3 February 2014

Ms Julie Coulter
Consumer Council
Elizabeth House
116 Holywood Road
Belfast
BT4 1NY

Dear Ms Coulter

**RE: Consumer Council 2014-2015 Combined Energy, Water and Transport
Forward Work Programme Consultation**

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) has been established
to promote awareness of issues relating to older people and be an authoritative
champion for them.

The Commissioner welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed 2014-2015
Combined Energy, Water and Transport Forward Work Programme.

There is no obvious duplication in respect to our own forward work programme, but if
we have information of value to the Consumer Council, relevant to the tasks they
undertake under this Forward Work Plan, the Commissioner would be very happy to
provide it to the Consumer Council.

The Commissioner notes with interest the Consumer Council assuming responsibility for
consumer representation on postal services in April 2014.

Postal services and the network of Post Offices are of great importance to older people.
Post Office branches provide a central place where older people can access a range of
government and private services. This is increasingly vital for some older people when
many services are moving online. Post Offices are also key parts of the local
community, especially in smaller villages or rural areas, and provide a place where older
people can meet others and be a part of community life. In a survey undertaken by Age
Concern in 2006 about Post Offices in rural areas, older people were clear that the Post
Office is crucial to the local community and there would be services they would be
unable to access if their local post office was to close.

If you would like to discuss any of these points in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact the Commissioner's Policy Team:

Emer Boyle, Head of Legal and Policy Advice

(028) 90 890 894

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Yours sincerely

Evelyn Hoy
Chief Executive