

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: Basis for Council Engagement in the RDS Review

City and Region

The Assembly debate at the time of the announcement and subsequent discussions as part of the initial consultation have highlighted the tensions around the perceived issues of regional disparity and the fundamental nature of the review highlights the necessity for the effective engagement to ensure the continued RDS recognition of Belfast as the “*economic engine for the Region as well as being the regional centre for administration, specialised high order services and cultural amenities*”.

This issue and the interdependence of regional cities with their hinterland was specifically addressed in the work commissioned from the OECD, which in turn formed an important part of the recent State of the City Conference. Professor Peter Tyler, Director of Studies in Land Economy at St Catherine’s College in the University of Cambridge, presented key findings for Belfast from the OECD which concluded that:

- the success of Northern Ireland and quality of life for all citizens over the next 25 years will crucially depend upon the success of Belfast. (This echoes the message of previous State of the City conferences which showed Belfast to be NI’s regional driver like other cities in other GB regions) Belfast is a major hub for both business and employment and any failure to fully exploit its potential will negatively impact on surrounding areas.
- The city should not be perceived to be in competition with other parts of Northern Ireland but rather as a gateway for trade, employment, services and visitors and as a magnet for private sector investment.
- the recent Programme for Government twin objectives of securing enhanced economic growth, whilst at the same time promoting social inclusion and equality across the region and its individual parts were consistent with City’s own objectives.

The OECD evidence based report would usefully inform the review of the Regional Development Strategy that seeks to set directions for the location of jobs, houses, businesses, public services, and facilities across the whole region. This evidence based approach will become increasingly important as the Regional Development Strategy continues to evolve and become more closely linked to public infrastructure investment with the flexibility to accommodate economic growth.

Regional Development Strategy and Local Planning / Strategy

The Minister stated that the RDS will be a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This statement reflected what would be a more involved role for the plan and Department “*that must concern implementation, and the actions and priorities necessary to deliver the vision*”. From the announcement it was clear that the Minister considered that the revised strategy would have clearer linkages to other planning mechanisms which “*must set out how connections could be made to deliver a more sustainable future development*”.

This suggests a greater role for the strategy in informing how places are shaped and developed at a local level. The approach to the review provides the opportunity to develop a new form of working between the strategic and local planning levels, which could reflect the potential structures that may evolve as part of the Review of Public Administration.

The statement recognises the need to take account of structures emerging as part of the review of public administration and whilst regional planning and policy statements will remain a central Government function, it accepts that relationships with local planning and development management must be structured in an efficient and effective way.

The benefits of this new more integrated approach is recognised in the findings of the five year review and is highlighted in the consideration of the relationship between the RDS and the Investment Strategy. Whilst the potential benefits of the better integration are clear the details in relation to the future statutory relationships between the Regional Development Strategy and local planning /plans will need careful consideration to ensure the retention of a degree of autonomy.

The five year review highlighted that the RDS did not have the influence that was anticipated due to a combination of factors, including insufficient detail and clarity on matters such as housing need, rural development, and the growth of cities and towns. There will be a direct relationship between the level of prescriptive detail in the RDS and the degree of local autonomy that may be available to local planning authorities in relation to local policy and the scale of potential development.

Trends and Local Issues

In relation to the specific past development and existing trends a number of issues could be identified through the monitoring of the RDS:

- A decline in the population in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area but growth in population of small settlements and open countryside in rural NI.
- A predicted growth in overall population in NI and increase in the number of households which will continue to drive the need for additional houses.
- Despite the economic growth, working age inactivity is higher than any region in the UK, innovation levels and entrepreneurial activity are comparatively low and infrastructure needs further upgrading.
- The trend of increasing number of vehicles in the region continues and the public transport use altered little between 2001 and 2004.
- In 2005, road transport accounted for 31% of the regions CO2 emissions, compared to 19.1% of the UK's CO2 emissions.

The approach adopted for the RDS and the level of detail in relation to policies and targets to address these trends and past development could have implications for the development of the city. The Council in engaging with the review process needs to be cognisant of the potential RDS implications for Council aspirations in relation to:

- The maintenance and development of the role of Belfast as the regional centre;
- The integration of the city into wider development strategies that address the regional balance of Northern Ireland;
- The location of key infrastructure projects required for the Belfast Metropolitan area and their prioritisation including waste management;
- The context for the proposed transfer of local planning functions through RPA;
- The potential for population led regeneration and continued growth;
- The continued growth of Belfast as a sustainable, vibrant, modern and compact city;
- The ability and measures to address the need for social and affordable housing
- The promotion of public transport and the reduction in the use of the private car;

- The improvement and management of air quality; and
- The ability to respond to issues of climate change and sustainability

These issues and trends will need to be addressed as part of a detailed response to the 10 year review of the regional Development strategy. There will be both informal and formal opportunities to respond to the proposals, in the period leading up to the publication of the proposed consultation draft early next year, through the ongoing participation in the working groups and any proposed consultation events.

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: Department for Regional Development Consultation Workshop

Review of the Regional Development Strategy

The Department for Regional Development is reviewing the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025.

As part of that review process the Department is holding 11 half day sub-regional workshops. The purpose of these is to share with you the work that has been done so far but more importantly to listen to views and ideas about your areas.

If you are interested in attending please contact Louise Fitzpatrick, on Belfast 028 90540186. You can also contact her by email on shapingourfuture@drdni.gov.uk or by textphone on 028 90540642.

The programme for the workshops is detailed below. You are welcome to attend more than one if you wish.

Local Government District	Time, date and venue
Belfast City Council	9.30 am on Thursday 4 December at the Northern Ireland Science Park, The Innovation Centre, Queen's Road, Queen's Island, Belfast
Ballymena Borough Council, Larne Borough Council and Carrickfergus Borough Council	9.30 am on Thursday 13 November The Braid Town Hall, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena, County Antrim
Omagh District Council and Fermanagh District Council	9.30 am on Friday 14 November at Valley Hotel, 60 Main Street, Fivemiletown, County Tyrone
Antrim Borough Council and Newtownabbey Borough Council	9.30 am on Friday 14 November at The Hilton Hotel, Castle Upton Estate, Templepatrick
Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council	9.30 am on Thursday 20 November at the Irish Linen Centre, Market Square, Lisburn
Magherafelt District Council, Cookstown District Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council	9.30 am on Friday 21 November at Burnavon Arts & Culture Centre, Burn Road, Cookstown
North Down Borough Council and Ards Borough Council	9.30 am on Friday 21 November at the Strangford Arms Hotel, 90-92 Church Street Newtownards
Armagh City and District Council, Banbridge District Council and Craigavon Borough Council	9.30 am on Thursday 27 November at Portadown Town Hall, 15-17 Edward Street, Portadown
Coleraine Borough Council, Ballymoney Borough Council, Limavady Borough Council and Moyle District Council	9.30 am on Thursday 27 November at University of Ulster, Cromore Road, Coleraine
Newry and Mourne District Council and Down District Council	9.30 am on Friday 28 November at Slieve Donard Hotel, Downs Road, Newcastle
Derry City and Strabane District Council	9.30 am on Friday 5 December at University of Ulster, Magee, Northland Road, Londonderry