

# Shaping Our Future

Public Consultation on a Regional  
Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland



RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK



The Queen's University of Belfast

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# THE CONSORTIUM

A consortium of four organisations undertook this action research project.



The Queen's University of Belfast

## The School of Environmental Planning The Queen's University Of Belfast

The School of Environmental Planning is one of eight Schools in the Faculty of Engineering at Queen's. The School provides professionally accredited undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Town and Country Planning, the undergraduate course being the only one in Ireland. The School has a long tradition of applied research on planning related issues, mainly sponsored by Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Recent studies have included planning enforcement, design in rural areas, the development plan system and a series of reports on conservation of the built environment. The staff involved in this research project were Malachy McEldowney, Ken Sterrett and Patrica Young.



## The Urban Institute The University Of Ulster

As an independent think tank with a remit to take a fresh look at urban problems, the Urban Institute links the University of Ulster, public agencies and the community in the field of urban regeneration. It offers a range of research and policy services, designed to improve analysis, practice and evaluation. It promotes inventive integrated strategies to tackle the multifaceted aspects of remaking the city, based on principles of equity as well as efficiency.



RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

## Rural Community Network (Northern Ireland)

The Rural Community Network (NI) seeks to identify and articulate the voice of rural communities in relation to issues of poverty, disadvantage and community development, in order to promote a more just and equitable society.

The Rural Community Network has 439 members, of which 301 are rural community organisations from all parts of Northern Ireland, 25 are Statutory organisations and 39 are Northern Ireland wide voluntary organisations. It receives core funding from the Department of Agriculture and the Voluntary Activity Unit with the remainder of its resources coming from trusts, membership fees, project income and private funding.

It is a Northern Ireland wide organisation and is managed by a voluntary committee elected every two years. It attempts to reflect a broad geographical, gender and religious mix in its members and committee. Two community representatives elected from each of the six counties make up the main component of the networks committee with farming, environmental, district council and voluntary organisation interests making up the rest.

The Network works with its members, mainly through sub-regional networks which come together on a geographical or theme basis. It also works with central and local government and voluntary and statutory organisations to promote the rural agenda.

The aims of the network are fourfold:

- to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty and disadvantage;
- to sustain and improve the quality of life of those people living in rural areas of Northern Ireland;
- to seek support for community development and decentralised rural policies;
- to develop linkages between community groups and sub-regional networks throughout rural areas of Northern Ireland and beyond.

The staff involved in this project were Nial Fitzduff, Therese Devlin and Gareth Harper.

### Community Technical Aid (Northern Ireland)



Community Technical Aid (CTA) is a voluntary organisation established in 1984 to provide community planning, architecture and project development services to groups and communities in greatest need throughout Northern Ireland. It is a membership organisation and is managed by a committee elected each year by the community groups and voluntary organisations which make up its membership.

CTA provides assistance to groups in both rural and urban areas for projects such as developing community facilities and amenities, preparing strategies for local area regeneration and environmental improvements, preparing development strategic plans and responding to planning and development proposals. It also facilitates consultation and community participation in major planning processes and endeavours to ensure that policies and plans of government bodies take account of community needs and give groups a real say in shaping the future of their communities.

CTA receives a grant from the Department of the Environment which it uses to provide some of its services at no cost to groups in areas of greatest need who otherwise would not be able to obtain the assistance CTA offers.

The staff involved in this project were Colm Bradley, Deirdre Harte, Catharine McWhirter, Gráinne McClean and Emma Barron with additional input from consultant Paddy Carroll.



# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

We were commissioned by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to undertake an action-research project relating to the Discussion Document - *Shaping Our Future: Towards a Strategy for the Development of the Region*. The first part involved a widespread consultation exercise targeted at the major stakeholders in the region across all sectors. The second part involved a comparative analysis of regional planning elsewhere.

The report is in three sections. The first is a summary analysis of the main arguments emerging from the consultation. The second is a review of the opinions expressed in the consultation itself, distinguishing those points which carried wide consensus from those which were predominantly held by particular sectors or areas. The third offers further analysis and proposals, and draws upon comparative references to regional planning elsewhere.

The report follows the core themes around which the consultation was structured. Inevitably there is some repetition of issues expressed among the themes, since they all were related.

# Summary Analysis

# SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The summary analysis below offers a synopsis of some of the main arguments to emerge from the consultation process. The key messages represent the views of the research consortium on the main points emerging from these arguments.

***strategy content. This connects to the widely expressed view that planning needs to be redefined as an ongoing participatory process; one which seeks to extend citizenship and develop civil society.***

## 1. 1 Process

- 1.1.1 This theme centred on the strategic planning process and included the scope and focus of the initiative as well as the role and value of consultation.
- 1.1.2 There was broad consensus about the need for a regional strategy and for such a strategy to be more than a physical development plan. This latter point reflected widespread concern that the *Shaping Our Future initiative*, while on the one hand encouraging a visionary approach, on the other, seemed to be narrowly focused on landuse issues particularly the location of housing. ***The key message on this issue was the need for a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to strategic planning that would give expression to the broader visions of the consultation exercise.***
- 1.1.3 There was considerable scepticism, particularly in the community and voluntary sectors, about the real value of the consultation process. Many argued that the process would be used to help legitimise a top-down DOE designed plan. ***A strong message from the consultation exercise was the need for a more transparent planning process that would demonstrate a dialogue and relationship between the consultation outcomes and the***

## 1.2 Valuing People

- 1.2.1 This theme encouraged debate about how planning can be more people focused. For the most part discussions centred on social and spatial equity and the role of planning in this regard.
- 1.2.2 It was widely recognised across all sectors that planning, even narrowly defined landuse planning, acted as an important mechanism in distributing scarce public and private sector resources. While poverty and unemployment as well as inequality more generally cannot simply be defined spatially, it was nevertheless acknowledged that spatial concentrations of deprivation persist and are affected by a range of location and infrastructure policies. Consequently it was widely argued by participants that strategic planning policies should be subjected to more explicit Targeting Social Need (TSN) and Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) proofing to ensure social and spatial equity. ***The key message was the need to recognise the central role of strategic planning in mediating between social need and market need.***

1.2.3 Spatial equity was a recurrent theme of discussion in rural areas. The main concern of participants was how to ensure an equitable balance of development across the region. ***The key message to emerge from these discussions was the need to identify 3-4 sub-regions as the basis for the consolidation of growth in a cluster of 5-6 District Council areas. This was the preferred strategy for creating a critical mass rather than concentration in one District Town.***

1.2.4 In terms of housing there was widespread acceptance among participants of the need to create complete communities. It was argued that the provision of choice of tenure and dwelling type within one area would address growing social divisions, which are becoming evident in urban, suburban and rural areas. ***The key message here was the need for housing policies aimed at reducing social exclusion.***

### 1.3 Building Prosperity

1.3.1 Discussions around this theme focused on economic issues and on the role that planning could play in developing the regional economy.

1.3.2 Many participants raised the issue of the relationship between an economic strategy for the region and the forthcoming Regional Strategic Framework (RSF). Some suggested that it was illogical to prepare a physical landuse strategy in the absence of an agreed underpinning economic strategy. Others argued that an integrated plan was required to provide an overall vision for the region:

one which would transcend the interests of separate administrations.

***The key message was the need for an approach which connected traditional landuse concerns, such as settlement policy, infrastructure and the environment, to economic planning at both regional and local levels. Importantly economic planning included the targeting of education and training initiatives.***

1.3.3 There was a widespread view that the economic dimensions of the regional strategy should be designed not only to attract inward investment but also, in equal measure, to support and facilitate local economic development and indigenous industry. This included support for the social economy and community businesses as well as for the diversification of the rural economy. ***The key message in this context was the need for strategic policies and proposals which would facilitate and foster integrated economic and physical planning at a local level.***

1.3.4 Considerable concern was expressed that the proposed regional transport corridors and potential growth areas would favour the east of the region and consequently reinforce existing imbalances. In addition, and particularly within rural areas, there was widespread concern about the designation of the low, medium and high growth areas. ***The key message from these discussions was the recognition that spatial and social equity is essential for the long-term development of the region.***

## 1.4 Caring for the Environment

- 1.4.1 This theme encouraged discussion on issues such as sustainability and environmental protection.
- 1.4.2 Discussions about sustainability illustrated how different groups sometimes offer divergent meanings of the concept. Some emphasised the need to understand how local decisions affect the wider world, others called for a more environmentally sustainable economy and many drew attention to the importance of sustaining traditional local communities. All contributors acknowledged that the value of employing the concept of sustainability was that it encouraged recognition of the 'connectedness' of issues: the economy to the environment, transport policy to settlement policy and so on. **While different concepts of sustainability arose in discussions on most themes, the main message from these discussions was the need to translate agreed criteria into measurable targets and priorities.**
- 1.4.3 There was a widespread view that the Shaping Our Future discussion document was biased towards urban issues and had reduced the complexity of rural Northern Ireland to its function as an environmental resource. Rural communities argued for an increasing role in the development and management of rural areas and the acknowledgement of the contribution that communities can make to the region as a whole. This included socio-economic development planning as well as environmental management. **The key message emerging from these discussions was that there should be an explicit recognition of the needs of rural areas and an acceptance of the role of communities in their local planning and stewardship.**
- 1.4.4 This theme prompted discussion about the quality of existing and future development, particularly housing development. There was considerable criticism of developer-led housing, which was often poorly designed and lacked the basic infrastructure for residential neighbourhoods. **The key message from these discussions was the need for a more interventionist proactive form of planning: one which sought to achieve high quality residential development through negotiated agreement with developers.**

## 1.5 Improving Communications

- 1.5.1 For the most part discussions around this theme centred on transport policy, although there was some wider debate about communications generally.
- 1.5.2 Much of the discussion about transport pointed to the pivotal role that it plays in urban and rural life. The nature of the connections of work to home, to leisure, and to everyday services illustrated how transport affects people's life chances. Planners therefore need to recognise the differing transport needs of different groups, for example urban and rural, and to build these into a more imaginative and locally sensitive strategy. Major new investment in public transport should underpin this. **The key message from these discussions was that there should**

***be a radical shift in transport policy towards an equal opportunity agenda, responsive to both urban and rural needs, as well as to established interests.***

- 1.5.3 Support for better public transport provision was almost universal with many pointing to the environmental value of reduced car traffic. Although Belfast's air pollution problems were frequently cited as an example of the inadequacies of current policy, others pointed to the effects on residential communities and on the environment generally. Alternative transport systems including cycle ways and black taxis were frequently referred to, as was making better use of existing transport. ***Again the key message was the need for a radical shift towards an imaginative transport policy which offered realistic alternatives to the car.***

## 1.6 The Issue of a Divided Society

- 1.6.1 Discussion around this theme centred on how planning policy could address the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland but it also prompted debate about other spatial divisions relating to, for example, social class and age.

- 1.6.2 During discussions there was significant recognition of the impact that planning policy, even 'neutral' planning policy, has had on the divided communities in the region. Awareness of the problems, however, did not inspire easily implemented solutions, but did suggest that policy proofing or impact assessments should be undertaken for the forthcoming strategy. ***The key message here was, firstly, a welcome for an explicit recognition of the sectarian divisions in the discussion document and secondly, a desire for this recognition to be acknowledged and developed in policy appraisal.***

- 1.6.3 Participants pointed to other spatial divisions that have undermined social cohesion and will continue increasingly to do so. These include the creation of distinct areas for the elderly; the social division engendered by the separation of public and private housing areas; and importantly, the major perceived division between the areas east and west of the Bann. ***The key message from these discussions was the need for an overarching and explicit objective of engendering social cohesiveness through policy and proposals.***

## 1.7 Regional Strategic Guidelines

- 1.7.1 The inclusion of Regional Strategic Guidelines in the discussion document encouraged debate about the relative value of different concerns and aspirations.

- 1.7.2 Most participants thought the tests (see page 40 Shaping Our Future) were too vague and consequently were open to a variety of interpretations. This led to discussions about how the tests could be given more concrete expression and about how they could be weighted, arbitrated, prioritised and implemented. Different sectors suggested certain priorities and some argued for additional tests, for example a rural development test and a community impact test. ***The key message from these discussions was support for the inclusion of guidelines and for an open and transparent process of 'test implementation'.***
- 1.8.3 Discussions about implementation also led to a widespread conclusion that an implementation body was needed to oversee the realisation of the strategy. Some argued for an implementation agency modelled on the urban development corporations or the new regional development agencies in Great Britain; others favoured a more inclusive, broadly based body which could draw upon existing district/area partnerships. ***The key message was that new structures should be set up to ensure that a co-ordinated and accountable implementation process is achieved.***

## 1.8 Implementation

- 1.8.1 This theme focused on how the RSF might be implemented.
- 1.8.2 Although there was little reference in the discussion document to implementation there was a broad consensus view that the RSF should address the issue. Importantly too, most participants pointed to the need for a co-ordinated inter-departmental approach to implementation. Such an approach should clarify the roles of various departments and agencies as well as the private sector and should be underpinned by measurable targets, timetables and resourcing. ***The key message emerging here was the need for clear direction about how the strategic vision could be achieved.***

# Review of Consultation

# REVIEW OF CONSULTATION

## 2.1 Process

- 2.1.1 There was broad agreement across all sectors about the need for a regional strategy. In this context most arguments focused on the large number of plans, visions and initiatives being developed without strategic guidance or any semblance of overall coherence; examples here included Local Economic Development Plans, City Visions, Area Plans and Area Partnership Strategies.
- 2.1.2 Similar arguments were made about the need to consider spending priorities within an agreed regional context. Some sectors questioned the scope of strategic planning. For example the rural communities suggested that there was no overall vision or strategy for the future development and management of the Northern Ireland countryside and its relation to the wider region and indeed no consideration of how the relationship between town and country could be developed. The business sector recognised the need for a coherent strategy which could relate to adjacent regions in Britain and Ireland and which would assist Northern Ireland to compete in the global marketplace.
- 2.1.3 There was also a broad consensual view that the strategy should be more than a physical development plan. The language of the Discussion Paper in places suggests and encourages a more integrated form of planning and this was widely welcomed. However the potential for a more integrated form of strategic planning raised questions about how this might be achieved. Almost all sectors asked questions about the relation between the RSF and other existing and forthcoming government strategies. Would the RSF provide the basis or foundation for a more co-ordinated approach to strategic planning? There was a welcome from a number of sectors for an approach which appeared to move beyond pure land use planning to address sustainable development in a more proactive and holistic way.
- 2.1.4 The community and voluntary sectors, particularly in the north west, in rural areas and in the Belfast urban area, were sceptical about the real value of the participation process. There was widespread concern that the consultation exercise would be used to help legitimise a top-down DOE designed plan. The short time scale for the consultation process, it was argued, provided justification for this concern. Many community groups thought the timetable was driven by EU funding priorities and sought clarification about this. In this context the community and voluntary sectors argued that the strategy and the processes of building and implementing a strategy should be seen as an opportunity for government to build confidence within and between sectors. In particular they argued for a transparent process that would demonstrate a dialogue and relationship between the consultation outcomes and the content of the strategy. Many also wanted the draft strategy to clarify the next stages of consultation, including the role and status of the Examination in Public and opportunities for participation. It was also in this context that many were concerned about the composition of the Advisory Panel. Despite PAFT there were no women on the Panel and no representative from the community sector in Northern Ireland.

- 2.1.5 Some environmental groups took this critique about the timescale for the strategy a stage further. They argued that if the DOE was serious about creating a framework to encourage and facilitate sustainable development, then the time allowed for consultation and indeed the time span for the strategy itself should have been much longer.
- 2.1.6 In contrast perhaps, some parts of the business sector stressed the need for speedier consultation and decision making processes. While recognising the value of planning at both local and strategic levels, they expressed concern about lengthy processes and indeterminate outcomes which created uncertainty and undermined business confidence.
- 2.1.7 A number of community interests took the view that the 'taking stock' or analysis part of the plan preparation exercise, as evident in the Discussion Document, was not sufficiently comprehensive. The links between issues relating to health, education, the economy and the environment were not explored; nor were the role, value and effectiveness of previous strategic planning initiatives and community involvement in such strategies, or indeed the current planning system critically evaluated. In a similar vein, some environmental groups argued that much of the information on the natural environment was superficial or misleading, and in places read like a 'tourist brochure'. It is important to note in this context that a number of groups found the rationale of the document difficult to follow. One group commented that the Discussion Document was 'a curious amalgam of guidelines, tests, strategies, goals and components'. The next stage document should

therefore have a clear understandable logical flow.

- 2.1.8 Within the community and voluntary sectors strong views were expressed about the need to redefine planning as an ongoing participatory process; a process which seeks to extend citizenship and develop civil society. Such a redefinition would have implications for monitoring and implementing the strategy (see section 2.9 on implementation) as well as for developing a more community owned form of planning at local levels. Moreover among almost all sectors, but particularly the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, there was support for a more interventionist and proactive form of planning.

#### General Consensus

- Need for regional strategy
- Need for a more integrated form of regional planning

#### Sectoral Views

- Scepticism about value of participation process (Community & Voluntary)
- Taking stock not sufficiently comprehensive & holistic (Community, Voluntary & Environmental)
- Need to redefine planning as a community owned process which encourages citizenship (Community & Voluntary)

- **Need for long term view on sustainable environment (Environmental)**
- **Need for speedier consultation & decision making (Business & Development)**

#### Ideas / Suggestions

- **A new approach to planning at all levels incorporating recognition of the value of proactive engagement and dialogue**

## 2.2 Regional Vision

- 2.2.1 There was a general welcome for the visionary approach set out in the Discussion Document. In seeking to Shape Our Future participants recognised the value of being encouraged to imagine and envisage a future in the round. There was, however, widespread concern about the DOE's capacity and influence to give substance to a broadly based vision. It was also argued by many that there appeared to be an unresolved tension in the Discussion Document between a visionary planning approach on the one hand and a traditional physical planning approach on the other. The traditional planning approach was identified as being essentially trend led and physical development focused while the visionary approach was characterised as creative, and holistic and less constrained by current demands.
- 2.2.2 Ideally it was argued there should be an integration of the two approaches - 'we can neither establish a vision which has no relation to the current

reality, nor extrapolate from existing trends to an undesirable future'. Many groups and participants were unwilling simply to translate their visions into land development proposals. How, it was asked, would the broader vision be achieved? What roles would other government departments play in the process of achieving the vision? During discussions some argued that our vision for the future should be built around the assets of the region including: our location within Europe; a skilled population; a highly developed and networked civil society; a strong community sector; and a very attractive natural environment.

- 2.2.3 The vision was interpreted differently by different people. For example while the community and voluntary sectors consistently argued that the goal of social equity should be central, environmental groups suggested that sustainability should be the touchstone by which all goals should be tested. Rural communities had yet another viewpoint, consistently arguing that the regional vision emerging from the tentative proposals and language of the Discussion Document had an urban bias. To counter this they suggested a spatial and social equity approach.
- 2.2.4 Many considered the vision to be too vague and therefore open to wide interpretation. In view of this a number of participants from different sectors argued that there was a need to recognise conflicting interests. For example, improving the quality of life for one section of the community might adversely affect another section. Similarly, some environmental interests argued that the promotion of sustainable development would require the acceptance of less

immediate economic benefit. The strategy therefore must identify priorities and acknowledge that there might be consequential trade-offs. In this context, it is interesting to note the argument from a number of participants, including some from the business community, that future economic prosperity would be dependent on ensuring social cohesion and inclusiveness, as well as addressing current imbalances.

#### General Consensus

- **Welcome for a more broadly based visionary approach to planning but concern about a narrow translation into land development proposals**

#### Sectoral Views

- **Social equity should be at the centre of the vision (Community & Voluntary)**
- **Sustainability should be at the centre of the vision (Environmental)**

#### Ideas / Suggestions

- **One clear theme projecting the region as a 'green' centre - a region with a clean, pleasing and often beautiful natural and built environment, designed for sustainability - exploiting all the potential in sectors like environmental technology and tourism**
- **The region should be a European test bed for innovative ideas and projects**

## 2.3 Valuing People

2.3.1 While there was some confusion about the precise meaning and implication of 'valuing people' there was general agreement about its significance. Community representatives were emphatic that this should be the first priority and that all other components of the 'quality of life' model should be subservient to it. They made the point that the authenticity of 'valuing people' as a theme would be judged by the way that the DOE were seen to value community views on the strategy. This contrasted with the environmental lobby who put 'sustainability' first, but there were interesting arguments about 'valuing people' being the basis of a sustainability agenda in any case. Local Agenda 21 is designed to ensure that people take control of their own lives in such a way that they understand the effects that their activities and lifestyle have on others within their community and across the world.

2.3.2 This related to the other debate about definition - the 'sustainable community' as opposed to the wider 'sustainability' issue. Some rural interests argued that the preservation of sustainable rural communities required the retention of a traditional dispersed settlement pattern, in order to maintain and develop a living and working countryside. Some environmental interests argued that this was unsustainable on the grounds of transport energy waste and septic tank pollution. Valuing people' is an undeniable virtue but sometimes the question arises 'which people'? There was no doubt that local community identity was an important quality in both urban and rural environments -

generally expressed as a desire to preserve positive features of an existing situation or, in some cases, a desire to define boundaries between one local community and another - in physical terms if necessary.

- 2.3.3. In general there was little disagreement about the need for both social and spatial equity, the first to be strictly monitored by TSN and PAFT criteria, the second to be achieved by some sort of 'growth cluster' strategy in rural areas linked to a hierarchy of service provision which took account of local needs as well as operational efficiencies, particularly with regard to health and educational facilities. A particular concern was the closure of hospitals and small schools and the implications of this for the quality of life of people in the affected areas. There was a clear need for acute hospital provision in the west of the region. This strategy would require governmental co-ordination and integrated planning.
- 2.3.4 Household prediction and housing allocations were predictable subjects of debate. Some of the environmental interests questioned the basis of the household growth predictions (now being seriously questioned also by planners at the national level) and some even questioned the principle of what they saw as an outdated 'predict and provide' approach, now being abandoned at national level. Housebuilders and construction interests were concerned more about land shortages and the delays caused by Area Planning uncertainty, while many local community representatives were critical of new housing quality and service provision. Criticism of the perceived power of the construction lobby in planning decision-making was commonplace.
- 2.3.5 Social equity was the dominant goal of the community sector which urged the necessity for positive action such as targeting areas of need to tackle poverty, unemployment and low wages (as reflected in the Department of Health and Social Services' Well into 2000 Strategy). Positive action was also required to overcome social exclusion and to address the specific needs of women, elderly people, children and young people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, including travellers. The important role of community development in the social and economic regeneration of communities should be recognised in this regard.
- 2.3.6 Other concerns expressed by the community sector focused on access to a range of affordable housing types and the necessity for a mix of housing type and tenure - for the elderly, those with disabilities and the unemployed for example.- in every community. This was developed in the rural interests' submissions by reference to the importance of place and family in local communities and the need to recognise the attachment of the indigenous population to land and place - sometimes finding expression in the dispersed settlement pattern, sometimes demanding critical mass of population in the smaller district towns.

### General Consensus

- Valuing people/social inclusion as priorities
- Social and spatial equity as general principles
- Integrated governmental approach essential
- Local identity/sense of place important

### Sectoral Views

- Sustainability = valuing people (Environment)
- Social equity / sustainable communities essential (Community)
- TSN and PAFT criteria as tests (Community)
- Spatial equity / growth cluster strategy in rural areas (Rural)
- Certainty and timeliness in area planning (Development)
- Housing type/tenure mix and access in all communities (Community)

### Ideas/Suggestions

- Valuing people as overarching objective
- Challenge 'predict and provide' household planning model

## 2.4 Building Prosperity

2.4.1 There was general consensus on the importance of the links between building prosperity and social cohesion and on the strength of human capital and investment in it, as well as that of finance and economics. Interestingly the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) made this point in its strategy advocating the establishment of a Regional Development Agency for Northern Ireland, one of whose responsibilities would be to 'ensure public policy focuses on regional competitiveness and social cohesion in a integrated and co-ordinated manner'. Another would be to 'help shape transport and land use planning strategies'. The emphasis generally was on the importance of investment in people and in areas of need in order to seek to reduce poverty and unemployment and ensure quality of jobs and investment.

2.4.2 This links to the necessity for co-ordinated institutional responsibility for planning and economic strategy, which should be embodied in the approach of the RSF. Of particular concern was the quality of inter-departmental relationships between the DOE and the department of Economic Development (DED) for example within government, and the extent to which all Departments were underwriting the RSF. It was agreed that organisations such as the Local Economic Development Unit (LEDU) and the Industrial Development Board, the District Councils and the private sector had an important role to play in ensuring that industrial location took place in a co-ordinated, sustainable and strategic manner which was responsive to the needs of the community, rather than being

dependent on the existence of previous infrastructure. Infrastructure development should follow, not lead, economic development.

- 2.4.3 Questions about the underlying economic strategy were raised by many in the business and professional sectors who saw the RSF as too concerned with housing allocation issues. This matter was frequently linked to questions about implementation and implementation agencies. Organisations like the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Laganside Corporation supported the idea of a strong semi-autonomous implementation agency which tied in with the CBI's desire for a regional development agency. Another general theme was the need for relating the local economy to its context - within Ireland, the UK and the EU - and taking on board the issues of competitiveness and complementarity, as well as those of communication and transport links. As already noted it was also suggested that Northern Ireland is now in a position to be a European test bed for new economic initiatives.
- 2.4.4 On the community and voluntary side the emphasis was very much on local community enterprise and the support of indigenous industry to avoid the instability of over-reliance on inward investment and on public sector employment. This related closely to concern expressed by environmental constituencies such as Northern Ireland Environmental Link (NIEL) and Friends of the Earth (FOE) about the dangers of reliance on multi-national inward investment with its potential global sustainability problems. The rural submissions made concrete suggestions for achieving some of these objectives namely for
- diversification of the rural economy and the development and support of existing or new indigenous business around identified key sectors, backed up by education and training initiatives for local populations, and a recognition of the value of local co-operative enterprise.
- 2.4.5 Recognised as of particular value was the building of partnerships between education and business to equip young people with a better combination of skills and experience. Education, of course, should respond to needs beyond the specific requirements of business or industry while taking the latter into account. Access to employment, education and training was often dependant on affordable childcare, given the increasing role of women in the workforce, so this should also be recognised as a priority in strategic planning.
- 2.4.6 On the spatial implications of economic policy serious concern was expressed by rural interests about traditional concentration on the Belfast sub-region, augmented by arguments such as the resources test, and the consequent deprivation of more peripheral parts of the region. Rural groups were particularly concerned about the designation of the low, medium and high growth areas. The Discussion Paper did not identify the criteria used to designate the growth areas and did not address the likely implication for rural areas and for towns that have not been designated for growth. It was argued that in designating growth areas spatial and social equity were essential objectives for ensuring the long term development of the region. A 'spatial equity' strategy was suggested - through the development of several

sub-regions comprising clusters of 5-6 District Council areas to create critical mass in terms of infrastructure and population catchment.

- 2.4.7 At a local level the question of the economic viability of town centres and the livelihood of local traders in the face of out-of-town large scale shopping developments was frequently raised. This was seen as a particular problem in disadvantaged areas. It was felt that a strategic plan should consider this problem in its widest context and that clearly defined limits should be imposed on this type of development.

#### General Consensus

- Building prosperity requires social cohesion
- Welcome for new integrated strategic approach

#### Sectoral Views

- More explicit economic strategy underpinning (Professional)
- Strengthened links to RoI/UK/EU (Business)
- Concern about Belfast domination / reinforcement of underdevelopment patterns (North-West/Rural)
- Development of more sustainable long-term approaches to countering unemployment (Community)
- Development of indigenous/local enterprise (Community/Rural)

- Spatial equity principle concerning economic environment (Community/Rural)
- Concern at over-reliance on multinationals (Environmental)
- Economic strategy through sustainability vision (Environmental)

#### Ideas/Suggestions

- Rural economic diversification supported by training/education and co-operative enterprise
- Cluster pattern for rural development
- Strong implementation agency - Regional Development Agency?

## 2.5 Caring For The Environment

- 2.5.1 There was general consensus on the value of the strategy's long-term vision and integrative approach. There was agreement also on the centrality of sustainability to the strategy, but some interesting debate on the definition of the term and its relative importance in relation to other objectives. FOE suggested that it must not be seen as separate from economic growth or community accessibility and that it must be seen as part of a global system, with due consideration given to the 'ecological footprint' of the region on the wider world. NIEL emphasised the difference between development and growth, whether this referred to economic or physical change; between desires and needs,

particularly in relation to housing and housebuilding calculations and emphasised the importance of the longer-term perspective ( well beyond 25 years). The Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT) suggested that caring for the environment should be prioritised as the foremost goal, underpinning all the others. This was obviously in conflict with some community sector prioritisations. Nevertheless, there was general agreement on the need for environmental legislation to be strengthened, extended and properly enforced and resourced to protect the natural and built environment.

- 2.5.2 There was general acceptance also of the seriousness of Northern Ireland's energy and pollution problems and the need to harness new technologies to respond to these problems - air pollution in Belfast, potential septic tank effluent pollution in rural areas, peat land exploitation and the loss of biodiversity generally. Allied to this was the perception that in the past, and even in the current document, such problems had been seriously underestimated. A particular underestimation of environmental effect applied to transport policy, which was also a good illustration of the difference between the need for access and the desire to own a smart car. Public transport expansion, properly funded, was commonly viewed as essential, together with the promotion of alternative transport modes (particularly in rural areas), lifestyle changes and focused educational programmes. Waste disposal was another important concern: it was felt that a regional strategy was necessary and that new and innovative methods of disposal for local rural areas should be investigated.
- 2.5.3 Another general theme was the necessity to move from bland pronouncements to effective and measurable guidelines and targets with the strategic guidelines frequently both praised and supplemented). For example, the sub-division of the resource test into a community resource and natural resource test was suggested by NIEL as well as the addition of an international and future impact test. At a more detailed level FOE suggested the application of CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets (20% by 2010), adherence to the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation (15-year programme) Bill and the introduction to Northern Ireland of the measures of the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 and of the UK National Cycling Strategy. Enforcement (particularly in relation to planning conditions) should be tightened up and the levying of taxes on undesirable practices such as greenfield development tax, water pollution tax and fuel-inefficient car tax, should be immediately considered. A counter view to this from the Federation of Small Businesses was that additional taxes would penalise their members. Another reservation in some quarters was that current fines for pollution could be passed on as extra costs to consumers, and therefore provided no disincentive.
- 2.5.4 On the rural environment there was general agreement that the rural dimension had been substantially underplayed and that there was an urban emphasis in the proposed strategy. The increasing role of the rural community in the management and stewardship of the countryside, following EU and CAP policy reform, was positively accepted, as was the importance of local involvement in the planning process, local initiative in

local economic development and local guidance for appropriate design and development e.g. such as that contained in Rural Voices (Rural Community Network 1998). Related to this was NIEL's assertion that it was more important in sustainability terms how a building was constructed than where it was constructed, which reinforced the necessity for detailed design guidelines. The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society were more specific about this: towns and villages should be revitalised but suburban development in open countryside should be avoided. Further divergence between the rural and environmental voices was evident in the UWT's demand for a shift away from the policy of facilitating a dispersed settlement and industrial pattern which was unsustainable in transport and septic tank pollution terms, and the RCN's demand for the recognition of the importance of the dispersed settlement pattern in creating and maintaining a living and working countryside.

2.5.5 There was fairly consistent criticism of the quality and style of developer-led housing layouts and designs, which was particularly strong from suburban communities under threat from encroaching new developments in places like Greenisland, Dundonald, Saintfield and Lisburn. Similar points were made by rural communities about the inappropriate urban design and density of new development in smaller rural areas. Lack of social and recreational infrastructure in new housing schemes was as big a problem as design and layout. Housebuilders' Federation and RICS representatives emphasised the importance of the development industry's contribution to the local economy and demanded more

certainty from area plans and design guides. All sides recognised the potentially positive role to be played by quality initiatives, planning agreements and emerging new settlements concepts. Of particular importance was the need for better enforcement of conditions attached to planning permissions to ensure that development takes place in accordance with approved plans.

#### General Consensus

- Long term vision and integrative approach valuable
- Serious pollution problems, particularly in Belfast, underestimated
- Public transport/alternative transports need serious investment
- Measurable targets to be set and achieved
- Housing layout, design and infrastructure provision unsatisfactory

#### Sectoral Views

- Global implications and long-term perspective (beyond 25 years) essential (Environmental)
- Tests, taxes and efficient enforcement essential (Environmental/Community)
- Beware taxes on small businesses, indigenous enterprise (Business)
- Recognise role of rural community in stewardship of countryside (Rural/Community)

- Recognise place of traditional dispersed settlement in living and working countryside (Rural)
- Beware unsustainable pollution, transportation and visual effects of uncontrolled development in countryside (Environmental)

#### Ideas/Suggestions

- Greenfield development tax/water pollution tax/ fuel-inefficient car tax
- Community resource test/ natural resource test/ international and future impact test
- Locally produced and accountable design and development guides
- Planning agreements, quality initiatives and new settlement design concepts

## 2.6 Improving Communications

- 2.6.1 The most commonly held view in relation to transport communications was that more imagination in policy and provision was required than had hitherto been the case. Attention should be paid to the relationships between planning and transportation, between private and public transport modes and between urban and rural accessibility patterns and demands. Most of the environmental and community groups supported this perception, as would be expected, but it was also supported, by implication, by the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) and other professional submissions.
- 2.6.2 On the planning/transport relationship there was a general acceptance of the need for some sort of public transport development corridors - provided they are equitably distributed - and of the benefits of higher-density development and compactness in certain urban situations. It was considered particularly important that such corridors should have a strategic relevance and should be implemented in partnership with local authorities. The Dutch 1990 Strategic Planning Strategy of 'managing mobility for a sustainable society' in which both locations and potential developments were graded in relation to key accessibility criteria and matched accordingly is favourably quoted by the NITHC, whilst many other European and UK precedents were mentioned by others. Brownland development in the inner cities, city-centre and riverside high-density apartment provision and edge-of-centre rather than out-of-centre shopping centres were all viewed as

contributing towards reducing journey times and therefore as planning priorities.

2.6.3 On the private/public split there was unanimity on the pressing need for major investment in public transport. The NITHC gave persuasive evidence of public transport funding in Northern Ireland at 33-50% of GB levels, which themselves were substantially below EU levels. Community, business and professional interests all stressed public transport inadequacies, while environmental interests demonstrated the pollution and congestion consequences of excessive reliance on the private car. Case studies of inadequate late-evening or early-morning public transport connections - for young people or shift workers - were presented by Bangor Youth Forum and Dundonald Regeneration Group. Organisations like the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and the CBI underlined the continued importance of road-based freight transport routes, without detracting from the need for better public transport provision.

2.6.4 There was a general recognition that the difference between urban and rural transport requirements needed explicit recognition in policy and practice, particularly to take account of justifiable car-reliance in rural areas. The RCN suggested extension of the regional transport network to include 4 additional rural links, consideration of differential rural and urban levels of road tax and serious investigation of alternatives to the car in rural areas such as community transport, flexibus and pooled taxis. It also suggested incentives to encourage public transport operators to expand their services in rural areas. There was a strong feeling in the north-west and in some rural areas that the regional

transport corridors and potential growth areas favoured the east of the region and could therefore reinforce existing imbalances. This could follow from prioritising development areas on the basis of already-existing infrastructure.

2.6.5 Alternative transport systems were consistently advocated. Sustainable Transport (SUSTRANS), for example, saw the RSF as an opportunity to give expression to their concept of a cycle network throughout Northern Ireland, pointing to the fact that a majority of car trips were in fact less than two miles. The West Belfast Black Taxi Association looked for recognition of both their local employment and flexible alternative transport roles as part of an integrated system. NIEL supported the promotion of alternatives such as the use of post office, health, education and other community vehicles for rural transport. The idea of free public transport for a limited time period as one of a series of test bed initiatives was also strongly advocated. Further investigation of the feasibility of light rail systems for Belfast was encouraged by Transport 2000, as was the extension of rail services in the North West and the immediate linkage of all airports into the rail network.

2.6.6 Communications is about much more than transport, and there was some attention given to the telecommunications revolution and its implication for living patterns, work, leisure and, consequently, planning. RCN pointed to the capacity of modern telecommunications to be a force for spatial equity in relation to economic development for rural areas - by interactive open access centres, educational programmes to develop IT skills in local communities, the

extension of STAR networks and teleworking centres, and flowing from this, the development of IT-based industrial employment in the North and West. Communications between planner and planned was also the subject of much comment: the use of the World Wide Web was advocated to improve public participation in the RSF and other planning exercises.

#### General Views

- More imagination and innovation in transportation policy/planning
- Prioritisation of existing city centres, inner cities, towns and villages for development over edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites
- Major investment in public and community transport

#### Sectoral Concerns

- Recognise needs of essential freight transportation to gateways, nodes and other transportation modes (Business)
- Recognise distinction between rural and urban transport and communication needs (Rural)
- Encourage alternative transportation modes by planning and investment (Environmental/Community)
- Develop innovative telecommunication systems as means of achieving social and spatial equity (Rural)
- Ensure equitable distribution of regional transport corridors and

infrastructure (Community/North West)

#### Ideas/Suggestions

- Differential urban/rural taxation for private transport
- Encourage alternative use of public services vehicles for rural transport
- Immediate linkage of all airports to rail systems
- Free public transport on experimental basis for a limited period
- Use World Wide Web for public participation in planning

## 2.7 The Issue of a Divided Society

2.7.1 There were clear differences in the perceptions of different consultees as to the precise meaning of this issue and as to its relevance to the concerns of a regional planning strategy. As it related to sectarian divisions within Northern Ireland there were those such as the Community Relations Council (CRC) and the Women's Information Network who welcomed its explicit recognition in the document as a first step to addressing its serious spatial implications. There were others, particularly in regional workshops, who pointed to the danger of institutionalising and possibly perpetuating the divisions by undue attention. The Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation was also regarded by community groups as something to build upon. It was felt that the strategy

should promote choice rather than attempt enforcement of integration or segregation, although some people felt that more integration in education was a basic requirement.

2.7.2 The CRC submission made a persuasive argument for serious address of the sectarian division problem. It argued that the effectiveness of any settlement categorisation strategy or of the community hubs identified depended on detailed analysis of service catchment and patronisation patterns and these were often, in both urban and rural areas, affected by sectarian concerns. These in turn affected economic viability: there were often parallel markets for goods and services which could not be planned for on the basis of a 'neutral' analysis. They also affected community sustainability: differing age/educational/social structures in minority communities demanded differing policy responses. On the positive side, such communities often demonstrated high-quality community organisation and self-help potential which could be fundamental to local economic development strategies. The implications for housing markets were also important. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) established expertise in dealing with division had become less influential as its house-building role receded, so new housing providers needed appropriate guidance.

2.7.3 In relation to other divisions within society there was strong representation from organisations representing people with disabilities, women, the Irish language, ethnic minorities, travellers, older people and lower income communities, which all welcomed the opportunity to

participate and the general inclusive objectives of the strategy document. Most, however, were insistent on the necessity for measurable performance targets to gauge achievement, with TSN and PAFT regarded as particularly important

2.7.4 Another pervasive theme was the division and the perception of division between east and west of the Bann, which was sometimes paralleled by perceived divisions between urban and rural cultures. Specific examples of the possible loss of health and educational establishments from the west - the RUC training centre at Enniskillen, the South Tyrone Hospital from Dungannon, the possible rationalisation of Health and Education Area Boards from their regional centres - were cited as evidence of a centralising trend within the public sector. This has obvious and interesting implications for the evolution of new government structures at both Stormont and local council levels.

#### General Consensus

- **Welcome for explicit recognition of all divisions within society**
- **Beware institutionalisation and perpetuation of divisions**

#### Sectoral Views

- **Analysis and planning of functional and behavioural patterns require recognition of sectarian influences (Community)**
- **Recognise positive and negative impacts of community solidarity (Community)**
- **East/west and urban/rural divides can be easily accentuated by insensitive**

**public investment or public sector rationalisation decisions; need to reverse this and possibly relocate some public services to the West (Rural)**

#### Ideas/Suggestions

- **Use PAFT and Fair Employment Agency criteria to monitor divisive impact of policy decisions**

## 2.8 Regional Strategic Guidelines

2.8.1 There was broad support across sectors for the inclusion of Regional Strategic Guidelines. Most participants thought the tests were too vague and consequently were open to a variety of interpretations. This led to discussions about how the tests could be given more concrete expression, and in turn, to how the tests could be weighted, arbitrated, prioritised and implemented. The NIHE for example, spoke of 'the sequential rule of development'. Taking the example of retail provision, this might mean that development would occur first in urban centres, then suburbs, and only then if really needed in greenfield sites.

2.8.2 Discussion about the guidelines did, however, assist people in identifying the relative value of different concerns and aspirations. The community and voluntary sectors for example, felt that social equity should be a priority and that TSN and PAFT should be core elements of the tests. Furthermore they consistently argued for the inclusion of a community additionality or community impact test. This reflected a widespread concern that new developments should have local community support and should

benefit local communities. Such a test would seek to ensure that community areas were properly developed with a range of facilities, services and infrastructure. Within rural communities there was, as already noted, widespread concern about an implicit urban bias in the document. In the light of this, communities argued for tests which were sensitive to the specific needs of rural areas, such as a rural development test, a view supported by environmental groups. It was also suggested by environmental groups that the development of measurable sustainability tests would demonstrate government's commitment to this repeatedly expressed goal.

2.8.3 Most participants were particularly concerned about how the guidelines would be administered and implemented. This reflected the general concern about the perceived lack of DOE accountability and transparency in the past. It was felt that the DOE had a responsibility to ensure that the process was both open and transparent to allow people to have more active involvement in the consultation, monitoring and implementation of the guidelines. Some argued that legislation might be needed both to strengthen the testing procedure and to ensure community involvement.

#### General Consensus

- **Support for inclusion of guidelines**
- **Tests too vague and open to variety of interpretations**
- **Tests need to be weighted, prioritised and made more concrete**

- **Need for an open and transparent process of test implementation**

#### Sectoral Views

- **Social equity should be priority (Community & Voluntary)**
- **Need to include community additionality / impact test (Community & Voluntary)**
- **Rural development test - need to include tests which are sensitive to the specific needs of rural communities (Rural Community & Environmental)**
- **Need for measurable sustainability tests (Environmental)**

## 2.9 Implementation

2.9.1 There was a broad consensus across sectors about the need for the RSF to address the issue of implementation. Significantly too, implementation was consistently considered to be an inter-departmental responsibility. This rationale emerged from the broader argument about the need for a more integrated approach to regional planning. An example of this approach from the community sector was the need to identify the training and education needs associated with the strategic economic development dimension of the plan. Similarly environmental groups stressed the need for a broad commitment from government departments and agencies to the implementation of all aspects of the sustainability agenda.

2.9.2 All sectors acknowledged that the

focus on implementation should be sharpened by clear direction about how the strategic vision could be achieved. The roles of various departments and agencies should be made apparent and objectives should be underpinned by measurable targets, timetables, resourcing and a clear understanding of the role of the private sector. A number of community and environmental groups also stressed the importance of effective enforcement to ensure meaningful planning practice. Overall there was general agreement about the need for a more proactive form of planning; an approach that would actively seek to realise an agreed vision, in contrast perhaps to the more traditional, passive approach which relied on public and private sector reaction.

2.9.3 Given the long timescale of the strategy there was also a general consensus that it should be flexible, responsive to change and regularly reviewed with ongoing consultation, at least every five years. This reflected concern about the 25 year timescale particularly when attempts to achieve various goals may take place over different periods. The timetable for consultation and review over the timescale of the Strategy should be clearly specified.

2.9.4 There was broad agreement across sectors about the need for an overseeing implementation body. However there were different views on the form this might take. Some within the business and development sectors argued for an implementation agency modelled on the urban development corporations or the new regional development agencies in Great Britain. The community and voluntary sectors on the other hand favoured a more

inclusive, broadly based body which could draw upon the existing area partnerships. They argued that in order to achieve a real sense of community ownership of the plan there would need to be continued involvement. Another suggestion, from the Fair Employment Commission, was for a mix of bodies to be charged with implementation responsibilities including what might be a reduced number of local councils.

2.9.5 The existing and potential hierarchy of plans was discussed by a number of groups. Some rural groups and communities in the north west suggested that consideration should be given to the creation of sub-regional strategies. It was argued that this might provide a more effective means for ensuring spatial equity within the region as well as offering opportunities for more locally based and focused management of the regional planning agenda.

2.9.6 At a more particular level, several groups were concerned about the role that the existing area plan process would play in the implementation of the strategy. Rural communities could more readily identify with the functioning of area plans. Some, however, argued for a more integrated area or local plan process that extended beyond land-use planning to include social, economic and area management dimensions. This, it was argued, might provide a more effective means for the local delivery of regional goals. A more specific suggestion to ensure better accountability was for rural advisory bodies, with local involvement, to be attached to each Planning Division. For urban communities, particularly those from inner and middle city areas, formal planning models were considered

inappropriate mechanisms for achieving regional goals. Again a more innovative approach to local planning was needed; one which embraced social, economic and environmental issues.

#### General Consensus

- **Need for strategy to address issue of implementation**
- **Need for inter-departmental approach to implementation**
- **Need for implementation body**
- **Need for measurable targets, timetables and resourcing**
- **RSF should be flexible, responsive to change & monitored**

#### Sectoral Views

- **Need for sub-regional strategies (Rural Sector & North West Community)**
- **Need for more integrated area & local planning processes (Community & Voluntary)**

#### Ideas / Suggestions

- **Implementation body modelled on Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) or Regional Development Agencies (RDCs)**
- **Implementation body drawing upon the experience of existing area partnerships**

# Further Commentary and Suggestions

# Further Commentary and Suggestions

## Introduction

In this section we seek to pick up some of the main issues generated by the consultation and proceed to add our own considerations. Thus, this goes beyond the 'public voices' and draws in some comparative references to regional planning elsewhere.

## A New Planning

Shaping Our Future represents a significant shift from traditional land use planning. As such, it is in keeping with the new thinking in Britain about regional development. There, government has outlined in its document, *Modernising Planning*<sup>1</sup>, the basis for achieving greater legitimacy and transparency in the system. According to this policy statement, regional planning should:

- be based on a partnership with all the key stakeholders in the region from an early formative stage
- provide the framework for tackling regional and sub-regional issues difficult for any individual local authorities to resolve
- be 'sufficiently prescriptive' to set the location of significant development
- include an integrated transport strategy
- facilitate the regional economic strategies of the new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
- offer a framework for bids for EU financial support, and
- be consistent with EU approaches to spatial planning such as The European Spatial Development Perspective

Central to this new planning then is that it be set in a European context; that it moves beyond development control to a more proactive development strategy; that it is based on inclusive partnerships; that it offers an integrated solution that binds the different aspects of a region's wellbeing --- the economic, social, environmental, educational, etc; and that it goes beyond the aspirational to include the resource and institutional means of the plan's delivery.

Specifically, the new regional agenda in Britain extols the role of Regional Chambers, comprising a diverse range of interests that go beyond just the local governments. Such bodies are designed to give a wide regional ownership of the process. Here, in Northern Ireland, the proposed regional assembly will be joined by a civic forum, an arrangement offering scope for an inclusive form of planning. Thus it is critical that the high levels of participation that have helped influence the strategy to date are sustained, so that the culture of civic involvement thus nurtured can be harnessed further by the new institutional structures. This conforms to current thinking about reinventing governance<sup>2</sup>, whereby decision making goes beyond traditional politics to include an active citizenship keen to share responsibility for social progress.

In this respect, the region is blessed with a dense and sophisticated network of social organisations outside of government. Compelling evidence from successful regions elsewhere shows that such institutional richness, if properly tapped, can be a pivotal development resource<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the social wealth generated by a learning, creative,

<sup>1</sup> Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), (January 1998), *Modernising Planning: a policy statement by the minister for the regions, regeneration and planning*, DETR, London.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in an urban context, see Healey, P, et al (eds.), (1995), *Managing Cities: the new urban context*, Wiley, Chichester.

networked society is a necessary complement to material wealth creation, especially if quality of life and social solidarity are to be embedded as core values.

Perhaps all of this would be more central in the draft regional strategy if the structure of the document was more as follows:

1. **The Vision** - at the very start, a clear concise vision ought to be set out. At present, this is somewhat diffuse. Part of the problem may be the splintering into a series of vision themes: valuing people, building prosperity, and so on. It may be preferable to establish one core 'hook'. In essence, this may begin with something like:

'We seek to move beyond sectarian and social division to an open equitable society, where people are valued for their creativity, enterprise and social contribution, and where we all look more outwards to a wider world with which to share culture, sport, investment and trade, while cherishing and promoting all that is best in our local distinctiveness'.

Thus, the vision should not be introverted. The search for a peaceful, prosperous and equitable region can only succeed if we look through a global lens. But a region open to the world for business does not at the same time have to be closed to its own most needy communities. Rather, a knowledge society relies on the fulfilment of all its talents. This implies a very strong statement about how greater equity in education can be advanced in a region currently operating a selective system, which contributes to very poor results at the lower end of the attainment range. Similarly, addressing our own hopes can not avoid redressing the despair of global poverty and environmental degradation. We are part of one world, which currently suffers from great divisions,

and there are large numbers of local people involved in environmental, development and church organisations keen to contribute to a fairer and more secure planet. A plan for the region's future can only benefit from their expertise and cosmopolitan insight.

It is clear from this that the vision should be based on explicit principles and values, and perhaps the section on regional guidelines with its guiding principles should come at this first stage, with explanation of how these underpin the vision itself. The vision then could lead to the second part of the document.

2. **The Strategy** - this would elaborate the strategic implications, with specific aims and objectives, followed by the action plan of linked policies necessary to implement the strategy. Preferably some targets, timetables and monitoring procedures would be included at this point.

At present, the coherence of the document suffers from limited evidence of real inter-departmental co-operation. To take the example of health, for which there is a recently formed regional strategy: there is no connection made between its key strands --- primary care; community care; and acute care --- and the whole regional development agenda. Making the links between the three key dimensions of the health strategy and the overall strategy might begin as in the following outline.

- **Primary care** - the increasing recognition that good health is linked to income, life opportunity and lifestyle has underpinned thinking about preventative strategies and health promotion. Thus, tackling inequalities in health will be tied to redressing general social inequities and to enhancing

<sup>3</sup> See Dunford, M and Hudson, R (December 1996), Successful European Regions: Northern Ireland learning from others, Research Monograph 3, Northern Ireland Economic Council, Belfast.

more equal opportunities in education and in the labour market. The design of housing and street lay-out will pay greater regard to reducing accidents in the home and those caused by traffic, while improving the mobility and safety of those with disabilities. Leisure amenities for extending sport in the community, together with transport policies to facilitate wider scope for cycling and walking will be consistent with policies to encourage greater exercise. The push for higher standards in water and air quality will be part of a wider drive to improve the public's access to the natural environment.

- **Community Care** - helping those with debilities to remain in a communal setting rather than be consigned to institutions demands that we retain communities mixed in age and family type so that family members can keep in regular touch with infirm relatives. Similarly, mixed use development within the community is needed to ensure proximity between home, shops, leisure facilities and public services, whereby those with mobility problems can access a range of amenities. Such considerations will be increasingly imperative as the number of very elderly rises.
- **Acute Care** - plans to concentrate specialist hospital provision have to be consistent with principles of equity. Thus, any such rationalisation has to be tied to policies such as improved public transport to safeguard against the disadvantage of distance. Moreover, to balance this trend, changes in medical technology

such as laser and micro surgery should be used to decentralise certain kinds of acute provision.

3. **The Spatial Framework** - only after establishing the vision, strategy and policies can the spatial framework reach land use expression. At present the connection between the two processes is weak. There is an uneasy combination of new visionary planning and old land use planning. A document with early emphasis on the spatial element risks being predisposed towards housing settlement and infrastructure - in other words, the typical concerns of traditional planning - rather than being a genuinely integrated plan.

This difficulty is perhaps most evident in the way that Shaping Our Future moves quickly from an outline of key drivers for change to the vision. This is very close to the old approach, whereby trends are identified and then policies to respond to such probabilities are offered. Known sometimes as the 'predict and provide' form of planning, this came to grief in the past in a number of important cases. For example, trajectories of future car use led to the building of more and more roads, the very provision of which encouraged greater car use to a point of new congestion. In other words, the policy derived from a narrow understanding of mobility choices, and thus relied on a traffic management approach rather than on a diverse integrated transport approach.

While, of course, our best bets about future trends remain a critical calculation, they should not over-determine the strategy. That is the very purpose of visioning -- to escape the straitjacket of such questionable statistics. Besides, visioning can be about challenging rather than submitting to trends. Thus, the document invites people to shape their future, not collapse before an inevitable outcome. This new mindset must be particularly important in a society where many are led to regard their future as written either by heaven or by history.

For instance, the figure of 200,000 dwellings is central to the document. Yet this is not beyond dispute. For one thing, it is not always clear whether this refers to extra net new dwellings (as distinct from some of it being made up from rehabilitated existing dwellings), or whether it implies an extra 200,000 households. Related figures of 4.4 million in England are now subject to greater interrogation. In any case, such projections are premised on the continuation of migration patterns and trends in marriage, divorce and single parenthood, and, in general, on the increasing trend towards the single person household. It does not question whether this is the way society may wish to go, or whether different social or fiscal policies may produce a different outcome<sup>4</sup>.

### *Paying Our Way -- a strategy for the regional economy*

At the base of any viable regional plan must lie a strategy for how we earn our living and engage with the global economy. Such a strategy is not an optional extra to a range of other strategies for regional progress. Rather, it is integral, as outlined in the White Paper, *Building Partnerships for Prosperity: sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment in the English regions*:<sup>5</sup>

It will be important to ensure that strategies for the provision of housing, transport and other infrastructure have regard to, and where relevant support, the RDAs' programmes of economic regeneration. Equally it will be important for the RDAs' economic development strategies to have due regard to regional planning guidance.

Such linkage is not easy here, where we have many agencies responsible for some aspect of economic development alone. By contrast, the new RDAs will co-ordinate: business support (here the IDB and LEDU); training and other labour market activities (here the Training and Employment Agency); regeneration, to include the Single Regeneration Budget and European Structural Funds (here the DOE Urban Affairs, and other bodies); and tourism promotion (here the Tourist Board). Whether we get some such overarching agency, as the local CBI advocates, remains to be seen. In any case, we need a vision of a new economic future consistent with the general regional vision and one that can bring greater coherence to our myriad economic development initiatives.

Amongst the factors to be considered in the economic vision might be the following.

- A modern economy involves a set of relationships amongst key stakeholders: workers; shareholders; suppliers; customers; local communities; and government. Greater equity and partnership are needed amongst these players in the region to help us move from a culture of dependency to a culture of inter-dependency, whereby we invest less time in searching for the next grant and more time in a resourceful tapping of native talent.

<sup>4</sup> See Bilton, M, 'Demolition Job: why government plans for 4m homes don't add up', Sunday Times Magazine, (5 April 1998), pp. 26-31.

<sup>5</sup> Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), (December 1997), *Building Partnerships for Prosperity: sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment in the English regions*, Cm 3814, The Stationery Office, London, p.41.

- For a greater reliance on home grown solutions, emphasis has to be on human capital. In modern production the premium is on factors such as good social communication, team-working, problem-solving, creativity, quality and reliability. Our education system has to be geared more to these kinds of aptitudes, and has to offer more equal opportunity than at present.
- Social exclusion is inefficient as well as inequitable since it locks out enterprise and effort, and wastes scarce social resources in compensation to those cast adrift from the labour market. Thus economic development has to be inextricably linked to targeting social need.
- A broader understanding of competitiveness in the new age highlights the role of quality and supply of labour; appropriate infrastructure; quality of life; cultural affinity; proximity to, and reaching for, the largest possible market; and industrial clusters, which achieve the critical mass needed for productive linkages amongst sectors.<sup>6</sup>
- The eight industrial clusters selected by the Northern Ireland Growth Challenge combine high tech sunrise industries such as health technologies with high touch people contact sectors such as tourism, business services and fashion. It might be useful to add two more sectors: environmental technologies, tied to our esteemed green natural clean environment, and cultural industries, geared to our rich creativity in this area. But underpinning such specialisation must be a determination to compete globally at the high wage, high value-added end of the market. Within an overall regional plan, we have to link this drive to features such as our research and development capacity, and in turn link this to other dimensions such as our higher education sector. How can more productive exchanges be established in these areas? For instance, how can a specific cluster such as health technologies be better tied into local hospitals, primary care centres, sports centres and the medical departments of local universities?
- As the world becomes smaller and more of everything everywhere is alike, there will be an advantage in distinguishing our product. This is summed up in the saying: 'As the world integrates, the premium lies in what differentiates'. Thus, a customisation, based on our local distinctiveness, is critical to global success.
- At a sub-regional level, we have tended to see duplication in development effort. At worst, this takes the form of a 'me-tooism', whereby if one area gets a marina or heritage centre, another demands the same. Instead, each sub-region should be encouraged to ask itself: what is our distinctive contribution to the region? In this way, each would seek to identify its comparative advantage within the region, and to specialise in certain niche areas to complement activities elsewhere in the region, while also engaged in the collaborative advantage of networking with those industries it shares with other parts of the region. This mix of complementarity and collaboration is

<sup>6</sup> Dunning, J, Bannerman, E, and Lundan, S (March 1998), Competitiveness and Industrial Policy in Northern Ireland

likely to yield better results for the region as a whole.

- Translating this into spatial terms means that there is virtue in designating distinct industrial corridors - not just based around transport nodes, but also tied to magnets such as universities, research parks, hospitals and areas steeped in heritage or rich cultural activity.
- This also highlights the role of local economic development. At present a diverse range of initiatives, programmes and funding regimes operate in this field. It is calling out for better rationalisation and focus. But it also needs to be better integrated into the macro regional effort at economic development. In part this reflects one of the fundamental challenges facing our regional economy: how can small dynamic private/community enterprises be best nurtured into medium sized companies capable of trading internationally?
- It is well established that a knowledge economy will also rely on efficient and imaginative use of information and communication technologies. In the first instance a region like Northern Ireland does not have the means to be at the cutting edge of invention in all these areas. Thus, while encouraging the optimum degree of pioneering in such software, it might be wise to follow a staged approach: imitation - pick up the latest thinking from centres of excellence across the world; adaption - tailor those technologies to the particular needs of local industry; diffusion - invest great effort in spreading the use of such technologies throughout industry and

education; and, on the experience and expertise developed from all of these efforts, proceed to greater innovation.

- It is of fundamental importance to think in terms of large global markets. We are perhaps used to thinking in terms of big products like ships or engineering equipment traded to a fairly small number of customers. This needs to be turned around into thinking about quite small products, such as a software disc - but ones that are sold in vast quantity across the globe to foster an economy of scale and scope.

Reviewing the location and form of technopoles - dense centres of high tech industries - across the globe, Castells and Hall<sup>7</sup> emphasise many of these criteria: the need for a long-term vision; a clear development strategy; early spread of networks; identification of innovation and best practice; the use of synergy such as that created by business-university links; a central initiative that acts as a focus and inducement, for instance an R&D programme attached to a public priority like health or environmental improvement; and patience for the long haul.

<sup>7</sup> Castells, M. and Hall, P. (1994), *Technopoles of the World, the making of 21st century industrial complexes*, Routledge, London.

## Beyond the Geography of Division

As outlined in Section 2, there was a widespread perception within the rural constituency that the document was too urban-focused. It was argued also that the agenda that had evolved over recent years for rural development and diversification should play an integral part in the strategic thinking about the region's future. Clearly, instead of an urban versus rural debate, a successful region demands a mutually beneficial relationship between the two. Amongst other changes, this requires a rejection of any characterisation of the rural as a place whose main purpose is to provide nourishment and retreat for the urban dweller. But it not just the problem of any direct urban bias in the strategy. Indirectly rural communities may well be penalised by broad-brush regional policies on housing, transport and training that fail to appreciate their distinctive needs.

Since the rural and agricultural dimensions are of greater significance in Northern Ireland than in many regions in Britain, the development strategy here has to pay particular heed to the following.

- How will continued rationalisation of, and reduced subsidy for, agriculture affect the region's economy?
- How will the demand for greater restraint in public spending affect public service provision for the more remote rural communities?
- How will the necessary demands for minimising the harmful environmental impact of new development square with the need for rural regeneration based on diversification?

- \* How will the use of greenfield sites be limited in a region whose largely rural character means that it has restricted brownfield capacity for recycled development?

These kinds of considerations require elaboration in the regional plan. However, it is mistaken to see any simple rural-urban divide. For instance, not all rural residents share similar life chances. Just as in urban areas, there are significant social differences. Thus, the inequality *within* both also demands attention. In this respect, it is insufficient to have a macro plan for say Belfast as a regional capital while ignoring the long-standing under-development of the North and West of the city. Redressing the problems of congestion of outer south and outer east Belfast, without appreciating that these derive in part from under-investment in the other half of the city, may simply reinforce that social divide.

However, renewing economic opportunity in depressed areas is a formidable task. For one thing, development in a place is not the same thing as development of a place. There could be significant new development within north and west Belfast without the residents benefiting greatly. By the same token, there could be development just beyond this area - say a development arc that includes Nutts Corner/Aldergrove/Crumlin with Mallusk on the other side - from which residents could benefit greatly. Yet such wider development corridors seem to violate principles of proximity and compactness, and could only comply with targets for improved environmental sustainability, if amongst other features they were tied to good public transport systems for labour mobility.

In a different way the development of Derry/Londonderry is seen by some to be

connected with its wider hinterland of Donegal. In other words, the sub-regional map of development nodes can be hard to draw. Such geographies rely on their perceived pertinence to their residents. Thus to designate a Belfast city region stretching from Ballymena to Banbridge may fly in the face of how people in that area perceive their own identities. Yet, while it is important that sub-regions are meaningful to the people who live in them, it is equally important that people do not box themselves into relatively tiny enclaves closed off from the rest of the region. Perhaps the proliferation of district councils over the last quarter of a century has contributed to this fragmentation and separation.

Another example of social division, which has a spatial outcome, is in the field of housing. Any strategy, which corrals public affordable housing into certain areas and exclusively for those on the lowest income, is prone to create social ghettos. Thus a regional plan, based on principles such as equity, has to move beyond a focus on housing demand with all of the inferences about the pre-eminence of the private housing market and choice for those with means. It has to be concerned also about housing need and about how best to maximise a social mix in building strong neighbourhoods. This implies new imaginative consortia of the NIHE, housing associations, local housing co-operatives and private developers in designing such places in collaboration with local community associations.

The sectarian geography of the region is pronounced. Over half of the population live in areas where over 90% plus of people are of the same religion. This means that perception of bias and discrimination in development priorities can be prevalent. In particular, the long-standing critique that

planning and investment decisions here have favoured the area east of the Bann is linked by some to the religious-political affiliation of that area compared to the west of the region. Since even district towns now can have a dominant religious complexion, any attempt to designate the varied levels of their potential growth could face this criticism. On the other hand, to get into a numbers game of selecting say four predominantly Protestant towns for high growth to be balanced by four predominantly Catholic ones would be foolish. Besides, being even-handed may involve making up for previous under-development rather than some mechanical equal sharing.

## *Sustainable Communities*

Sustainable development means that we do not grow in prosperity today at the expense of future generations. The concept argues for balanced development, which allows for economic and social progress without degrading the environment to a point which prevents tomorrow's society from enjoying natural resources at least to the same extent as we do today.

Some new initiatives in this field elsewhere acknowledge a wider definition. They refer to the concept of sustainable communities, meaning that development should be viable not just in an economic and environmental sense, but also in a social sense. The latest government thinking in Britain endorses this understanding.<sup>8</sup>

An example of this more integrated approach is ***Planning the Sustainable City Region: Manchester 2020***. It suggests that there are three criteria for effective strategies in this regard.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), (December 1997), op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Town and Country Planning Association and Centre for Employment Research, Manchester Metropolitan University, *Planning the Sustainable City Region: Manchester 2020: an inquiry into the prospects for integrated sustainable development in a major conurbation.*

- The *containment of spatial growth* in order to achieve a compact settlement form. This is said to offer the best means to secure cohesion, efficiency and viability, while protecting the quality of both the built environment and its hinterland.
- The *reorganisation of aspects such as 'the physical metabolism'* to ensure higher standards of services such as shelter and mobility, while mindful of minimising harmful environmental impacts within viable local and global capacity.
- The *integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions* to development.

To give a flavour of the many and mixed steps advocated to achieve sustainable communities, the following 20 provide some examples.

1. optimising the use of vacant and derelict land
2. clustering of higher densities around local settlement centres and public transport nodes
3. protecting precious capital in built and natural heritage
4. upgrading buildings to best practice energy use, with renovation and maintenance based on low impact, green materials and with all buildings being monitored for environmental health hazards
5. ensuring all new building to energy rating NHER 10 or commercial equivalent
6. reducing the need for travel to work, amenities and services
7. promoting new clean smart technologies in transport
8. designing neighbourhoods for pedestrian and cyclist priority
9. providing flexible integrated public transport to compete with the car and to facilitate intermodal travel
10. greening of the city and town, with increasing networks of greenways and wildlife habitats, and doubling biodiversity and biomass on open land in agriculture, woodlands and freshwaters, with community forests to stretch to one third of urban fringe
11. promoting organic and low impact food production
12. defining minimum standards in waste and pollution strategies, eg for human health impact as 1 statistical fatality per million
13. containing transport emissions by previously mentioned transport policies
14. moving waste management up the hierarchy by; promoting its re-use at source by producers; targeting up to 50% of household/commercial waste to be re-used, re-cycled or composted
15. promoting renewable energy sources to meet up to 10% of local need
16. providing infrastructure for linked heat and power across all inner and industrial areas
17. changing lifestyles to cut the environmental costs of consumption
18. supporting community-based social and economic networks

19. promoting the social economy
20. developing civic awareness and involvement

## *Integrated Planning for Sustainability*

The important point is that the total effect of this kind of combined strategy is greater than the sum of the parts. This, again, emphasises the importance of integration in the new planning. The Strathclyde Structure Plan (1995) extols the role of integration as a means of meeting all the diverse objectives of a major strategic plan, which is designed to:<sup>10</sup>

- resolve conflicts between competing land uses
- protect valued resources
- positively anticipate and enable development, and to
- indicate priorities for new investment

The Strathclyde Plan outlines the following aims: to (1) strengthen the economy; (2) reduce deprivation and disadvantage and their effects; (3) protect and enhance the environment; (4) use non-renewable resources prudently; and (5) minimise pollution. Importantly, it underlines these goals with two central principles about development: 'in situations of great complexity or uncertainty, the precautionary approach will be adopted; and there should be an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of any development'.<sup>11</sup>

In pursuing this agenda the Strathclyde Plan comes to some key conclusions: the benefit of intensification of

urban-based activities; the importance of making urban areas more attractive places in which to live and work; the positive relationship between improving urban centres and steps to substitute car use with public transport; the complementary nature of strategies for urban regeneration and those of rural protection and enhancement; the need for environmentally friendly economic activity in remoter rural areas; the danger posed by wide use of greenbelt land not only to the quality of the environment, but also to the prospects of urban renewal; the way a concentration of housing and job opportunities outside existing built-up areas raises the demand for travel; and the fact that developments with complete or extensive reliance on the private car militate against the objectives of sustainability.

In many of these considerations, the link between land use and transportation is crucial. Thus the Plan is clear that in this respect it seeks to:

- minimise the demand for travel, particularly commuting by car

<sup>10</sup> Strathclyde Regional Council, Strathclyde Structure Plan 1995, Written Statement, Strathclyde Department of Physical Planning, Strathclyde, p. 344.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.23.

- maximise the role of public transport, particularly in regard to accessibility to city centre and suburban locations
- maximise the use of non-road freight carrying, particularly by rail, thereby reducing traffic flows through communities
- protect the environment
- secure good accessibility to the economic hubs

Giving practical expression to these intentions, the Plan identifies a number of critical policies to be adopted, including one to 'harness the development potential of the retail industry in support of town centres'<sup>12</sup>. Here, a series of measures is listed, including: the continued presumption against mega out-of-town centres; the restriction of goods ranges in retail warehouses; a strong consideration being given to accessibility to the public transport network; and a definition of a hierarchy of shopping centres, designed to achieve a strategic retail approach across the region.

Such planning is in line with a regional strategy which boosts the compact city while improving sensitive rural development. However, a recent report in Britain<sup>13</sup> has highlighted the difficulties. For example, it reminds us that in most metropolitan areas, the easy brownfield sites have already been developed, leaving the most problematic and costly. Such sites, with their contamination, limited access, low demand and high expense, will require considerable public subsidy for reclamation. The report argues that there is a wide consensus that pressure for urban decentralisation will continue. Thus, policies designed to achieve 'extreme' urban compaction face formidable difficulty.

One compromise between the compact city and pushing development into very rural areas is offered, namely a flexible redefinition of greenbelt boundaries. In this respect, 'suburban extensions are seen as a relatively sustainable form of development, allowing use to be made of existing infrastructure, including transport systems'.<sup>14</sup> The authors conclude that a form of sustainable greenfield development is feasible if it is tied to a portfolio approach 'in which different elements ... peripheral extensions, infillings, selected new communities at different geographical scales ... are combined, without any exclusive concentration on a single element of the package, and always adapted to local circumstances'<sup>15</sup>.

Within this strategy, they insist that two key principles for sustainability can be safeguarded. First, settlements can be formed to optimise self-containment in terms of living, working and leisure. Second, the need for longer journeys can be met through an efficient and flexible public transport provision. Both of these might 'best be achieved by clusters of mixed-use neighbourhoods linked along a public transport spine and with a relatively high linear density (though not entailing very high residential densities)'<sup>16</sup>.

This is similar to the concept of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which has been suggested to cope with the diffuse development patterns typical in US regions. Such development forms are 'mixed-use, transit-oriented, walkable, and diverse. Reordering private space to make the public domain more usable, memorable, and the focus of each neighbourhood is an overarching goal'<sup>17</sup>. But the advocates of TODs are sceptical about whether this can be consistent with the sprawl of suburbs, which in common with new towns and edge cities, are seen to miss out on the central

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.177.

<sup>13</sup> Breheny, M. and Hall, P. (1996), *The People: where will they go?* Town and Country Planning Association, London.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.59.

characteristics of traditional towns - 'pedestrian scale, an identifiable centre and edge, integrated diversity of use and population, and defined public space'<sup>18</sup>. Amongst the principles of TOD development is the use of life-cycle cost analysis in assessing viability. This goes beyond initial cost to estimate factors such as long-term maintenance, resource supply, environmental loss, and replacement, clean up and demolition costs. But the fundamental need is to re-balance the role of car and pedestrian<sup>19</sup>.

To accomplish such a re-balancing, the metropolitan circulation framework should be layered, providing an arterial grid for through traffic, neighbourhood streets for pedestrians and slow cars, a pedestrian-dominated urban centre. Pockets of mixed-use development with moderate densities and streets designed for both pedestrians and cars would support transit, even in the suburbs. A network of such developments would focus the now sprawling suburban environment, draw traffic from overloaded arterials and freeways, and balance the housing and job opportunities throughout the region.

To appreciate these arguments fully, they have to be viewed in the American context.

## *The US Experience*

Looking to the experience in the US suggests that the goal of sustainable settlement can often be in conflict with that of dispersed development. There have been three waves of such dispersal within US regions. The first was in the post-war period when a substantial sub-urbanisation of residence

and to some extent industry occurred, followed since the 1960s by the 'mallings' of the suburbs with significant out-of-town retail complexes followed since the 1970s by the suburbanisation of offices, two thirds of which are now in such centres. These patterns reinforced each other with, for example, a more office based workforce creating demand for more suburban housing and retailing, producing in some instances a scale of development referred to as 'edge cities'<sup>20</sup>.

These processes were the outcome of push factors from central cities, such as congestion, pollution, noise, crime and grime, together with pull factors in the suburbs, such as the facility of under-priced car use, good supply of relatively cheap land, public policies which subsidised housing and highways, technology changes from the telephone onwards which minimised the effect of distance, and the desire by employers for low-rise offices which allowed for more efficient employee interaction.

But the results were a depletion of resources and investment in central cities; increased use and cost of energy and pollution; and a deepening social and racial rift as a white middle class flight from the cities further ghettoised lower income groups in declining urban areas. Once the process started, it tended to spiral, with demoralisation and poverty in the city streets spilling over into low attainment in the under-funded public schools, the poor performance of which was a further inducement to middle class parents to leave. In other words, the US experienced a twin process of sprawl and segregation.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, not all the problems fell to the cities. The rural areas suffered an incursion.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>17</sup> Calthorpe, P. (1993), *The Next American Metropolis, ecology, community and the American dream*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, p.53.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, E (August 1996), *The Dispersed and Segregated Metropolis*, published essay for the Commercial club of Chicago, Chicago.

People who moved to the suburbs for the quiet life with open greenery discovered, as the demand for such development rose, increasing density and traffic congestion, long commutes to work, and rising crime and other features of city life they imagined they had escaped. To redress the harmful effects of these trends, current effort in many US regions is targeted at what some refer to as 'sensible growth', the goals of which include the following<sup>22</sup>.

- **exercising good stewardship of the land by protecting open space for public use**
- **deploying scarce infrastructure spending prudently by emphasising reinvestment over expansion**
- **reducing the almost total reliance on the car, creating walkable communities with convenient access to shops, employment, services and alternative transport modes**
- **providing greater housing choice in socially mixed and mixed use neighbourhoods**

Current studies are now questioning who pays for the existing pattern, which fragments city and suburb<sup>23</sup>. As one publication put it in relation to sprawling development<sup>24</sup>:

*There are questions as to whether new buyers ultimately pay all the costs associated with the development and whether various public subsidies fuel dispersion and distort the private market.*

This suggests that the goal of sustainable communities requires a comprehensive social

cost-benefit analysis of major development, whereby the question of who pays what for what benefit for whom is clearly discernible.

The American experience also offers good examples of how community development has made a major contribution to the revitalisation of rural areas. As noted by Murray and Dunn<sup>25</sup> rural development in the United States is becoming more strongly associated with community-led regeneration initiatives and this is echoed in the case of Northern Ireland. Drawing upon a detailed examination of the Rural America Programme and case studies of communities involved in the Colorado Rural Revitalisation Project, Murray and Dunn examine the contribution of collaborative rural community efforts to the challenge of responding to change in the late twentieth century advanced capitalist economy of the United States. There rural society is being transformed by having to adapt to a new international order, a changing role for government, the accepted interdependence of community and economic development and the strong relationship between community and place. These issues strike a chord with recent experience in Northern Ireland, not least the need for the participation of rural people in thinking more about their own future and putting into practice their ideas for its attainment.

## *The European Agenda*

Regional development in Europe is underpinned by six key considerations<sup>26</sup>.

1. the search for *sustainable economic development*
2. the need to *decrease regional growth inequalities*

<sup>21</sup> Frieden, B. and Sagalyn, L. (1989), *Downtown, INC: how America rebuilds cities*, the MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>22</sup> Campaign for Sensible Growth (January 1998), *Growing Sensibly: a guidebook of best development practice in the Chicago region*, Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Bank of America and The Resources Agency (1994), *California at the crossroads: the costs of sprawling land use patterns*, LA.

<sup>24</sup> Campaign for Sensible Growth (January 1998), *op. cit.*, p.1

<sup>25</sup> Murray, M. and Dunn, L. (1996) *Revitalising Rural America: A Perspective on Collaboration and Community*, Wiley:Winchester

3. the linked demand for a *strategic approach* to achieve a coherent and co-ordinated improvement
4. the growing importance of *partnership* to the development process
5. the increased focus on *entrepreneurship, technological advance, innovation, and competitiveness*, and
6. the greater attention paid to *small to medium size enterprises* and *supply-side factors* like skilled labour, quality sites and good infrastructure

The role of spatial planning in addressing these issues has been highlighted in *Europe 2000+*. Amongst the practical expressions of these goals are: the development of cross-border co-operation; the reduced exclusion of marginalised groups and peripheral regions; the balanced regeneration of urban areas, whereby deprivation and spatial segregation are considered alongside growth and development; and the revitalisation of rural areas in ways which are sensitive to environmental preservation.

However, such strategies struggle with the tensions between competition and cohesion. The Single Market extols the need for a large economic bloc that can hold its own in an increasingly competitive global economy. Yet this may involve further concentration on the centre of Europe, where state-of-the-art technologies in information and telecommunications together with the command and control functions of large corporations dominate to the disadvantage of more peripheral regions. Such a scenario also tends to favour large cities over smaller ones and in general to draw human and capital resources away from those areas

considered less well endowed economically<sup>27</sup>.

Increasingly national and regional plans are locating themselves within the European context. Besides the imperatives that derive from European funding for development, the prospect of expanding trans-European business, transport, energy and communications networks ensures that the European dimension is critical.

## Making It Happen

Regional planning in the past was largely reactive. It is true that being able to exhort and cajole, it could also deploy a mix of regulation and subsidy to support a more even development pattern across all regions. But this kind of indicative planning fell short of a capacity to make the plan happen. Rather, the plan's fulfilment was dependent on a myriad of largely disconnected decisions by corporations, public and voluntary bodies, many of which stakeholders had little hand in the plan's authorship.

Thus, while the DOE is taking a lead in the production of the plan, it is critical that the process is not only embedded at an inter-departmental level within government but is also inclusive of wider civil society. Perhaps, to give full expression to this new approach, the composition of the regional planning team should be extended beyond the Planning Service, while we are still at this formative stage. Operating as an interdisciplinary team of planners, economists, health managers, educationalists, community developers and so on, and drawing in expertise from outside government, such a broader body could facilitate a multi-agency and cross-sectoral perspective.

<sup>26</sup> Alden, J and Boland, P. (1996) *Regional Development Strategies, a European perspective*, Regional Studies Association, Kingsley Publishers, London.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Permitting those agencies that can help deliver the plan to help shape it in the first instance is one part of improving implementation. Another is to recognise that an imaginative mix of regulation and incentives is needed to encourage development to accord with the strategy. Interestingly, *Modernising Planning* (see <sup>1</sup>), in addressing new measures to improve delivery, highlights the need for innovative and experimental use of economic instruments such as tradeable permits tax and financial incentives to realise policy objectives. These would be part of a proactive engagement with stakeholders, who in return would be expected to offer clear planning gain agreements:

*Our aim here is not just to ensure that such agreements reflect external costs but to speed up decision making by requiring obligations to be more predictable and transparent*.<sup>28</sup>

For instance, a strategy based on principles of compactness, sustainability, proximity equity and efficiency may consider a package such as the following:<sup>29</sup>

- Greater planning restriction in greenfield sites, and greater planning facilitation in urban and rural settlements
- Tax credits for clearing contaminated land and further credits for building socially mixed housing on such brownfield sites
- Tax credits for multiple occupancy, and residential use of commercial property, provided these comply with proper dwelling standards
- Removal of VAT from conversions to encourage refurbishment as an

alternative to moving to larger newly built property outside existing settlements

- Tax credits for those families giving up car ownership, together with affordable annual season tickets for an integrated public transport system
- Provision of affordable housing in the countryside, with preference given to local need and to construction being undertaken by a consortium of local housing associations and the NIHE, demonstrating sensitivity to the local place and employing local labour
- A land development tax on use of greenfield sites to help pay for such financial inducements
- Increased tax burden on car use in urban areas, including selective road tolls and higher parking costs

Within the realm of a regional assembly, it may be feasible to achieve some autonomy that will allow for such initiatives.

Another important feature of implementation is how different levels of planning connect. Only a limited number of people use a region or indeed imagine a region. Rather, the present geography of most peoples' everyday lives remains quite limited. Some live and work at a very local level, perhaps using other parts of the region only occasionally. Others commute between 10 and 40 miles or more a day to work in urban centres. And yet for others, everyday life transcends locality either through the new communications networks or through regular overseas travel. When we begin to consider what we want our region to be like, we need to start at the bottom and consider both the value and definition of local, spatially defined

<sup>28</sup> Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), (1998), op. cit., DETR, London, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> Based on Bilton, M., (5 April 1998), op. cit.

community as well as considering its limitations. In addition, we also need to consider the region from the top, and particularly to understand how external forces, such as inward investors, define their spatial needs.

How then can we define locality - is it a district council area, a town or townland, a suburban neighbourhood or an inner city community area? Within localities what services should be provided and which should be regional or sub-regional in terms of their locational reach? It already seems evident that statutory agencies in Northern Ireland are defining locality and space in different ways. District Councils provide a range of services within a defined area and some of these are centrally located in District towns.

However, the changing provision of health facilities both at a very local health centre level and at a regional and sub-regional hospital level is affecting how we use and define social space. In the field of education provision, primary schools remain very important community markers of locality. However the introduction of parental choice, particularly at secondary school level, has disrupted previously defined catchment areas. Significantly too, the closures of schools in rural areas and in some inner urban areas have undoubtedly contributed to the loss of local community confidence which in turn has triggered further depopulation. Increased mobility for some has also encouraged a more dispersed pattern of development and in recent years this has led to the location of retailing and other services in out-of-town sites. All of this affects how we define, understand and experience locality and place.

How then does planning address these spatial relationships as well as people's need

for a sense of community or locality? We currently have a plethora of plans and strategies operating across Northern Ireland. At the smallest local level, we have in parts area partnerships seeking to develop integrated strategic plans for regeneration. At a wider local level, perhaps the most important, certainly in terms of land use or spatial development planning, is the area plan. This plan, which normally covers one district council area, is increasingly confining its terms of reference to land use and physical development issues. Wider social, economic, ecological and area management issues are considered to be beyond the remit of the statutorily defined area plan process. In addition, at this local district council level, we also have local economic development strategies prepared by the councils. Almost in tandem, and again at council level, there are district partnership plans which seek to address peace and reconciliation issues.

The *Shaping Our Future* consultation process raised two relevant points in this context. First, there was an almost universal demand for a more integrated and co-ordinated form of planning. The relationships between issues were widely experienced and understood, and people constantly pointed to the disadvantages of the current fragmented approach of government departments. Consequently there is some expectation that the RSF will provide the basis for a more co-ordinated approach to the overall development of the region. In turn, of course, this raised the concern about how a more integrated regional vision can be realised at local levels.

The second and related point concerns how community ownership of planning at a local level can be developed. Many pointed to the success of the local area partnerships and their demonstration of the benefits of cross-sectoral participatory planning and decision-

making. Considered together therefore, it can be argued that there is a need for a planning vehicle which can offer a co-ordinating function for local planning as well as encouraging community ownership through a partnership approach.

Development planning represents only one dimension of the broader planning processes that affect our everyday lives; arguably though, it is a very tangible and central dimension. It is suggested therefore that the remit of area plans, and where appropriate local plans, should be extended to provide a more comprehensive basis for local planning. This is not to suggest an all-embracing plan for every aspect of local life, but rather to acknowledge the need for a central co-ordinating process which would give direction to other policies and initiatives. Importantly too, the involvement of local area partnerships in this planning process would offer a wider engagement with a broader range of local interests than at present.

The future of planning at a local level is of course inextricably linked to the future geography and responsibilities of local government. If, as seems probable, there is a major reorganisation of local government within a new political context, then the spatial template may change.

## Conclusion

Nobody says that regional planning is easy. It confronts any number of tensions. For example, on the grounds of efficiency and environmental impact, it makes great sense to concentrate new development in areas that have surplus capacity in terms of physical and social infrastructure. However, it could be argued that some parts of Northern Ireland that have such capacity like Antrim and Craigavon are themselves part of a legacy of previous planning decisions seen to be biased towards the east of the

Province. To grant them further scope for growth may be seen as re-visiting the unfinished business of the Matthew era. In other words, an equity perspective would indicate that we are not starting from a level playing field, where all parts of the region have the same opportunity for bidding for development. Previous rounds of investment in infrastructure favour some areas over others, and the relatively neglected areas may make a good case for saying 'it is now our turn'.

In similar vein, it makes sense in terms of efficiency and economy to increase density levels in existing settlements. But, one of the push factors out of towns and cities is the concentration of the built environment and limited green open space. So if we want to extol town/city living as offering quality of life, the degree of land intensification has to be watched carefully.

Much of the draft strategy implies that housing development will rest with private developers. Yet, the attainment of other goals such as proximity, sustainability and equity means that developers are going to face impositions such as planning agreements. How is this balance between intervention and the market going to be struck to protect the general public good?

Our argument here is that the regional plan has to be concerned about the five Es:

- Efficiency
- Economy
- Equity
- Environment
- Empowerment

It is the latter dimension - empowering diverse stakeholders to get involved - which underpins the others. Trade-offs between

conflicting goals, weighting amongst the goals, phasing the investment needed - all these and more need to be subject to debate and engagement in a wide political process that includes the citizen.

# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX 1

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology sought to ensure a comprehensive approach, one that was inclusive and interactive across all sectoral interests; a spatial reach throughout the region; and a multi-thematic focus involving the full range of strategically important issues, considered not only as single themes but also in terms of their linkages.

The four interdependent goals set out in the *'Shaping our Future'* Discussion Paper formed the spine or template for the discussions and interviews:

**Valuing People,  
Building Prosperity  
Caring for the Environment  
Improving Communications.**

To these, we added the following: Process, Regional Vision, Issue of a Divided Society, Regional Strategic Guidelines and Implementation. These helped to ensure a consistency in approach across the different forms of consultation as well as across the different spatial and sectoral interests.

These general themes, in turn, needed to be related to a set of research questions. Thus, more specifically the discussions and interviews encouraged participants to consider:-

- **The validity of these proposed goals;**
- **What they specifically meant for them;**
- **What alternative/additional goals might be suggested;**
- **How we can translate goals into achievable objectives;**
- **How these goals might be translated into a spatial context;**

- **How competing goals could be arbitrated;**
- **How an integrated approach could be optimised;**
- **How we prioritise goals and objectives; and**

How an agreed strategy could be delivered, managed and evaluated.

In addition to these themes and research questions, the concept of sustainable development was a central rubric in the discourse which we generated.

**The component tasks involved in the research were as follows:**

### 1. *Policy Analysis, Research and Briefings*

This included the following:

desk research on matters germane to developing a Regional Strategy, including for example:

- new regional policy in Britain, and its local implication
- spatial policy in the EU, and implications for the Structural Fund
- Agenda 2000, including rural development policy
- new guidelines for development planning

To take just two of the above for illustration of why we considered this comparative perspective to be germane to the project:

in the aftermath of Scottish devolution, regional policy in England will become more important. The Regional Development Agencies Bill will set up RDAs, with effect from April 1999, to co-ordinate regional economic development. But, the intention is that these will underpin a wider regeneration remit, and that they will involve a diverse coalition of partners. While all RDAs will operate within a common framework of objectives, functions and funding arrangements, each will evolve in forms relevant to particular regional circumstance. This will re-shape regional policy, and it is important that our discussions here about Northern Ireland's development were informed by the discourse in Britain.

the European context is critical. Europe 2000 sets the mega regions within which sub-regional development can be framed. The mid-term review of the Structural Fund in both parts of Ireland appraises progress in attaining regional goals. Such documentation needed to be examined for the lessons held for our new approach to regional development.

policy analysis was designed to elicit the connections among various recent policy initiatives from the Department of the Environment: e.g. the new transportation review; retail location policy; housing review, and rural planning policy. Moreover, since the strategy involves an inter-departmental focus, it was also necessary to review the implications of other Departments' policies, for example, Regional Health Strategy; Competing in the 1990s, etc

the dissemination of this research in 'user-friendly' form to a wide range of interests participating in the consultation would be designed to upgrade the level of informed debate

## 2. *Sub-regional conferences*

Three sub-regional conferences were organised. The intention here was to re-launch the 'Shaping our Future' initiative within three major spatial constituencies - the greater Belfast area, the north west and the rural area - and to focus on issues relating to the role of these sub-regions within the region.

Each conference drew together a wide cross section of people. For instance, amongst the constituencies addressed were:

- the 11 rural networks
- district partnerships
- Leader groups
- major cities/towns
- agricultural interests
- community forums
- specialist focus groups
- trade unions/business (e.g. the Group of 7)
- churches
- region-wide voluntary sector

The general format of the conferences was workshop-based. Each conference comprised two key components:

a. Information giving: based on the research, invited speakers and other material generated by the interviews, community workshops and specialist seminars by that stage.

b. Interactive engagement: via such methods as scenario planning, the audience was facilitated to express views and suggestions. While the DoE document *Shaping Our Future* was used to focus debate, the values and principles related to development, which emerged in the Belfast City Region process and in the public discussions around rural development was also robustly interrogated in an attempt to highlight the tensions in reconciling some of these aspirations.

### *3. Community Planning Workshops*

Within each sub-regional area, a series of workshops were targeted at more locally based groups. Target groups here included local community and voluntary organisations, environmental lobbies, trader associations, and local economic development groups.

### *4. Specialist Seminars*

We convened specialist forums based on the four goals listed above. These seminars drew together experts from a range of relevant sectors to allow cross-sectoral engagement and interrogation of the key issues.

### *5. Interviews*

A key component of the consultation process was a series of semi-structured interviews with leading personnel across all sectors throughout the region. These interviews sought to go beyond information gathering and explored how the key issues relevant to a regional strategy could be considered and prioritised.

# APPENDIX 2

## *LIST OF GROUPS WHICH PARTICIPATED*

A Ray of Hope  
Adapt Northern Ireland  
ADMAC  
Association for the Development of  
Pettigo and Tull(ADOPT)  
Age Concern  
Age Concern (East/Castlereagh)  
Aghagallon Rural Development  
Association  
Aghalee Development Group  
Ahoghill Village Association  
Ainsworth Community Association  
Albertbridge Area Community  
Development Project  
An Telelann  
Antrim Borough Council  
Assisting Randalstown Community  
towards Harmony and Economic  
Success (ARCHES)  
Ardmore Community Association  
Ardoyne Youth Club  
Armagh Confederation of Voluntary  
Groups  
Armagh Unemployed Group  
Arthritis Care North West  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland  
Ashton Centre  
Ballycolman Community Association  
Ballyconnell Community Development  
Association  
Ballyhalbert Community Association  
Ballymagorry District Development  
Association  
Ballymagroarty Community  
Association  
Ballymena Borough Council  
Ballymoney Borough Council  
Ballymote Community Project  
Banbridge District Council  
Banbridge District Enterprise Limited  
Banbridge Youth Information Centre  
Bangor Access Group/ Shopmobility  
Bangor Historical Society  
Bangor Round Table  
Barnardo's  
BDS Community Group  
Belcoo and District Development  
Group  
Belfast Brook Advisory Centre  
Belfast City Council Community and  
Leisure Services  
Belfast Education and Library Board  
Belfast Green Party  
Belfast Interface Project  
Belfast International Airport  
Belfast Traveller Sites Project  
Belfast Travellers' Education and  
Development Group  
Bellaghy Development Association  
Belturbet Community Development  
Association  
Blackie Community Groups'  
Association  
Blossom Trust  
Bogside Brandywell Initiative  
Boyd Partnership  
Blackwater Basin Rural Agency for  
Community Enhancement (BRACE)  
Braniff Associates  
Bridge Accessible Transport  
Bridge Community Centre  
Bridge Community Transport  
Bright Lights  
British Association of Nature  
Conservationists  
Brocagh Residents' Association  
Broughshane Development  
Association  
Broughshane Development Group  
Bryson House  
Burren Community Forum  
Bushmills Development Group  
Business and Traders' Association,  
Moneymore  
Business in the Community  
Cairnshill Residents' Association  
Caledon Playgroup  
Camowen Partnership  
Caphill Community  
Carmen Trust  
Carnhill Resource Centre  
Carnmoney Hill Country Park  
Campaign  
Carrickfergus Together (District  
Partnership)  
Carrickmore Adult Education Group  
Carryduff Community Forum  
Castlefinn Community Enterprises

Castlewellan Regeneration Limited  
Cathedral Youth Club  
CCDO  
Castleberg & District Community  
Development Association (DCDA)  
Cullybackey Environmental  
Improvement Association (CEIA)  
Central Bangor Residents' Association  
Central Community Relations Unit  
(CCRU)  
Central Mournes Community  
Association  
Centre of Creative Energy  
Chinese Welfare Association  
Chronicle Newspaper  
Church of Ireland Housing Association  
Churches Trust  
Churchtown Community Association  
Chyralis Women's Centre  
Citizens' Advice Bureau, Dungannon  
Clanabogan and District Initiatives  
Clanmil Housing Association  
Clara Park Tenants' and Residents'  
Association  
Claudy Rural Development  
Association  
Clondermot High School  
Clones Development Association  
Clones Development Society Limited  
Clough and District Community  
Association  
Colin Glen Trust  
Conlig Community Group  
Combat Poverty  
Community Connections  
Community Development Centre  
North Belfast  
Community Leadership Programme  
Community Relations Council  
Community Transport Association  
Confederation of British Industry (NI)  
Conservation Volunteers  
Cookstown and Western Shores Area  
Network  
Cornerhouse Community Family  
Centre  
Corpus Christi College  
Corpus Christi Services  
Council for Nature Conservation and  
the Countryside  
Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)  
Craft Connection  
Craigavon Borough Council  
Cregagh Football Club  
Creggan Health Information Project  
Creggan Pre-school Carers  
Cross-Border Community  
Development Project  
Crossgar Community Association  
Crumlin Development Association  
Cruse Bereavement Care  
Cushendall Development Group  
Darkley and District Community  
Association  
Dee Street Regeneration Trust  
Department of Agriculture for Northern  
Ireland  
Department of Health and Social  
Services  
Department of the Environment  
(Northern Ireland) Transport Division  
Derg Finn Partnership  
Derg Valley Care  
Derry City Council  
Derry Frontline  
Derry Healthy Cities  
Derry Travellers' Support Group  
Derry Well Women  
Derryinver Community Association  
Derrytrasna Community Association  
Developing Rural Enterprise  
Disability Action  
Disability Resource Centre  
Disabled Drivers' Association  
Disabled in Community Action  
Donaghadee Community Association  
Donegall Pass Community Group  
Donemana and District Community  
Association  
Dove House  
Down and Connor Diocese (RC)  
Down District Council  
Donaghcloney Rural Needs Group  
(DRNG)  
Dromara and District Community  
Association

Dromara Pre-school Playgroup  
Dromore 2000  
Drumaroad and Clanvaraghan  
Community Association  
Drumduff and Drumnakilly Community  
Association  
Drumquin Development Association  
Duncairn Community Centre  
Dundonald Greenbelt and Heritage  
Association  
Dundonald Greenbelt Association  
Dundrum Village Committee  
Dunfield Residents' Group  
Dunlewey Substance Advice  
Dunloy Development Association  
Dunmurry Development Partnership  
Dunnalong Community Association  
Dunnalong Community Services  
Dunnsford Cross-community  
Resource Centre  
Dupont (UK) Limited  
East Belfast Community Development  
Agency  
East Belfast Traders' Association  
East Down Rural Community Network  
East End Residents' Association  
ECOC  
Economic Council  
Educational Guidance Service for  
Adults  
Eglinton Residents' Association  
Enniskillen Together  
Erne Advocacy Group  
European Commission  
Extern  
Fair employment Commission  
Falls Community Council  
Falls Forum  
Family Farm Development  
Faughanvale Women's Group  
Federation of Small Businesses  
Fermanagh Business Initiative  
Fermanagh District Partnership  
Fermanagh Rural Community Network  
Fermanagh Women's Network  
First Trust Bank  
FOCUS (Omagh)  
Footprints Women's Centre  
Forbairt Feirste  
Foreglen Community Association  
Forest Park Centre  
Forum for Community Work Education  
Foundry Trust  
Fountain Area Partnership  
Fountain Street Community  
Association  
Foyle Basin Council  
Foyle Residents' Group  
Foyle Search and Rescue  
Friends of the Earth  
Fund Worldwide  
Fury Area Development Association  
Galliagh Residents' Association  
Garran and Croob Cross Community  
Group  
Gasworks Trust  
Gifford Community Development  
Group  
Gingerbread Northern Ireland  
Glenarm Village Committee  
Glenelly Development Trust Limited  
Glenravel Community Association  
Glens Development Group  
Glens of Antrim Angling Development  
Glenview Community Association  
GIÙr na nGael  
Gortgonis Community Association  
Greater Belfast Community Network  
Greater East Belfast Partnership  
Greater Shankill Community Council  
Greater Shankill Partnership  
Greater Twinbrook and Poleglass  
Community Forum  
Greencastle Area Residents' Group  
Greencastle Credit Union Building,  
Omagh  
Greencastle Development Association  
Greencastle Women's Group  
Greenisland Heritage and Environment  
Group  
Greysteel Community Association  
Greysteel Community Enterprises  
Hazelbank Residents' Association  
Health Promotion Agency  
Help the Aged  
Henderson Fireplaces  
Hilltop Environmental and Community  
Care Limited

Historic Monuments Council  
Holy Family Playgroup  
Holywell Trust  
Holywood Residents' Association  
Indian Community Centre  
Inner East Youth Project  
Institute of Civil Engineers  
Intercomm Project  
International Tree Foundation  
Inverbrenna Centre and Youth Club  
Inverbrenna Community Association  
Ionad Ulbh Eachach  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
Irish Council of Churches (ICC)  
Irish Linen Centre, Lisburn  
Irish Planning Institute  
Irvinestown Community Partnership  
Islandmagee Community  
Development Association  
JJ Higgins Limited  
Kansas Residents' Association  
Keady & District Community Initiatives  
Limited (KDCI)  
Kells and Connor Improvement  
Committee  
Kesh Development Association  
Kilcooley Residents Association  
Kilcoo and Tollymore Regeneration  
Group  
Killinchy & District Community  
Association  
Killough Community Association  
Killylea and Tynan Community  
Association  
Killyleagh Town Committee  
Knockatallon Development  
Association  
Knockmoyle Community Hall  
Committee  
Lagmore Residents' Association  
Landscape Institute (Northern Ireland)  
Leafair Community Association  
Lenadoon Community Forum  
Lenadoon Women's Group  
Lettershandoney Community  
Association  
Ligonel Community Enterprises  
Limited  
Ligonel Improvement Association  
Limavady Borough Council  
Limavady Chamber of Commerce and  
Trade  
Limavady Community Development  
Initiative  
Limestone Trust  
Lisburn Development Limited  
Lisburn District Peace and  
Reconciliation Partnership  
Lisburn Enterprise Organisation  
Lisburn Rights Group  
Lisburn Welfare Rights Group  
Lisnacree Community Centre  
Lisnaskea Chamber of Commerce  
Laurencetown, Lenaderg and Tullylish  
Community Development Association  
(LTCDA)  
Long Tower Trust  
Loughbrickland Community  
Association  
Loughbrickland Joint Venture  
Loughgiel Community Association  
Lower Malone Residents' Association  
Lower Whitewell Tenants' Association  
Lurgan Council for Voluntary Action  
McCormick Group of Companies  
Magherafelt Women's Group  
Maguiresbridge Development  
Association  
Making Belfast Work (South and East)  
Making Belfast Work (South)  
Markets Development Association  
Mary Gray Community Development  
Group  
Melmount Community Care  
MENCAP  
Methodist Women's Association,  
Belfast  
Middletown Community Association  
Mid-Springfield Community  
Association  
Mid-Ulster Women's Network  
Mill Village Women's Group  
Milltown Community Trust  
Monbrief Community Association  
Moneymore Community Group  
Morton Community Centre  
Mournderg Partnership  
Moyle District Council

Moylinn House Community  
Development Support Services  
Agency  
Muckamore Residents' Association  
Multistoreys Residents' Association,  
Rathcoole  
National Trust  
New Mossley Youth Centre  
New 'n' Used  
Newbuildings Community Association  
Newcastle Community Development  
Association  
Newcastle Youth Initiative  
Newington Credit Union  
Newry and Mourne Carers  
Newry and Mourne District Council  
Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Newtownabbey Community  
Development Agency  
Newtownabbey Community Project  
Limited  
Newtownabbey District Partnership  
Newtownards Road Women's Group  
Northern Ireland Association for the  
Care & Resettlement of Offenders  
(NIACRO)  
Northern Ireland Phillipino Community  
Association (NIFCA)  
NITHLO  
North Antrim Community Network  
North Antrim Rural Action  
North Belfast Communities in Action  
North Belfast Cultural Society  
North Belfast Partnership  
North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum  
North Belfast Traders' Association  
North Down Youth Council  
North East Institute of Further and  
Higher Education  
North West Community Network  
North West Forum for People with  
Disabilities  
Northern Ireland Agricultural  
Producers' Association  
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network  
Northern Ireland Chamber of  
Commerce and Industry  
Northern Ireland Chamber of Trade  
Northern Ireland Community Addiction  
Service  
Northern Ireland Co-operative  
Development Agency  
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic  
Minorities  
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated  
Education  
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary  
Action  
Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative  
Northern Ireland Economic Council  
Northern Ireland Environmental Link  
Northern Ireland Disability Action  
Northern Ireland Federation of  
Housing Associations  
Northern Ireland Health and Social  
Services Trust  
Northern Ireland Hill Farming  
Northern Ireland Hospice  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
(Banbridge)  
Northern Ireland Leader Network  
Northern Ireland Tourist Board  
Northern Ireland Transport Holding  
Company  
Northern Ireland Transport 2000  
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust  
Northern Ireland Volunteer  
Development Agency  
Oakleaf Rural Community Network  
Omagh District Council  
Omagh District Partnership  
Omagh Forum for Rural Associations  
Omagh Gold Mining Action Group  
Omagh Traders  
Oakleaf Rural Community Network  
(ORCN)  
Ortus West Belfast Enterprise Board  
PHAB Northern Ireland  
Planning Appeals Commission  
Playboard  
Poleglass Concerned Parents' and  
Residents' Association  
Poleglass Residents' Association  
Portglenone Enterprise Group  
PROBE (University of Ulster)

Queen's University Department of Civil Engineering  
 Randalstown Arches Association  
 Rathcoole Community Forum  
 Rathgill/Willowbrook Residents' Association  
 Rathlin Farmers' Group  
 Regeneration of Camlough  
 Regeneration of Mourne Area Limited (ROMAL)  
 Regeneration of South Armagh (RoSA)  
 Regeneration of Ballyholland Area Limited (RoBA)  
 Roden Street Community Centre  
 Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors  
 Royal Naval Life Boats  
 Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
 Royal Town Planning Institute  
 RSCA  
 Rural Community Development Action Team  
 Rural Community Development Health Project  
 Rural Community Development Initiative  
 Rural Development Council  
 Salvation Army  
 Sandy Row Community Centre  
 Sandy Row Community Forum  
 Save our Lagan Environment (SOLE)  
 Save the Children  
 Seamus Canavan and Associates  
 Shankill Community Forum  
 Shankill Women's Centre  
 Shopmobility Bangor  
 Short Strand Community Forum  
 Simon Community  
 Sion Mills Community Association  
 Sixmilecross Development Association  
 Slievegallion Rural Development Association  
 Social Democratic and Labour Party  
 South Belfast Age Concern  
 South Belfast Partnership  
 South Eastern Education and Library Board  
 South Eastern Education and Library Board Library Information Service  
 South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association  
 South West Community Forum  
 Southcity Resource Centre  
 SPCA  
 Sperrin Caring Services Agency  
 Sperrin Lakeland Healthcare Trust  
 St Davog's ACE Scheme  
 St James' Forum  
 St Louise's Comprehensive College  
 Community Education  
 St Luke's ACE Scheme  
 St Luke's Family Centre  
 Star Neighbourhood Centre  
 South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)  
 Strabane District Council  
 Strandburn Residents' Association  
 Strangford Community Association  
 Strangford Lough Agri-tourism Group  
 Streetbeat Youth Project  
 Students' Housing Association Co-operative  
 Suffolk Community Services Group  
 SUI  
 Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme  
 Sustrans  
 Sydenham Environmental and Community Group  
 Tradd & Ballyronan Development Association (TABDA)  
 Talking Hands  
 Tempo Development Association  
 Thorn Environmental Community Group  
 Toome Association of Community Groups  
 Toome Industrial Development and Leisure (TIDAL)  
 Top of the Hill 2010  
 Topped Mountain Historical Society  
 Town Centre Management  
 Translink  
 Transport Management, Hillsborough  
 Transportation Group  
 Truagh Development Association  
 Tully and District Development Group  
 Association

Tullycarnet Credit Union  
 Tullycarnet Residents' Association  
 Tullycarnet Resource Centre  
 Tullycarnet Women's Group  
 Youth Action (NI)  
 UCD Limited  
 Ulster Architectural Heritage Society  
 Ulster Bank  
 Ulster Farmers' Union  
 Ulster Society for the Preservation of  
 the Countryside  
 University of Ulster  
 Ulster Wildlife Trust  
 Upper Andersonstown Community  
 Forum  
 Upper Andersonstown Housing Group  
 Upper Springfield Development Trust  
 VFU  
 Veridian  
 Village Residents' Association  
 Village Roundabout Caring Agency  
 Vine Community Centre  
 Voluntary Service Belfast  
 Voluntary Service Lisburn  
 Voluntary Unit (DHSS)  
 Waterside Area Partnership  
 Waterside Development Trust  
 Waterside Women's Centre  
 West Belfast Taxi Association  
 Westcare Business Services  
 Western Health and Social Services  
 Board  
 Westlink Women's Group  
 Westrock Parent Youth Support Group  
 West Winds Tenants Association  
 Windsor Women's Centre  
 Women's Centre Derry  
 Women's Resource and Development  
 Agency  
 Women's Support Network  
 Woodburn Management Committee  
 Woodland Trust  
 Workers' Educational Association  
 YMCA (Carrickfergus)  
 Youth Action  
 Youthnet

## *List of Individuals who Participated*

Brakspeare, Rupert	
Brown, Louise	
Captain, Eileen	Belfast
Carson, Martin	Downpatrick
Collins, Paul	
Coney, John	Omagh
Connolly, Harry	Ballymoney
Conway, Jarlath	Cookstown
Crilly, Michael	Belfast
Delaney, Martin	Dungannon
Dolan, Eamonn	Enniskillen
Fitzpatrick, B	Banbridge
Goy, Diana	Bushmills
Gribbin, Malachy	Castledawson
Hadden, Joy	Caledon
Halferty, Aidan	Magherafelt
Halferty, Patsy	Magherafelt
Hamilton, Thomas	Saintfield
Haughey, Bernadette	Strabane
Hoening, Carmel	Belfast
Hoening, Tom	Belfast
Holland, Eunice	Cookstown
Holst, Eddie	Strabane
Kilpatrick, Pat	Magherafelt
Lake, Malachy	Omagh
Lappin, James	Newcastle
Lavery, Maria	
Magowan, M	Limavady
McAllister, WJ	Broughshane
McClellan, PJ	Beragh
McCracken, Marion	Limavady
McIlmoyle, Leslie	Limavady
McLarnon, M	Magherafelt
McLarnon, S	Magherafelt
McNulty, B	Trillick
McPhilemy, Clare	Strabane
Morris, Julie	Omagh
Morrow, Bertie	
Murphy, Brian	Magherafelt
Nicholl, Tommy	
Nugent, Linus	Omagh
O'Connor, Patricia	Cavan
O'Connor, Teresa	Coalisland
O'Donnell, Michael	Derry

O'Shiel, Nicholas	Omagh
Rafferty, G	
Richardson, Jill	Coagh
Riddel, James	Omagh
Robinson, Peter	Belfast
Tackle, D	Castledawson
Taylor, R	Bangor
Thompson, Harry	Banbridge
Todd, HL	Randalstown
Tully, Tina	Redhills, Co Cavan
Wallace, Mary	Antrim
Walls, Katrina	Magherafelt
Ward, Celine	Strabane
Warke, John	
Wilson, Samuel	Ballynahinch