

2005

Annual Report  
Tuarascáil Bhliaintiúil



**COMHAR**  
THE NATIONAL  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERSHIP





**COMHAR**

THE NATIONAL  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERSHIP

2005

Annual Report  
Tuarascáil Bhliaintiúil

# contents

<b>1</b>	Introduction	2
<b>2</b>	Overview of Work	3
<b>3</b>	Comhar Working Groups	4
<b>4</b>	Recommendations and Advice	5
<b>5</b>	Comhar's Review of Second Term	8
<b>6</b>	Comhar Sponsorship	9
<b>7</b>	International Dimension of Comhar's Work	11
<b>8</b>	Comhar Representation at Conferences	12
<b>9</b>	Operational Programme Monitoring Committees	13
<b>10</b>	Quality Customer Service	14
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Comhar's Terms of Reference (2002–2005)	15
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Membership of Comhar (2002–2005)	17
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Comhar Work Programme (2002–2005)	19







# 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 for the period 2002 to 2005 are set out in Appendix 1.

Comhar works in three-year cycles and began its second term on 21 May 2002. This annual report covers the final year of Comhar's second term, i.e., the twelve-month period up to the end of May 2005.

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. Dr. John Bowman was Chairman of Comhar from its establishment in 1999 until 30th June 2004. Noel Casserly was acting Chairman for the final year of Comhar's second term. The full list of members for Comhar's second term is given in Appendix 2.

A MEETING OF COMHAR PLENARY IN SESSION AT DUBLIN CASTLE



# 2 Overview of Work



Comhar's terms of reference provide a broad scope for Comhar's work programme; it 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. Comhar's *Principles for Sustainable Development* provide the overall guiding philosophy. The work programme for the period 2002-2005 was submitted to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in December 2002 and is at Appendix 3.

Comhar has considered that the following criteria are particularly relevant in defining the context for its work:

- 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 the final year of its second term, Comhar engaged with the national and European policy agendas as well as outreach and awareness raising activities. As in previous years, four Plenary meetings of Comhar were held during the twelve month period. Comhar Bureau, consisting of five members, one from each pillar, facilitated decision-making and working arrangements. Significant highlights of the year included:

- The submission of recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the Review of Local Government Financing.
- The submission of comments to the European Commission on the Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.
- The submission of comments to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the interim review of progress in implementing the National Biodiversity Plan.
- The submission of recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on giving effect to EU Directive on public access to environmental information.
- Participation in the benchmark study of national sustainable development strategies and the role of national councils of sustainable development undertaken by the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) network.
- Sponsorship of a Questions and Answers session on sustainability during the Convergence festival in Dublin.
- Continued sponsorship of special awards for sustainable development at the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and the introduction of a new Comhar award in the Tidy Towns competition.
- The publication of Comhar's first calendar; the calendar's images and text focus on practical actions which can be taken by individuals or groups to foster sustainable development.
- A review session, held in Kilkenny over two days, on Comhar's experience during its second term.

# 3 Comhar Working Groups



Many of Comhar's policy proposals and recommendations are initially developed within the Comhar working groups. The main working group activities during the year are summarised as follows:

## **Awareness and Education Working Group**

The working group was established to consider and make recommendations on developing Comhar's outreach activities. Comhar recognises that there is a major challenge to communicate sustainable development in a manner which is more meaningful and understandable to the broader general public. The main activities included overseeing the completion of two pilot projects on sustainable development education and awareness and developing ideas for stakeholder involvement in the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

The members of the working group were Billy Murphy, Elaine Nevin, Gavin Harte, Vivienne Brophy, John Hammond, Noel Casserly, Marie Hughes and Brendan Linehan (Director of ENFO).

## **Ad-hoc Working Group on Local Government Finance**

Comhar established an ad-hoc working group on local government finance to prepare a response to the invitation for submissions on the independent review of local government financing in Ireland. Comhar's analysis and recommendations were submitted to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in September 2004.

The members of the working group were Jeanne Meldon, Emer O'Siochrú, James Pike, Aileen Pyne, Billy Murphy and Noel Casserly.

## **Biodiversity Working Group**

This working group was set up in early 2004 to provide a mechanism for consultation and input from stakeholders in relation to the interim review of progress of implementation of actions identified in the National Biodiversity Plan.

A report prepared by the group was submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2004; the report was published in May 2005.

The members of the working group were Shirley Clerkin, Jim Devlin, Karin Dubsky, Lorraine Fegan, Liam Lysaght, Bernie Walsh, Mary McKenna, Noel Casserly and Marie Hughes.



# 4 Recommendations and Advice



During the period covered by this report, Comhar completed the following recommendations and advice:

- Submission on Review of Local Government Financing: sent to Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, September 2004.
- Comments on Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: sent to the European Commission, October 2004.
- Comments on the interim review of progress in implementing the National Biodiversity Plan: sent to Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, November 2004.
- Recommendations on giving effect to EU Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information: sent to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, February 2005.

## Submission on Review of Local Government Financing

Following the announcement of a major independent review of local government financing in Ireland, Comhar submitted recommendations to the Department. While the review focused on the current rather than the capital financing of local government, Comhar considered it essential to address the wider context. The main thrust of Comhar's recommendations was on extending the revenue base for local government through taxation on natural resources, in particular land.

Comhar's submission made recommendations on the introduction of:

- Development levies
- Zoning levies
- Smart taxes or dual commercial rating
- Site value tax on public and charitable property
- Second home land value tax
- Farm land value tax
- Land value tax on all residential dwellings
- User charges for water and waste
- Part V Planning Act Reforms.

## Comments on Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy

In July 2004, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS). The Strategy, which was adopted in 2001, aims to achieve a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. Its basic aim is to ensure that economic growth, environmental quality and social inclusion go hand in hand, thereby increasing citizens' welfare. The consultation process aimed to gather the views of the public at large, stakeholders and experts in the field.

The review will include an assessment of progress made since 2001 and a road-map outlining what needs to be done to achieve long-term sustainable development. The review of the EU Strategy is expected to be completed in early 2006.



Key points of the Comhar submission were:

- the review of the EU SDS should take the opportunity to identify delivery gaps, intensify implementation measures, and foster better links with national sustainable strategies;
- a stronger political commitment and willingness to tackle difficult issues will be essential to meet the challenges;
- enhanced stakeholder participation is needed if the revised strategy is to address the difficulty of mobilising public support for long term goals;
- all sectors of society must be persuaded of the need to change patterns of behaviour and consumption in order to build positive scenarios for the future;
- communication of sustainable development in a more accessible way is necessary as well as the integration of sustainable development principles into the formal education system;
- a commitment is needed to move away from unsustainable patterns of production and consumption to a new pattern of responsible competitiveness with a lighter environmental footprint, greater social justice and investment in recovery of biodiversity and environmental quality;
- the application of sustainability impact assessments should be extended to external as well as internal impacts of EU policy proposals, e.g., in the area of trade; and
- analysis of policy proposals should quantify the costs of not taking action in terms of their impacts on human health and the environment and set it out alongside the benefits of taking action.

### **Recommendations on the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan**

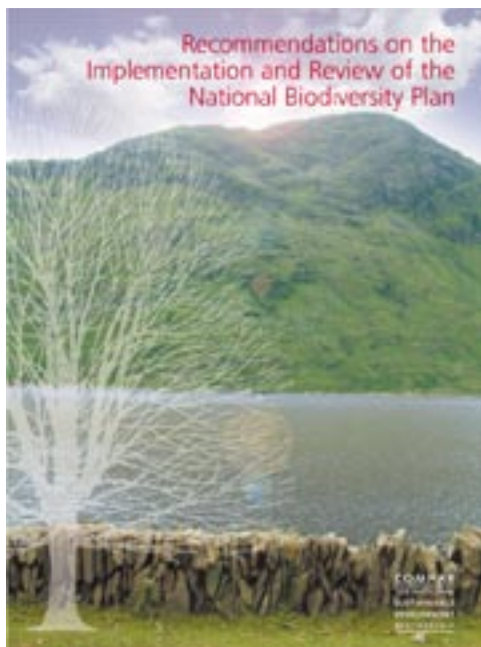
Comhar's Report provides observations on the main issues in the Plan and concludes that progress to date on most of the actions in the National Biodiversity Plan has been slow or minimal and that it is difficult to audit the Plan due to a lack of prioritised targets within specified time-scales. Comhar's main recommendations are:

- 1 Establish a Biodiversity Fund (€1 million per annum) to support local site conservation and management, and for the production of biodiversity awareness and educational material.
- 2 Establish a dedicated biodiversity unit within the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and create biodiversity units or posts within the relevant government departments and state agencies, as soon as possible.
- 3 Set up the Biodiversity Forum, under the auspices of Comhar, for all relevant stakeholders.
- 4 Carry out biodiversity awareness and training in all relevant government departments and in local authorities.
- 5 Generate public awareness of the importance and relevance of biodiversity protection to the people of Ireland.
- 6 Establish prioritised targets and time-scales for species and habitat protection and conservation.
- 7 Develop indicators to measure progress of conservation measures.





- 8 Update present information systems to improve access to information on all aspects of biodiversity conservation in Ireland.
- 9 Develop better means of communication with the public.



The Report of the Working Group was published in May 2005.

### **Recommendations on giving effect to EU Directive on public access to environmental information**

A new EU Directive on public access to environmental information revised an earlier Directive and required implementation into Irish law by February 2005. Comhar recommended transposition of the Directive by way of new Regulations replacing the earlier Regulations SI 125 of 1998. In addition, Comhar recommended that comprehensive guidance should be prepared for public authorities that have statutory obligations under the legislation, as well as public information and awareness raising measures for users who wish to gain access to information under the revised code.

Comhar's principal recommendations for the new Regulations are:

- The definition of "public authority" should address clearly the position of state-sponsored bodies and their obligations under the new Regulations.
- Uncertainties concerning the interaction of responsibilities under the Freedom of Information and the Access to Environmental Information legislation should be addressed.
- The grounds for refusal of a request for environmental information, in accordance with article 4 of the Directive, must not be overly restrictive.
- A new review procedure should be provided for, in accordance with article 6 of the Directive, that is expeditious and either free of charge or inexpensive.
- There should also be provision for a review procedure before a court of law in which the acts or omissions of a public authority can be reviewed.



## 5 Comhar's Review of Second Term

At the end of its second term Comhar felt it would be useful to review the experience of the previous three years. The aim of the Plenary meeting held in April 2005 was to take stock of Comhar's work during its second term and generate ideas for the incoming Comhar in the context of developing a new work programme.

The discussions addressed four broad topics:

- 1 Comhar outputs, recommendations, publications and sponsored research.
- 2 Communication with stakeholders and the general public: education and awareness projects; sponsorship of awards and events, and website.
- 3 Priority issues for next term: implementation and review of National Sustainable Development Strategy, measuring sustainability (indicators and assessment), prosperity/quality of life and consumption, climate change and biodiversity.
- 4 Effectiveness of working arrangements, plenary meetings and working groups.

A detailed report of the outcome of the meeting is on Comhar's website.



SOME OF COMHAR MEMBERS AND STAFF WHO ATTENDED THE REVIEW MEETING IN KILKENNY, APRIL 2005



# Comhar Sponsorship



Comhar continued to engage in strategic partnerships and co-financing with other organisations as an efficient way of promoting key messages on sustainability.

## Pilot Projects on Sustainable Development Education and Awareness

Two pilot projects on sustainability awareness and education, which were jointly sponsored by Comhar and ENFO were completed:

- *Developing Comhar's Sustainable Development Principles for Schools*  
This aim of this pilot project was to develop a practical guide to Comhar's *Principles for Sustainable Development* for use in both primary and secondary schools. The pilot project, which was managed by Eco-Unesco, was undertaken in 8 schools (primary and secondary). The children were encouraged to liaise with school management to develop a sustainable development policy for their school. The working group has recommended the development of a toolkit based on project outcomes.
- *Sustainability Training for Civil Society Groups*  
The aim of the project was to develop, on a pilot basis, a training and awareness framework to enhance the understanding of sustainable development amongst civil society groups. Comhar's *Principles for Sustainable Development* provided the overall guiding philosophy. Supporting awareness material was provided by ENFO. The programme was developed jointly by Waterford Institute of Technology and the Tipperary Institute. Approximately 900 people

attended talks which were delivered to existing meeting and event structures in the South East Region and North Tipperary. The opportunities for an extended programme to be delivered in partnership with other local networks will be explored during Comhar's next term.

## Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition

Comhar sponsors a number of special awards in the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition each year. The awards are made for projects which best demonstrate sustainable development. The sponsorship, which began in 2000, is a means of both raising awareness of Comhar and its purposes and also encouraging greater involvement/interest by young students in sustainable development issues. The award winners in 2005 were:

- Mary Ennis, Billy Fehin, Justine McCarthy, Hazelwood College, Dromcollogher, Limerick for their project "Investigation of Elephant Grass",
- Jennifer Ní Choinneacháin, Jessica Ní Cheallaigh, Coláiste Iosagáin, Bothar Stigh Lorgan, Baile an Bhóitair, Baile Atha Cliath for their project "Leitreachas ón gaoth", and
- Elaine Collins, Evelyn Spillane, Deirdre Plant, Mount Mercy College, Model Farm Road, Cork for their project "The health benefits of a leisure centre to the community".

A selection of entries from the competition was subsequently displayed at a special exhibition in ENFO.





### **New Comhar Award in Tidy Towns Competition**

In 2004, Comhar offered a new award in the Tidy Towns competition. The award was for the town or village where a building, group of buildings or space has been improved in a manner consistent with Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development.

The prize-winners, announced at the national award ceremony in Dublin Castle on 3rd September 2004, were:

- Sustainable Development Award  
Government Offices, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
- Highly Commended Award  
The Miller's Inn, Croom, Co. Limerick

### **Comhar Support for activities at Convergence**

Sustainable Ireland hosted a series of events, during the year, at the Cultivate Centre in Temple Bar, Dublin advocating the transition to more sustainable living. Events in October 2004 centred on the theme *Bringing Together Business, the Environment and Society for Sustainable Development*, and aimed to bring together individuals and organisations from Ireland and beyond to explore opportunities in developing Ireland's Eco-economic sector. The keynote address was given by the well-known chemist, author and international sustainable business consultant, Dr. Michael Braungart. Comhar sponsorship, linked to this event, supported the setting up of an online portal for a new all-island Future Business Network to support the outcome of the Festival.

In April 2005, as part of the Convergence festival, Comhar sponsored a Questions and Answers event, chaired by Karen Coleman, from "The Wide Angle" on the Newstalk 106 radio station. The panel, made up of international and local speakers, included the Swedish planner Torbjorn Lahti, John Gilliland, Northern Ireland Commissioner of the UK

Sustainable Development Commission, Bernie Walsh of Sunflower Recycling, John Barry, Director of the Institute of Governance at Queens University Belfast, and Michael O'Callaghan, co-ordinator of the GM-Free Ireland Network. The focus of the evening was "Health and Sustainability" and there was a lively and informative discussion on a broad range of subjects.

In 2002 the United Nations proclaimed the ten-year period from 2005 to 2014 as the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Governments around the world were invited to use the Decade to integrate education for sustainable development into their national educational strategies and action plans at appropriate level. Comhar provided sponsorship for a one-day seminar at the Convergence 8 Festival on 29th June 2005 – "The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development: Identifying Stakeholders and Influencing Ireland's Strategy".

### **Feasta Conference "Food Security in an Energy Scarce World"**

Comhar contributed to the cost of a three-day conference, organised by Feasta, held in University College, Dublin in June 2005. The purpose of the conference was to assess the threat to the world's food supply posed by the prospect of a declining availability of energy. Large quantities of oil and gas are used in the manufacture of fertilisers and pesticides, at all stages of food production and in the construction and repair of equipment and infrastructure needed to facilitate food supply. An extensive list of speakers examined the possible solutions to the crucial question "How can the world's population be fed without the extensive use of fossil fuels in the production, processing and distribution of food?"



# International Dimension of Comhar's Work

THE PARTICIPANTS WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING OF THE EEAC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP IN KLOSTER EBERBACH JUNE 2005

## EEAC Network

During the year, Comhar participated actively in the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) network and strengthened links to similar councils in other European countries.

Comhar participated in the *Sustaining Sustainability* benchmark study of national strategies for sustainable development in nine EU member states<sup>1</sup> and their links to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. The study focuses on the governance of sustainability including horizontal and vertical coordination, and the links between government and non-governmental sectors. It particularly explores the role and impact of advisory councils for sustainable development and environment in these SD processes.

The study was commissioned by the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development and conducted throughout 2004. The participating national councils co-financed the study, facilitated the research work in their own countries, and took also actively part by reviewing the individual country chapters. With this setting, the study created a true sense of ownership, and was itself a 'learning process' and 'capacity building', as the gained insights and knowledge remain in the network.

Noel Casserly represented Comhar on the EEAC's Sustainable Development Working Group, Karin Dubsy represented Comhar on the EEAC's Biodiversity Working Group and Jeanne Meldon represented Comhar on the EEAC Steering Committee.

Further information on the EEAC is available at [www.eeac-network.org](http://www.eeac-network.org)

## 13th Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD)

The 13th Session of CSD was held at UN Headquarters in New York in April 2005. It was the second session to be



held since the new multi-year programme was adopted at CSD 11 in 2003. The new work programme restructured CSD's work on the basis of two-year Implementation Cycles, with each cycle comprised of a Review and a Policy year focused on a thematic cluster of issues. CSD13 focused on policies and options to expedite implementation of the goals and commitments in relation to the priority areas of water, sanitation and human settlements, as contained in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration.

Ministers and senior officials participated in a high level segment delivering statements, and engaging in discussions with Major Groups and UN agencies. A Partnership Fair and numerous side events were held throughout the session. The Irish delegation was lead by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dick Roche, T.D. Noel Casserly represented Comhar on the Irish delegation.

A summary of the outcomes published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development is available at [www.iisd.ca/csd](http://www.iisd.ca/csd)

## United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Comhar was represented at the Annual meeting of UNEP National Committees held in Geneva in October 2004. The meeting served as the European Regional Preparatory meeting for the 6th Global Civil Society Forum and discussed, inter alia, strengthening civil society engagement in the work of UNEP and was attended by European regional partnership networks and civil society organisations.

<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and UK



## Comhar Representation at Conferences

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

- "Towards a Land Value Taxation for Local Government" – Oxford on 16th September 2004
- "Wood Energy 2004" – Sustainable Energy Ireland's conference in Cork on 7th October 2004
- "ecobusiness 04" – Dundalk Chamber of Commerce National Environment Conference on 20th and 21st October 2004
- "Passive House Ireland 2004" – Sustainable Energy Ireland Conference on 4th and 5th November 2004 in Dublin
- "Future Towns and Villages" – The Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland Conference in Limerick on 18th November 2004
- "Ireland's Energy Security of Supply" – Sustainable Energy Ireland's conference in Dublin Castle on 10th February 2005
- "Education for Sustainable Development" – Conference in Esbjerg, Denmark – 19th to 21st May 2005





# Operational Programme Monitoring Committees



A number of Comhar members continued to represent Comhar on the Monitoring Committees for the National Development Plan and the various Monitoring Committees for the Operational Programmes and the Environment Co-ordinating Committee. This representation is set out below:

Committee	Comhar Representative
National Development Plan/ Community Support Framework	Jeanne Meldon
Southern & Eastern Regional OP	Billy Murphy
Border, Midlands & Western Regional OP	Emer O'Siochrú
Economic & Social Infrastructure	David Healy
Employment & Human Resources Development OP	-
Productive Sector OP	Pat Finnegan
CAP Rural Development Plan	Ruaidhrí Deasy
Interreg IIIA	Bernie Walsh
Leader+	Billy Murphy
Environment Co-ordinating Committee	Jeanne Meldon

# 10 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.





# Appendix 1



## Comhar's Terms of Reference (2002–2005)

- 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, 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 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, 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. Where a nominated person is appointed to the Partnership, the second nominee from the same body will be designated as the alternate and may substitute for the member from time to time.
- 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, with the exception of 10 members (two from each pillar) appointed in 2002, who will serve a four-year term, at the end of which the term of office of all members will revert to three years. The 10 members concerned shall be chosen by lottery within each pillar at the first meeting of the Partnership in 2002. 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 the vacating member(s). The size of the membership may be varied by the Minister for the Environment 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 (2002–2005)

<b>Chairman:</b>	Dr. John Bowman <sup>2</sup>
------------------	------------------------------

<b>Pillar 1</b>	<b>State/ Public Sector</b>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Ms. Lorraine Fegan <sup>3</sup>	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
Mr. Tom O'Mahony <sup>4</sup>	Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government/Environmental Network of Government Departments

<b>Pillar 2</b>	<b>Economic Sectors</b>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Olga Carey	Construction Industry Federation
Donal Buckley	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Sandra Kehoe	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Padraig Haugh	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
Ruaidhrí Deasy	Irish Farmers Association

<b>Pillar 3</b>	<b>Environmental NGOs</b>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Ms. Elaine Nevin	ECO (The Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth)
Catherine Casey <sup>5</sup> Pat Finnegan David Healy Emer O'Siocró	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

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bowman's term of office expired on 30th June 2004 – Noel Cassely acted as Chairman for the remainder of Comhar's second term

<sup>3</sup> Replaced Declan Burns during the term

<sup>4</sup> Replaced Geraldine Tallon during the term

<sup>5</sup> Replaced Dr. Elizabeth Cullen during the term

<b>Pillar 4</b>	<b>Social and Community Sector</b>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Br. Kevin Codd	Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI)
Ms. Josephine Henry	National Youth Council of Ireland
Billy Murphy	PLANET (Partnerships for Local Action Network)
Mr. Donie O’Leary <sup>6</sup>	People with Disabilities in Ireland
Ms. Bernie Walsh	Community Platform, CORI, National Association of Tenants’ Organisations, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Community Workers’ Co-operative, ACRA

<b>Pillar 5</b>	<b>Professional/Academic Sector</b>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Rachel Kenny	Irish Planning Institute
Dr. Richard Moles	Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland,
Jeanne Meldon	Universities Research Group on the Environment
John Hammond	National Council for Curriculum Assessment
James Pike	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland

<b>Ex-officio member:</b>	Mr. Sean Power, Chairman, Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment and Local Government.
---------------------------	---

<sup>6</sup> Replaced Sharyn Long during the term



# Appendix 3



## Comhar Work Programme (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 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 campaign *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

**COMHAR**

THE NATIONAL  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERSHIP

17 St. Andrew Street,  
Dublin 2,  
Ireland

Tel: 01 888 3990  
LoCall: 1890 200 327  
email: [comhar@environ.ie](mailto:comhar@environ.ie)  
[www.comhar-nsdp.ie](http://www.comhar-nsdp.ie)