

Briefing Note – Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications

The Committee on Transport and Communications plays a key role in shadowing the work of the Department of Transport and the Department of Energy, Climate and Communication, as well as the office of the Taoiseach. The Committee scrutinises legislative proposals to promote and coordinate transport and communications planning.

The membership of each Committee usually reflects the proportion of the seats held by each of the political parties in the Houses of the Oireachtas (Dáil and Seanad).

Overview of procedures:

It is customary to refer to the Chair as Chairperson, a TD is referred to as Deputy, and a Senator as Senator (for those not on video calls, signs in front their seats will explain who they are).

The proceedings will be recorded and broadcast live (both TV and audio) so your body language and reactions will be visible at all times. All comments made within the committee room are public.



Committee members may use emotive language when asking questions. It is important when giving evidence to the committee you are frank and succinct but don't take the tone of the questioner. Also avoid using the language of the questioner. If a question is asked in a raised or emotive fashion do not respond in kind.




Make a note of the questions and who asks them, as often you may be asked three to four questions at a time. You may wish to have a colleague with you to help record questions and prompt you with information.



Take your time when getting ready to answer a question and if you don't have information to hand tell the chair you will check the information and get back to the committee- remember you are on the public record. Do not be afraid to refer a question to a colleague present at the meeting if they have more knowledge on the subject area than you do.




Speak on behalf of your company. If you do not have information or a response do not feel pressed to speculate on what you may do into the future.




Try to ensure that you have a relatively plain background, and that you are in a space free of interruptions for the duration of the meeting. It's best to avoid overly flashy clothing, pens, watches, etc.

Committee on Transport and Communications		
Deputies	Background	Positions
	<p>Kieran O'Donnell (Chair) – Fine Gael – Limerick City</p> <p>Deputy Kieran O'Donnell previously served as a TD for Limerick City from 2011-2016, losing his seat at the 2016 General Election. Following this he was elected to the Seanad serving from 2016 -2020. He is a chartered accountant and often speaks in relation to finance matters having previously sat on the Public Accounts Committee and the Finance Committee.</p>	<p>Since being elected he has raised the issue of extensions for driving licences due to the Covid-19 lockdown with Minister Hildegarde Naughton (see here).</p> <p>During a Committee meeting in November, the deputy asked Minister Naughton if the RSA were having funding difficulties in retaining the 34 staff that have been employed on temporary contracts since 2017/18 and asked if the Minister would consider further funding if she received a submission from the RSA, which the Minister said she would.</p> <p>During a committee meeting with the NCBI, the Irish Wheelchair Association, and the Irish Guide dogs for the blind groups on January 19th, (hereafter referred to as the e-scooter meeting), he acknowledged their concerns regarding e-scooters, and told them he would contact the department to ensure their concerns were addressed and responded to.</p>
	<p>Joe Carey – Fine Gael – Clare</p> <p>Deputy Carey was first elected to the Dáil in 2007 and has retained his seat at every election since. Deputy Carey was previously Fine Gael Spokesperson on Juvenile Justice in 2007 and Fine Gael's Deputy Chief Whip in 2010. He has not been appointed as a front bench spokesperson in the party since</p>	<p>The deputy addressed a question to Minister Naughton during a Committee meeting on November 25th, asking why the 34 driving instructors employed on an interim basis by the RSA in 2017-18 were not being kept on on a permanent basis when they were clearly qualified, given</p>

	<p>then and has largely served in the back benches.</p>	<p>there were currently 66,000 people waiting on a test. He highlighted that the Department had allocated funding for the hiring of 40 more instructors, and that the 34 should therefore be kept on to avoid time wasting in re-filling the positions.</p>
	<p>Cathal Crowe – Fianna Fail – Clare</p> <p>Deputy Crowe was first elected to the Dáil in 2020 having previously served on Clare County Council for the Shannon Area since 2004. Prior to being elected as a TD Crowe was a primary school teacher and has previously worked with Fianna Fáil MEP Brian Crowley in the European Parliament.</p>	<p>Noted the growing presence of e-scooters and noted the need for proper regulations on parking and restrictions on where they can drive, based on recent experiences in London where such things were unregulated. Also suggested the need for an alert sound.</p>
	<p>Michael Lowry – Independent – Tipperary</p> <p>First elected to the Dáil in 1987, Lowry served as minister for transport, energy and communications during the rainbow coalition government between 1994 and 1996, before resigning and becoming an Independent. Despite being a controversial figure nationally, Lowry is consistently popular within his constituency topping the poll in every general election he has contested since 1997.</p>	<p>Deputy Michael Lowry submitted questions to Minister Ryan about waiting times in Tipperary, requesting a breakdown per test centre</p> <p>Asked what resources were being put in place to reduce waiting times</p> <p>Asked if the Minister was aware that the excessive wait time was impacting people's job prospects and access to education</p> <p>Emphasised the need to reduce waiting lists so that people could access tests in a more timely manner.</p>
	<p>Steven Matthews – Green Party – Wicklow</p> <p>Prior to his election to the Dáil, Steven Matthews served as a Councillor on Bray Town Council from 2008 – 2014 and on Wicklow County Council from 2014 – 2020 representing the Green Party. He unsuccessfully contested the 2016 General election. He was subsequently elected to the Dáil at the</p>	<p>During the e-scooter meeting, the Deputy supported calls for designated parking bays, ensuring e-scooters are kept off of footpaths, and addressed concerns over speed limits.</p> <p>He has also been very supportive of the need for 30</p>

	<p>2020 General Election representing Wicklow, though notably his base of support would be in the North Wicklow area particularly in Bray and Greystones.</p> <p>He is currently the Green Party's Spokesperson on Business Enterprise and Innovation, though has not been active on these issues since the Green Party entered Government.</p>	<p>KMH speed limits in urban areas. He has used RSA messaging and graphics from the RSS when asking questions on this issue.</p>
	<p>James O'Connor – Fianna Fáil – Cork East</p> <p>Elected to the Dáil in the 2020 General Election at his first attempt, O'Connor previously served on Cork County Council since May 2019. He is currently the "Baby of the Dáil" being elected at age 22 in February.</p> <p>Prior to being elected to the Dáil he was studying Business at Trinity College Dublin but in an interview he stated he has yet to complete his final exams.</p>	<p>Has not made any recent comments in relation to e-scooters or test waiting times.</p> <p>Deputy O'Connor was recently photographed attending an event for e-scooter rental provider Superpedestrian link here</p>
	<p>Darren O'Rourke – Sinn Féin – Meath East</p> <p>Deputy Darren O'Rourke was elected to the Dáil in the 2020 general election where he topped the poll in the Meath East constituency receiving over 10,000 votes. He was appointed as the party's Transport Spokesperson in July 2020 following a number of representations he made criticising the government's response to Covid-19 and seeking clarity on areas such as driving tests.</p>	<p>During the e-scooter meeting, acknowledged that the government was likely to proceed with regulations on e-scooters as opposed to legislation, and would treat them similarly to bicycles. However, he agreed with proposals that sound warnings, path access limits, and age limits should be legislated for.</p> <p>Described them as a cleaner and cheaper transport alternative to cars, and welcomed moves to legislate for them on Irish roads. (10/11/21)</p> <p>Called on the Minister to make a statement on the number of people waiting on tests and the number of</p>

		driving instructors currently employed, per centre.
	<p>Duncan Smith – Labour – Dublin Fingal</p> <p>Elected to the Dáil at the 2020 General Election, Smith previously served on Fingal County Council from 2014 – 2020. He has been involved in the Labour Party for a number of years and previously worked as a Parliamentary Assistant for Deputy Brendan Ryan. He currently serves as the Labour Party’s spokesperson on Climate Action, Communications Networks and Transport and is also a member of the Covid-19 Response Committee.</p>	<p>E-scooters meeting: Highlighted the need for transport infrastructure too be disability proofed.</p> <p>Previously noted role of e-scooters in decarbonisation efforts (24/03/21)</p>
	<p>Ruairí Ó Murchú – Sinn Fein – Louth</p> <p>Deputy Ó Murchú was elected to the Dáil in 2020 filling the seat vacated by the retirement of former Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams. He was co-opted onto Louth County Council in 2017 and re-elected in 2019. He also previously worked in Leinster House for the party.</p>	<p>E-scooters meeting: Will mostly be addressed through regulations. Need an agreement on parking and age limits. Sceptical about the introduction of insurance and licensing.</p>
Senators		
	<p>Jerry Buttimer – Fine Gael – Cork South</p> <p>Elected first as a Senator in 2007, Buttimer was also previously a TD for Cork South Central from 2011 – 2016, though a boundary change moving the areas of Bishopstown and Glasheen to the Cork North Central Constituency had an impact on his hopes of re-election. He was subsequently elected to the Seanad in 2016 where he was appointed as Leader of the Seanad. He again ran in the Cork South Central constituency in the 2020 General Election but failed to secure a seat.</p>	<p>On e-scooters: The Deputy acknowledged there was much work still to be done and said the Committee would contact the Department to ensure the groups’ concerns were addressed. Said there was still much work to be done. Senator Buttimer was recently photographed attending an event for e-scooter rental provider Superpedestrian link here.</p>

	<p>Timmy Dooley – Fianna Fáil – Clare</p> <p>Senator Dooley previously served as a TD for the Clare constituency from 2007 – 2020 and was a high-profile member of Fianna Fáil’s front bench as the party’s Spokesperson on Communications, Climate Action and the Environment from 2016 – 2019. In 2019 he was involved in the “votegate” scandal where TDs were caught with irregularities in their voting patterns. He was subsequently removed from the party’s front bench.</p>	<p>No recent comments on e-scooters or driving test delays.</p>
	<p>Lynn Boylan – Sinn Féin – Dublin South-West</p> <p>Senator Boylan was elected to the Seanad on the Agriculture Panel in 2020, having previously served as an MEP in Brussels between 2014 and 2019. She unsuccessfully contested the Dublin Bay South by-election in 2021, losing out to Ivana Bacik.</p> <p>Prior to her career in politics, Boylan served as a coordinator for the Irish Wildlife Trust at Killarney National Park, worked for the Global Action Plan in Ballymun, and served on the board of Safefood.</p>	<p>E-scooter meeting: Referenced difficulties in Brussels as one of the examples of how not to do e-scooters re path ad parking regulations. Asked for examples in the updated submission of places where insurance had been effective.</p>
	<p>Gerard Craughwell – Independent</p> <p>Elected to the Seanad in 2014 during a by-election having secured the nomination of Fianna Fáil, Craughwell has been re-elected twice and largely represents the interests of independent Senators. Senator Craughwell has previously served in the military which he often references and is a former President of the Teachers Union of Ireland. He is originally from Galway but now resides in South Dublin.</p>	<p>Asked about the implementation of helmet regulations, as he noted the increased number of children on e-scooters as pillion passengers. (17/11/21)</p>



Gerry Horkan – Fianna Fáil – Dún Laoghaire

Senator Horkan was re-elected in the 2021 Seanad by-election, having previously served on the Industrial and Commercial Panel between 2016 and 2020, losing his seat in the 2020 Seanad election.

Prior to his time in the Seanad he was a member of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council from 2003-2016.

E-scooter meeting: was sceptical about a 12kmph speed limit, seemed to accept 20kmph that was standard elsewhere. Supported geofencing but asked how this could be regulated in privately owned scooters; acknowledged need for age limits and bans on footpaths.

Raised the issue of NCT backlogs last June (30/06/21).