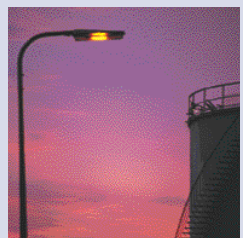
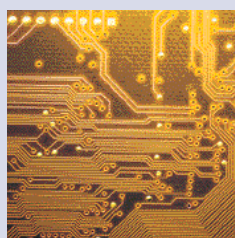
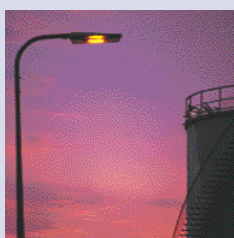
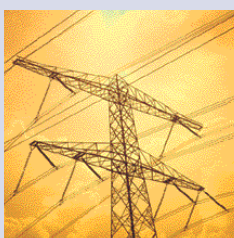


ANNUAL REPORT 2002
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil



COMHAR
THE NATIONAL
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP

Comhar Annual Report 2002



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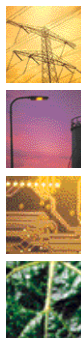
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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



Dr. John Bowman
Chairman

In the third year of its first term of office, Comhar continued to develop its work in a number of areas. Recommendations and reports were made during this period on four main topics:

- A further contribution to the preparation of the National Spatial Strategy, which continued to be a major focus of the planning working group.
- Recommendations to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on Communicating the National Climate Change Strategy; this built on and developed points raised in Comhar's recommendations on an early draft of the Strategy in late 1999.
- A report to the Earth Council on an Assessment of Ireland's Progress on Agenda 21. This formed part of a project being co-ordinated by the Council whereby National Councils for Sustainable Development prepared similar reports as part of the preparations for

the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in 2002.

- Comments to the Department of the Environment and Local Government on a draft Policy Statement on Preventing and Recycling Waste.

An important area of work during this period, which had commenced at the end of Comhar's second year, was the development of, and agreement on, a set of Principles for Sustainable Development. I am grateful to the members of Comhar, and in particular the six members of the *ad hoc* group which was specially established for the purpose, for their considerable work on this project. These principles will, I believe, be a major contribution to the understanding and appreciation of sustainable development in Ireland, and it is our expectation that they will provide a bench-marking tool for policy-makers.



A highlight of the year was Comhar's own review of its experience during its first two and a half years. The intention was to pass on the benefit of our experience and provide the new members forming the Partnership for the second term with some established practices and methods of working. A special session was held over two days to consider a range of issues including not only the work done, but also the manner and means through which Comhar carried out its business. Important points raised included a need for greater focus in the work programme to maximise Comhar's contribution and influence; additional supports for the members, who as volunteers contribute significantly from their time to Comhar; and the importance of raising the profile both of Comhar and of sustainable development. Arising from its discussions, Comhar made a number of recommendations to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government concerning

Comhar's membership and terms of reference. I welcome the Minister's positive response to these recommendations, and also his attendance at our October Plenary to discuss the issues further with us.

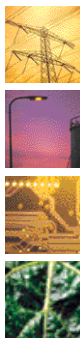
During the course of the year, we welcomed a number of new members to Comhar. Liz O'Brien, Gráinne O'Leary and Sadhbh O'Neill all left for new positions, and were replaced by Billy Murphy, Mary Conway and Ruth McGrath. The input of these new members, albeit at a relatively late stage in the three-year term, was a useful illustration of the benefits of Alternates - one of the recommendations which came out of Comhar's review.

I do, of course, acknowledge the input of all of Comhar's members during the year, and over the three-year term of office now completed. I have already said to the members, and would like to place on record here, how much I appreciate their commitment to

Comhar and the spirit of co-operation which was achieved - even when there were genuine, deeply-held differences between members. I further hope that our influence - while not as great as some would have liked - has been in a constructive direction and that we have established a platform in Comhar's initial term of office for future progress on this important agenda.

Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat staff - Maureen Doyle, Marie Hughes and Ida Connolly - for their contribution to Comhar, and also the staff of ENFO, where the secretariat is located, for their assistance.

John Bowanan



RÉAMHFHOCAL AN CHATHAOIRLIGH



Dr. John Bowman
Chathaoirligh

Sa tríú bliain dá chéad théarma in oifig, lean Comhar de bheith ag forbairt a chuid oibre i roinnt réimsí. Rinneadh moltaí agus tuarascálacha i rith na tréimhse sin ar cheithre phríomh-thopaic.

- Tuilleadh rannpháirtíochta in ullmhúchán na Straitéise Spásúla Náisiúnta, a lean de bheith ag saindiríú isteach go mór ar phleanáil ghrúpa oibre.

- Moltaí chuig an Aire Comhshaoil agus Rialtais Áitiúil ar Straitéis Náisiúnta ar Athrú Aeráide a chur trasna; rinne sé sin tógáil ar na pointí a ardaíodh i moltaí Chomhar, agus d'fhorbair iad, ar dhréacht luath na Straitéise i ndeireadh 1999.

- Tuarascáil chuig Comhairle an Domhain ar Mheasúnú Dhul chun Cinn na hÉireann ar Chlár 21. Bhí sin mar chuid de thionscadal arna chomhordú ag an gComhairle lena ullmhaigh Comhairlí Náisiúnta d'Forbairt Inbhuanaithe tuarascálacha comhchosúla mar chuid de na hullmhúcháin don Chruinniú

Mullaigh Domhanda ar Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe atá le tionól in Johannesburg in 2002.

- Tuairimí chuig an Roinn Comhshaoil agus Rialtais Áitiúil ar dhréachtRáiteas Beartas ar Chosc agus Athchúrsáil Dramháola.

Ba chuid thábhachtach den obair i rith na tréimhse sin, a thosaigh ag deireadh an dara bliain de Chomhar, ná forbairt agus comhaontú shraith Prionsabal d'Forbairt Inbhuanaithe. Táim buíoch do chomhaltaí Chomhar, agus go háirithe do sheisear comhaltaí an ghrúpa *ad hoc* a bunaíodh go speisialta chun na críche sin, as a n-obair as cuimse ar an tionscadal seo. Cuirfidh na prionsabail seo, creidim, go mór lenár dtuiscint agus ár meas ar fhorbairt inbhuanaithe in Éirinn, agus táimid ag súil go soláthróidh siad uirlis chóimheasa do dhéantóirí beartas.

Ar cheann de bhuaicpointí na bliana bhí athbhreithniú



Chomhar féin ar ar chleacht sé i rith a chéad dhá bhliain go leith. Is éard a bhí i gceist ná sochar ár dtaithe a thabhairt ar aghaidh agus roinnt cleachtas agus modhanna oibre sainbhunaithe a sholáthar do na comhaltaí nua a bheidh i gcomhdhéanamh na Comhpháirtíochta don dara téarma. Tionóladh seisiún speisialta thar dhá lá chun breithniú a dhéanamh ar raon saincheistanna, lena n-áirítear an obair atá déanta, ach ní shin amháin, ach an modh agus na meáin trína ndearna Comhar a ghnó. Ar na pointí tábhachta a ardaíodh áiríodh an gá atá le fócas níos mó sa chlár oibre chun rannpháirtíocht agus tionchar Chomhar a uasmhéadú; tacaíochtaí breise do na comhaltaí, mar shaorálaithe, a chaitheann cuid shuntasach dá gcuid ama le Comhar; agus an tábhacht le próifíl Chomhar agus na forbartha inbhuanaithe a ardú. Ag eascairt óna chomhráití, rinne Comhar roinnt moltaí don Aire Comhshaoil agus Rialtais Áitiúil maidir le comhaltacht agus téarmaí tagartha

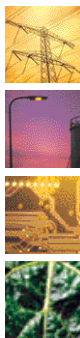
Chomhar. Fáiltím roimh fhreagra deimhneach an Aire ar na moltaí sin, agus chomh maith leis sin é a bheith i láthair ag ár gCruinniú lomlánach i mí Deiridh Fómhair chun níos mó plé a dhéanamh ar na ceisteanna sin linn.

In imeacht na bliana, d'fháiltíomar roimh roinnt comhaltaí nua chuig Comhar. D'fhág Liz O'Brien, Gráinne O'Leary agus Sadbh O'Neill i gcomhair post nua, agus tháinig Billy Murphy, Mary Conway agus Ruth McGrath ina n-áit. Ba léiriú úsáideach a bhí in ionchur na gcomhaltaí nua sin, cé go mba ag staid sách déanach sa téarma trí bliana é, ar shochair Mhalartuithe – ceann de na moltaí a tháinig as athbhreithniú Chomhar.

Tugaim aitheantas, ar ndóigh, d'ionchur gach comhalta de Chomhar i rith na bliana, agus thar an téarma trí bliana in oifig atá críochnaithe anois. Tá ráite cheana leis na comhaltaí agam, agus ba mhaith liom é a chur i gcuntas anseo, a mhéad meas atá agam ar a dtiomantas do

Chomhar agus ar spiorad an chomhoibrithe a baineadh amach – fiú nuair a bhí difríochtaí fíora, sách doimhne idir na comhaltaí. Tá súil agam freisin go ndeachaidh ár dtionchar – cé nach raibh sé chomh mór agus ba mhaith le roinnt daoine – i dtreo chuiditheach agus go bhfuil ardán bunaithe againn i dtéarma tosaigh oifige Chomhar do dhul chun cinn amach anseo ar an gclár oibre tábhachtach seo.

Ar deireadh ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghlacadh leis an bhfoireann rúnaíochta – Maureen Doyle, Marie Huges agus Ida Connolly – as an méid a chur siad le Comhar, agus chomh maith leis sin le foireann ENFO, ina bhfuil an rúnaíocht suite, as a gcabhair.



ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Comhar, the National Sustainable Development Partnership was established in 1999 as the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development, and to help increase participation and consultation on these matters. Its full terms of reference are set out in Appendix 1.

Comhar's 25 members are drawn from five pillars: the State sector, economic sectors, environmental NGOs, social/community NGOs and the professional/academic sector. The Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government is an *ex officio* member of Comhar, which is chaired by Dr. John Bowman. The full list of members is given in Appendix 2.

Comhar's mission statement, agreed by members in September 1999, states that it "seeks to work in partnership to encourage sustainable development across Irish

economy and society, and to advise Government on policies which support and promote sustainable development".

REPORT ON WORK

This annual report covers the period from March 2001 to February 2002, during which time Comhar continued its work in a number of areas, as outlined in this report.

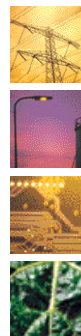
Four Plenary meetings were held during the course of the year. Comhar's Bureau met three times to assist the Chairman in the management of the Partnership; in addition, it was consulted by phone and email on a number of occasions. Developments in the four working groups, which were established in 1999 under the three-year work programme (see Appendix 3), are summarised below.

NATIONAL POLICY AND MECHANISMS GROUP

This group was set up to address issues of policy consultation and advice, together with means and

instruments to implement policy and ensure better integration of environmental and sustainability considerations in economic sectors.

During the period under review, the group followed up its earlier work on the National Climate Change Strategy, by preparing recommendations to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on the critical issue of communicating climate change. After discussion within the group, draft recommendations were sent forward to Comhar as a whole, with the intention that they would be considered at the March 2001 Plenary meeting. However, owing to the postponement of this meeting because of the "foot and mouth disease" outbreak, they were instead considered and approved through written procedures. The agreed proposals were sent to the Minister in early April 2001.



SPATIAL PLANNING GROUP

This group was established to examine a range of issues associated with spatial planning; a medium-term focus of its work is to contribute to the development of the proposed national spatial strategy.

During 2001 this group continued to focus on the National Spatial Strategy being prepared by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The group met regularly to prepare an Input to Stage 3 of the preparatory process, which involved the preparation of Policy Papers (the stage where the results of the research and data gathering would be integrated). The group also met with the Spatial Planning Unit on a number of occasions. In March 2001, the group's input to Stage 3 was submitted to the Department. Subsequently, the group considered the Public Consultation Paper "The National Spatial Strategy – Indications for the Way Ahead" which was published in

September 2001. A draft response prepared by the group was considered by Comhar at its Plenary meeting in October 2001. It was agreed to amend the proposed response in light of discussion at Plenary and the amended document was discussed at a meeting of the group with the Spatial Planning Unit in late October 2001.

WASTE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT GROUP

This group was established to focus on the higher elements of the waste hierarchy, and in particular on options for waste prevention, minimisation, re-use and recycling.

Early in the period under review, the group met with the Minister for Environment and Local Government to discuss a number of current waste management issues. The group also met with officials from the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources in October 2001 to discuss national policy on dredging and spoil management.

In late October 2001, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government asked Comhar to consider and comment on a draft Policy Statement on Preventing and Recycling Waste. Work on this began with a meeting of the working group and some other members with officials from the Department to facilitate Comhar's assessment of the draft document. Owing to the tight deadline, a draft response prepared arising from this work was circulated to all members of Comhar for adoption by written procedures and the final response was sent to the Department on 22 November 2001.

LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY, PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION GROUP

This group was established to address issues related to promoting local initiatives for sustainable development, and Local Agenda 21 in particular; to identify means of securing more effective participation across communities and the general public; and to consider



education and information on sustainable development.

In late 2001 and early 2002, this group developed and organised two regional seminars, on behalf of Comhar, on the theme of “Setting the Ground for Local Agenda 21 – 10 years on from Rio”. The purpose of the seminars was to provide a forum for all sectors and actors participating in the City/County Development Board process to examine progress under Local Agenda 21, and to identify strategies for its delivery, with particular relevance for City and County Development Boards and local development groups and agencies.

AD HOC GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Following initial discussions around issues of the definition and understanding of sustainable development in Ireland, Comhar had agreed in late 2000 to prepare a set of sustainable development principles. An *ad hoc* group was

established in early 2001 to take forward this work. The group held several meetings over the course of the year, and did substantial work on drafting the principles. Draft texts were considered, and guidance given, by Comhar in Plenary during the course of the year. Following general approval at the December 2001 Plenary, the group was mandated to complete its work and carry out final editing, taking account of points made at the Plenary. This work was finalised before the end of the term of office in February 2002.

WORK ITEMS CONCLUDED

During the period covered by this report, Comhar reached agreement on the following recommendations and reports:

1. CONTRIBUTION TO STAGE 3 OF THE NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

Addressed to: Department of the Environment and Local Government
Date: 23 March 2001

2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMUNICATING THE NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Addressed to: Minister for Environment and Local Government
Date: 5 April 2001

3. REPORT TO THE EARTH COUNCIL - ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON AGENDA 21

Addressed to: The Earth Council (copied to Minister for Environment and Local Government)
Date: 2 August 2001

4. COMMENTS ON DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON PREVENTING AND RECYCLING WASTE

Addressed to: Department of the Environment and Local Government
Date: 22 November 2001

A brief summary of each of these reports/recommendations is given below. The full text of each is available on Comhar’s website (www.comhar-nsdp.ie) or from the Secretariat.



1. CONTRIBUTION TO STAGE 3 OF THE NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

Comhar raised some key issues concerning proposed areas of research, and the integration into the proposed policy of the three aspects of sustainable development – environmental, economic and social. It noted that protecting resources while developing economic and social potential was a fundamental issue for a sustainable national spatial strategy. All resources in a region or an area, including social, cultural, ecological and physical resources, should be taken into account in the devising of a spatial policy framework. The integration of social, cultural and economic issues with environmental and quality of life factors must be considered.

The issue of one-off houses in rural areas for people who commute to work in the town or city needed to be addressed as part of a broader strategic framework which would look at positive incentives that

encourage settlement clusters based around existing villages and schools. The gateway concept could also be formulated as a cluster of towns rather than a single town. Relevant issues included intra-regional links, public transport services and accessible transport, social inclusion, socio-economic development, social/cultural cohesion and conservation.

Comhar raised a number of “cross boundary” issues, concerning the point at which the national strategy would be incorporated at the levels of regional planning, development plans and county strategies. Finally, Comhar noted that the strategy must be informed by an overarching understanding of sustainable development principles and practices, and that it would be essential to develop indicators to assess progress and conformity with sustainability principles.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMUNICATING THE NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

In its 1999 submission on the draft Climate Change Strategy, Comhar had identified communication of the Strategy, policies and implementation programmes as a critical success factor to bring about the necessary behavioural change. In response to a request from the Minister, Comhar elaborated on this point in specifically addressing the communication of the Strategy.

Comhar recommended that the communications strategy must:

- recognise the urgency of taking immediate action. Action must start early both to work towards the objectives of the Strategy and to show commitment at the highest level to actively addressing climate change;
- be sustained over a period of at least five years, aimed at the general public and with



the objective of raising awareness on climate change and the related causes and effects. It should include the true costs of climate change, including of inaction, and give feedback on actions and progress;

- have significant, dedicated resources, including major additional funding, assigned to it. To maximise effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, this should be co-ordinated and integrated with existing campaigns and funding mechanisms;
- be integrated with and exploit synergies with other relevant campaigns and activities; this might include co-ordination with any similar work being carried out in Northern Ireland. A full-time communications co-ordinator should be appointed, as part of the Climate Change Implementation Team and reporting at the highest level in the Department of the Environment and Local Government, with a specific

brief to ensure that the communications strategy is developed, disseminated, monitored and evaluated;

- involve all of the target sectors identified in the National Climate Change Strategy, and be designed to make the best use of the key actors and media available within each sector;
- involve central government and local authorities leading by example;
- recognise and incorporate the potential of key groups such as the media, NGOs and professional institutions in communicating climate change;
- integrate climate change messages throughout the education system, with a particular focus on the third-level sector; and
- tap innovative channels/media, such as theatrical productions and the Internet, to extend coverage of the message.

Comhar also made some suggestions for a specific communications programme, including points such as media launches and campaign slogans. Particular emphasis was placed on making the campaign relevant to people and integrating it with the provision not only of tailored information and practical advice, but also of the necessary facilities - such as public transport - to enable people to make the behavioural changes being sought. Recommendations were also made regarding the timing and presentation of the messages involved.

3. REPORT TO THE EARTH COUNCIL - ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON AGENDA 21

Comhar's report formed part of the National Councils for Sustainable Development Assessment of Progress on Agenda 21, being co-ordinated by the Earth Council as part of the global preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in 2002. The



report followed a specified framework, was restricted to 15 pages in length, and had to be completed before the end of August 2001. It therefore represented a summary overview of the situation at that time.

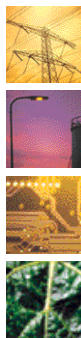
In its report, Comhar summarised the structure and aims of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, and diagnosed strengths and weaknesses in its implementation. It noted that while the focus of the Strategy on integrating environment into the various policy sectors was very important in giving a new priority to environment, its weakness was that the Strategy did not have many quantified objectives in the economic policy areas which undermine the environment. There was a need to reinforce the Strategy objectives and measures and ensure that they are more closely adhered to in the implementation of the National Development Plan.

Other weaknesses noted by Comhar included the fact that public perception of sustainable development was generally weak; this lack of understanding impacted both on political acceptance and the resources devoted to implementing Agenda 21. In addition, several of the Strategy measures, especially those relating to energy and transport, had been overtaken by the current economic boom and are now not seen to be strong enough to achieve progress towards sustainability. The lack of specific funding for sustainable development was a further weakness.

Comhar concluded that the National Sustainable Development Strategy needed review and updating, both in respect of some elements and measures and of implementation structures. Improved integration with other policies, particularly in relation to economic development, was needed; the Strategy objectives needed to be fully taken into account, and taken forward, in

all other policies and strategies, reflecting the breadth of sustainable development. Responsibility for implementation and monitoring needed to be clarified, and better co-ordination was required to ensure that the Strategy was effective and not countered by other policy developments, increased pressures on the environment or social inequalities. Structures for implementing the Strategy should be more strongly defined and supported.

Comhar's report addressed three national critical issues - energy, transport and biodiversity. The first two were key target sectors in the National Strategy, but measures taken had to some extent been overtaken by growing pressures in the sectors. The strong links with climate change, and the need for further and stronger action in these sectors, were noted. Transport links with planning policy, including the forthcoming National Spatial Strategy were also indicated. In



relation to biodiversity, the report noted the delays in bringing forward the National Biodiversity Plan, and the increasing pressures on the natural environment due to the economic boom.

Climate change was identified as an emerging critical issue, and the report gave details of the National Climate Change Strategy. It noted that a cross-departmental Climate Change Team had been established to ensure early implementation of the Strategy. While the Strategy was very comprehensive in its approach and had a convincing mechanism for implementation, the difficulties in reaching Ireland's targets under the Kyoto Protocol, emphasised in the OECD 2000 review of Ireland's environmental performance, were not to be underestimated.

Comhar recognised that participation and involvement were essential if a vision of sustainable development was to be widely shared, and that accordingly a broad contribution

to defining and elaborating this vision was needed. An increased focus on sustainability at local level would help to ensure greater involvement of all citizens, with emphasis on partnership between State agencies, sectors and communities. A challenge for society was for the disparate interest groups to play their part in sustainable development. The Ireland of the future would need a fundamental rebalance in production and consumption patterns together with a far broader understanding of the importance of cumulative individual actions. It would also need to be part of a global rebalancing of the economic system to ensure that development was within the limits set by nature.

4. COMMENTS ON DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON PREVENTING AND RECYCLING WASTE

Comhar felt that while the draft policy statement had many excellent aspects, it failed to fully address some important

issues and perhaps oversimplified others. It commented on a number of general issues, as well as in relation to specific chapters of the draft. Comhar also made some recommendations about presentation to strengthen the policy paper and make it more accessible. It noted that more emphasis should be given to awareness raising, with practical examples of how the message would be delivered. If the right slogan were chosen, it would be catchy and applicable to multiple situations. Such a campaign should have the aim of reinforcing the central message that waste policy is everybody's business.

Costs and financial issues needed to be better addressed. The role of fiscal instruments in waste prevention and minimisation should be dealt with at an early stage in the document; the provision of economic incentives for reducing waste should be included in each chapter as a key action by Government. Options which should be



explored included VAT rates, taxes on raw materials as opposed to use of recycled materials, tax reliefs and levies.

The general weakness in the area of infrastructure deserved more attention. While Comhar had not had sufficient time to debate the question of whether there should be a National Waste Authority, it noted that even if such a central authority were to be established, much would still remain to be done at local government level. Local elements are crucial for a properly-operating waste management system; the change in practices in relation to waste management must be “owned” by the local population through increased emphasis on civic and local pride.

Integration with other policy areas was a crucial point to be considered in the draft statement, with at least a commitment given to further exploring the various options. These might include rail transport of wastes (including recyclables), which could be

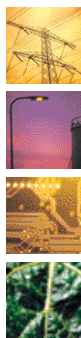
supported by planning policy; waste policy must also be integrated with the National Climate Change Strategy.

Comhar noted that waste could be a material resource, which could lead to jobs and other opportunities, and recommended that this concept should be used more from the early stages of the document. Re-use also needed to be better highlighted. Targets for prevention and minimisation should be set and brought to the fore, to give them more attention and focus. Comhar highlighted the importance of preventing and minimising waste, pointing out that the option of reducing waste by consuming less should be referred to. Noting that many simple steps could be taken in regard to waste minimisation, it felt that legislation and enforcement were needed to ensure the consumer has this kind of choice. More legislative support was also needed to promote re-use of waste; other supports could be provided by taxes on non-standard

containers to help address the proliferation of container types and over-complex designs, which minimise interchangeability and restrict the uses for returned containers; and more emphasis on “Design for Reuse”. While legislation might be difficult to draft, Comhar proposed a number of steps which could be taken to encourage its uptake. It also noted that re-use of unwanted goods could be stimulated by building “swap-shops” where people could leave items they no longer needed, while others could take what they wanted, free of charge.

Comhar noted that a major incentive for recycling would be the development of markets for recycled goods, and that one means of ensuring this would be to require, by legislation, recycled material to be used in products.

Comhar questioned the appropriateness of introducing a landfill levy at this particular juncture, given that the costs of disposal would rise



significantly, including for the domestic sector, thus providing a strong incentive to divert from landfill. If, however, it was a firm decision to impose a landfill levy, then a number of further considerations arose. The proposal for published rates of escalation was sound but the concept of a predetermined 'final level' served no useful purpose and might be a hostage to fortune. Similarly, it would be wise to publish indicative rates of escalation, leaving room for flexibility and perhaps for differential rates for different wastes or localities. A more flexible remit in relation to use of the levy might help relieve some of the current difficulties with the acceptance of infrastructure.

PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

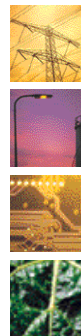
As already noted, work on Comhar's principles for sustainable development was largely taken forward by an *ad hoc* group established for this purpose. Their work was

completed, and approved by Comhar in Plenary, during the period under review, leaving minor editing and preparation for printing to be carried out thereafter.

Comhar's intention in developing the principles for sustainable development was that they could be used to determine whether policies, existing or future, are likely to lead to sustainable development - in other words, that the principles could be used as a benchmark for policies. The approach adopted was based around a framework which, rather than defining the concept rigidly, sought to identify a number of dimensions of sustainable development. These are expressed as themes, which in turn yield principles. The separation of themes is somewhat arbitrary because by definition, principles are inter-dependent. An important point was that an *a la carte* approach to the principles was not appropriate: all must be pursued, and in tandem.

Each principle is discussed in terms of significance, meaning and justification, and its relevance in the Irish context is further elaborated. The themes take account of the traditional economic/social pillars of sustainability but at the same time recognise that the concept is above all about integration. Hence the environment is treated as an integral part of economic development and a part of the socio-cultural sphere rather than as a separate dimension. The framework includes citizen participation as a key dimension in moving towards sustainability.

The following table sets out the themes and principles agreed by Comhar:



THEMES	PRINCIPLES
<p>Satisfaction of human needs by the efficient use of resources</p>	<p><i>the use of non-renewable resources should be minimised</i></p> <p><i>Use of hazardous/polluting substances and wastes created should be minimised; waste management should be environmentally sound</i></p>
<p>Equity between generations</p>	<p><i>Renewable resources should be used within the capacity for regeneration</i></p> <p><i>The quality of soils and water resources should be maintained and improved</i></p>
<p>Respect for ecological integrity and biodiversity</p>	<p><i>The diversity of wildlife, habitats and species should be maintained and improved</i></p>
<p>Equity between countries and regions</p>	<p><i>Air and atmosphere should be protected and human-induced effects on climate minimised</i></p>
<p>Social equity</p>	<p><i>Social inclusion should be promoted to ensure an improved quality of life for all</i></p> <p><i>Sustainable development depends on co-operation and agreement between states</i></p>
<p>Respect for cultural heritage/diversity</p>	<p><i>The quality of landscapes, the heritage of the man-made environment and historic and cultural resources should be maintained and improved</i></p>
<p>Good decision-making</p>	<p><i>Decision-making should be devolved to the appropriate level</i></p> <p><i>Stakeholder participation should be promoted at all levels of decision-making</i></p>



COMHAR'S REVIEW OF EXPERIENCE

In the interests of improving the Partnership and maximising the value of its contributions, Comhar felt it would be useful to review the experience of its first period of operation. It therefore held a special meeting over two half-days in September 2001 to review performance and consider future directions. This meeting, which was attended by all available members, focused on areas where Comhar had performed well, and on how any deficiencies could be overcome. Aspects considered included the work programme, working groups, Comhar's structure and terms of reference, as well as available supports such as funding and staffing.

Arising from the review, a number of recommendations were made to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, with particular reference to the terms of reference and membership, and he was asked to take these into consideration in

considering appointments to Comhar for its second term of office. In particular, the Minister was asked to facilitate continuity in Comhar's work by providing a means for the re-appointment of some members, and to provide other supports for members including the designation of official Alternates.

The Minister was subsequently invited to attend Comhar's Plenary in October 2001, at which these recommendations were discussed with him. The Minister expressed a willingness to take Comhar's views on board in preparing for the second term of office, and promised to bear in mind proposals relating to additional funding.

At the same Plenary, Comhar undertook to give further thought to internal issues raised in the review, including the need for a more focused work programme and working groups. It was felt that it would be very important for new members coming into Comhar in 2002 to have the benefit of

the experience gained during the first term of office.

COMHAR'S REGIONAL SEMINARS - SLIGO NOVEMBER 2001 AND THURLES FEBRUARY 2002

In late 2001 and early 2002, Comhar organised two regional seminars on the theme of "Setting the Ground for Local Agenda 21 - 10 years on from Rio". The rationale for the seminars derived from the realisation that the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in Ireland was very much behind its original target date of 1996 (as agreed at Rio in 1992), and indeed behind the subsequent target of 1998 set in the National Sustainable Development Strategy in 1997. While there had been a number of worthy Local Agenda 21 type initiatives, no comprehensive Local Agenda 21 plan had yet been drawn up by any local authority.

The timing of the seminars related to the fact that the structures necessary for Local Agenda 21 were now being



established, and all City and County Development Boards (CDBs) were engaged in preparing ten-year local development strategies. The fact that these ten-year strategies would commence in 2002 - ten years after Rio - made it particularly apt to link the two. The seminars were also timely in light of the publication in early October 2001, by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, of revised Guidelines on Local Agenda 21, "Towards Sustainable Communities".

The seminars were intended to provide a forum for all sectors and actors participating in the CDB process to examine progress under Local Agenda 21, ten years after it first arose, and to identify strategies for its delivery. To give some local and regional focus to the debate, Comhar decided to hold two seminars, one each in the Border Midlands and Western Region and the Southern and Eastern Region. Following some debate over whether a week-day or weekend



Left - Right: Ms. Maire Ni Chionna, Ms. Jennifer Wann, Mr. Billy Murphy (members of Comhar), Dr. Ger Mullaly (speaker), Mr. Gino Van Begin (speaker), Dr. John Bartlett (Institute of Technology, Sligo), Dr. Ann Clune, Mr. Sean Regan, Ms. Bernie Walsh (members of Comhar).

would be more suitable to attract the intended audience, it was decided to try both options over the two seminars.

The first seminar was held in the Institute of Technology, Sligo, on Saturday 10 November 2001. It was attended by nearly 50 people. Guest speakers were Mr. Gino van Begin, Deputy European Director of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), who spoke about *Local Agenda 21 in Europe*, and Dr. Gerard Mullally of University College Cork, who spoke on *Local Agenda 21: An*

Irish Perspective. After lunch, two parallel workshops were held on the themes of Politics of Participation, and Local Economic Development.

The second seminar was held in the Anner Hotel, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, on Thursday 21 February 2002. It was chaired by Dr. John Bowman, Chairman of Comhar, and was attended by over 120 people. While this was significantly higher than at the first seminar, it is unclear whether this indicated a preference for a week-day timing, or was related to other factors such as longer advance notice or interest generated by



the holding of the previous seminar. The speakers at this seminar were Mr. Chris Church, Sustainable Development Advisor, Community Development Foundation UK, who spoke about the experience of Local Agenda 21 in the UK, and Dr. Gerard Mullally, who gave the same presentation as in Sligo. In the afternoon session, parallel workshops were held on the themes of Making Participation Work and Local Economic Development.

A report of the seminars, including the presentations made and reports from the workshops, is available from the Secretariat, and is also on the website (www.comhar-nsdp.ie).

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

During his visit to Dublin in January 2002, Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) met with three members of Comhar's Bureau (Ms. Geraldine Tallon, Ms. Jeanne Meldon and Dr. Mary Kelly), and the Director of ENFO (Mr. Brendan Linehan) to



Tadhg Leonard and Oliver Kiernan from Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon with their teacher Ms. Marie Donnelly.

discuss sustainable development partnerships and a possible role for Comhar/ENFO as the UNEP National Committee for Ireland. While it was agreed that further consideration could be given to this matter on receipt of additional information from UNEP, the imminent end of Comhar's current term of office meant that it would fall to the new members to take a decision on the matter.

CONFERENCES ATTENDED BY MEMBERS

Comhar was represented at two international conferences during the period under report:

- the European Conference for Sustainable Development in the Urban Environment, held in Barcelona on 2/3 May 2001, and
- the seminar, A Vision for Our Common Future- UK's Contribution to Earth Summit 2002, organised by the UNED UK Committee in London on 22 January 2002.

In addition, members of Comhar attended a number of seminars and conferences in Ireland during the year:

- the "Green and Bear It" conference, organised by the ESRI on 10 May 2001;



- a workshop on the Management of Construction and Demolition Waste in Ireland, held by the EPA on 10 May 2001;
- the seminar “Improving Your Business through the Environment” organised by Enterprise Ireland on 30 May 2001;
- the conference “Achievement and Challenge Rio+10 and Ireland” held in University College Dublin during the week of 10-14 September 2001. Comhar’s Chairman, Dr. John Bowman, also presented a paper at the conference on the topic, “Sustainable development: oxymoron, empty promise, or political necessity for this millennium?”;
- the Rural Resource Development Ltd. Conference, “Our Society in the New Millennium – Is the Future My Responsibility” on 7/9 November 2001;
- the seminar “Wealth, Power, Inequality. Challenges for Community Work in a New Era” organised by the Community Workers Co-



Dr. John Bowman, Chairman of Comhar, with Tadhg Leonard and Oliver Kiernan from Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon after winning they won the Comhar award in the Young Scientists and Technology Exhibition.

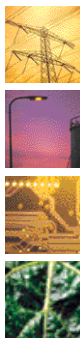
operative on 10/11
December 2001;

- the Schumacher Ireland conference, “Ensuring a Sustainable Future for Urban Environments”, on 12 December 2001;
- “Globalisation, Implications for the Developed and Developing World” organised by the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland on 23 February 2002.

YOUNG SCIENTISTS AND TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION

Comhar sponsors a number of special awards in the Young

Scientists and Technology Exhibition each year, for projects which best demonstrate sustainable development. This sponsorship, which began in January 2000, is intended both to raise awareness of Comhar and its mandate, and also to encourage greater interest and involvement by young students in sustainable development issues. The award winners in the 2002 Exhibition were Tadhg Leonard and Oliver Kiernan of Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, for their project “Rubbish”.



APPENDIX 1

COMHAR'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

(1) The Terms of Reference of the National Sustainable Development Partnership are to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, to evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards.

The Partnership will:

(A) Have a specific focus on:

- Consideration of policy proposals and issues relating to the environment and sustainable development, and advice to Government on them;
- Researching and making recommendations, tailored to national conditions, on specific approaches to, or instruments for, environmental management and protection,

employment creation in the environmental sector, environmental performance in economic sectors;

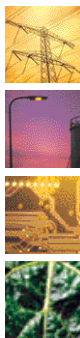
- Reviewing the implementation in Ireland of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements, and contributing to annual national reports to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development;
- Reviewing/responding to national data on environmental quality trends;
- Recommending mechanisms for greater integration of environmental and sustainable development considerations into the development and implementation of all Government policies;
- Promoting information exchange, dialogue and consultation on environmental policy and sustainable development among the social

partners and non-governmental organisations;

- Advising on means of raising public awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues, and encouraging positive behaviour at individual, community and sectoral levels.
- (B) Examine and make recommendations on other issues related to environment and sustainable development.
- (C) Review and monitor the implementation of the Partnership's recommendations and if necessary make further recommendations; and
- (D) Examine and report on relevant matters referred to it by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government or any other Minister.



- (2) The Partnership may consider sustainable development issues on its own initiative or at the request of a Minister of the Government.
- (3) The Partnership will work in three year cycles and will inform Government, through the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, of its programme of work within three months of the beginning of each cycle.
- (4) In drawing up its work programme, the Partnership will take account of the role and functions of other bodies in areas related to sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) such as the NESG, the NESF, the EPA and the Heritage Council to ensure complementarity.
- (5) The Partnership may be invited/designated by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government to attend relevant international
- for a, including the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- (6) The Partnership may invite Ministers, Public Officials, Members of the Partnership, and outside experts to make presentations and to assist the Partnership in its work. It may also constitute appropriate subsidiary, consultative fora to assist in its work.
- (7) The Partnership will publish and submit all its reports (which shall include annual reports on progress) to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, who shall bring them to Government; to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government; and to such Government Departments and bodies as may be appropriate.
- (8) The Partnership will be drawn from five broad pillars:
- State/public sector;
 - economic sectors;
 - environmental NGOs;
 - social/community NGOs;
 - professional/academic sector.
- (9) Bodies designated by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government under these five pillars shall nominate candidates for the Partnership, and the Minister shall appoint no less than three of the nominees from each pillar to the Partnership.
- (10) The Partnership will have an independent Chairperson appointed by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government. The Chairperson's term of office shall be five years, and may be extended by the Minister.
- (11) The term of office of members will be three years during which term members may nominate alternates. Casual



vacancies will be filled by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government from among the original nominees within the relevant pillar and members so appointed shall hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. The size of the membership may be varied by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on the approval of the Government.

estimate for the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

(12) The Chairperson of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government shall be an ex-officio member of the Partnership.

(13) The Partnership is under the aegis of the Department of the Environment and Local Government and is funded through a Grant from that Department. This Grant is part of the overall



APPENDIX 2

MEMBERSHIP OF COMHAR

Chairman

Dr. John Bowman

Ex-officio member

Mr. Jackie Healy-Rae, Chairman, Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government

PILLAR 1

Name	Representing
Mr. Declan Burns	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr. Paddy Fitzmaurice	Central Fisheries Board
Mr. Joe Gavin	County & City Managers' Association
Mr. Joe O'Gorman	Irish Assembly of Regional Authorities
Ms. Geraldine Tallon	Department of the Environment & Local Government/Green Network of Government Departments

PILLAR 2

Name	Representing
Mr. Des Cummins	Small Firms Association
Mr. Jim Devlin	Irish Farmers' Association
Dr. Mary Kelly	Irish Business & Employers' Confederation
Mr. Brendan Leahy	Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
Mr. Terence O'Donnell	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers'
Mr. Fergus Whelan	Irish Congress of Trade Unions



PILLAR 3

Name	Representing
Ms. Karin Dubsky	Irish Coalition for Sustainability/NIEDO, Earthwatch, Coastwatch, Global Action Plan, Irish Wildlife Trust, VOICE, Birdwatch Ireland
Mr. Philip Geoghegan	An Taisce
Ms. Jeanne Meldon	Irish Uplands Forum
Ms. Gráinne O'Leary	ECO (The Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth)
Ms. Sadhbh O'Neill	Irish Coalition for Sustainability/NIEDO, Earthwatch, Coastwatch, Global Action Plan, Irish Wildlife Trust, VOICE, Birdwatch Ireland
Ms. Jennifer Wann	Irish Women's Environmental Network

PILLAR 4

Name	Representing
Dr. Anne Clune	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms. Josephine Henry	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ms. Liz O'Brien	PLANET (Partnerships for Local Action Network)
Mr. Seán Regan	Community Platform, CORI, National Association of Tenants' Organisations, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Community Workers' Co-operative, ACRA
Ms. Bernie Walsh	Community Platform, CORI, National Association of Tenants' Organisations, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Community Workers' Co-operative, ACRA

PILLAR 5

Name	Representing
Mr. T. Kieran Kennedy	Royal Town Planning Institute
Dr. Richard Moles	Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland, Universities Research Group on the Environment
Ms. Máire Ní Chionna	Institution of Engineers of Ireland



APPENDIX 3

WORK PROGRAMME, 1999-2002

INTRODUCTION

Comhar, the National Sustainable Development Partnership, was formally established on 26 February 1999. Its terms of reference are, in brief, to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, to evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards.

These terms of reference provide a very broad scope for Comhar's work programme. Within them, Comhar has an independent brief to design its own agenda. It may also be asked by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters.

In defining its work programme, Comhar considers that the

following criteria are particularly relevant:

- adding value to existing work;
- assessing the policy relevance of issues, with a view to positioning itself at the developmental end of policy;
- avoiding duplication of work being carried out by other bodies; and
- using its unique nature and the strength of its broad representation to come to informed and balanced perspectives and recommendations.

Under its terms of reference, Comhar will work in three-year cycles. This work programme accordingly outlines, in broad terms, the main areas in which Comhar will concentrate its contributions over the period from 1999 to 2002. While seeking to be reasonably comprehensive in this regard, Comhar recognises the need for more focused definition in respect of the broader topics.

Members also consider it important to retain a degree of flexibility in the work programme, to allow for adjustment, if necessary, in the light of experience or to take account of new issues arising over the three-year period. In delivering on its work programme, Comhar will give careful consideration to the most appropriate vehicles to disseminate its message. In this regard, its work and products may take a number of forms, as appropriate to particular issues, including:

- advice to Ministers, to specific sectors, or to the general public;
- opinions on critical issues in relation to the environment and sustainable development;
- recommendations on policy development;
- research and preparation of reports; and
- sponsorships or other means to raise awareness.



Comhar will publish all its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media. It will also submit its reports to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, for appropriate referral to Government, to the Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government, and to relevant Government Departments and other bodies.

MAJOR WORK AREAS

Comhar has identified four major work areas, comprising clusters of related issues as set out below, as requiring examination in its initial work programme. Working groups are now being established to begin the task of addressing these major areas. A first step for the groups will be to develop more detailed terms of reference in each area, to define and guide the work and establish more specific timetables and targets for each issue. The groups will also consider, inter alia, what sustainability means for the

various issues, and the sectors or groups which they wish to address.

NATIONAL POLICY AND MECHANISMS/INSTRUMENTS

Comhar's remit concerns not only policy consultation and advice, but also means and instruments which may be used to implement policy and in particular to ensure better integration of environmental and sustainability considerations in economic sectors. Initially, Comhar will offer advice on the sustainable development profile of the new National Development Plan. In relation to mechanisms and instruments to promote and pursue sustainability, options which may be examined by Comhar over the period of the work programme include:

- environmental management;
- eco-labelling;
- environmental taxation;
- voluntary agreements;

- regulation;
- sustainability proofing/eco-auditing of policies;
- green procurement;
- indicators; and
- effective communication strategies.

SPATIAL PLANNING

Comhar recognises that spatial planning is critically related to the pursuit of sustainable development, and has decided to establish a working group to examine a range of associated issues. These may include, for example, sustainable settlements, planning and land use, agriculture and rural development, and coastal zone management. The ESRI, in its report to Government on "National Investment Priorities for the Period 2000-2006" (March 1999) recommended the preparation of a long-term strategic physical planning framework for Ireland, incorporating a settlement strategy and an assessment of



development needs in the future. The Government has decided in principle to develop a national spatial planning policy. It is anticipated that contributing to the development of this policy will be a medium-term focus for Comhar.

WASTE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Comhar recognises that modernising waste performance is a key national policy objective. This is a very broad area, and research, recommendations or other inputs by Comhar will be informed by the waste hierarchy, prioritising prevention, minimisation, reuse and recycling and options for disposal. Comhar is aware that substantial work is underway by local authorities to complete the preparation and formal adoption of Waste Management Plans under the Waste Management Act, 1996. It has identified a need for focus on the higher elements of the hierarchy, and in particular on options for waste prevention, minimisation, reuse and

recycling, but may also address options for waste disposal. There is a particular need for education and awareness raising in these regards. Comhar also considers that case studies and best practice models, which may illustrate principles or problems and help to promote more sustainable performance, should be developed.

LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY/ PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION

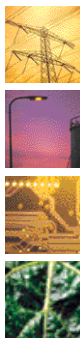
Sustainable development considerations are relevant at all levels of government and society, and must also involve communities and individuals. Guidance on the pursuit of sustainable development within reformed Local Government structures, issues relating to Local Agenda 21 and other forms of community action for sustainability will be encompassed by this working group. Comhar recognises the importance of broad public participation and involvement in these regards, and will address means of securing more

effective participation across communities and the general public. Identifying and disseminating models of good practice may be a focus of work in this regard. Education and information on sustainable development will also be addressed within the remit of this group.

ONGOING WORK

Comhar recognises that a number of ongoing and recurring issues arise from its terms of reference, including

- monitoring overall progress under the National Sustainable Development Strategy, and progress towards sustainable development in general (having regard to the remit of other bodies working in this area, notably the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development of the Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Local Government);
- reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other



Rio agreements; and

- generally reviewing relevant policy proposals and developments as they arise.

Comhar will maintain an overview of these issues, and make appropriate provision to address these tasks on an ongoing basis, using a variety of suitable means.

AWARENESS RAISING

To some extent, Comhar's mandate in relation to general awareness raising will be met in the course of delivering on its key objectives. In publishing its conclusions, opinions, reports, and recommendations, for example, Comhar will

- raise awareness of environment and sustainable development issues in general;
- reinforce the value of pursuing sustainable development policies and provide influential and representative guidance for economic sectors and the

general public; and

- seek to build consensus around best practice models for better environmental and sustainable development performance.

Comhar will undertake specific awareness-raising actions from time to time as part of its work programme. In this regard, Comhar has decided in principle to provide some sponsorship in areas where this could highlight sustainable development concerns and draw attention to its agenda and implementation.

OTHER ISSUES

Alongside major work areas, individual members also have the option of proposing/developing initiatives on particular areas of interest, which will then be submitted to the wider membership for consideration. Such initiatives could facilitate Comhar input to a range of issues, some of which may require short-term attention, or may subsequently be further developed within the work programme.

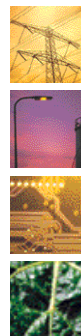
AREAS WHICH THE MINISTER ASKED COMHAR TO EXAMINE

The Minister for the Environment and Local Government asked Comhar to consider three issues in preparing its work programme:

- how best to influence behaviour across the economy and society to support Ireland's international commitments on climate change, including limiting growth in greenhouse gas emissions;
- to inform Ireland's input to this year's Community-wide assessment of EU environment and sustainable development policy; and
- to identify and develop good practice models and instruments which will promote environmentally sustainable behaviour.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change abatement policies will have a continuing relevance across Comhar's



work programme, impacting on and influencing a broad range of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. Climate change will therefore be taken into account across the work programme and by all the working groups already referred to. A National Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy is currently being prepared, with a view to meeting Ireland's commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Comhar will now give consideration to appropriate advice and recommendations on economic and social behaviour in support of progressive action to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

REVIEW OF EU POLICY ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Comhar notes the importance of the current review of EU policy on the environment and sustainable development, which is due to be completed by the end of 1999 and to lead to a new policy programme for the period 2000-2005. It notes that the European Commission

is preparing a communication for Council, containing a global assessment of performance under the Fifth Environment Action Programme, by summer 1999. Comhar will encourage public and stakeholder consultation on the new communication during autumn 1999, as well as making its own contribution to the debate.

GOOD PRACTICE MODELS AND INSTRUMENTS TO INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

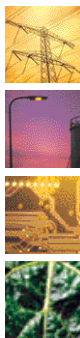
Work in these regards will be substantially addressed by the working groups already referred to. In relation to models of good practice, Comhar recognises the value of identifying and disseminating such examples to encourage practical action for sustainability. Given that good practice models may be found across a range of issues and sectors, it is intended to pursue this throughout the work programme, including the areas of local sustainability, waste prevention and management, and sustainable planning/land use issues.

CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND REVIEW

Comhar's input to the current review of EU policy on the environment and sustainable development has already been referred to above.

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL REPORTS TO THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is tasked by the UN with furthering and monitoring the global implementation of Agenda 21. As part of its work, specific topics are designated for review at each of its annual meetings. The over-arching issues for the period to 2002 are poverty and sustainable consumption and production. Sectoral and cross-sectoral themes to be examined in 2000 are integrated planning and management of land resources; financial resources/trade and investment/economic growth; and agriculture. In 2001, the themes will be atmosphere; energy; transport; and



information for decision-making and participation.

National reports are prepared annually, on the basis of questionnaires issued by the CSD, and are submitted in late autumn for the following year's meeting. The Department of the Environment and Local Government will provide draft reports to Comhar in good time, seeking its opinions/recommendations on the content

OECD ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF IRELAND

The Environment Directorate of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) implements a programme of environmental performance reviews, whereby member countries submit themselves for peer review of their environmental policies and performance. A commitment was given in the National Sustainable Development Strategy (1997) that Ireland would seek review under this programme.

The review will be carried out during 1999, with a preliminary visit during the summer, and the main review in the autumn. Comhar welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this major review, and to work with and advise the OECD as appropriate.

REVIEW

This three-year work programme will be reviewed at the end of 1999, which is an introductory year. Comhar has established a Bureau, whose tasks include monitoring and guiding the overall work programme between Plenary sessions.

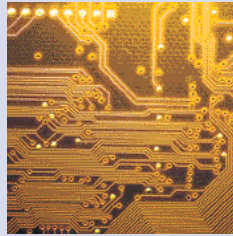
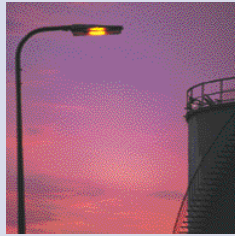
ANNUAL REPORT

Comhar is required to report annually on its progress and activities. Its work will therefore include the preparation and publication of an annual report, which will, inter alia, include an update on the work programme.



COMHAR

THE NATIONAL
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP



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