Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland

Framework for Collaboration

Consultation Document

Seeking Your Views

We are seeking your views on this Framework for Collaboration on the spatial strategies on the Island of Ireland. The consultation will run from Tuesday 15 February for 8 weeks. Responses must be received by 5 pm on Monday 11 April 2011.

This document examines the key planning challenges faced by both parts of the Island and discusses the potential for collaboration in spatial planning. It sets out a framework for collaboration at different levels within the public sector which should result in mutual benefits. These benefits can be at the local border area level and at the larger Island level. It represents a non-statutory approach to providing advice and guidance at relevant spatial or geographical scales.

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed to a third party if requested. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances.

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Issues, opportunities and challenges in relation to spatial planning and future development are frequently shared, North and South. Understanding this relationship can help economic recovery through more effective planning and prioritisation of investment.

1.2 Effective planning means creating competitive and sustainable places and bringing about better balance between meeting development needs and protecting our shared environment. Prioritisation of investment means targeting resources where they will create the greatest competitive advantage.

1.3 This document examines the key planning challenges faced by both parts of the Island and discusses the potential for collaboration in spatial planning. It sets out a framework for collaboration at different levels within the public sector which should result in mutual benefits. These benefits can be at the local border area level and at the larger Island level.

1.4 The two spatial strategies – the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) in the North and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in the South are key foundations on which future strategic investment decisions in each Region will be made. These strategies highlight the need for co-operation on issues which transcend boundaries. They emphasise the importance of working together for the development of urban and rural areas and for the provision of infrastructure and services.

The Framework Approach and Status

1.5 The Framework is a non-statutory approach to providing advice and guidance at relevant spatial or geographical scales. It should encourage policy makers in the public sector to take account of the wider impact of their work, to recognise and exploit opportunities for a wider perspective and to avoid "back to back" planning.

The European Union View of Spatial Planning and Collaboration

1.6 Co-operation, or collaboration, between regions for territorial development is accepted as good practice within the European Union (EU) and is promoted in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)[1], and the EU Territorial Agenda (EU TA).

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1   European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (Potsdam, May 1999) – http//ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ sources/docoffic/official/reports/som_en.htm

1.7   Research shows that collaboration is important to:

- solve cross boundary issues that cannot be dealt with by regions on their own;

- provide policy support for action or fiscal measures needed to achieve co-operation;

- help ensure consistency of policy at different levels ; and

- foster networking on decisions about cross boundary issues and projects.

1.8   Both the ESDP and the EU TA promote connectivity between Member States as a way of promoting a stronger Europe in the face of global challenges.

1.9   The concept of connectivity includes people and freight transport, energy supply and digital communications infrastructure as well as linkages for social or community reasons. Connectivity therefore has implications for where jobs are located, accessibility to services and for spin off economic activity. Benefits will be felt most at the points where connectivity networks touch or cross.

The Experience of Collaboration across Europe

1.10   Both the EU and the wider Council of Europe supports practical research on how spatial and territorial co-operation can be achieved. The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (known as ESPON) manages research projects on behalf of the EU to provide information and reliable data on EU development trends and comparisons with the wider world.

1.11   The ESPON 2013 programme has further developed the relevance of the research programme for policy makers by introducing a stream of research projects driven by the needs of ESPON participants. Details are available at http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/

1.12   The majority of co-operation projects to date have involved regional or local authorities in France, Germany, Belgium and Spain. Co-operation initiatives are most often funded by INTERREG.

1.13   The INTERREG IVA Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland is an EU supported Structural Funds Programme which seeks to address the economic and social problems resulting from the existence of borders. It supports strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable Region. The INTERREG IVA Programme is worth €256 million (€192 million from the EU with further national contributions of €64 million). This programme covers the period 2007-2013.

1.14   The programme is being delivered through 2 priorities:-

- *Priority 1:* Co-operation for a more prosperous cross-border Region by helping to diversify and develop the economy through innovation and enterprise.

- *Priority 2:* Co-operation for a sustainable cross-border Region by supporting activities that promote cross border co-operation in policy development and delivery of services.

Existing Arrangements North and South

1.15   Co-operation and collaboration is not new on the Island of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government are already collaborating on a range of projects for economic benefit. This has happened for example through the creation of the Single Electricity Market, joint investment in the City of Derry Airport, and by significant road and rail investment on routes linking Dublin and Derry and Dublin to Belfast and Larne Port.

1.16   Other ongoing co-operation themes include agriculture and plant and animal research, education, environmental protection and waste management, in a cross border context. There is also joint working on, accident and emergency planning, health promotion and co-operation, energy matters, transport planning, road and rail infrastructure, and public transport services and road safety.

1.17   These and other projects are advanced both through the North South Ministerial Council and through other contacts between Departments and Agencies, North and South.

1.18   Local authorities from both jurisdictions are working with ILEX, the urban regeneration company in the North West. Local authorities in the Newry-Dundalk area have also come together to deliver the Twin City Region project. The Irish Cross Border Area Network (ICBAN), a network of Councillors, is also working together to respond to unique economic and social needs of the central border region.

1.19   The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), an academic partnership, has been working closely with central and local government, North and South in information gathering, skill and policy development.

1.20   On a wider basis throughout Britain and on the island of Ireland co-operation North, South, East and West is also now being addressed in a British Irish Council Spatial Planning workstream.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Spatial Strategies of the Island of Ireland

Background

Regional Development Strategy

2.1   The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is the spatial strategy for the North and has a statutory basis. It covers the period 2000-2025. Its purpose is:

- to provide an over-arching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public sector in respect of those elements of their strategies which have a spatial development perspective.

2.2   The RDS has been reviewed to reflect the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government and provide a spatial context for the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. The revised draft RDS[2] is undergoing a 3 month consultation exercise and the intention is to publish a final revised RDS in mid 2011. The revised Strategy, covering the period 2010-2035 will:

- Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of the Region.
- Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Derry as the hub of the North West.
- Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential.
- Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities.
- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places.
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake.
- Take actions to reduce the carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change.

2.3   Strengthen links between North and South, East and West, with Europe and the rest of the world. Under the proposals for planning reform, applications for regionally significant development will be determined by central government. The revised RDS considers that projects which are regionally significant will be those which:

- deliver strategic improvements in external and internal communications;

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2   Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2025 – Consultation 10 Year Review available at www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/

- contribute to the achievement of renewable energy targets;

- contribute to the achievement of waste management and climate change targets; and

- raise issues of more than regional importance.

National Spatial Strategy

2.4   The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is the spatial strategy for Ireland which, while being a non-statutory policy document, nevertheless has a strong influence over the legislative and policy framework for planning, through the Planning and Development Act, and on capital spending, under the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013[3]. Its purpose is to:

- identify broad spatial development patterns for areas; and

- set down indicative policies in relation to the location of industrial development, residential development, services, rural development, tourism and heritage.

The existing NSS covers the period 2002-2020.

2.5   The NSS aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective and integrated planning. In order to drive development in the Regions, the NSS requires that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass be built up through a network of gateways and hubs.

2.6   Nine gateways are identified to act at national level, through their large scale and critical mass, to both drive development over the urban and rural areas they influence, and support more balanced patterns of development nationally. The NSS identifies 9 Hubs to hold a strategic position in support of gateways, energising their own immediate areas and establishing a link between the larger urban areas and more rural areas. It also identifies an important need to support the role of smaller towns, villages and rural areas at the local level.

2.7   The Strategy outlines a framework within which transport and other linkages can be integrated with Ireland's future spatial structure.

2.8   The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the South (DOEHLG) has published a report[4] reviewing experience in implementing the NSS since its publication in November 2002. The NSS Update and Outlook Report states renewed implementation priorities that both take account of that experience and respond to the considerably more challenging economic context facing implementation in the years ahead.

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3   Further updated through the Capital Investment Priorities 2010-2016, and the National Recovery Plan 2011-14
4   National Spatial Strategy Review and Update Report 2010 available at www.environ.ie

2.9   In this regard, key implementation priorities include:

- continuing to influence the spend on capital investment from available resources in a spatial planning context;

- ensuring that the regions and strategic locations such as the gateways have good arrangements to deliver strategic vision and leadership in their planning and development; and

- implementation of reforms of the planning system under recent 2010 legislation to ensure good consistency of approach between national (NSS), regional (Regional Planning Guidelines), and local (City and County) planning.

Diagrams 1 and 2 show pictorially the main elements of each of the Strategies.
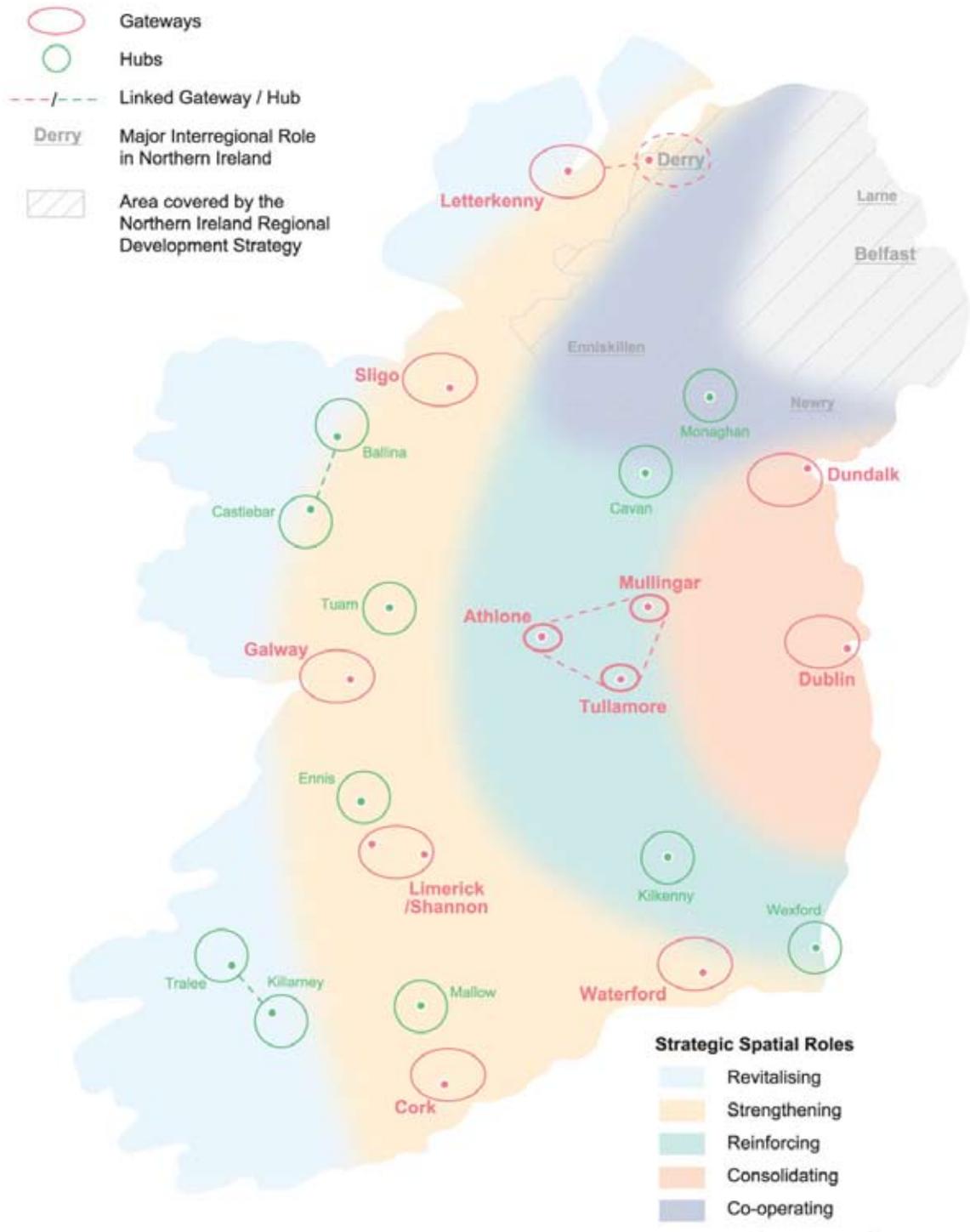
Diagram 1: The Regional Development Strategy 2010-2035

Diagram 2: The National Spatial Strategy

National Spatial Strategy

Map 2: Gateways & Hubs

Gateways
Hubs
Linked Gateway / Hub
Derry — Major Interregional Role in Northern Ireland
Area covered by the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy

Letterkenny
Derry
Larne
Belfast
Enniskillen
Sligo
Monaghan
Newry
Ballina
Cavan
Dundalk
Castlebar
Tuam
Mullingar
Athlone
Galway
Dublin
Tullamore
Ennis
Kilkenny
Wexford
Tralee
Killarney
Mallow
Limerick /Shannon
Waterford
Cork

Strategic Spatial Roles

Revitalising
Strengthening
Reinforcing
Consolidating
Co-operating

Comparison of RDS and NSS

2.10 There are differences between the Strategies that reflect their context. For example:

- The RDS has a legislative basis with Government Departments in the North having to have regard to it in their development functions. While the NSS does not have such a legislative basis, it is specifically referenced in planning legislation through the 2010 Planning (Amendment) Act

- In practice the NSS has been more strongly built into the development of government policy through, for example, its influence on the National Development Plan, and other capital investment plans and programmes.

2.11 The 2 Strategies are, however, also giving very similar messages. Both Strategies:

- have sustainable development at their core;

- promote more balanced regional development;

- recognise the differing but complementary roles the various regions have;

- recognise the critical role that metropolitan centres play as key focal points and drivers of economies in an international context;

- promote tiers of urban centres, gateways and hubs; and

- promote a more broadly based rural economy and strong rural communities.

Cross Border Issues

2.12 Both Strategies recognise the importance of their nearest neighbour and cite similar areas where co-operation can be mutually beneficial.

2.13 The Strategies:

- recognise the potential of the Dublin/Belfast corridor to become a significant axis of development within the wider European context;

- point to the need for the development of the Dublin/Belfast corridor to include development of the wider eastern seaboard corridor, including the Newry/Dundalk area;

- promote the development of the Derry/Londonderry/Letterkenny Gateway and the wider North West area;

- suggest the potential for developing further collaborative action in other parts of the border area;

- encourage the development of an integrated sustainable transport network; and

- encourage the potential for further collaboration on cross border energy inter-connections and on economic co-operation and enterprise..

2.14   Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government and local authorities are actively engaged in cross border co-operation on a wide range of other matters.

Conclusion

2.15   Whilst there are important differences that need to be recognised, overall there is a strong commonality of themes and approaches in both Strategies. This provides a sound basis upon which to build a framework for collaboration that will guide and aid the development of the Island of Ireland to fulfil its potential.

CHAPTER 3
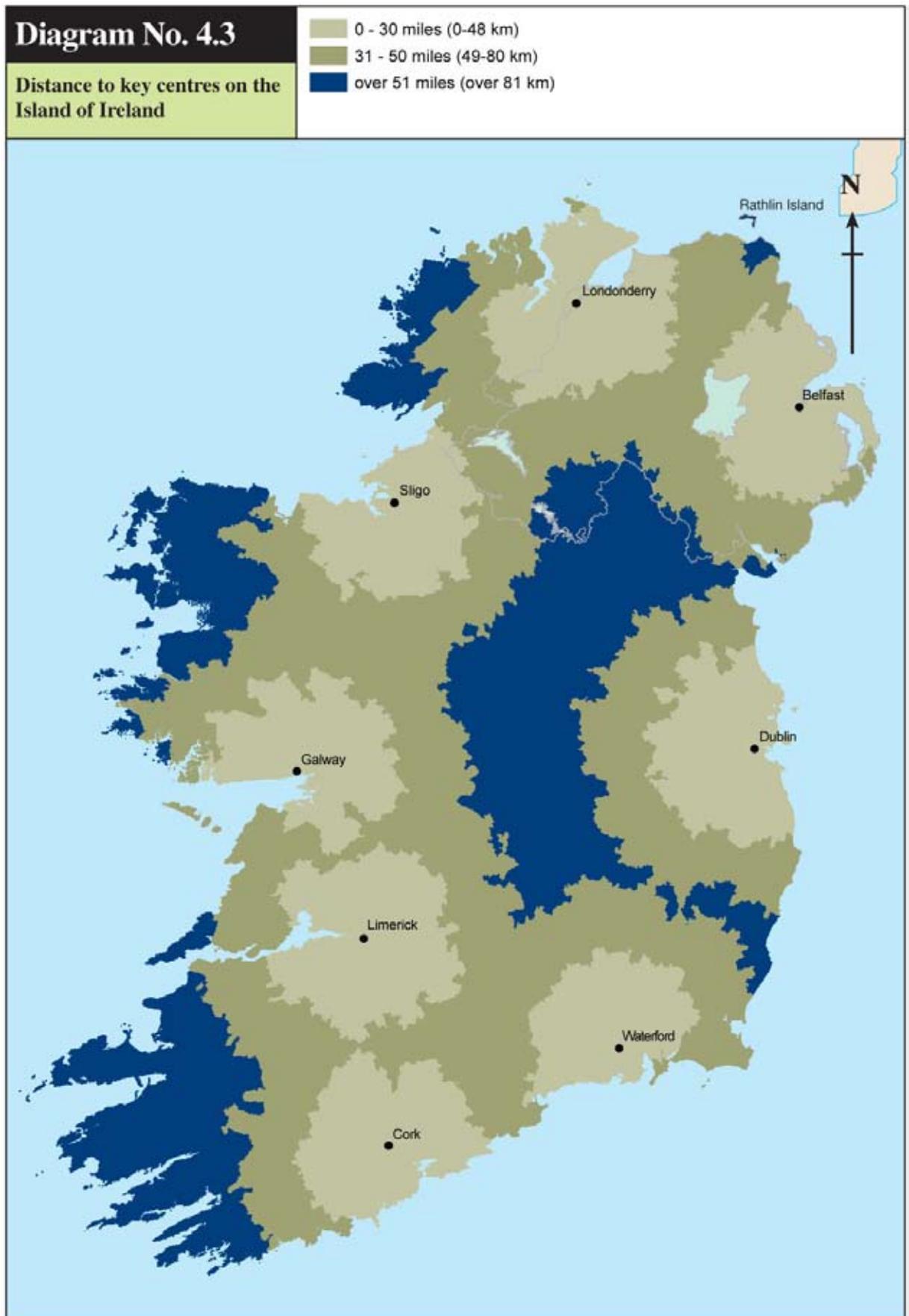
3.0 Spatial Challenges on the Island of Ireland

Introduction

3.1   This section looks at the spatial challenges and recognises where those challenges are different between the North and the South and also where there are similarities.

3.2   Cross-border co-operation and collaboration provide opportunities to boost the economic performance and competitiveness across the Island. More can be achieved through collaboration than competition.

Settlement Patterns

3.3   The two main cities on the Island, Dublin and Belfast, pose significant challenges in spatial planning and infrastructural provision. Their continuing growth in economic terms is fundamental to the prosperity of the Island. The city region concept places them at the centre of our economies.

3.4   The growth of Dublin reflects the growth of the Irish economy over the past two decades. However, there is now an understanding that continued expansion of the physical extent of the city is not a sustainable development path and will work against significant ongoing investment in public transportation and urban regeneration. The core city continues to transform with riverside and dockland regeneration.

3.5   In Belfast the core city area has seen population decline over many years and a decrease in population density, although there are indications that this trend may reverse. The city centre is undergoing a transformation with the completion of a number of significant regeneration schemes.

3.6   Cork in the South West and Derry in the North West are the next biggest urban centres, with populations of 123,000 and 91,000 respectively. Both serve wider hinterlands of 325,000 and up to 300,000 respectively. The zones of influence of some cities, particularly in the West overlap, as shown in Figure 3.

Diagram 3: Distance to Nearest Principal City on the Island of Ireland

Diagram No. 4.3

Distance to key centres on the Island of Ireland

- 0 - 30 miles (0-48 km)
- 31 - 50 miles (49-80 km)
- over 51 miles (over 81 km)

Rathlin Island

Londonderry

Belfast

Sligo

Galway

Dublin

Limerick

Waterford

Cork

N

3.7   Beyond the principal cities, other cities and main towns perform the important function of providing services to a wide hinterland, including rural areas. They are the focus of transportation networks and will be the optimum locations for employment, health and education services.

Population

3.8   The estimated 2009 population of the Island as a whole is just over 6 million, with around 4.5 million in the South and about 1.8 million in the North. The age structure of the Island is broadly similar between North and South.

Figure 1	Percentage of population per age group in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
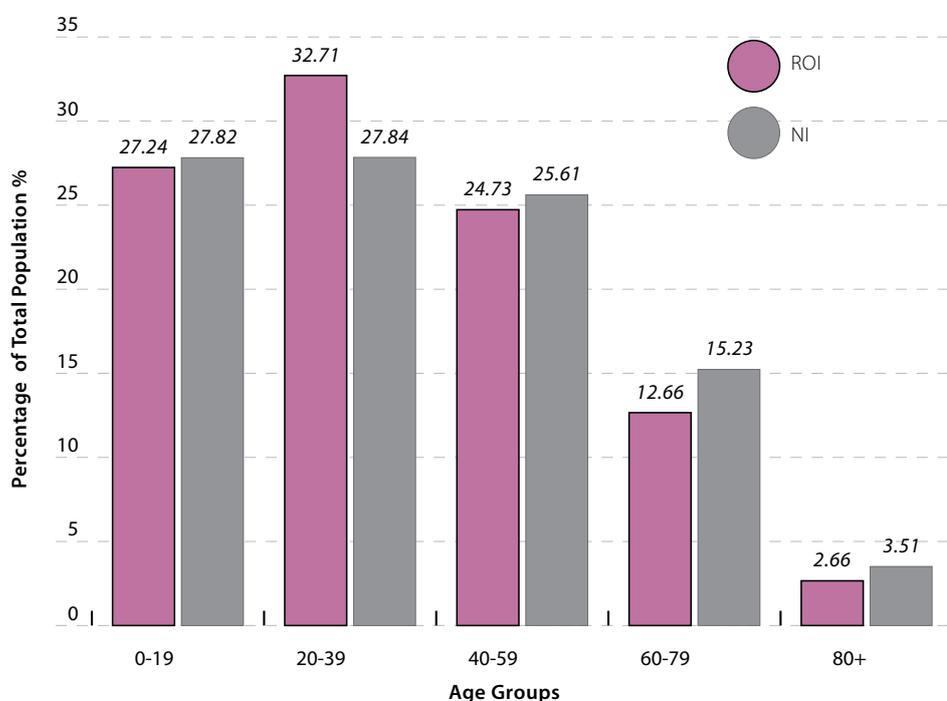
Source: Ireland North and South A Statistical Profile (2008) NISRA & CSO.

3.9   The large percentage of younger people highlights the pressures on education and skills development but also the positive impact on the local labour market.

3.10   Official forecasts show that the Island could have a population of just over 7 million by 2021 made up of just over 5 million in the South and close to 2 million in the North. By 2030 the Island may once again return to a population of 8 million, a level last seen just before the great famine in 1841.

3.11   In the South past population growth has been in the smaller towns rather than in the cities. Significant population growth has taken place in the Mid East, Midland and West Regions of Ireland over the last 10 years. The population of the Mid East is forecast to rise by around 24% to 2022[5].

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5   Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010

Accommodating future population growth predominantly outside the main cities poses a number of challenges. The vitality and attractiveness of urban areas, the provision of essential services and the quality of the receiving environment will be affected. At risk will be water quality and habitats. The continuation and extension of car-based commuting and continuing increases in transport sector related CO_2 emissions will work against becoming more sustainable and achieving climate change targets.

3.12   Similarly, whilst the total population in the North is predicted to increase, if past trends continue, the main growth will be in smaller towns and villages with minimal growth in cities and larger towns. This raises challenges for cost effective delivery of services, providing sustainable integrated transport networks, and building the critical mass of skilled people needed by new knowledge intensive service jobs replacing those in traditional industry.

3.13   Official forecasts for both jurisdictions show that the population is ageing. This also has implications for amongst other things, housing supply, transport provision and care systems.

Housing

3.14   Where people choose to live is influenced by the availability of and accessibility to jobs, facilities and services. Local housing markets cross borders, and authorities can benefit from working together when preparing future area plans and housing policies.

3.15   House building has slowed down on both parts of the Island and there is now an oversupply of housing, particularly in the South. It is quite likely that the level of house building will be low over the next few years with 25,000 houses completed in the South in 2009 as opposed to a peak of around 90,000 in 2007. In the North house building also showed a decline from a peak of 15,000 new dwelling starts in 2005/2006 to 8,400 new dwelling starts in 2009/2010.

3.16   Planning for future housing needs should take account of any oversupply and the cross-border nature of housing markets. Those working on core strategies of development plans, North and South will benefit from sharing housing market assessments to determine realistic future housing and land use zoning requirements.

Economy

3.17   The 2 economies on the Island of Ireland face similar challenges arising from the increasing pace and intensity of global competition.

3.18   Both economies have performed strongly until the recent global economic recession. Between 1996 and 2006 GVA in the South increased by over

186 per cent, in the North the increase was almost 71 per cent. Growth has been greatest in the East and closest to Dublin and Belfast where urban structures and communication links are strongest.

3.19   The contribution to the economy of business and financial services has grown particularly in Ireland whilst the numbers involved in the agriculture sector has declined on both sides of the border. The challenge is to support this transition and sustain rural communities and maintain the rich environmental resources of our countryside. In the North the emerging economic strategy is seeking to rebuild and rebalance the economy.

3.20   All parts of the Island now face the challenge of recovery from economic recession. Many of the 'new economy' jobs in professional services have sought out large pools of labour in cities. Reliance cannot be placed on foreign direct investment alone to provide employment growth. Indigenous skills development and support for indigenously owned small and medium sized enterprises will also be necessary. Job forecasts suggest that the strongest growth opportunities are in graduate hungry service sector jobs in a dynamic and fast growing knowledge-based economy.

3.21   Data on the mobility of the workforce on a North/South basis and the retention of graduates would assist a better understanding of labour issues which is needed for better planning. Evidence also suggests that the labour force of border areas, North and South, was disproportionately dependent on the construction industry. The challenge is to co-operate on re-skilling and training the workforce. This will help to support the emergence of competitive regions.

Environment

3.22   The environment plays a key role in the attractiveness of the Island and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

3.23   Rivers, lakes and mountains often transcend the border. The management of the above environmental assets and the landscape in general cannot be undertaken in isolation. We share Water Framework Directive targets for river basins, 2 of which are shared across the border.

3.24   Likewise, other EU Directives create duties on all to protect the rich biodiversity of the Island. Through co-operation it could be possible to create ecological networks, which help the protection of priority species and conserve biodiversity.

3.25   Our built heritage too is coming under pressure from development on both sides of the border. Such structures can provide the focus for regeneration and contribute to the character of a place and to its identity. The built heritage sits within a landscape context, and with moves towards a national

landscape strategy in the South, the management of the landscape and its various components and elements on a cross border basis is an important emerging planning issue.

Climate Change

3.26   Greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland rose by around 23% between 1990 and 2008. The most significant and sustained increase has been in the transport sector, where emissions have increased to over 2¾ times their 1990 levels, due almost entirely to road transport. Whilst in the North total emissions decreased by around 11% the transport sector showed an increase of 39%.

3.27   The longer term targets that the EU has set for 2020 are stringent, seeking a 20% reduction in total EU greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (relative to 1990 levels) and at the same time to increase to 20% the share of renewable sources in electricity production. The Northern Ireland Programme for Government sets a target for a 25% decrease in total greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. In the South, Government is committed to introducing appropriate targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to be framed within Climate Change legislation, and a 40% share of renewable sources in electricity production by 2020.

3.28   Both parts of the Island have challenging targets to meet, the achievement of which will have significant implications for planning. There is potential for actions in one jurisdiction to impact on the other.

Connectivity

3.29   Connectivity is about transport, energy and telecommunications and is essential to modern competitive places and regions.

Transport

3.30   A growing population places new demands on the Island's transportation infrastructure. In the last 5 years there are 732,000 more vehicles on our roads. The car is the main method of travel with approximately 70% using it to travel to work. Whilst the number of cars registered has been rising in both parts of the Island the North has more cars per head of population than the South.

Figure 2	Number of cars per thousand of population
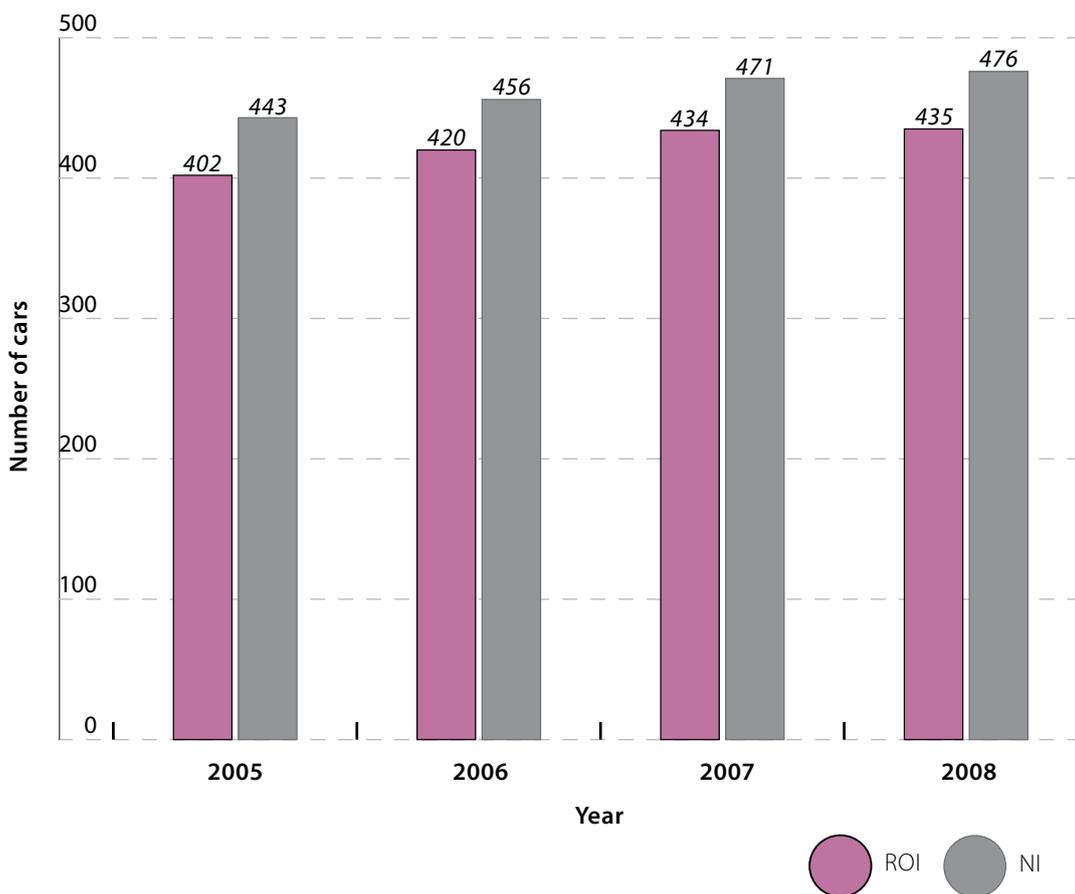
Sources: Central Statistics Office and Driver Vehicle Agency

3.31   As well as more cars on the roads further pressure is being put on the transport infrastructure by the rise in freight carried. As an Island economy all freight exports and imports come through the ports and the volume of freight has been increasing, for example between 2000 and 2005 the volume increased by more than 6 million tonnes.

3.32   The movement of people and goods is important for the future growth of the economy. Transportation networks help to deliver balanced economic growth and good connections to air and seaports are vital.

3.33   More traffic leads to more congestion particularly in the larger urban areas. This adds to greenhouse gas emissions and can have adverse impacts on health. Collaboration on solutions to these problems such as investment in public transport, the co-ordination and planning of development will reduce the need to travel to jobs, schools, services and facilities. In addition, providing real time information about traffic conditions and public transport journey interchange should benefit the Island as a whole.

Energy

Electricity

3.34   The Island's electricity networks are integrated through the North South interconnector. Already through co-operation there is an Island wide wholesale electricity market. To maximise the benefits from a Single Electricity Market (SEM) and improve security of supply, a second North South electricity interconnector is planned for 2012. This interconnector will enhance diversity and security of electricity supply and further growth of renewable generation.

3.35   In addition, the Moyle interconnector links the North to the electricity grid in Britain bringing additional competition to the electricity generation market in the North. A new interconnector between Dublin and Wales is being built and further links to France are under consideration. Significant investment in grid infrastructure, North and South, will be essential to meet the ambitious renewable electricity targets set by both jurisdictions.

3.36   The developments above are creating a more stable and secure energy distribution system for the Island as a whole and are essential in unlocking the potential for further contributions from the renewable sector both in onshore and marine based development. For these reasons, marine spatial planning will become a more important issue for the future. Good co-operation regarding wind wave and tidal stream developments in both Irish and UK territorial waters could lead to mutual economic benefits. Collaborative work on marine research and offshore grid developments is also ongoing under the auspices of the British Irish Council.

Diagram 4: The Electricity Network
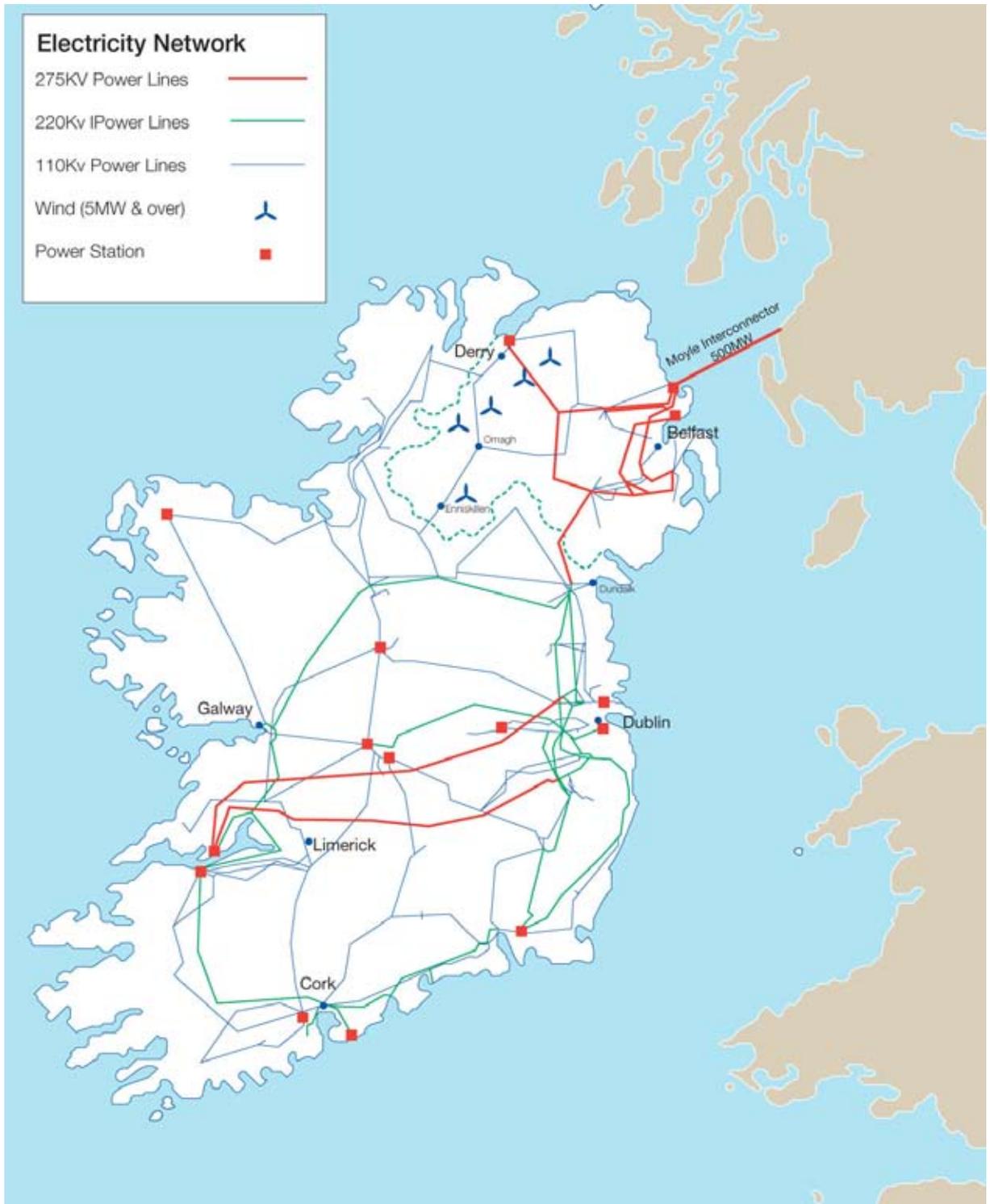
Gas

3.37   The new North South pipeline and enhanced East West interconnection between the Island, UK and European gas networks are paving the way for common arrangements for gas (CAG) offering scope for economies and efficiencies which will bring consumer benefits along with increased security

of supply. To this end Governments, North and South, are also investigating the long-term possibility of natural gas and liquefied natural gas storage on the Island. A major Liquefied Natural Gas terminal has recently been approved by An Bord Pleanála in the South on the Shannon Estuary and exploratory work is ongoing on gas storage potential in County Antrim.

Diagram 5: The Gas Network

Telecommunications

3.38   Effective communications infrastructure is a requirement for the development of a knowledge-based economy. There is a need to ensure that the opportunities provided by access to high quality telecoms services are fully exploited.

3.39   The recent direct international telecommunications link to North America offers companies a competitive edge. However, there will be a need to collaborate North and South on alternative technologies if higher broadband speeds are to be achieved.

Conclusion

3.40   The challenges presented in this section demonstrate that many key planning and development issues between North and South are similar. These include the regional differences between the urbanised East and the more rural West of the Island, the economic challenge of recovery from the recession, and the need to meet environmental targets.

3.41   A key factor in facilitating better joint working is more detailed and consistent information at a local level. This means that we need to work together to provide a more comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to integrating datasets in areas such as population, employment, transportation, housing and the environment. This information needs to be made widely available in a form that is understood and capable of analysis by stakeholders at all levels.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 The Framework for Collaboration

Introduction

4.1   This Framework is a means of collaboration to address the challenges set out in Chapter 3. It should encourage policy makers in the public sector to take account of the wider impact of their work and the potential benefits of avoiding "back to back" planning.

4.2   This Framework identifies four priority areas for collaboration. These have been identified from shared issues where practical solutions are likely to bring mutual benefit North and South or East and West. Future work areas may emerge after practical experience and a review of either spatial strategy.

4.3   The priority areas for collaboration are:

A.   Equipping the Island

4.4   In order that both parts of the Island can compete in the global market, spatial plans, North and South, have an important role to play in ensuring that we meet our infrastructure needs in a strategic, plan-led, integrated and sustainable manner.

4.5   Where, and when, we provide infrastructure, services and facilities will shape the economic, social and cultural future of our communities. The provision of cost effective and environment friendly infrastructure will also influence future development patterns.

4.6   From an Island-wide perspective this means continued progress in enhancing physical connectivity to allow sharing of scarce and expensive infrastructure, such as ports and airports. Improving access to the North West, and Derry, will help to ensure that its potential as a principal city on the Island is maximised. To enhance the conditions necessary for global competitiveness and sustainable economic development it will be necessary to continue to develop the energy and communication grids.

B.   Competitive Places

4.7   Both spatial strategies identify Dublin and Belfast as key economic drivers. The linked cities and towns of Derry and Letterkenny, and Newry and Dundalk are important locations because of their role as administrative, educational or commerce centres or as gateways to other places and Regions.

4.8   The value of these key locations will be enhanced through an integrated planning process where departments, agencies and authorities work together to secure a co-ordinated and agreed approach to their development and the spaces between them. Current examples include, the collaborative

working between Derry and Letterkenny, the Newry and Dundalk Twin City Project, and the North West Integrated Transport Strategy. Other important partnerships may be developed and agreed from time to time.

C. Environmental Quality

4.9 The quality of our environment is highly prized. It is important because it is the backdrop to our way of life on a daily basis. It is also increasingly relevant as a deciding factor for those in a more mobile workforce. EU Directives on the environment have had a major impact on locational decision making as they protect places with high natural asset value.

4.10 Collaboration at a strategic level, and in line with relevant EU Directives, can secure the careful conservation and enhancement of shared natural and cultural heritage assets, especially in relation to water quality, habitats, archaeology and architectural heritage.

4.11 There is a statutory obligation arising from the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive regarding trans-boundary consultation in relation to spatial and land use plans. EU Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment required for plan making on either side of the border will benefit from an inclusive approach to the identification of issues and responses. Early and continuing engagement during plan preparation is required to inform that process in a timely way and avoid later difficulties in resolving any emerging issues. Relevant Departments in the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government working together can ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to addressing environmental issues emerging from spatial planning processes.

4.12 Developing and promoting regional identity is a priority. This includes harnessing the Island of Ireland's rich history and environment. While supporting the need to protect and enhance the built heritage, development at all levels must be sustainable. This requires: i) protection of the distinctive character of areas which is worth preserving, ii) developments which are in harmony with the existing natural landscapes, and iii) the creation of places valued by people. All factors including those which contribute to the shaping of settlements and their origins need to be considered including those which contribute to their unique or distinctive identity.

D. Spatial Analysis

4.13 Both spatial strategies are founded on an evidence based approach that promotes management action. They also inform government processes which allocate resources. Gathering data and information on common trends provides a ready basis for understanding where co-operation may be beneficial.

4.14 The spatial planning process in both parts of the Island will benefit from a continuation of the work in harmonising and integrating key datasets such as population, employment, transportation, housing, retailing and environmental indicators. There have been huge strides recently in giving datasets added value by making data available using a geographic address. This approach allows data to be visualised using internet portals which can be accessed with little or no expense or expertise and widens the benefits of "being informed" to a much wider audience. For example, the Northern Ireland Geographic Information (GI) Strategy 2009-2019 aims to increase the use and exploitation of GI as a vital element in the enhancement of service delivery within both the public and private sectors.

4.15 Co-operation on analysis of geographically addressed data will allow spatial planners to identify and manage development trends in a more timely and informed way. Those trends may be the result of global influence or have long term economic consequences such as the current huge oversupply of housing in all parts of the Island.

Levels of Engagement and Co-operation

4.16 The priority areas identified above will require working at 2 levels.

Level 1 - The Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government. Government Departments will continue to co-operate at the strategic level.

Level 2 - Local Authorities North and South. These will be responsible for achieving national and regional spatial planning objectives through the delivery of local plans, programmes and projects that are well integrated in a cross-border context.

Level 1 – Government Departments

4.17 Government departments will continue to work at a strategic level to share approaches in the development and implementation of the RDS in the North and the NSS in the South. Working together will allow spatial plans to understand and prioritise patterns of sustainable development and to maximise investment.

4.18 Spatial plans should promote patterns of development that ensure more sustainable travel and transportation patterns. In this way we can maximise current and future investment in public transport and avoid unnecessary use of non renewable energy sources.

4.19 Certain key infrastructure, such as sea and air ports, road and rail, energy and telecommunication connectivity bring mutual benefits to all parts of the Island. Co-operation at strategic planning level will help to ensure that the greatest added value is extracted from investment in shared infrastructure.

4.20 Collaborating at a strategic level, in line with relevant EU Directives can assist in meeting climate change targets. It will also help to conserve and enhance energy resources and shared natural, cultural and landscape assets, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to emerging areas of interest such as the potential for marine spatial planning.

4.21 The spatial planning process will benefit from integrated datasets such as population, employment, transportation, housing, retailing and the environment. A key opportunity is to collaborate in the analysis of the next census which will be taking place in the same year, North and South, in 2011.

4.22 Sponsorship and guidance of research programmes, participation in capacity building and joint conferences and workshops will contribute to the building up of knowledge and expertise across the public, private and academic sectors in spatial planning.

Level 2 - Regional and Local Authorities

4.23 At the local level it will be important that the guidance in the RDS and NSS is incorporated into regional planning guidelines, development plans, community plans and regeneration schemes and that there is support for cross border projects and initiatives for both urban and rural areas.

4.24 Integrated planning processes at the local level, where agencies and authorities North and South work together on a cross border basis, are essential in enhancing the potential and quality of strategic places on the Island, that straddle such cross border locations. Such networks already exist for example, the East Border Region (EBR), Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and the North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG).

4.25 It is important that the collaborative approach to the designation or protection of key environmental assets for example, landscapes, designated sites and river basin management plans continues. This work has resulted in the designation of Geoparks in Fermanagh/Cavan and Down/Louth.

4.26 Local actions can deliver strategic objectives in a practical way such as identifying and exploiting potential created by new infrastructure and progressing specific cross border projects for urban and rural areas. Co-operating in the development of cross border datasets, to inform local planning in areas such as housing, retail, and travel, and the potential to share services.

Progress

4.27   Action to support progress will be taken forward between the Department for Regional Development in the North and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the South. This work will be reviewed periodically. Reports on co-operation will be made available through the existing monitoring arrangements for the NSS and RDS. Regular reports on spatial planning workstreams will be prepared for the British Irish Council meetings.

Conclusion

4.28   The value of practical day to day co-operation is already evident. The task now must be to ensure that co-operation is used to influence planning outcomes North and South for the benefit of our communities.

4.29   This Framework is an overview of the issues and potential for progress in collaboration on spatial planning in an Island context. What matters most are the next steps to action the concepts.

4.30   Both Departments will engage in a round of stakeholder consultation on this document. The findings of that consultation will be used to guide targets and actions which each of the responsible Departments, North and South, will undertake to support greater co-operation in cross border planning at all levels of engagement. A review of this Framework will be carried out after 2 years and a report on actions will be presented to the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish government.

Department for Regional
Development

Department of the Environment,
Heritage and Local Government