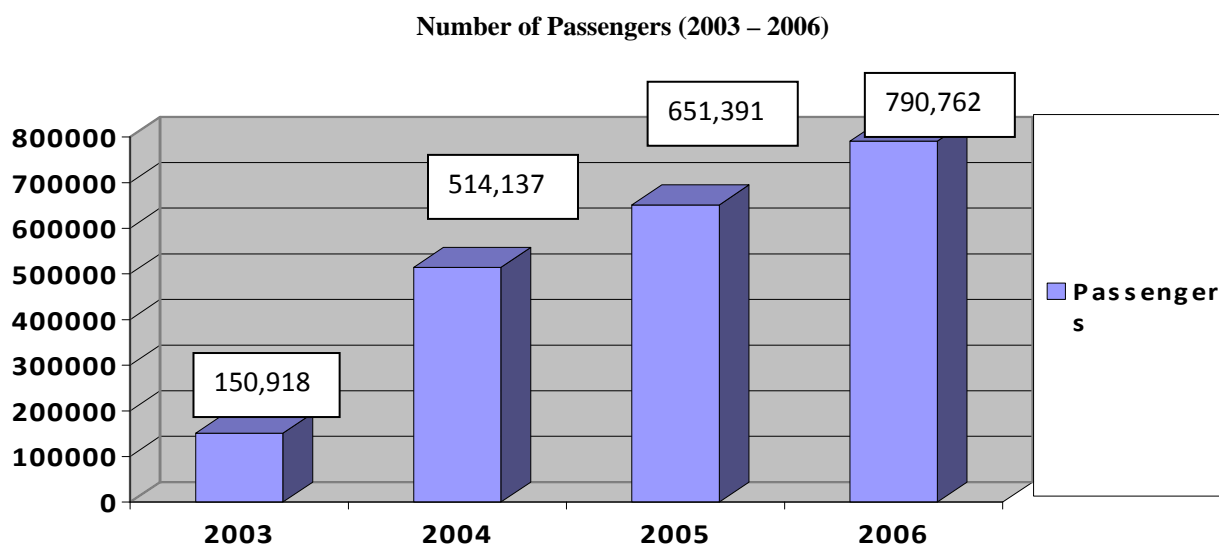
- (i) Reduce social inclusion,
- (ii) Improve people's quality of life (including mental health),
- (iii) Strengthen social networks, reduce isolation and prevent social segregation,
- (iv) Reduce the burden of care on families,
- (v) Allow people to shop in their local communities,
- (vi) Help keep rural life alive and generates better levels of security in people's lives.

These then are the motives which guide the Committee in making the case for a properly funded rural bus transport system.

In a summary of a paper presented to the Irish Rural Link Conference in May 2007, Ms Erin Cotter set out a model of a transport system that worked.

Transport Models and Services - What is working?	
Models: 1. Contracting local operators 2. Operating own vehicles 3. Brokerage of vehicles and resources 4. Car schemes: - Voluntary cars - Co-ordinated hackney	Services: - Locally planned, driven and delivered - Flexible and demand responsive - Accessibility and vehicle design - Free travel pass accepted - Standards and training - Integrated to other services

She went on to outline that up to that date (May 2007) 2.26 million passenger journeys had been made under the RTI. She gave a further breakdown of these statistics as follows:



She supplied a further breakdown of the travel undertaken as follows:

Key Figures	(2.26m passenger journeys to date)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People: • 67% Female • 61% Free Travel Pass • 9% Serious Mobility Difficulties • 70% Rarely or never have access to a car 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services: • 76% journeys door-to-door basis • Passenger assistance available 1/3 of projects • 20% journeys demand responsive • Majority – weekly services

Useful as these figures are, as an indicator of the national network, we can get a very useful snapshot of how things operate at local level. Information generated from Meitheal Mhaigh Eo shows how vital the RTI is. The Committee is most grateful to Meitheal Mhaigh Eo for this information which contains certain key elements specific to County Mayo RTI.

In County Mayo, by the year-end 2006, there were 31,257 passenger journeys recorded, making a total of 3,011 trips. 34 routes were in operation and ten new routes were developed. One of the original community transport services established under the RTI in 2002 was granted a route license from the Department of Transport in 2006.

The success of this initiative was confirmed by a commitment from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Pobal) to mainstream the RTI initiative and to increase funding over 2007-2013. The RTI became the RTP and an estimated €90 million was due to be spent over 2007-2013.

7.2 County Mayo

The unique structure of Meitheal Mhaigh Eo (five LDP's) although complicated has allowed each LDP to decide schemes which will most efficiently benefit the target group that has been prioritised in their own locality. This bottom-up-approach enables the LDP's to utilise local knowledge of both staff and the Local Working Groups.

7.2.1 Social Benefits

The overall objective of the RTI is to address social exclusion in rural Ireland. The focus in County Mayo has therefore been to target the most vulnerable groups in rural society and to ensure that they are provided with effective access to services, social activities and employment. In this regard the County Mayo RTI has been successful. The use of free travel passes on services is central to this success in addressing social exclusion – it allows equality of access for those who have travel passes. Other achievements in alleviating social exclusion are:-

- (i) An increase in levels of independence and reduced isolation for excluded rural residents;
- (ii) Improved access for users to other important public services such as healthcare and pension facilities;
- (iii) Allowing those living in isolation to engage with others and socialise in the community.

The RTI provides a link for isolated residents to their communities, friends and necessary services. Older people in particular find it reassuring to know that someone will call to their home at least once a week.

7.2.2 Improved Transport Service

The County Mayo RTI has also managed a higher quality standard in rural public transport provision through the use of passenger assistants, improved vehicle accessibility, certificate training for drivers and passenger assistants. Better co-ordination in rural public transport provision between transport providers and other public services, has also been achieved.

7.2.3 Accessibility

One of the main challenges with accessibility in the County Mayo project was the lack of appropriate vehicles tendering for routes. Projects are sometimes faced with the decision of either using available vehicles or not having any service at all. Accessibility was not a problem in all cases and the majority of the services are accessible particularly those routes serviced by community vehicles.

Meitheal Mhaigh Eo were pleased with the level of consultation with disability representatives. They have a member of People with Disabilities in Ireland and the HSE on their County Advisory Group. All their meetings are held in accessible buildings.

7.2.4 Linkages with Existing Transport Networks

All services endeavour to link in with the existing transport network, which includes established services provided by private providers as well as Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann.

7.2.5 Linkages with Public Services and Facilities

All of the services link with some services and facilities be they locally based or in the larger towns. For example, many of the services stop at local post offices for passengers to collect pensions, children's allowance etc. before carrying on to larger towns. Facilities range from shops and social facilities to medical services and hospitals to preschools, training facilities etc. Some of the services link in with the meals on wheels initiative.

7.2.6 Door-To-Door

Most of the services in County Mayo offer a door-to-door collection, which is one of its main strengths. The majority of all passengers said that this option was the most important feature of the service. This element of the service is only possible with the use of mini-buses and the skills of bus driver in areas where access to a house is an issue. The provision of door-to-door services has enabled an increased proportion of mobility impaired rural residents to use public transport. For those with disabilities or for people who are mobility impaired, a distance of 500 yards to a hail and ride bus service might be as prohibitive as a distance of five miles.

7.2.7 Economic Benefits

Passengers wishing to access retail, pension or banking facilities primarily use the RTI. Passengers are brought to local towns and villages where they carry out these duties. This element of the RTI has also employed the services of local transport providers and community vehicles. Both of these demonstrate an economic benefit for rural localities.

7.2.8 Management Structure

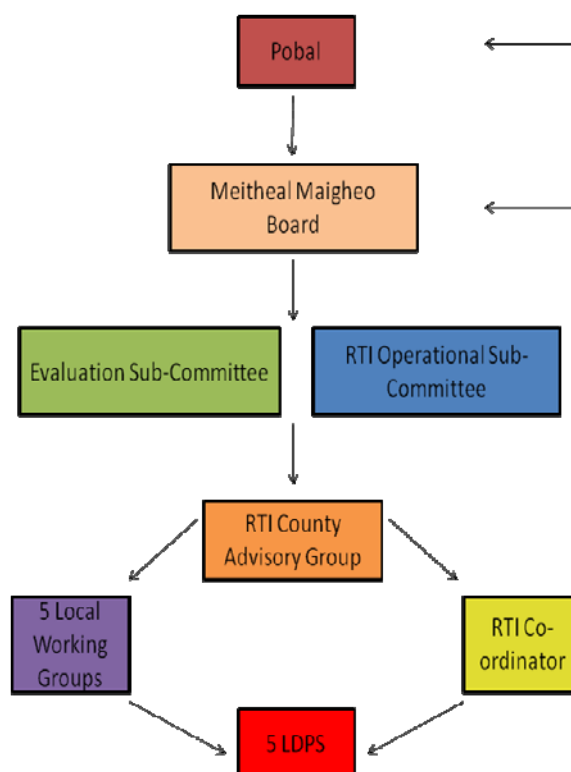
The County Mayo RTI is managed at a local level by the five local working groups and a County Level by the County Advisory Group. Each LWG has a representative on the County Advisory Group and through this mechanism there is effective communication. A number of key agencies are represented on the CAG, including FÁS, Bus Éireann and the HSE. This partnership approach has allowed for co-ordination transport provision and participation from other agencies. The hope is that such representations from statutory agencies will allow for the development of operational links with these organisations.

7.2.9 County Development Board

The County Development Board (CDB) has adopted the RTI's County Advisory Group as their Transport Forum under the CDB Strategy and Implementation Plan. This amalgamation offers a real opportunity to link the RTI with other transport systems in County Mayo and also marry the RTI's strategies and actions with the CDB's implementation plan. An effective model of communication has now been established with regular feedback on the progress and development of the RTI being provided to the CDB and Transport SPC.

For a diagrammatical model of how all this works in County Mayo, please see overleaf.

The structure of the model used in County Mayo is set out in the following diagram:-



The specific example shown exemplifies the view put forward by Comhar (Sustainable Development Council) in May 2008 'Rural Transport Policy – A Special Case'.

7.3 Special Case: Rural Transport Policy (Comhar, May 2008)

Rural transport has been neglected and many geographical areas have very little regular conventional transport services. This makes it difficult for rural dwellers to travel without using a car.

Comhar SDC recommended that revenues from transport fiscal measures be used to –

- (i) Improve rural transport services for 'conventional' trips (i.e. work or school related transport)
- (ii) Increase funding for the RTP to enable full geographical coverage of the scheme

Co-ordination of services in rural areas by different government and non-government agencies is needed so that mobility and accessibility objectives are aligned. For example, the closure of local services should be avoided to reduce the need for increased mobility to larger urban conurbations

A National rural transport policy strategy is needed to draw together existing schemes and transport services and provide a vision for an ambitious future for transport in rural areas.

All this underpins the case for a properly funded rural transport system and the next chapter attempts to draw the up to date picture as well as conclusions which are sustainable.

8. Rural Transport Policy: Now and the Future

The Committee supports the need for an effective Rural Transport network in Ireland but realises that it must convince the Government of the strength of the case by putting forward sustained arguments grounded in facts and logic.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the benefit of a research paper undertaken by the Oireachtas Library and Research Service on 'Rural Transport' which defines rural transport as specifically concerned with transport in low density areas.

Nearly 1.6 million people live in rural Ireland (40% of the population). A 2002 survey conducted by Fitzpatrick's Associates showed that as many as 380,000 people perceived that they had unmet transport needs and future projections (up to 2021) show that this figure may rise to an estimated 450,000 people including 244,000 in key target groups.

Indicative Estimates and Projections of Levels of Unmet Needs

Year	Estimates of Rural Population with Perceived Unmet Needs	Estimates of Target Group with Perceived Unmet Needs
2002	364,959	203,887
2005	382,902	209,281
2011	409,856	210,878
2016	434,543	225,717
2021	453,019	244,170

The research paper outlines the current policy framework (2007-2013) as set out in the National Development Plan. The chapter on 'Development of the Rural Economy' contains a section on roads and public transport. It states that 'under the rural Transport Initiative, some €90 million will be spent improving public transport services in rural areas' (Government of Ireland, 2007, p.81). This figure is also referred to in the section on transport commitments, which states that 'investment in transport infrastructure over the Plan period will total nearly €3 billion of which €90 million will be invested in the RTI for its contribution to the rural economy. It states that 'other examples of specific initiatives that will benefit the rural economy include the RTI, made permanent from the beginning of 2007 with priority assigned to areas that have no public transport services'.

The Programme for Government contains commitments on rural transport. It states that 'vibrant, rural communities are vital to the future of our nation' and that 'over the next five years, will greatly enhance and extend RTI nationwide' (Fianna Fail, Green Party, Progressive Democrats, 2007, p.59). Under the specific heading of "Transport it states "we will build on the success thus far of the RTI and extend the RTP nationwide" (Fianna Fail, Green Party, Progressive Democrats, 2007, p.59).

The current social partnership agreement 'Towards 2016' contains a section on transport, and specifically Transport 21, including details of elements of the national strategy. In relation to the RTI it states that "the government decided in 2005 that the RTI would be put on a permanent footing from 2007 onwards" (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006, p.25). It acknowledges that "the community and voluntary sector has a vital contribution to make and role to play in local and rural transport services and has been actively involved in the development of Rural Transport Initiatives" (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006, p.25).

Against this, the "An Board Snip Nua Report" has serious implications for Rural and Regional Development, not least of which is rural transport. For a fuller assessment of the effect of the Report the document "Let Them Eat Cake" an I.R.L. briefing note (0905) is recommended. On

rural transport the McCarthy report states. “Given the availability of private sector bus alternatives, the high level of car ownership and the underutilisation of synergies with other publicly funded local transport services support the view the level of direct Exchequer assistance can and should be eliminated, particularly in light of current budgetary circumstances this programme should be ended”.

Thus a real threat to the RTP clearly exists although the Committee acknowledges the statement by the Minister of State with Responsibility for Older People, Ms Áine Brady TD, speaking at an Active Retirement Ireland meeting, that “The Government has committed itself to the scheme in the revised Programme for Government” which was reported in the Irish Times on 15 October 2009. The revised programme for Government says: “We will explore the provision of a full-scale transport system in rural areas using the network expertise of Bus Éireann, the resources of the school transport system and the financial resources being spent on transport by the HSE and the Department of Education”.

In reply to Dáil questions Number 646 and 648 put down by Deputy Michael Ring, the Minister for Transport stated on 3 November 2009 that:-

- (i) There are commitments to the RTP in the National Development Plan, ‘Towards 2016’ and the Department of Transport’s Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005. The renewed Government Programme also contains a commitment to explore the provision of a full-scale transport system in rural areas using the network expertise of Bus Éireann and the resources of the school and health transport systems;
- (ii) The Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programme recommended the abolition of the RTP. The Government will consider the Group’s recommendations as part of its preparations for Budget 2010. The Government has also referred the Group’s report to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance and General Affairs for consideration prior to the Budget;
- (iii) Separate to and before the report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programme, my Department had decided that a Value for Money Review would be undertaken on the RTP in 2010. Subject to the outcome of the deliberations and decisions referred to earlier, it is the intention to proceed with the review next year and all relevant matters relating to the operation of the Programme will be examined;
- (iv) On rural transport generally, it is important that existing resources in this area are utilised as cost-effectively as possible and in that context a number of initiatives are currently underway exploring the potential for improved synergies between existing transport providers (namely, the Health Service Executive for health transport, Department of Education and Science for school transport, Bus Éireann for rural transport, and Pobal for RTP services). These initiatives involve pilot transport projects in the North East and North West, an exercise to map all transport services in County Louth and a cross-border pilot rural community transport project under the auspices of the British/Irish Council. The outcome of these initiatives will feed into the process for developing rural transport policy.

It is the view of the Committee that the case for rural transport should continue to be made. The final chapter rehearses the up to date arguments for a rural transport service and the conclusions the Committee draws.

9. Conclusions

9.1 Impact and Effect of Rural Transport System

Quoting again from the Oireachtas Library and Research Service research paper (see previous chapter) the report of poor rural transport can be wide ranging and can affect the following areas:-

- (i) Jobs, education and often school activities;
- (ii) Healthcare;
- (iii) Social and Leisure activities;
- (iv) Confidential advice and specialist support;
- (v) Food shopping.

The following table contains the two main components of a rural transport system as set out in that report.

Key Elements of a Rural Public Transport	
Main Components	Typical Services
Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-urban, ‘Expressway’ type bus and rail services, which typically link major urban centres but which indirectly, serve rural hinterlands. • Dedicated, scheduled ‘rural’ services, which are usually offered by Bus Éireann and private transport operators. • The school transport system, which is operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education and Science.
Non – Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services provided under the RTI, which are usually provided by community-based organisations and which are typically non-conventional in nature. • Other specialist ‘public service’ transport, which includes transport provided through the HSE or transport provided by charitable bodies for specific target groups. • Private hire services, which are largely non-conventional and fully demand-responsive in nature, including taxis and hackneys.

Source: Reproduced from Fitzpatrick Associates (2006)

Funding is a critical issue. The National Development Plan states “€6.9 billion of the €32.9 billion to be invested in transport will be funded by the Exchequer and Private Public Partnership (PPP) resources. This comprises an investment of €90 million over the seven years of the RTI amongst other commitments (Government of Ireland, 2007, p.112). This particular commitment is also referred to under the heading of ‘Public transport investment outside the RDA’ subheading of the Transport Programme and also the chapter on the ‘Development of the Rural Economy’.

The RTI was allocated €4.5 million in 2005 and €5.1 million in 2006. There was funding of €9 million in 2007. The Minister for Transport recently announced additional funding of €2

million for the RTP bringing the total 2008 allocation for the RTP to €11. The estimated provision in 2009 is €1m”.

Recorded Passenger Journeys on RTP Services 2004-2008 with an estimate for 2009

Year	Passenger Journeys
2004	514,137 passengers
2005	651,391 passengers
2006	791,264 passengers
2007	998,350 passengers
2008	1,197,764 passengers
2009	1,500,000 passengers (estimated)

The Committee would like to contrast this with the provision the Exchequer has made for CIE. Parliamentary questions 206 and 207 answered on 21 October 2009 state:-

- The provision for Exchequer subvention for CIE for 2009 is €303.189 million of which approximately €45 million will be allocated to Bus Éireann. The amount is not broken down by reference to routes or areas;
- Funding of €1 million is being provided for the RTP in 2009;
- Pobal, which administers the RTP on behalf of my Department, is working with 36 individual rural transport groups around the country;
- Neither I nor my Department have any role in relation to the day-to-day management of the Programme, including allocating funds to particular groups or services.

Number of Passengers, excluding School Children, carried by Bus Éireann

Year	Passengers	Exchequer Subsidies €(Millions)
2004	47.8 million	46.623 million.
2005	49.0 million	48.323 million
2006	49.7 million	50.523 million
2007	50.2 million	52.544 million
2008	48.2 million	56.354 million
2009	45.3 million	

Subvention Provision for CIE 2009 and Estimate of Passenger Carrying as Advertised by the Company

	Subvention €(Millions)	Estimate of Passengers
Iarnród Éireann	175,782	38.5 million
Bus Éireann	44,982	45.3 million
Bus Átha Cliath	82,425	127.0 million

Contrast this with the RTP provision of €1 million and what needs to be achieved. Rural transport has emerged as a key policy area in recent years. Ireland’s situation in rural transport is probably affected by the fact that Ireland has both low population density and

wide population dispersal. This has important implications for the choice of policies undertaken to address the issue of rural transport. It has already been stated that there are broadly two types of model for the delivery of rural public transport; heavily subsidised conventional rural public transport and less subsidised conventional, scheduled rural services. It has been suggested that given the specifics of the Irish situation, that there should be a mix of conventional and non-conventional services in Ireland. A key issue with developing rural transport policy is what policy objectives are policymakers attempting to achieve.

Given that rural transport is a public good if benched purely from a private cost base it will always be uneconomic. Comhar (Sustainable Development Council) in research commissioned from and conducted by Irish Rural Link (2009) states:-

- (i)** There are social benefits arising from better public transport provision in rural areas which include greenhouse gas emissions reduction, social inclusion, and rural development opportunities. For this reason, additional public funding is required to support rural transport provision, a portion of carbon tax revenue (in proportion to that paid by rural people/business) should be ring-fenced for rural transport;
- (ii)** It is unlikely that door-to-door public transport service can be provided to every single household in rural areas. A combination of services at different levels of frequency is needed –
 - (ii.i)** High quality national transport services with pickup points on national routes;
 - (ii.ii)** Better integration of existing services (including bus stops with timetable information and Park and Ride nodes);
 - (ii.iii)** Regular commuter services between towns and villages;
 - (ii.iv)** Mobility management plans for work-places, schools and sporting activities;
 - (ii.v)** Good quality information is needed to link transport systems and enable travel across a range of transport services;
 - (ii.vi)** Rural transport planning should be moved from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to the Department of Transport;
 - (ii.vii)** A group of transport experts from the Department of Transport should be available to communities within the RTP to enable more professional transport planning.

That report also states that rural transport should be within the broader context of sustainability. Data has shown that there is a very high trip rate in rural areas and that the primary mode of transport is the private car. Due to this dependence on the private car, transport plays a significant role in the economic social and environmental viability of rural areas and communities. We should remember though (as we have seen) that Ireland is not unique in this. Lessons can be learned from the case studies quoted (and indeed other case studies).

Travel demand issues such as integration, governance and land use planning are critical factors in examining mobility policy and sustainable travel in rural areas. The U.K has recognised the economic value of a sustainable rural transport network, illustrated by its

emphasis on accessibility planning. Part of Ireland's quandary regarding sustainable rural transport lies in the lack of interaction between policies. A prime example of poor integration, governance and land use planning is the phenomenon of urban sprawl (shown clearly by the Census data). So, while one area of Government wishes to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs, and another Government Department wishes to improve transport links in an efficient and low cost manner, other areas of local and national government allow settlement policies that run directly counter to the first two aims. Such lack of integration across Government Departments and their policies and programmes is at the heart of the problem. To leave the status quo untouched while trying to implement a rural transport scheme to help build and sustain rural communities becomes more and more inefficient and energy hungry and more and more unsustainable.

It can be concluded from this report that Ireland's effort to achieve sustainability in rural transport has developed from a narrow focus to reduce social exclusion. This report reveals that rural transport throughout Europe gives people the basic right to freedom of mobility, a right that does not disadvantage people because of where they live. When we observe rural transport with a view to addressing its challenges, it is necessary to view it from a measured perspective of social, environmental and economic sustainability viewpoints. From the Comhar Rural Transport Policy document one can make the distinction that environmental sustainability is most at threat due to over reliance on private car usage in the absence of a viable alternative transport model. Nationally and internationally policies have been agreed to reduce emissions and mitigation measures are being pursued.

The Comhar report outlines the challenges and obstacles to sustainable rural transport currently, effecting the development of rural transport policy.

9.2 Challenges and Obstacles to Sustainable Rural Transport (Irish Rural Link 2004)

This report has found that rural transport in Ireland is faced with a number of challenges and obstacles, namely:-

- (i)** No national rural transport policy;
- (ii)** No national rural public transport service;
- (iii)** Lack of funding;
- (iv)** Lack of coordination of existing services;
- (v)** Lack of integration of existing services;
- (vi)** No responsible authority for the coordination or delivery of rural transport.

No best practice to inform rural transport provision or reduction:-

- (i)** Current legislation;
- (ii)** Lack of data.

This report also identifies significant research deficiencies.

The most significant finding in the review was the distinct lack of data on rural transport. While transport is constantly cited as a major problem in rural areas the details of transport behaviour, demand, supply and information of existing services is absent. The report highlighted a significant lack of data to adequately inform the formulation of a rural transport policy. Gaps in data include:-

- (i) Mobility and accessibility levels of rural residents;
- (ii) Settlement patterns;
- (iii) Transport needs, demands, behaviour;
- (iv) Transport providers;
- (v) Services and facilities;
- (vi) Barriers to provision;
- (vii) Interconnections with urban environments;
- (viii) Potential of expanding urban services;
- (ix) Potential impacts of proposed policies.

Before any measures, either reduction or provision, are advanced, gaps in data should be filled.

The report concluded that rural transport in Ireland is predominantly based on the private car and in its current form rural transport in Ireland is environmentally unsustainable. An effective sustainable rural transport system is therefore essential. Irish Rural Link followed this up in a pre-budget submission in Oct 2009 “Ensuring Regional Recovery, Enhancing Local Resilience”. In the context of rural transport this report quotes extensively from the submission in the following paragraphs.

9.3 Rural Transport: Irish Rural Link – Pre Budget Submission 2010

Spend per person in public transport in rural areas is significantly lower than in urban areas. As noted in the RTP Performance and Impact Report 2008/09 the service is successfully delivering a service in a “complex operating environment of market failure and diminishing public service provision”.

A recent review of five RTP groups found that “the RTP projects are providing an essential service to a large population who would otherwise have few opportunities for travel, for social interaction or for access to health care and other important services. The projects demonstrate strong community spirit and show what can be delivered with a relatively modest budget, by keeping overheads low and by taking advantage of local knowledge and integration with other services”.

It provides value-for-money for individual passengers, families, communities and Government.

9.3.1 Individual Passengers

The RTP is one of the significant services enabling older adults to continue to live independently in their homes. It:-

- 9.3.1.1 Provides access to Rural Transport;
- 9.3.1.2 Provides better access to health and social services;
- 9.3.1.3 Expands access to accessible transport;
- 9.3.1.4 Reduces mental health problems;
- 9.3.1.5 Enhances overall quality of life;
- 9.3.1.6 Offers Independence;
- 9.3.1.7 Develops Social Connectedness.

9.3.2 Family Members

- 9.3.2.1 No longer have to take days off work to drive other family members to appointments;
- 9.3.2.2 Better health and social outcomes for passengers;
- 9.3.2.3 Reduces burden of care on families.

9.3.3 Communities

- 9.3.3.1 Local people continue to shop in local communities;
- 9.3.3.2 Public money invested in the RTP has a multiplier effect through benefits to private enterprises in the local economy;
- 9.3.3.3 Increases Rural Development capacity;
- 9.3.3.4 Bottom up approach which underpins all development within the country;
- 9.3.3.5 Community led initiatives continue to grow and expand;
- 9.3.3.6 Capacity building within the community enhances the people in the community;
- 9.3.3.7 Integrated Community – sense of belonging;
- 9.3.3.8 Local employment means wages are spent in local economy.

9.3.4 Government

- 9.3.4.1 Departments seen to implement policies;
- 9.3.4.2 Local success means national success;
- 9.3.4.3 Income tax, Income levies and PRSI paid to Central Government;
- 9.3.4.4 Rural Transport is a success and can be promoted at Government level;
- 9.3.4.5 Reduction in Unemployment;
- 9.3.4.6 Training given to staff through programme.

9.3.5 Training and Development

- 9.3.5.1 Up skilling of staff;
- 9.3.5.2 Training provided through RTP;
- 9.3.5.3 Life-Long Learning;
- 9.3.5.4 Saving to the Exchequer;
- 9.3.5.5 Investment in local business;
- 9.3.5.6 Enhanced employment.

9.4 Recommendation

Maintain RTP funding at current levels and develop a national transport poverty strategy.

9.5 Conclusions

The conclusions of this report can be summarised as follows:-

- 9.5.1 Rural transport problems are not unique to Ireland;
- 9.5.2 Rural transport options are not confined to any one method of transport, but can be a mix of modes;
- 9.5.3 There are better social benefits from better public transport provision including environmental emission reduction, greater social inclusion and other rural development opportunities and integration;
- 9.5.4 Given that a door-to-door rural transport service can be provided to every household, we need to be innovative in the mix and provision for rural transport from buses to hackneys and taxis;

- 9.5.5 Existing initiatives are too narrowly focused;
- 9.5.6 There is still not enough adequate research in qualitative detail done on existing service provision;
- 9.5.7 There is no effective integrated rural transport policy;
- 9.5.8 There a lack of adequate funding available to properly maintain rural transport networks;
- 9.5.9 There is a lack of integration and co-operation among the many government departments and state agencies. Thus there is a need to put rural transport policy on a proper footing;
- 9.5.10 Use of the Free Travel Pass should be standardised on the same basis as it is used on Bus Éireann;
- 9.5.11 There should be a dedicated fleet resource for the RTP with an ongoing vehicle maintenance and upgrade programme in place;
- 9.5.12 There should be a medium term policy RTP of say five year duration with funding projection attached;
- 9.5.13 Out of hours dedicated CIE school buses should be re-deployed into the RTP;
- 9.5.14 There should be targeted initiatives to particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. taxi voucher provision for the elderly for a specified annual amount);
- 9.5.15 At least a one-day-a-week service on pension payment day should be provided for the elderly with off-time loop services on that day provided to the utmost amount possible;
- 9.5.16 Update current legislation on public transport generally making statutory provision for the delivery of a sustainable RTP;
- 9.5.17 In tandem with legislative reform, create a responsible authority for the co-ordination and delivery of Rural Transport;
- 9.5.18 Continue to encourage community-led initiatives and be pro-active in the expansion of services;
- 9.5.19 Given that the 2010 Budget has introduced a carbon tax, the Committee proposes that a dedicated percentage of that tax should be ring-fenced to adequately fund an effective sustainable Rural Transport network.

These are just some of the recommendations (many of which have already been put forward by others), which the Committee feels can enhance rural transport provision over the next number of years.

Appendix 1 – List of Research Material (Non-Irish) Provided

1. 'Transport for Quality of Life' (Research for Transport 2000 Countrywide, Lynn Sloman U.K, 2000).
2. 'Rural Transport Futures Project – A Summary' (Transport 2000 Trust, U.K.)
3. 'Rural Transport – an Overview of Key Issues for the Commission for Integrated Transport (Dr. David Gray, Robert Gordon, University Aberdeen, Scotland, 2001)
4. 'Public transport in Low Density Rural Areas' (Rural Transport Newsletter No.1 – ARTS Conservation, a project within the 5th Framework Programme of the E.U, 2003)
5. 'Road to Nowhere from Rural Transport Futures (Edited by Lynn Sloman produced for Transport for Quality of Life, Guardian, U.K, 2003)
6. 'Rural Transport – Demonstration Sites (ARTS Newsletter No.2, 2004)
7. 'Rural Transport – Evaluation and Transferability of Rural Transfer Systems' (ARTS Newsletter No.3, 2004)
8. 'Bridgeport Scooter Scheme' (Dorset, U.K, 2004)
9. 'Transport Action Patients' (Cornwall, U.K, 2004)
10. 'Fellrunner Village Bus Ltd.' (Longworthy, Cumbria, U.K, 2004)
11. 'Rural Transport and Accessibility Planning' (series of courses in association with Countryside Commission and Hallrow by Oxford Brooks University (Feb./Apr. 2005)
12. 'East Midlands Rural Transport Conference' (Nottingham Rural Transport Partnership, Oct. 2005)
13. 'The Future for Greener Transport in Rural Devon' (U.K, 2007)
14. 'Evaluation of Rural Transport Provision (Jon Crockett/Nick Briggs, M.V.A Consultancy for Practitioners meeting University of Manchester, 2007)
15. 'Thinking about Rural Transport – The Implications for Rural Transport' (Commission for Rural Committee in collaboration with the University of the West of England, 2008/2009)
16. 'Herefordshire Rural Transport Partnership' (Overview Document, U.K., Undated Excerpt)
17. 'Rural Transport in the Highlands and Islands – A Guide to Good Practice' (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland, Undated Excerpt)
18. 'Rural Transport Handbook' (ARTS Project within 5th Framework Programme of the E.U.)
19. 'Demand Responsive Transport (D.R.T) – A Summary' (available online at www.innovation-report.co.uk Undated Excerpt)
20. 'Seeking Solutions for Rural Transport' (Transport Problems and Solutions, Wearsdale and Teesdale U.K, Undated Excerpt)

Appendix 2 – List of Research Material (Ireland) Provided

1. 'Rural Transport Initiative – Information Pack' (2000)
2. 'An Overview of Rural Transport in Ireland' (Presentation to the Irish Planning Institute, Fitzpatrick Associates, Economic Consultants, 2004)
3. 'External Evaluation of the Rural Transport Initiative' (a report prepared for ADM by Fitzpatrick Associates, Economic Consultants, July 2004)
4. 'A Case Study on the Impact of Rural Transport Provision for Older People in one Rural Area' (adopted from B.Sc Rural Development Degree Thesis, M. McKenna, July 2006)
5. 'Progressing Rural Public Transport in Ireland' (a discussion Paper, Fitzpatrick Assoc. 2006)
6. 'Consultation Document on Progressing Rural Public Transport in Ireland' (Dept. Of Transport, Summer 2006)
7. 'Meitheal Mhaigh Eo Teo – Annual Report 2006' (Published 2007)
8. 'On the Move – Developing Rural Transport' (Pobal, Paper Irish Rural Link Conference, E. Cotter, May 2007)
9. 'Social Impact of Improved Public Transport' (Paper by Heinrick Row, Dept. Of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway, Sept. 2007)
10. 'Rural Transport Programme Guidelines 2008-2010' (Pobal, 2007)
11. 'Developing Transport Throughout the Country' (Fianna Fail, 2007)
12. 'Rural Transport and Social Inclusion' (Comhar Seminar Documentation, Oct. 2007)
13. 'Research Paper for Deputy M. Ring on Rural Transport' (Oireachtas Library, Research Service, June 2008)
14. 'Response to Public Consultation on Sustainable Travel and Transport' (Comhar Executive Summary, May 2008)
15. 'Information on Rural Transport' (Erris Local Development Programme, Oct. 2008)
16. Written replies by Minister for Transport to questions by Deputy M. Ring, 4th Nov. 2008 (Dáil Question No. 279 and No. 280)
17. Written replies by Minister for Transport to questions by Deputy M. Ring, 3rd Nov. 2009 (Dáil Question No. 641 and No. 642)
18. Written replies by Minister for Transport to questions by Deputy M. Ring, 3rd Nov. 2009 (Dáil Question No. 646 and No. 648)
19. 'Proposal Invitation for Policy Briefing Paper on Sustainable Rural Transport' (Comhar, Nov./Dec. 2008)
20. 'Awakening the West: Overcoming Social and Economic Equality' (Senator Pearse Doherty, Report Nov. 2008)
21. "Let them Eat Cake" – 'What on Board Snip Nua Report Means for Rural and Regional Development' (Irish Rural Link Briefing Note, July 2009)
22. 'Towards a Sustainable Rural Transport Policy' (Summary of Research Paper by Irish Rural Link, 2009)
23. 'Encouraging Regional Recovery – Enhancing Local Resilience' (Irish Rural Link – Pre-budget Submission 2010)

Appendix 3 – Membership of the Joint Committee

Teachtaí Dála

Cyprian Brady (FF)
Seán Connick (FF)
John Cregan (FF)
Michael Kennedy (FF) [Vice-Chairman]
Micheál Kitt (FF)
Tom Kitt (FF) [Chairman]
Dinny McGinley (FG)
Olivia Mitchell (FG)
John O’Mahony (FG)
Michael Ring (FG)
Mary Upton (Lab)
Jack Wall (Lab)
Mary A. White (GP) [Convenor]

Seanadóirí

Larry Butler
Jerry Buttimer [Convenor]
Pearse Doherty

VACANCY following the death of Senator Tony Kett yet to be filled

VACANCY following the election of Senator Alan Kelly to the European Parliament
yet to be filled

Labhrás Ó Murchú

Appendix 4 – Orders of Reference of the Joint Committee

Dáil Éireann on 23 October 2007 (and 25 October 2007*) ordered:

“(1) (a) That a Select Committee, which shall be called the Select Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs consisting of 13* members of Dáil Éireann (of whom 4 shall constitute a quorum), be appointed to consider -

- (i) such Bills the statute law in respect of which is dealt with by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;
- (ii) such Estimates for Public Services within the aegis of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;
- (iii) such proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 159, concerning approval by Dáil Éireann of the terms of international agreements involving a charge on public funds; and
- (iv) such other matters

as shall be referred to it by Dáil Éireann from time to time;

- (v) Annual Output Statements produced by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and
 - (vi) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted and commissioned by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select.
- (b) For the purpose of its consideration of matters under paragraphs (1)(a)(i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) above, the Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 83(1), (2) and (3).
- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, by virtue of his or her *ex officio* membership of the Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order 92(1), the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall be entitled to vote.

(2) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider -

- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;
- (ii) such matters of policy, including EU related matters, for which the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;
- (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
- (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;
- (v) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 83(4);
- (vi) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act 1997, and for which the Joint Committee is authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
- (vii) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 2(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body concerned or by the Minister

for Arts, Sport and Tourism or the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and

- (viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- (3) The Joint Committee shall have the power to require that the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism or the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall attend before the Joint Committee and provide, in private session if so desired by the Minister or Minister of State, oral briefings in advance of EU Council meetings to enable the Joint Committee to make known its views.
- (4) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.
- (5) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 83(1) to (9) inclusive.
- (6) The Chairman of the Joint Committee, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be Chairman of the Select Committee.”

Seanad Éireann on 24 October 2007 ordered:

“(1) That a Select Committee consisting of 6 members of Seanad Éireann shall be appointed to be joined with a Select Committee of Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider –

- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport, Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;
- (ix) such matters of policy, including EU related matters, for which the Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;

- (x) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
- (xi) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;
- (xii) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 70(4);
- (xiii) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and for which the Joint Committee is authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
- (xiv) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 1(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body or by the Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism or the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and

- (viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- (7) The Joint Committee shall have the power to require that Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism or the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall attend before the Joint Committee and provide, in private

- (8) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.
- (9) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 70(1) to (9) inclusive.
- (10) The Chairman of the Joint Committee shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.”