

NEWS RELEASES

THE DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

27 October 2005

A26/M2 BALLEE ROAD EAST ROUTE ANNOUNCED

Regional Development Minister Shaun Woodward has announced the selection of the route for the A26/M2 Ballee Road East scheme.

The major improvement scheme will provide a direct connection from the M2 Ballymena bypass underneath the Larne Road roundabout to the A26 Ballee Road East dual carriageway at an estimated cost of £6 million.

The Minister said: **"I am well aware of the strong support for this scheme given the significant benefits it will bring to those using the strategic A26 route linking Belfast to the north east of Northern Ireland and onto Londonderry. Road planning is a challenging exercise and it is important to strike a balance between the benefits to the wider public and the disruption to local communities.**

"I know there has been extensive consultation on the various routes and I can assure local people that the impact on the community and environment has played a major part in Roads Service's consideration of the alternative routes. I am satisfied that the options have been thoroughly examined and evaluated and the chosen alignment offers the best overall solution to this exciting project."

Roads Service presented different route options for the dual carriageway at a public consultation held in March 2005. Feedback from this consultation was considered, along with the assessment of environmental, safety, economic, accessibility and integration issues in the selection of the preferred alignment.

Work will now continue with the design of the 1.6km preferred route, providing the opportunity to fine tune the alignment to reduce the impact on property and the environment. The scheme will now be progressed through the statutory procedures of environmental statement, planning and land acquisition. Members of the public and other interested parties will have a further opportunity to comment on the scheme at the stage.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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M2 Ballymena Bypass to Ballee Road East – Preferred Route

