

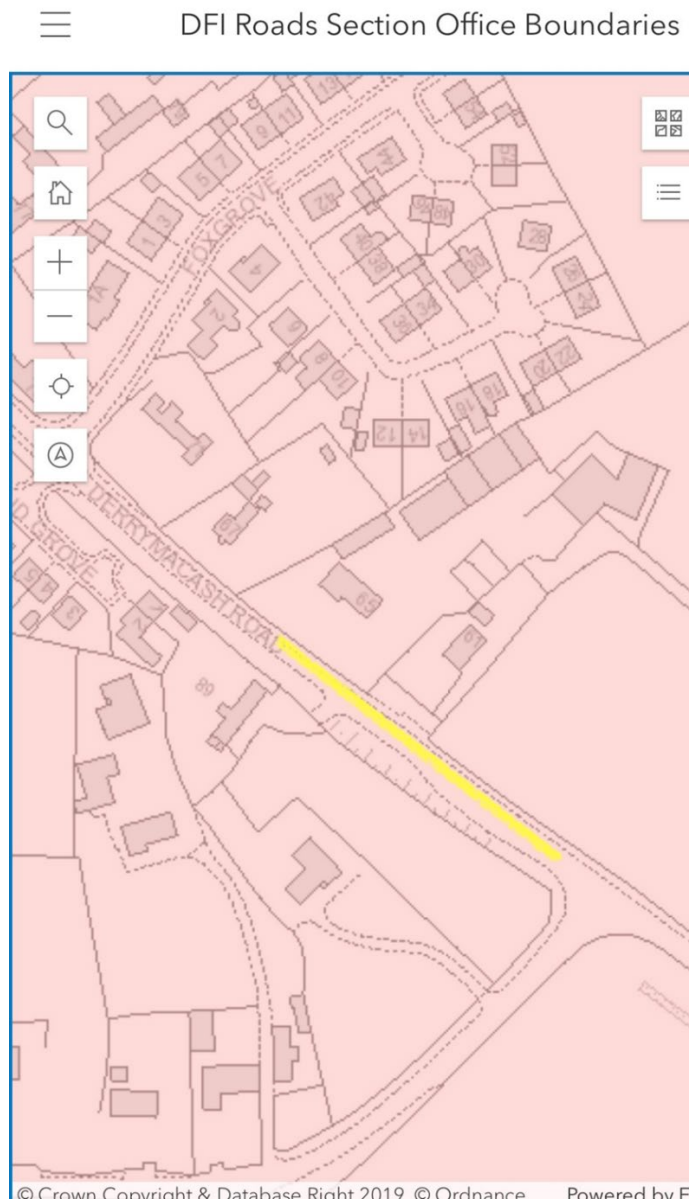
EIR Request (received 17 November 2023) - Reference: DFI/2023-0435

Lack of rural roads investment Derrymacash/Derrytrasna.

First of all, I'm content for this to also be treated as a FOI request and am aware of the expected response times.

As both a taxpayer and ratepayer of many years living in a rural area I feel I am being failed in the service or should I say lack of in relation to the state of the local road network.

As an example the section of road highlighted yellow in the below map has been dug up numerous times over the past 2 years and each time has been left in a worse state of repair which is totally unacceptable. Can you please advise me what the process is for your office as to survey and sign off on how these roads are left by contractors?



Your Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) references large minor works on local roads which will have a dominant safety theme. This certainly doesn't appear to have been reflected in the zero investment with the Derrytrasna - Derrymacash road over the past 20 years, specifically from the Derrytrasna Lane/Charlestown Road junction to the Kinnego Embankment. There are particular stretches of this road that pose a significant road safety risk to motorists and those other categories outlined in para 3.26 below. The local road network I have referred to also services 2 local primary schools and a greater volume nowadays of both cyclists and pedestrians and the failure to invest in these roads poses again a significant safety risk.

Can you please advise what investment has been allocated to this stretch of road network over the past 5, 10, 20 years?, I am not referring to repairs but specifically targeted works such as improvement and upgrades. I am not impressed that sections of road are identified and sprayed with paint for repair and yet have to be resprayed as the paint has faded and repairs not yet occurred.

I am in the process of having my car serviced (3yr old motor) and the cv joints need replacing with the mechanic saying he could attribute the damage to the poor state of the roads, I will in time be submitting a claim for vehicle damages against DFI.

I would encourage you and your officials to visit this rural road network and see the poor conditions for yourself. It's only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs which could be easily avoidable if serious investment and effort was forthcoming.

Response (issued 29 November 2023)

Thank you for your email of 17 November 2023 about the condition and investment for roads in the Derrymacash and Derrytrasna area. As you have requested recorded information your request is being treated as a request under the Environment Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

In considering your request on behalf of the Department, I have determined that the information requested falls under the aegis of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), as opposed to Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your request is for information that relates to activities, policies or plans that affect the environment. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes from consideration under that Act requests for what is deemed to be environmental information.

A guide explaining the Environmental Information Regulations can be found at:
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi-eir-and-access-to-information/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/>.

The Environmental Information Regulations established general public rights of access to environmental information held by public authorities, similar to the general rights established under FOI. There is no provision for privileged access to information, it may either be released to the World at large, or it must be withheld. Any information provided in response to an information request (either FOI or EIR) is considered to have been placed in the public domain.

In response to your request, I can confirm that the Department for Infrastructure does hold information related to your request.

I should firstly advise that utility companies such as NI Water and NIE have a statutory right to install their infrastructure within the boundaries of the public road. They are responsible for all aspects of their works including the quality of reinstatements where trench openings have been made. They, as with other Statutory Undertaker's, are required to carry out all such works in compliance with strict guidelines and they normally provide a two-year warranty after the reinstatement has been completed. Unfortunately, they are not required to carry out full width reinstatements and are only required to reinstate the width of their trench.

DfI Roads carry out periodic inspections on Statutory Undertaker works on the public road network and where defects outside the performance criteria are found they have an obligation to repair them in compliance with the required standards. I can confirm that NI Water has recently completed repairs at this location.

Regarding your question about investment in this stretch of road network over the past 5, 10, 20 years, the Department only retain records going back seven years. I can confirm that no substantive maintenance such as resurfacing has been carried out at this location in that time. However, the Department is well aware of its condition, and I am pleased to say that the section of road between Aghacommon Embankment and Derrymacash (exact extent to be determined) is a high priority for resurfacing, to be completed when the necessary resources become available.

For your information regarding investment and roads maintenance in general, recent budget cuts have led to a reduction of road maintenance activities and the need to prioritise the delivery of essential services. The Department is also experiencing significant staff resource pressures which is further compounding the issue. Regrettably, in reality what this has meant is that fewer repairs have been carried out across the entire road network than we

would have liked resulting in the need for us to address only the worst defects and focus primarily on higher trafficked routes.

This has not been a decision the Department has taken by choice or because it represents good engineering practice, it is solely a consequence of us not having sufficient funding to do more. We need to spread the funding over such a large network that it forces us to make difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising aspects of our work and quality standards.

There is nothing we would like to do more than to be delivering the highest quality maintenance service on our roads but that is currently not possible due to the limitations on road maintenance funding. Furthermore, the ongoing and sustained shortfall in funding over recent years has sadly had a significant negative impact on the overall integrity of the entire road network.

I appreciate your concerns regarding the Department's inability to carry out road maintenance to the level expected by the public, however, without sufficient funding going forward our roads will undoubtedly continue to deteriorate. However, I can assure you that the Department will continue to do all it can with the resources available to seek to keep the road network as safe as possible.

Regarding taking forward safety improvement schemes, the Department uses criteria based assessment which is primarily based on injury collision history (based on information provided by PSNI) which typically means areas that have accident clusters. This criteria assessment is outlined in the Department's policy document [Development of minor works and large minor works schemes RSPPG E032](#) that identifies the potential for viable improvement schemes and justification for public expenditure.

Road safety is a very high priority for the Department and it is committed to working proactively to make our roads safer and to address the needs of all road users. We would like to implement more road safety measures, but due to limited resources, schemes must be assessed and prioritised to those locations where the greatest benefits can be achieved. Any viable improvement scheme is placed onto a prioritised programme and taken forward as and when resources permit.

Due to the lack of collisions on the Derrytrasna - Derrymacash Road, from the Derrytrasna Lane/Charlestown Road junction to the Kinnego Embankment over recent years there has not been a scheme considered. However, the most recent safety measure was to reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph through Derrymacash in 2020.

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