

2003

Annual Report
Tuarascáil Bhliaintiúil

COMHAR

THE NATIONAL
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP



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Chairman's Foreword

During the first year of its second term, *Comhar* has maintained its focus in

advancing the national agenda for sustainable development. The new membership was appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in May 2002 and quickly got to work. A new work programme, for the period 2002-2005, was agreed by *Comhar* at its plenary meeting in December 2002. *Comhar* has identified a number of broad areas of interest and it has established working groups to consider and make recommendations on these issues:

- Climate change
- Spatial planning/housing
- Waste prevention and recovery
- Awareness and education
- International issues

During its second term, *Comhar* will engage the European as well as national policy agendas and will draw on its broad representation to come to informed and balanced perspectives and recommendations.

Key outputs during the last year include:

- publication of *Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development*;
- publication of *A Living Island*, by Michael Viney, a *Comhar* pamphlet on Ireland's responsibility to nature;
- comments on the draft national report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- an analysis of the key priorities for the review and intensification of the measures in the National Climate Change Strategy; and
- recommendations on use of economic instruments in the area of waste prevention and waste recovery.

Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development provide the overall guiding philosophy for much of the work now underway. For example, the Principles have been taken as the starting point in developing a set of recommendations for "principles for sustainable settlement". Also, a practical version of the Principles is being developed for use in schools.

There is a significant challenge facing us to communicate sustainable development to the general public in a more meaningful and accessible way. This is necessary if we are to see behaviour and lifestyle changes consistent with sustainable development.

Comhar is committed to building a higher national profile for sustainable development. I am particularly pleased with the publication of the first *Comhar* pamphlet – *A Living Island*. I am delighted that a writer as distinguished and highly regarded as Michael Viney is our first author in this series. I look forward to further *Comhar* pamphlets that will stimulate and inform debate on sustainable development.

During its second term *Comhar* is continuing to undertake outreach and awareness-raising activities that involve key sectors and the general public. I believe that strategic partnerships and co-financing with other organisations are an efficient way of promoting key messages on sustainability. Examples of such initiatives over the last year include:

- part sponsorship of a conference on Ireland's Transition to Renewable Energy on 31st October, 1st and 2nd November 2002, organised by Feasta in conjunction with Sustainable Energy Ireland and the Tipperary Institute;
- sponsorship of three events in Sustainable Ireland's Convergence Festival held in Temple Bar in May 2003; and
- continued sponsorship for special awards, which best demonstrate sustainable development, in the Young Scientists and Technology Exhibition.

On the international front, *Comhar* was represented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The *Comhar* members who attended the Summit reported that their participation had been positive and enriching and gave a wide perspective on the challenges that lie ahead for sustainability on a global scale.

Over the last year, *Comhar* has also been strengthening links with the European Environment Advisory Councils network and, through it, building relationships with other National Sustainable Development Councils operating elsewhere in Europe. *Comhar* is also engaging with UNEP and working with ENFO to promote an awareness of UNEP activities. I am grateful to my fellow members of *Comhar* for their commitment and contribution to the work of *Comhar* during the year. I hope that we can continue to bring added value and exert a positive influence on the future progress of this important agenda.

Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat staff – Noel Casserly, 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 Bowman



Focal ón gCathaoirleach

Sa chéad bhliain den dara téarma lean *Comhar* air ag díriú ar chur chun cinn

an chláir náisiúnta don fhorbairt inbhuanaithe. Cheap an tAire Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil an bhallaíocht nua i mí na Bealtaine, 2002 agus leagadar ar an obair go tapa. D'aontaigh *Comhar* ar chlár nua oibre don tréimhse 2002 – 2005 ag a lánchruinniú i mí na Nollag 2002. Tá *Comhar* tar éis raon leathan d'ábhair spéise a aimsiú agus tá grúpaí oibre bunaithe aige chun na hábhair seo a mheas agus moltaí a dhéanamh ina leith:

- Athrú Aeráide
- Pleanáil spásúil/Tithíocht
- Cosc ar Dhramhaíl agus Athshlánú
- Feasacht agus Oideachas
- Ceisteanna Idirnáisiúnta

Sa dara téarma dó déileálfaidh *Comhar* le cláir na bpolasaithe Eorpacha i dteannta le cláir náisiúnta agus bainfidh sé úsáid as an rannpháirtíocht leathan atá aige chun teacht ar thuairimíocht fheasach chothrom agus ar mholtaí.

San áireamh i bpríomhoibreacha na bliana seo caite tá:

Prionsabail don Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe foilsithe ag *Comhar*; *Oileán Beo*, foilseachán le Michael Viney, paimfléad le *Comhar* ar fhreagracht na hÉireann i leith an nádúir; Tuairimíocht ar an dréacht-thuarascáil náisiúnta don Chruinniú Mullaigh ar Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe; Anailís ar na príomhthosaíochtaí don athbhreithniú agus do neartú na mbeartas atá sa Straitéis Náisiúnta um Athrú Aeráide; agus Moltaí ar úsáid ionstraimí geilleagracha maidir le cosc ar dhramhaíl agus maidir le hathshlánú dramhaíola.

Tá roinnt mhaith den obair atá idir lámha anois bunaithe ar an bhfealsúnacht atá sa treoir ghinearálta atá sna *Prionsabail don Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe* atá ag *Comhar*. Tá úsáid á mbaint as na Prionsabail, mar shampla, mar thúsphointe i bhforbairt sraith de mholtaí i gcomhair “prionsabail don lonnaíocht inbhuanaithe”. Tá leagan praiticiúil de na Prionsabail á fhorbairt freisin lena úsáid i scoileanna.

Tá dúshlán mór romhainn ceist seo na forbartha inbhuanaithe a chur faoi bhráid an phobail i gcoitinne ar bhealach ina mbeidh sé níos éasca ciall a bhaint aisti agus eolas a fháil fúithi. Ní mór seo a dhéanamh má tá fúinn athrú a fheiceáil i nósanna iompair agus saoil a bheadh ag teacht leis an bhforbairt inbhuanaithe.

Tá *Comhar* tiomanta d'ardán níos airde a thabhairt d'fhorbairt inbhuanaithe go náisiúnta. Tá an-ríméad orm faoi – *Oileán Beo* – an chéad phaimfléad dar fhoilsigh *Comhar*. Cuireann sé áthas orm gur scríbhneoir chomh cáiliúil agus chomh haitheanta le Michael Viney a chuir tús leis an tsraith seo. Tá mé ag tnúth le paimfléid eile ó *Chomhar* a spreagfaidh agus a chuirfidh leis an díospóireacht ar fhorbairt inbhuanaithe.

Sa dara téarma tá *Comhar* ag leanacht ar aghaidh le gníomhaíochtaí for-rochtana agus spreagadh feasachta a thógáil orthu féin agus ina mbeidh príomhearnála agus an pobal go ginearálta rannpháirteach. Creidim gur bealach éifeachtach chun príomhtheachtaireachtaí ar inbhuanaitheacht a chothú is ea páirtíochtaí straitéiseacha agus cómhaoiniú le heagraíochtaí eile. Samplaí de thionscnaimh na bliana seo caite is ea:

- páirt-urraíocht ar chomhdháil ar an Athrú chuig In-Athnuachan Fuinnimh in Éirinn, 31 Deireadh Fómhair, 1 agus 2 Samhain 2002 a bhí eagraithe ag Feasta i gcomhpháirt le Forbairt Inbhuanaithe Éireann agus Institiúid Thiobraid Árann;
- urraíocht ar thrí imeacht ag Féile Choinbhéirseachta Inbhuanaitheachta Éireann a tionóladh i mBarra an Teampaill i mí na Bealtaine 2003; agus
- urraíocht leanúnach ar na gradaim ar leith siúd is fearr a léiríonn forbairt inbhuanaithe ag Taispeántas na nEolaithe Óga agus na Teicneolaíochta.

Ó thaobh chúrsaí domhanda de rinneadh ionadaíocht ar *Chomhar* ag an gCruinniú Mullaigh Domhanda ar Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe i Johannesburg sa bhliain 2002. Thuairiscigh baill Chomhair a bhí i láthair ag an gCruinniú Mullaigh go raibh toradh deimhneach sásúil ar a rannpháirtíocht agus gur tugadh léiriú leathan ar na dúshláin atá roimh an fhorbairt inbhuanaithe ar scála domhanda.

I gcaitheamh na bliana seo caite freisin bhí *Comhar* ag neartú an cheangail idir é agus gréasán Chomhairlí Comhairleacha Comhshaoil na hEorpa agus tríd sin ag déanamh ceangail chumarsáide le Comhairlí Náisiúnta Forbartha Inbhuanaithe eile atá ag feidhmiú ar fud na hEorpa. Tá *Comhar* i dteagmháil le hUNEP agus ag obair le hENFO chun aird a tharraingt ar ghníomhaíochtaí UNEP. Tá mé buíoch do mo chomhbhaill i *gComhar* as an díograis agus an dúthracht a chaith siad le hobair *Chomhair* i gcaitheamh na bliana. Tá súil agam go mbeidh ar ár gcumas leanacht ar aghaidh ag cur leis an obair agus tionchar deimhneach a bheith againn ar dhul chun cinn an chláir seo, clár atá chomh tábhachtach sin, sa todhchaí.

Ar deireadh, ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil an bhfoireann rúnaíochta, – Noel Casserly, Marie Hughes agus Ida Connolly – as a gcuid oibre i *gComhar*, agus freisin le foireann ENFO, mar a bhfuil an rúnaíocht lonnaithe, as a gcabhair agus a gcúnamh.



John Bowman

1. 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. Its terms of reference are, in brief, to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, 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 full terms of reference are set out in Appendix 1.

Comhar works in three-year cycles and began its second term on 21 May 2002. *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, Heritage and Local Government is an ex officio member. *Comhar* is chaired by Dr. John Bowman. The full list of members appointed in May 2002 is given in Appendix 2.

A new *Comhar* Bureau was set up to assist the Chairman in managing *Comhar's* business. The Bureau consists of five members, one from each of *Comhar's* pillars. The members appointed in 2002 were Ms Geraldine Tallon, Mr. Ruaidhri Deasy, Mr. David Healy, Ms. Sharyn Long and Ms. Rachel Kenny.

2. New Work Programme

This annual report covers the first year of *Comhar's* second term, i.e., the twelve month period following the appointment of new members to *Comhar*, by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in May 2002. A new work programme, for the period 2002-2005, was submitted to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in December 2002.

Comhar's terms of reference provide a broad scope for *Comhar's* work programme. Within them, *Comhar* has discretion to design its own agenda or it may be asked by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters.

The new work programme outlines, in broad terms, the main areas in which *Comhar* will concentrate its contributions over the period from 2002 to 2005. The work programme was finalised following discussions at the Plenary Meetings, held on 21st May 2002 and 25th September respectively, and takes into account points made in the review of *Comhar's* activities during the first term of office.

While seeking to be reasonably comprehensive, *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.

Comhar considers that the following criteria are particularly relevant in defining its work programme:

- 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.

During its second term of office *Comhar* will engage with the national and European policy agendas as well as outreach and awareness raising activities that involve key sectors and the general public. *Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development* provide the overall guiding philosophy. The full work programme for the period 2002-2005 is set out in Appendix 3.

3. *Comhar* Working Groups

In its work programme, *Comhar* identified five major work areas, as the focus for its consideration. Working groups were established in October 2002 to address these areas.

- Awareness and education
- Climate change
- Spatial planning/housing
- Waste prevention and recovery
- International issues

Awareness and Education Working Group

The working group was established to consider and make recommendations on developing *Comhar's* outreach activities. A major challenge for *Comhar* is to communicate sustainable development in a manner which is more meaningful and understandable to the broader general public.

The working group has completed an initial overview of some best practice models of sustainable development awareness and education. A number of specific tasks are underway including:

- the development of a practical version of the Sustainable Development Principles for use in schools, and
- the development of a sustainability training and awareness pilot project for civil society groups.

In a report to the *Comhar* Plenary in March 2003, the working group recommended that *Comhar* engage in strategic partnerships and undertake co-financing with other organisations in the promotion of the sustainability agenda.

The members of the working group are Billy Murphy, Elaine Nevin, Gavin Harte (alternate nominated by David Healy), Vivienne Brophy (alternate nominated by James Pike), Sandra Kehoe, John Hammond, Noel Casserly and Brendan Linehan (Director of ENFO).

Climate Change Working Group

As part of the process of the 1st biennial review of the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS), *Comhar* was invited to prepare an analysis of the key priorities for the review and intensification of the measures in the Strategy.

Analysis and recommendations were initially developed by the *Comhar* Working Group on Climate Change and finalised following discussions at the *Comhar* Plenary meeting on 4th December 2002. The recommendations were submitted to the Minister in December 2002. *Comhar* believes there is a need to strengthen the NCCS and accelerate implementation measures given the current level and projected increase in emissions. The recommendations are summarised in Section 4 of this Report *Work Items Concluded*.

The members of the Working Group are Donal Buckley, Pat Finnegan, David Healy, Bernie Walsh and Noel Casserly.

Spatial Planning/Housing Working Group

The publication of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in 2002 provides an important context. Rural housing, including one-off urban generated rural housing, provides the initial focus and *Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development* are the starting point for developing a set of recommendations on "principles for sustainable settlement". An audit of relevant research has been undertaken and issues being considered include: the evolving relationship between rural and urban areas, rural population decline, land tenure and affordability, spatial considerations including densities in villages and towns.

The working group is undertaking three research projects:

- Local Rural Housing Patterns: Pressures and Constraints affecting Sustainable Settlement Development.
- Comparative Study of Development Plan policies in relation to Rural Development.
- One-off housing and town and village expansion.

The members of the working group are Jeanne Meldon, Rachel Kenny, Joe Gavin, Emer Ó Siocrú, Sharon Long, James Pike, Aileen Pyne, Padraig Haugh, Billy Murphy, Josephine Henry and Noel Casserly.

Waste/Economic Instruments Working Group

Comhar was invited to make recommendations to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the use of economic instruments in the area of waste prevention and waste recovery. The recommendations were initially developed by the *Comhar* Working Group on Waste/Economic Instruments and finalised following discussions at the *Comhar* Plenary meeting on 4th December 2002. The recommendations have regard to the commitment in the Agreed Programme for Government which states that consideration will be given to the extension of the levy on plastic bags,

to other areas such as non-reusable packaging. The recommendations are summarised in Section 4 of this Report *Work Items Concluded*.

The members of the working group are Declan Burns, Jim Devlin (alternate nominated by Ruaidhrí Deasy), Geraldine Tallon, Elizabeth Cullen, Br. Kevin Codd, Donal Buckley and Noel Casserly.

International Issues Working Group

The working group was established to bring forward proposals to develop the international aspects of *Comhar's* work following on from World Summit on Sustainable Development. The objective is not only to learn from international experience but also to input an Irish perspective. Specific tasks envisaged include:

- providing appropriate inputs into the development of national positions on EU matters such as the roll out of the Sixth Environment Action Programme and the review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy;

- hosting an international conference on sustainable development during Ireland's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004;
- building closer links with national sustainable councils in other countries through the European Environment Advisory Councils network;
- collaborating with ENFO on promotional measures in relation to UNEP.

The members of the working group are Pat Finnegan, Richard Moles, Geraldine Tallon, Emer Ó Siocrú, Bernie Walsh and Noel Casserly.

4. Work Items Concluded

During the period covered by this report, *Comhar* completed the following work items:

- Comments on the draft national report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development: sent to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, June 2002.
- Principles for Sustainable Development: published July 2002.
- Comments on 1st Biennial Review of the National Climate Change Strategy: sent to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, December 2002.
- Recommendations on Use of Economic Instruments in the area of Waste Prevention and Waste Recovery: sent to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, December 2002.
- A Living Island – Ireland’s Responsibility to Nature: *Comhar* pamphlet published, May 2003.

Comments on the draft national report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg in August/September 2002. As part of the preparations for the Summit, *Comhar* was asked by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to consider and comment on the draft national report, “Sustainable Development: Review, Assessment and Future Perspectives”. *Comhar* arranged an exceptional meeting, at short notice, for members on 13 June 2002 to consider the draft national report; *Comhar*’s comments and recommendations on the draft report were sent to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in late June 2002.

Principles for Sustainable Development

Work on the preparation of principles for sustainable development was finalised by the first members of *Comhar* and launched in July 2002. *Comhar* considered it important to set out an agreed view on what sustainable development means and particularly to relate the concept in a practical way to the Irish situation. Having considered existing definitions of sustainable development, *Comhar* decided to develop a set of principles which could



be used to determine whether current or future policies are likely to lead to sustainable development. It is hoped that these principles can be used as a benchmark for policies.

Sustainable development must encompass environmental protection, economic development and social development in an integrated manner. Therefore the principles developed by *Comhar* address all three objectives. An *a la carte* approach to the principles is not appropriate: all must be pursued and in unison.

Comments on 1st Biennial Review of the National Climate Change Strategy

As part of the process of the 1st biennial review of the National Climate Change Strategy, *Comhar* was invited to prepare an analysis of the key priorities for the review and intensification of the measures in the Strategy. Members agreed on the need to strengthen the NCCS and accelerate implementation measures given the current level and projected increase in emissions. Key recommendations include:

- the Strategy should be strengthened by the development of interim targets or milestones along the path to the Kyoto target;
- the Government should ensure that the structure and implementation of emission-trading in its pilot phase meets the criteria set out in the NCCS;
- if "flexible mechanisms" are to be used to meet any of Ireland's commitments, they must be subject to a transparent national vetting mechanism to ensure they promote sustainable development and operate in a manner consistent with national foreign policy and aid policy;
- *Comhar* fully supports negotiated agreements as a mechanism for actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions but costs and quantities need to be carefully framed and implemented;
- one of the most significant avenues open to the government for strengthening NCCS remains a concerted, concentrated and dedicated effort to complete installation in Ireland of sufficient renewable energy supply to allow compliance as a minimum with our commitments under the renewables directive.

The cross-sectoral issues of carbon taxation and emission-trading were the only issues where, because of the different perspectives of the various pillars represented on *Comhar*, and given the timescale for making recommendations, it was not possible to put forward consensus recommendations. Two different perspectives on these issues are set out separately in the recommendations.

The full text of the recommendations can be down-loaded from the *Comhar* website www.comhar-nsdp.ie

Recommendations on Use of Economic Instruments in the area of Waste Prevention and Waste Recovery

The recommendations were prepared having regard to the commitment in the Agreed Programme for Government that consideration would be given to the extension of the levy on plastic bags to other areas such as non-reusable packaging. *Comhar* considers that economic instruments are an important component in the cluster of environmental policy measures, which also include producer responsibility initiatives, regulation and supporting structures and complement.

Comhar concluded that any new environmental levies or taxes need to be well thought out and targeted. In the context of the commitment in the Agreed Programme for Government, consideration should be given to further levies on certain packaging e.g. paper bags, plastic beverage containers, Tetra Pak liquid containers, cans, polystyrene fast food packaging, etc. Other problematic products from a waste/ litter perspective, e.g. chewing gum, newspapers and newsprint should also be considered. Options for introducing deposit and return systems (as an alternative, or addition, to levies) could also

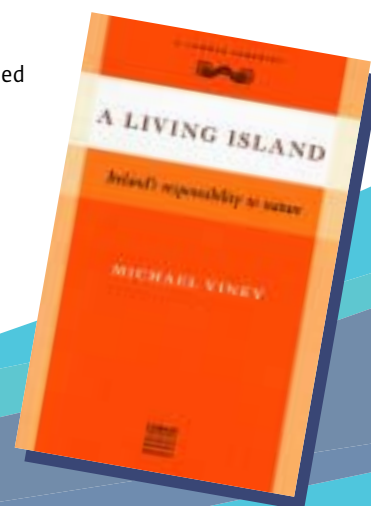
be considered. Products recommended should be subject to ex-ante and ex-post evaluation. The experience in other EU countries can offer useful models of best practice as other countries learn from Ireland's experience in relation to the plastic bag levy.

The full text of the recommendations can be down-loaded from the *Comhar* website www.comhar-nsdp.ie

Comhar pamphlet: *A Living Island – Ireland's Responsibility to Nature*

The pamphlet, *A Living Island - Ireland's Responsibility to Nature*, is the first in an occasional series on issues related to sustainable development. The aim of the pamphlets is to promote a greater understanding of sustainability issues by encouraging debate on these important issues. *Comhar* commissioned the well-known writer Michael Viney to write the pamphlet and it addresses many inter-related themes including biodiversity, farming, forestry, ecology, landscape, the selection of conservation areas, coastal and marine issues. *Comhar* Chairman, Dr. John Bowman, formally presented the pamphlet to Mr. Pat The Cope Gallagher, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, at a special launch during the Convergence Festival in Dublin in May 2003.

The pamphlet can be down-loaded from the *Comhar* website www.comhar-nsdp.ie



5. *Comhar* Sponsorship

Feasta Conference on Renewable Energy

Comhar contributed to the cost of a conference on Ireland's Transition to Renewable Energy which took place on 31st October, 1st and 2nd November 2002. The conference was arranged by Feasta in conjunction with Sustainable Energy Ireland and the Tipperary Institute in Thurles. The focus of the conference was how soon and with what sense of urgency should Ireland begin its transition to sustainable sources of energy and what sort of economy will result.

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. The sponsorship, which began in 2000, is seen as a means of both raising awareness of *Comhar* and its purpose and also encouraging greater involvement/interest by young students in sustainable development issues. The award winners in 2003 were:

Clare Cooney, Mount Mercy College, Cork, for her project "The consequences of the plastic bag levy on the non-grocery sector", and

Eithne Mullen, Siona De Lappe, Aoife Brady, Clifden Community School, Galway, for their project "The versatile willow of Ireland".

Some of the entries from the competition were later displayed in Enfo, the environment information service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. This provided an opportunity for the general public to view the exhibits.



Mr. Declan Burns, member of Comhar, presenting the special award to Clare Cooney.



Mr. Declan Burns, member of Comhar, presenting their special award to Eithne Mullen, Claire Mullen, Sonia DeLappe and Aoife Brady.



Clare Cooney, Comhar award winner, with Elaine Nevin, member of Comhar and Dr. John Bowman, Chairman of Comhar in Enfo.

Comhar Events at the Annual Convergence Festival

Comhar sponsored three events at the 4th Annual Convergence Festival which took place in Dublin from 16-25 May 2003. The Festival brought together a wide range of people from a variety of backgrounds with the intention of promoting sustainable development in Ireland. It featured conferences, workshops, films, theatre, music and exhibits. The following events were sponsored by *Comhar*:

■ Questions and Answers

This event, similar to the well known TV series, was chaired by *Comhar's* Chairman Dr. John Bowman. The panel of experts included Helena Norberg-Hodge, founder and director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture, Fr. Sean McDonagh, chairman of Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment, Gavin Harte, manager of Ireland's first eco-village project, Karin Dubsy Coastwatch Europe, Donal Buckley head of IBEC's environmental unit and Ken Macken from the Environmental Protection Agency. A large audience participated in a stimulating session which considered a wide range of topics including the destruction of small farming throughout the world, the need for strong environmental education in our secondary schools and the important role played by NGOs in fostering interest in sustainable development.

■ The Education & Sustainability Forum

The forum provided an opportunity for parents, educators, organisations and institutions to meet and address an important issue of our time: education for sustainability. Speakers included Stephen Stirling writer and educator, Frances Leahy, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and Michael Kenny, NUI Maynooth.

■ Entering the Eco-Economy

A conference and exhibition which explored the concept of an economy based on ecological and sustainability principles. It included presentations of products and services aimed at moving the economy towards sustainability. Speakers included Nuala Ahern, MEP, Tadhg Coakley, Clean Technology Centre, Pooran Desai, Bioregional Development Group (London), Erik O'Donovan, IBEC, and Richard Douthwaite, author and environmental campaigner.



Noel Casserly, Secretary to Comhar, Pat The Cope Gallagher, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Dr. John Bowman, Chairman of Comhar, at the launch of the first Comhar pamphlet - A Living Island.



Dr. John Bowman at the annual Convergence Festival, May 2003.

6. Operational Programme Monitoring Committees

Following the appointment of new members, *Comhar's* representation on Monitoring Committees for Operational Programmes and the Environment Co-ordinating Committee changed. The table on the right shows the current representatives on each committee.

COMMITTEE	COMHAR REPRESENTATIVE
National Development Plan/ Community Support Framework	Jeanne Meldon
Southern & Eastern Regional OP	Billy Murphy
Border, Midlands & Western Regional OP	Emer Ó Siocrú
Economic & Social Infrastructure	David Healy
Employment & Human Resources Development OP	Sandra Kehoe
Productive Sector OP	Pat Finnegan
CAP Rural Development Plan	Ruaidhri Deasy
Peace OP for Northern Ireland and the Border Region	John Bowman
Interreg IIIA	Bernie Walsh
Leader+	Billy Murphy
Environment Co-ordinating Committee	Jeanne Meldon

7. *Comhar* Representation at Conferences

World Summit on Sustainable Development

Three members, Bernie Walsh, Richard Moles and Emer Ó Siocrú represented *Comhar* at the World Summit on Sustainable Development which took place in Johannesburg from 26th August to 4th September 2002. The members reported that their participation had been positive and enriching and gave a wide perspective on a range of issues. The members considered that the key matter arising from the event is the question of implementation. It is intended to engage with Ireland's Overseas Development Aid programme to enhance its sustainable development perspective and also to develop a working relationship with the UN Environment Programme.

Other Conferences

Comhar was represented at a number of conferences and seminars during the period under report:

Royal Irish Academy conference "Climate Change in Ireland - New Perspectives on Scenarios and Impacts" held in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin on 11 June 2002.

Stakeholder forum on "Sustainable Development in the EU" held in Brussels on 12/13 September 2002.

"The Irish Renewable Energy Forum – Working towards 2005" organised by Sustainable Energy Ireland on 26/27 September 2002.

Dundalk Chamber of Commerce's fourth National Environment Conference "Towards a Sustainable Environment" on 8/9 October 2002.

European Environmental Advisory Councils 10th Annual Conference arranged by the Heritage Council in Kilkenny on 16-19 October 2002.

Annual meeting of United Nations Environment Programme national committees and partner NGOs held from 25-26 November 2002 in Geneva.

ESRI's conference on "The Sky's the Limit: Efficient and Fair Policies on Global Warming" on 11 December 2002.

An RIA-IPI conference "Urban Generated Rural Housing and Appropriate Development of Towns and Villages" on 19 February 2003.

An Taisce's conference "Getting Prices Right – Moving towards Environmental Fiscal Reform in Ireland" on 20 February 2003.



Dr. Nick Betts, Queen's University, Belfast, Dr. John Bowman, Chairman of Comhar, and Dr. John Sweeney, NUI Maynooth, at the RIA Climate Change Conference in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

8. Quality Customer Service

Comhar is committed to the provision of high quality services to all its customers. During the year under review *Comhar* continued to support the strategic management initiative process through the continued review and implementation of the Customer Service Action Plan. A website to facilitate the dissemination of information about *Comhar* and its activities was launched during the year.

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.
- (D) Examine and report on relevant matters referred to it by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage 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, Heritage 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 NESCF, the EPA and the Heritage Council to ensure complementarity.
- (5) The Partnership may be invited/designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to attend relevant international fora, 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, Heritage 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, Heritage 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, Heritage 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, Heritage 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, Heritage and Local Government on the approval of the 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, Heritage and Local Government and is funded through a Grant from that Department. This Grant is part of the overall estimate for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

APPENDIX 2

Membership of Comhar

Dr. John Bowman	Chairman
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Pillar 1 State/Public Sector

NAME	REPRESENTING
Mr. Declan Burns	Environmental Protection Agency
Cllr. Aileen Pyne	Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland
Mr. Joe Gavin	County & City Managers' Association
Cllr. Jim Shortt	General Council of County Councils
Ms. Geraldine Tallon	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/ Environmental Network of Government Departments

Pillar 2 Economic Sectors

NAME	REPRESENTING
Ms. Olga Carey	Construction Industry Federation
Mr. Donal Buckley	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Ms. Sandra Kehoe	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Mr. Pdraig Haugh	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
Mr. Ruaidhrí Deasy	Irish Farmers Association

Pillar 3 Environmental NGOs

NAME	REPRESENTING
Ms. Elaine Nevin	ECO (The Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth)
Dr. Elizabeth Cullen	An Taisce; Coastwatch Ireland; Conservation Volunteers Ireland; Earthwatch; Feasta – Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability; Friends of the Irish Environment; Irish Doctors Environmental Association; Irish Peatland Conservation Council; Irish Wildlife Trust; Irish Women's Environmental Network; Keep Ireland Open; VOICE
Mr. Pat Finnegan	as above
Mr. David Healy	as above
Ms. Emer Ó Siocrú	as above

Pillar 4 Social and Community Sector

NAME	REPRESENTING
Br. Kevin Codd	Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI)
Ms. Josephine Henry	National Youth Council of Ireland
Mr. Billy Murphy	PLANET (Partnerships for Local Action Network)
Ms. Sharyn Long	People with Disabilities in Ireland
Ms. Bernie Walsh	Community Platform

Pillar 5 Professional/Academic Sector

NAME	REPRESENTING
Ms. Rachel Kenny	Irish Planning Institute
Prof. Richard Moles	Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland
Ms. Jeanne Meldon	Universities Research Group on the Environment
Mr. John Hammond	National Council for Curriculum Assessment
Mr. James Pike	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

Mr. Sean Power	Chairman, Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government
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APPENDIX 3

Comhar Work Programme for the Period 2002-2005

1. Introduction

Comhar, the National Sustainable Development Partnership, was formally established in 1999 and began its second term on 21 May 2002. 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, Heritage and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters.

Under its terms of reference, *Comhar* works 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 2002 to 2005. It takes account of discussions at the Plenary Meetings, held on 21st May 2002 and 25th September respectively, and of points made in the review of *Comhar's* first term of office.

While seeking to be reasonably comprehensive, *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 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.

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, conferences/seminars 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, Heritage and Local Government, for appropriate referral to Government, to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government, and to relevant Government Departments and other bodies.

2. Major work areas

During its term of office *Comhar* will engage with the national and European policy agendas as well as outreach and awareness raising activities that involve key sectors and the general public. The three year Work Programme Framework will allow for some flexibility, enabling an annual review of work priorities. *Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development* will provide the overall guiding philosophy.

Arising from discussions at Plenary Meetings in May and September 2002, *Comhar* has identified five broad areas of interest:

- Climate change
- Spatial planning/housing
- Waste prevention and recovery
- Awareness and education
- International issues

Working groups have been established to address these major areas. The working groups will develop more detailed terms of reference in each area, which will define and guide the work and establish more specific timetables and targets for each issue. Climate change as well as health, social inclusion and local sustainability are considered to be over-arching themes, the implications of which will be an integral part of any issue addressed by *Comhar*.

2.1 Climate Change

A specific task is envisaged for *Comhar* in the National Climate Change Strategy; this provides that the biennial review of the Strategy will be undertaken by the cross-Departmental Climate Change Team “in consultation with *Comhar*”. This review has now commenced and an initial Departmental consultation paper has been received by *Comhar* in order to assist its participation. In a related area, *Comhar* will also contribute to the preparation of a National Acidification Strategy.

2.2 Spatial Planning/Housing

The publication of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in late 2002, and its subsequent implementation provide an important context. *Comhar* considers that rural housing, including one-off urban generated rural housing, requires particular attention. Related issues include transport, land use, social integration, and issues around viable rural communities and economies. Consideration will be given to how sustainable development principles could be implemented in a practical way in relation to rural housing.

Housing quality and construction are also relevant to climate change policies, mostly through energy efficiency but also in methods of construction (e.g. use of cement, the production of which is a major source of greenhouse gases). Health issues are also relevant (e.g. fuel poverty, energy efficiency, building quality and maintenance).

Comhar will take account of IPI and RIAI ongoing work in this area and explore opportunities for collaboration which, because of *Comhar*'s breadth of expertise, would bring added value.

Comhar will also address the broader planning agenda, e.g., it may review the issue of wind farms which are desirable from a renewable energy perspective but have raised concerns due to perceived environmental impacts including impact on the landscape, and noise pollution.

2.3 Waste Management

Waste management continues to be a major issue in all aspects from sustainable production/consumption to waste management and disposal. It includes contentious issues such as incineration,

location of landfills and payment of waste charges. *Comhar* notes that the EPA's report, *Environment in Focus 2002*, records an increase of over 60% in generation of household and commercial waste in the five years to 2000. While there have been major changes in policy and practice in recent years (e.g. EPA licensing of landfill sites, new policy statement on prevention and recycling of waste, establishment of new bodies), much remains to be done in addressing the growing problem.

Comhar will address sustainable production and consumption issues such as market mechanisms and eco-efficiency, including consideration to extending the environmental levy to other products or packaging.

2.4 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 also undertake specific awareness-raising actions from time to time as part of its work programme. A major challenge is to communicate sustainable development in a manner which is more meaningful and understandable to the broader general public. *Comhar* will consider how the *Principles for Sustainable Development* can be further developed, for specific target groups, e.g. schools.

Opportunities for co-operation with ENFO will be explored in relation to the provision of information on sustainable development. *Comhar* will bring forward advice and recommendations on environment/sustainability-friendly behaviour across society and sectors. The DOELG awareness campaigns

The Environment: It's Easy to Make a Difference has ended its current phase; *Comhar* will contribute to the specification for any new or refreshed campaign.

2.5 International Issues

Comhar must continue to engage with international developments. The outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) can be expected to guide and influence both international and national action for sustainability over the coming years. There will be important developments at EU level such as the roll out of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, with the development of the thematic strategies provided for under the Programme. *Comhar* will also consider how best to contribute to the development of national positions on specific new initiatives such as the new Chemicals Policy.

Comhar will consider how best to contribute to Ireland's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004; possibilities include appropriate contributions to policy initiatives or hosting a European conference for equivalent National Sustainable Development Councils.

Comhar will also consider how it can contribute a national perspective in promoting the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

3. 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);
- 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.

4. Other Issues

Alongside major work areas, individual members also have the option of proposing and 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.

5. Review

The Work Programme aims to provide a flexible framework for the three year period, enabling, where appropriate, an annual review of work priorities under the direction of the *Comhar* Bureau.

6. 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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