



2007

ANNUAL REPORT

ABOUT COMHAR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Comhar Sustainable Development Council¹ (Comhar SDC) was established in 1999 as the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development. Its terms of reference are to:

- Advance the national agenda for sustainable development
- Assist in devising suitable mechanisms for sustainable development
- Advise on the implementation of these mechanisms
- Contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards

The full terms of reference for the period 2006 to 2008 are set out in Appendix 1. Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and began its third term on January 1st 2006 under the Chairmanship of Professor Frank Convery.

Comhar SDC is comprised of 25 members who are drawn from five pillars: the State sector, the economic sector, 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. The full list of members for the second year of Comhar SDC's third term is given in Appendix 2. The broad representation allows Comhar SDC to arrive at informed and balanced conclusions.

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¹ Previously the National Sustainable Development Partnership; the name was changed in 2006.

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am delighted to present the 8th annual report of Comhar Sustainable Development Council.

The year 2007 will be remembered as the last year of vigour for the 'tiger economy'. We now enter a period of very slow economic growth and associated contraction in government revenues, rising unemployment and sharp fall on construction activity. The pressures to attract inward investment will further intensify, and we will need to be innovative and smart in what we do and how we do it to come through this adjustment with minimum damage.

We now have ambitious targets set in regard to greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, reduction of biodiversity loss, waste management. In 2007, our conference, our recommendations to government, our commentaries and our studies all reflected this need to make sure that the incentives we face in the market place encourage sustainable activity, and that the institutional arrangements we bring to bear in making and implementing decisions are designed to be efficient – deliver objective at least cost – and to be fair. To the extent that time and resources allow, we have mobilised evidence to support our inputs at various levels. 2007 was a year of great development for Comhar Sustainable Development Council (SDC). In our advice to Government, we have continued to advocate for the need to make progress towards a sustainable and fair society.

This report outlines the range of activities undertaken by Comhar Sustainable Development Council during 2007, including:

- Recommendations to Government on the National Sustainable Development Strategy Review
- Recommendations to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on communicating climate and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Recommendations to Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland 2007-2020
- Recommendations to Government on Motor Tax and VRT
- Observations on adapting to climate change submitted to the European Commission
- Recommendations to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government with regards to their revised Statement of Strategy
- Recommendations to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources with regards to their revised Statement of Strategy
- Recommendations to the Department of Transport with regards to their revised Statement of Strategy
- Recommendations on Budget 2008
- A seminar series on transport which fed into the Action Plan on Sustainable Transport
- A joint meeting between the Biodiversity Forum and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG)
- A national conference, "Making it happen – towards a sustainable Ireland"

- Continued sponsorship of special awards for sustainable development at the Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and the Tidy Towns competition
- The publication of a Comhar SDC's calendar highlighting practical actions which can be taken by individuals or groups to foster sustainable development

I'm grateful to Council members for their active participation in the work of Comhar SDC during the year. The development of Comhar SDC perspectives is initiated and guided to large extent by the efforts of the Comhar SDC Working Groups. Working groups have been established to address priority issues identified in our work programme, including climate change, sustainable development indicators, the new National Development Plan, review of the national sustainable development strategy, as well as education and awareness. It has been very helpful for us to be able co-opt on to the working groups key stakeholders beyond the Comhar SDC membership.

Professor Frank Convery
Chairman



Frank Convery and Claire McKeown.

THE WORK OF COMHAR IN

2007



1. INTRODUCTION

Comhar SDC works in three-year cycles and began its third term on January 1st 2006 under the Chairmanship of Professor Frank Convery. This annual report covers the second year of Comhar SDC's third term, the twelve-month period up to the end of December 2007. Comhar SDC's terms of reference provide a broad scope for its work programme. The organisation has discretion in designing its own agenda or, alternatively, 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 SDC's publication – Principles for Sustainable Development – provides the overall guiding philosophy. The work programme for the period 2006-2008 is available in Appendix 3.

The current Comhar SDC Work Programme sets out the broad parameters with a degree of flexibility 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 SDC publishes its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media. It also submits 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.

During 2007, Comhar SDC 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 SDC were held during the twelve month period. Significant highlights of the year included:

- Recommendations to the Department of Finance on sustainability in relation to the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The NDP represents the main vehicle determining investment priorities, so Comhar SDC devoted considerable effort to addressing how to ensure that sustainability was incorporated, not just in the investment programme, but also in the operation and maintenance of what Comhar SDC invest in. The Department of Finance remains the key engine for the development and implementation of national policy; Comhar SDC regard the incorporation of sustainability considerations into its decision-making processes as fundamental.
- Recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the review of the National Climate Change Strategy. Comhar SDC focused on the mix of policy that need to be mobilised if Comhar SDC are to change the trajectory of our green house gas emissions, and adaptation to climate change; the latter means first and foremost, changing how Comhar SDC manage our water.
- Recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). The recommendations addressed the thematic priorities identified in the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy as well as cross-cutting issues such as governance.
- Recommendations to the Department of the Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland 2007-2020.

- Recommendations to the Department of the Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on the Energy Green Paper: 'Towards a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland'. Comhar SDC welcomed the range and breadth of ambition, but noted that energy efficiency and conservation still do not get 'parity of esteem' with energy supply and renewables, in spite of the fact that the economic, environmental and energy reduction payoffs to vigorous action in this domain are manifest.
- Submission to the Environmental Protection Agency on Ireland's Draft National Allocation Plan for emissions trading for the period 2008-2012.
- Recommendations to the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government on proposals for a waste regulator.
- Submission to the Department of Finance on Budget 2008. The focus of the submission is on mobilising markets – carbon levy, and VRT and Motor Tax – to change greenhouse gas emission trajectory as in the Agreed Programme.
- Submission on OECD Review of the Irish Public Sector: Comhar SDC responded to the invitation to make a submission on the OECD Review of the Irish Public Sector. The recommendations were drawn in part from Comhar Sustainable Development Council's 2006 Recommendations on Sustainability in the National Development Plan 2007-2013.
- Comhar SDC paper on surface transport and energy efficiency prepared for the Annual Conference of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils: This paper focuses largely on the potential for realising energy efficiency in passenger cars in the EU. EU legislation currently being prepared could have a major impact on the future energy performance of passenger cars sold in Europe.
- Comhar SDC Recommendations on Communicating Climate Change and the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Comhar SDC updated the 2001 submission to the Department on communicating climate change. Many of the original recommendations remained relevant. Overall, it is crucial that any media/awareness campaign on climate change should not be lost in the midst of other advertising campaigns (environmental or other). There is a need for overall co-ordination of communication approaches to ensure that synergies are maximised and duplicating or competing campaigns avoided.
- Comhar SDC Recommendations on proposed VRT and Motor Tax restructuring to include CO₂-emissions differentiation: Comhar SDC reviewed the Options for restructuring the VRT and Motor Tax systems and proposed CO₂-differentiated rates that could provide CO₂ emissions reductions and include a factor that provides an incentive for advanced emissions after-treatment technologies (i.e. next level of Euro standards) with the 2005 vehicle stock in Ireland yet remain revenue neutral.

2. BIODIVERSITY

In recent times, the diversity of life on earth has substantially and, in many cases, irreversibly decreased. There has been considerable changes in species distribution, changes in the timing of seasonal events and changes in the links between species. Biodiversity can be defined as the variety of life, and includes diversity at all levels – ecosystems, organisms and genes, as well as the multitude of complex interactions between species that is a feature of all living systems. Safeguarding Ireland's biodiversity is therefore a hugely important and urgent task.

2.1 THE BIODIVERSITY FORUM

In response to the pressure on biodiversity, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government developed a National Biodiversity Plan in 2002. The Biodiversity Forum was set up in early 2006 to report on the implementation of actions identified in the National Biodiversity Plan, as well as ensure ongoing input into the development of national strategies to promote biodiversity conservation. It also oversees independent monitoring of progress in the continuous implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, highlighting progress and bottlenecks. The Biodiversity Forum exists under the auspices of Comhar SDC and provides a mechanism for consultation and input from stakeholders. The Forum has an important all-island dimension with representation from Northern Ireland biodiversity interests.

A major action of the Biodiversity Forum in 2007 was tracking progress in terms of actions implemented as part of the National Biodiversity Plan. At the end of 2007, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government announced its intention to publish a second National Biodiversity Plan. Comhar SDC invited proposals for a briefing paper that would inform the Forum of input into the plan. This process continued into 2008.

The Forum is chaired by Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson Director of the National Botanic Gardens. The members of the Forum during 2007 were Dr. Liam Lysaght, Dr. Ken Whelan, Gerry Clabby, Cliona O'Brien, Niamh Hunt, Ruaidhrí Deasy, Karin Dubsky, Siobhan Egan, Anja Murray, Ornagh Darcy, Professor Emer Colleran, Professor Richard Moles, Bob Browne, Ken Bradley, Louise McAlavey, Mike Meharg. Ex-officio members include Ciaran O'Keeffe (DOEHLG), Colman O'Criodáin (DOEHLG), David Kelly (DOEHLG), Noel Casserly (Comhar SDC) and Paschal Stephens (Comhar SDC).

2.2 FORUM/NIBG JOINT MEETING

The Biodiversity Forum and the Northern Irish Biodiversity Group (NIBG) held a joint meeting in Athlone in October 2007. The main points from the discussion involved examining the practicalities of co-operation between the Forum and the NIBG and promoting north-south co-operation on specific projects. A follow up meeting was held in December 2007. The issues identified for potential joint work included:

- Revision of biodiversity plans and strategies with shared input as appropriate, in both directions.
- Management of cross-border sites, notably wetlands, and harmonisation of management objectives.
- Examining the links between climate change and biodiversity. It was recognised this could be an enormous subject area, but the key was to focus on the relationship between the two.
- Control and prevention of invasive alien species. For practical reasons, this could only ever be achieved by harmonisation of actions by both administrations.
- Further conferences and meetings.

3. BUDGET 2008 SUBMISSION

Comhar SDC made specific proposals to the Department of Finance on the national budget for 2008. This re-emphasised the importance of ensuring that our quality of life in Ireland, especially in regard to environmental and social domains, is protected and enhanced. Comhar SDC's recommendations were framed in the context of advancing quality of life and in giving shape to the medium-term quality of life objectives in the National Development Plan. Comhar SDC considered that the focus should be on mobilising markets through schemes such as a carbon levy, and VRT and Motor Tax to change greenhouse gas emission trajectory as in the Agreed Programme. Fiscal decisions are the key shapers of economic, social and environmental performance promoting signals that actively promote sustainable behaviour. The key Comhar SDC recommendations were:

- A carbon levy should be introduced aimed at rebalancing the tax base to promote a lower carbon economy. Producers and consumers in the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) would be excluded from the levy. In addition, the revenues from the levy should be returned to the citizens to support those who suffer from fuel poverty.
- Rebalancing the VRT and Motor Tax as outlined above.
- The Government should carbon-proof all new fiscal measures to ensure that they do not incentivise a rise in greenhouse gas emissions and other pressures on the environment, and ideally encourage reduction.
- Any reduction in stamp duty of housing should be contingent on meeting the highest energy efficiency standard, as validated by independent labelling standards via the implementation of the *Energy Performance in Buildings Directive (EPBD)*.
- Ensure local governments have sufficient funding to employ officers responsible for biodiversity and sustainable development.
- Create a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) to finance projects and activities that advance competitiveness, reduce pressure on environment, and support social cohesion.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE

Ireland ratified the international binding agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, in 2002. In doing so, Ireland agreed to limit its greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels. Greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland have risen steadily since 1990 and in 2004 were 23% above 1990 levels. A National Climate Change Strategy was published in 2007, which set the framework for tackling climate change in Ireland from 2007-2012.

4.1 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Climate Change Working Group was set up to:

- Prepare a draft response to EPA consultation on 2nd National Allocation Plan (2008-2012) under the Emissions Trading Scheme.
- Prepare draft response to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government consultation on the review of the National Climate Change Strategy.
- Liaise formally with the Interdepartmental Climate Change Team.
- Engage in education and awareness-raising with respect to Climate Change, assisting in implementing Article 6 of UNFCCC.

Towards the end of 2007 Comhar commissioned research “*Cap and Share*”, a personal carbon trading scheme – the aim of the study is to identify whether this would be an effective policy option supporting the transition to a lower carbon intensity economy in Ireland. The project was undertaken by AEA Technologies and Cambridge Econometrics and the final report of the study was due for delivery in Autumn 2008.

Other activities and recommendations addressed by the climate change working groups are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The members of the working group in 2007 were Frank Convery (Chair), Tony Larkin, Donal Buckley, Pat Finnegan, Richard Douthwaite, Ornagh Darcy, Laura Burke, Frank Maughan, Lisa Ryan, Noel Casserly.

4.2 COMMUNICATING CLIMATE CHANGE

In early 2007, Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on communicating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. From conducting a desk top review of Ireland’s progress on reducing carbon emissions, Comhar SDC recommended that emissions reduction should be an integral part of all personal and business decision-making. Other recommendations on communicating climate change made to the Department include:

- Fulfil a dual role of raising awareness of the necessity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and of providing information on greenhouse gas emissions associated with our daily choices.
- The communication should emphasise the urgency of taking action and promote individual responsibility.
- The communication should be sustained over a period of at least five years.
- The communication campaign should have significant, dedicated resources assigned to it.
- A full-time communications co-ordinator should be appointed.
- It should be integrated and exploit synergies with other relevant campaigns and activities across Government departments and with Northern Ireland.
- Identify and develop the institutional framework to implement carbon labelling of products across all sectors and provide assistance with a consistent design.
- Involve central government and local authorities leading by example, requiring green procurement where possible and an ex-ante climate impact assessment of Government policies and measures.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS ON MOTOR TAX AND VRT

Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the proposed motor tax restructuring process. The road transport sector is the main source of growth in Irish greenhouse gas emissions. Unless this trajectory can be modified, it will be impossible for us to contribute usefully to the abatement of greenhouse gasses and reduce our dependence on imported oil. There are many facets to changing the course:

- Congestion prices, which manage demand on roads to the point that it flows freely and buses can operate effectively.
- More clustering of households and jobs in the vicinity of public transport nodes so high quality cost-effective and frequent mobility services can be provided.

However, one key to moving quickly to make our new fleet more fuel and environmentally efficient is to change the taxes we pay to buy and operate a car.

CO₂ emissions can be reduced from passenger cars by the replacement of the passenger car fleet with more fuel-efficient vehicles and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. Vehicle taxes represent fixed costs to vehicle owners and can be used to influence consumers to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles. Comhar SDC welcomed the initiative of the Department to incorporate CO₂ emissions differentiation into the motor tax system. However, vehicles taxes have no effect on driving behaviour. Therefore Comhar SDC proposes in the long-term that VRT be abolished and the revenue collected as a distance-based charge instead, while annual motor tax continue to be applied as a function of vehicle emissions.

In the short-term both VRT and motor tax should be restructured and levied on the basis of CO₂ emissions and advanced emissions performance. Comhar SDC also made recommendations to the Department of Finance on incorporating CO₂ emissions differentiation into the VRT system. These systems send a clear message to consumers regarding the significance of the fuel economy of vehicles.

4.4 ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The European Commission published a Green Paper on the subject of adapting to climate change. Adaptation is based on the inevitability of adverse impacts of climate change and the need to introduce adaptation measures to lessen these effects. The Commission launched a public consultation on the Green Paper and invited submissions. Comhar SDC submitted its observations directly to the Commission and also to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2007.

The Green Paper made a strong case for integrating adaptation measures into other EU strategies and policies. Comhar SDC strongly agreed that early action is necessary and considered that adaptation must be factored into the conceptual stage of all new policies. The European Commission also proposed the establishment of a European Advisory Group on Adaptation to act as a Commission's Expert Group. Comhar SDC supported this initiative and recommended that the Advisory Group offer advice to Member States not just on community policies but also areas that are primarily the responsibility of Member States, such as spatial planning.

5. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Comhar SDC recognises that there is a major challenge to communicating sustainable development in a manner that is meaningful and understandable to the broader general public.

5.1 EDUCATION AND AWARENESS WORKING GROUP

The working group was established to make recommendations on developing outreach activities. The main activities of the group include:

- Facilitating stakeholder input into the preparation and implementation of the national action programme in relation to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- Reviewing existing funding mechanisms for ESD.
- Preparing draft recommendations on an ESD national programme for submission to the Department of the Education and Science and the Department of the Environment Heritage & Local Government and advising on implementation.

The members of the working group are Laura Burke, Niamh Hunt, Emer Dunne, Billy Murphy, Elaine Nevin, Matthew Seebach, Carmel Sheridan, Noel Casserly (Chair), Ben Whelan, Michael Mc Kenna.

5.2 ESD WORKSHOP

Comhar SDC held a workshop in April 2007 in Cultivate on ESD. Research was also commissioned on education for sustainable development by ECO UNESCO. The purpose of this research was:

- To provide an overview of good practice in Education and Training for Sustainable Development in Ireland, to provide samples of good practice, programmes and projects.
- To draw conclusions on the policy frameworks and other mechanisms required to further develop Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland.

Comhar SDC was involved with an interdepartmental group in inputting into a National Strategy for ESD.

5.3 NATIONAL STRATEGY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Outcomes from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 recognised that life long learning and education is a driving force towards Sustainable Development. To promote this, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which will run from 2005 to 2014, provides a framework for global action. The goal of the UN Decade is to move society towards sustainable development, taking into account the complex interactions between the three pillars of Sustainable Development, namely environment, society and economics.

The European dimension is addressed in the UNECE Strategy for ESD² which was adopted in Vilnius in 2005 and in the revised EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)³ published in 2006; the revised EU SDS calls on member states to implement the UNECE Strategy for ESDS and bring forward national action programmes.

Key themes in ESD include: poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace, ethics, responsibility in local and global contexts, democracy and governance, justice, security, human rights, health, gender equity, cultural diversity, production and consumption patterns, corporate responsibility, environmental protection, natural resource management and biological and landscape diversity.

² <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/welcome.htm>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/welcome/index_en.htm

The Irish government made a commitment to the development of a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. A National Steering Committee for Sustainable Development was established in 2005 to move forward the development and implementation of a National Strategy on ESD.

Members of the National Steering Committee include representatives from various government departments including the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Foreign Affairs – Irish Aid, CDVEC – Curriculum Development Unit, University of Limerick, Comhar SDC and ECO UNESCO.

The Department of Education and Science retains the overall coordinating role for policy development and implementation for ESD at national level and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government are responsible for reporting at international level. The Department of Education and Science engaged the services of ECO UNESCO to undertake a consultancy on the development of a national strategy for education for sustainable development. Proposals for a draft strategy were presented to a stakeholder workshop in Croke Park in December 2007.

5.4 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Comhar SDC aims to engage effectively with key sectoral commercial and political interests and the general public so that there is widespread understanding of sustainability issues. As part of this objective, Comhar SDC Chairman, Professor Frank Convery, publishes a bi-monthly commentary which focuses attention on the sustainability dimension of emerging issues. The following commentaries were published in 2007:

- **Adapting to Climate Change in Ireland – Some Reflections** – considers how policy instruments need to be developed to achieve outcomes that are cost effective and that encourage innovation.
- **Sustainability and Slots in Ireland** – examines why Heathrow slots have arisen as an issue, what are the commercial forces involved, and the implications for sustainable development.
- **Sustaining Action on Climate Change** – reflects on actions required to deliver on the Government commitment to 'set a target for *this administration* of a reduction of 3% per year on average in our greenhouse gas emissions'.
- **Universities and Local Sustainable Development** – considers how Universities, as engines of innovation can play little role in energising their own adjacent communities.
- **Sustainability and Trading – the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in Ireland** – reflects on the importance of this policy instrument for Ireland because, via trading, the EU ETS provides maximum flexibility for electricity generators, combustion plants and heavy industry in making their contribution to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Community involvement and Sustainability** – suggests that every statutory organisation – given authority and resources by the citizen – should be obliged to engage seriously and substantively with communities and relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and indeed support them with funds and information.
- **The Carbon Levy – Some Frequently Asked Questions** – addresses issues in the context of the Comhar Sustainable Development Council Recommendations to Government for Budgets 08-12.
- **Climate Change and Sustainability** – considers, from policy to personal, what can we do as individuals, families and households to change outcomes.
- **Budgets and Sustainability – the first small step towards the Irish Environmental Miracle?** – examines the challenge in simultaneously moving to become a knowledge society, and ensure the environmental and social sustainability of our efforts, while enhancing competitiveness.

6. ENERGY

Ireland's total primary energy consumption has grown from about 9 million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe) in 1990 to almost 14 mtoe in 2004. This is projected to grow a further 43.6 percent up until 2020. Ireland's CO₂ emissions have increased by 25.4 percent (2005 figures) above 1990 levels and are projected to rise to 37 percent above 1990 levels by 2020 without further policy measures. About 87 percent of Ireland's energy is imported. Almost all of this imported energy will be from fossil fuels. Renewable energy accounted for only 1.8 percent of total energy in 2004 and this is projected to decline to just 1 percent by 2020. The four major challenges to sustainability in Ireland's energy sector are:

- Increasing energy consumption
- High dependence on imported fossil fuels
- Increasing emissions of CO₂
- Low use of renewable forms of energy

6.1 COMHAR SDC RECOMMENDATIONS ON DCENR STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) announced its intention to develop a new Strategy Statement in 2007. The purpose of the strategy is to set priorities for the work of the Department for the three-year period from 2008-2010. Comhar SDC recommendations on the draft Strategy related to energy and natural resources, which are closest to Comhar SDC's ongoing areas of work. They also draw on other inputs made regarding priorities for the new Government, a submission to OECD governance study, and inputs to the strategies of the Departments of Transport and of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Comhar SDC recommended that the Department should ensure that its entire operations are aligned with the goal of sustainable development. In this regard, the forthcoming revised National Sustainable Development Strategy should be the umbrella within

which key elements of the Department's strategy are embedded. Also, the Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan (STTAP) should be prioritised as a major strategic document for the Government. Specific Priorities should include:

- Sustainable energy should become the explicit and overarching goal of the Department, informing all activities within all units of the Department.
- Fiscal and macroeconomic instruments are supported. The introduction of a carbon levy as decided in the Agreed Programme for Government could make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of Ireland's energy system in the long term.
- There should be a focus on demand-side and consumer issues.
- The Department and regulatory authorities should provide the necessary political and technical direction to effect a re-orientation of the national electricity grid, in such a way that it will be able to accommodate widespread penetration of small-scale and intermittent sources of electricity.
- The Department should lead a policy review of carbon intensive fuels, especially coal and peat, in Ireland's energy mix.
- In liaison with Sustainable Energy Ireland and other agencies, the Department should exploit the opportunities in the State's research and development budget foreseen under the National Development Plan to maximise the synergies with Ireland's climate-change goals.
- A strategic environmental assessment should be undertaken on the national policy and programme for biofuel production. Additional research is required to explore the potential of second-generation biofuels using lignocellulose biomass.
- The DCENR itself should become a model of public-sector energy efficiency and best practice in its daily operations, ranging from the staff behaviour, the energy management of its buildings, and its purchasing policies.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS ON NATIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

The Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources issued the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2007-2020 for Consultation in October 2007. The plan was commended due to the fact it emphasised action and linked energy policy and climate change. Comhar SDC made a number of suggestions for strengthening and improving the plan:

- Clarify the baseline and counterfactual situation, by specifying numerically what the total energy consumption is expected to be in the target years, with and without the Action Plan.
- Analyse market failure, and the implications.
- Do a policy instrument-action matrix, perhaps showing the policy instruments – information, market-based instruments (taxes and levies, emissions trading), subsidies (grant and tax concessions), direct public investments, regulations (command and control), liability, green purchasing, research and development on the X axis, and the actions on the Y (vertical). This will clarify what is proposed, and provide some insights as to how the mix might be changed to advantage.
- Create a Business Energy Efficiency Forum (BEEF) to bring those who supply energy efficiency soft and hardware and services into a grouping with the brief of maximising business opportunities locally and globally in this field.
- Appoint a body with the remit of advancing the agenda, identifying weaknesses in implementation and reporting to the Cabinet Committee for Energy and Climate Change.
- Document the institutional capacities and delivery structures identified as the implementing agents, and ensure that any deficiencies are identified early on and corrected.



Consultation session on review of NSDS at Cultivate Centre, Dublin, April 2007.

7. SUBMISSION ON OECD REVIEW OF THE IRISH PUBLIC SECTOR

Comhar SDC responded to the invitation to make a submission on the OECD Review of the Irish Public Sector. The recommendations were drawn in part from Comhar Sustainable Development Council's 2006 Recommendations on Sustainability in the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

- Identify the key strengths of the Irish policy system and what is necessary to secure and enhance this performance in the future.
- Identify cases of excellence in Irish policy design and the converse, and what lessons can be yielded from national experience.
- Examine the role of the Department of Finance and how it could best incorporate the sustainable agenda should command particular attention.
- Reflect on how the interface between public servants and the political leadership is best managed in the public interest, and the merits or otherwise of a cabinet type system.
- Identify what is the appropriate balance between dedicated independent evaluation agency – Controller and Auditor General in the Irish case – and departmental and agency evaluation in evaluating performance, accepting that organisations typically will not voluntarily demonstrate and document failure for policies for which they are responsible.
- Examine how best to incorporate environmental and social aspects into the evaluation process.
- Examine the mandate of local government in Ireland, and whether it has the structures, scale and scope to deliver, and what changes, if any, would be necessary in this regard. In particular, the pre-requisites needed to deliver the sustainability agenda should be identified.
- Recommend whether river basins should become part of the decision-making and delivery framework as regards activities where water management are central.

8. NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Ireland's Sustainable Development Strategy is the template for ensuring that our economic and social development can continue into the future, in conjunction with the protection and enhancement of the environment. Ireland published its first National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) in 1997. The NSDS was revised in 2002 in the run-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Following the adoption of a revised EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EUSDS) in June 2006, Ireland is preparing an updated NSDS.

In the Irish context, a major shift in our economic model will be necessary to realise sustainable development. Meeting the challenge of climate change will require fundamental changes in the way we live and work. This will be a transformative project, but it need not be disruptive. Targets need to be set well in advance and strong, unambiguous signals must be given to guide the individual actions of all members of society. Comhar SDC welcomed the proposed publication of the revised National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), in this regard.

8.1 THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

This National Sustainable Development Working Group was set up in early 2006 to consider and make recommendations in relation to a number of inter-related areas:

- Integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation, implementation, monitoring and review of the new National Development Plan for the period 2007-2013. This work was completed in 2006.
- Development and use of appropriate mechanisms for measuring progress on sustainable development, including indicators and assessment methodologies.

- Assessing priorities for the revision of Ireland's National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS).

The group oversaw the preparation of recommendations for Government in relation to the review of the NSDS, which linked Irish and EU commitments (see below).

The members of the working group are Frank Convery (Chair), Laura Burke, Donal Buckley, Ruaidhri Deasy, Aoife Cassidy, David Healy, Billy Murphy, Cathy Maguire, Richard Moles, Noel Casserly, Lisa Ryan, Pat Gilheaney, and Pat Fanning.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS ON NSDS REVIEW

Comhar SDC prepared a comprehensive document outlining recommendations for the revised NSDS. The recommendations were informed by commissioned research on sustainable development indicators (undertaken by Enviro Centre) and commissioned research on sustainable consumption and production (undertaken by Dr. Peter Doran of Queen's University Belfast) regional workshops in Dublin, Cork and Sligo to feed the recommendations Comhar SDC also organised three regional stakeholder workshops, in Dublin, Cork and Sligo in collaboration with the Cultivate Centre and Sligo Institute of Technology.

The recommendations followed the template proposed by the EU SDS. This template sets out an approach for better policymaking based on better regulation and on the principle that sustainable development should be integrated into policy making at all levels. It advocates the use of tools for better policy-making, including ex-post assessment of policy impacts, and participation from the public and relevant stakeholders. Comhar SDC has recommended the following:

- Focus on better policy making and policy integration. Sustainable development requires that government policies are coherent and formulated with regard to other policies and priorities, as opposed to in isolation.
- The High Level Inter-departmental group should continue to oversee the delivery of the revised strategy after its adoption.
- Commit to the development and refinement of Impact Assessments (IA) for policies and programmes in order to assess the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development, including costs of inaction, and ex post analysis. Existing Regulatory Impact Assessment methodologies should be reviewed in the light of best practice on sustainability impact assessments.
- Put in place the necessary supports and mechanisms to provide for effective delivery of the revised NSDS at local and regional level.
- Extend the principle of – making the polluter pay. All users should be encouraged to pay for different kinds of infrastructure to reflect, at least part of, the environmental cost of their use. Charging should be designed to encourage a less environmentally damaging behaviour.
- Public procurement accounts for a large share of national consumption. If the Government integrates principles of sustainable development into its purchasing decisions, this will at once create a market for sustainable products and help Government to align its operations with the principles of sustainable development.



Consultation session on review of NSDS at UCC, April 2007.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS ON DOEHLG STATEMENT OF STRATEGY (SOS)

Comhar SDC responded to the invitation to make an input to the drafting of the DOEHLG Statement of Strategy. The Programme for Government agreed in June 2007 identified three key priorities for this term of government. One of these was combating climate change. Targets have been set to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3% per year on average. Climate change mitigation and adaptation will need to be given particular emphasis in the Department's work programme from 2008-2012. Comhar SDC recommended that the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government:

- Mobilise the various policy instruments – information and education, regulation (command and control), direct investment, subsidies, market based (levies charge and taxes, trading), research and development – having regard to their effects singly and in combination.
- Marshall evidence nationally and internationally to map out options and their implications in terms of capital and operating costs, the incentives the policy provides to key stakeholders, expected outcomes, sustainability, implementation mechanisms.
- Have clear and effective mechanisms for interaction in situations where the involvement of more than one government department is necessary. This is important in identifying and evaluating the spill-over effects associated with policy choices.
- Carbon-proof all investment in infrastructure and other programmes before implementation.
- Local government have central responsibilities that are crucial with regards to advancing a sustainability agenda. The Environment Fund could support additional staffing resources in the local agenda service, for example biodiversity officers and local sustainability officers supporting the delivery of sustainable development at local and regional level.

10. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Transport is one of the seven key challenges identified in the revised EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) published in June 2006. In the Irish context, transport poses some of the most complex set of challenges to sustainable development. The transport sector has grown much faster than the economy as a whole and this growth has been accompanied by increasing problems like congestion, local air pollution and the effects of urban sprawl. In 2007, the Government announced that it would publish a Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan (STTAP).

10.1 TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP

Comhar SDC created a Working Group on Sustainable Transport to provide input to the debate and to make specific recommendations to the Department of Transport and other government departments and agencies. In addition, the Working Group on Sustainable Transport gathers stakeholder views and the latest national and international research findings to bring concrete policy recommendations to the Government. It applies Comhar SDC's broad perspective on sustainable transport, its widely representative membership and its access to research (in-house, specially commissioned, and the wider research world) to a sector that may have suffered in the past from a lack of integrated policy.

The Transport Working Group held a series of substantive meetings, each around a specific theme, at which experts and stakeholders discussed the most pertinent dilemmas and opportunities in the Irish transport sector. The Working Group on Sustainable Transport had the following specific tasks:

- Add value to the policy debate on the Sustainable Transport Action Plan.
- Facilitate the elaboration of stakeholders' views.
- Provide a forum for the exchange of information and research findings.

- Organise meetings with national and international experts to introduce relevant research and best practices.
- Act as a focal point for the communication of views to Government, especially the Department of Transport but also other relevant Government departments.
- Produce written interim reports, *ad-hoc* papers and commentaries, and a final report containing detailed recommendations to Government.
- Hold a special seminar/conference to present the findings of the Working Group to Government and the general public.

The chairman of the group is Professor Brendan Walsh. The other members are Tony Larkin, Liam Berney, Donal Buckley, Pat Finnegan, Richard Douthwaite, and Judy Dunne. Ex-officio members include Dave Fadden (Department of Transport and Maritime Affairs, Strategic Planning and Policy Division) and David Browne (Department of Transport and Maritime Affairs, Strategic Planning and Policy Division)

10.2 TRANSPORT SEMINARS

In 2007, Comhar SDC hosted a seminar series on transport. The purpose of the seminars was twofold:

- To examine the potential of policy measures, such as mobility management, modal shift and eco-driving, in order to manage transport environmental impacts and demand.
- To help Comhar SDC formulate policy recommendations to Government, specifically to feed into the Action Plan on Sustainable Transport.

Comhar SDC hosted the first half-day seminar on the role of walking and cycling in Irish transport policy. The purpose of the seminar was to identify the potential role of walking and cycling in national transport policy, by referring to national and international best practices.

The speakers were:

- Matthew Page from the University of Leeds (Institute for Transport Studies)
- Niels Jensen from the City of Copenhagen
- Damien O Tuama from Colin Buchanan Transportation Consultants.

The second seminar was on rural transport and social inclusion. The speakers were:

- Dr. John McDonagh from the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway
- Professor Jim Walsh, Vice-President for Innovation at NUI Maynooth
- Henk van der Kamp, the Head of the School of Spatial Planning at Dublin Institute of Technology.

The third seminar was on policy measures to manage transport impacts and demand. The speakers were:

- Philippe Crist, policy analyst at the Joint Transport Research Centre of the OECD and the International Transport Forum
- Una McGrath and Suzanne Cleary, analysts with Vipre consultancy
- Professor Austin Smyth, Head of the Transport Department at the University of Westminster, London and Professor of Transport Economics at the Transport Research Institute in Edinburgh.

The fourth and final seminar in 2007 was on economic instruments to manage transport impacts and demand with:

- Stef Proost, a professor at the Catholic University of Leuven
- Marian Jongman, a senior policy advisor in the road haulage division of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management in the Netherlands
- Jeremy Ryan, a Senior Transportation Planner working in the Dublin Transportation Office speaking at the event.

10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT'S NEW STRATEGY STATEMENT

In 2007, the Department of Transport developed a new Strategy Statement to set priorities for the work of the Department for the three-year period from 2008-2010.

Comhar SDC made recommendations to the Department in relation to sustainable transport systems.

Comhar SDC recognises that the transport sector in Ireland is faced with a cascade of challenges, including limits to energy supply, limits to natural carrying capacity and limits to social capital. The high rate of growth in this sector has at times lacked adequate co-ordination. However, there are good opportunities for change. There is increased awareness about climate change and the other negative impacts of transport, as well as a strengthened will in Government to address complex policies. Comhar SDC recommended the following to the Department of Transport:

- The primary focus of the new Statement of Strategy should be the development and execution of the Sustainable Transport and Travel Action Plan (STTAP).
- Sustainable transport should become the explicit and overarching goal of the Department of Transport, informing all activities within all units of the Department. It should not merely being a sub-sectoral objective to be considered on an equal basis along with other transport priorities.
- Resources should be allocated to develop transport and land-use models for the whole country. The Department should allocate increased resources for policy analysis, especially for innovative measures such as user charging, congestion pricing and other incentive-based approaches.

- All potential transport projects should be subject to a sustainability impact assessment as part of the project design and selection process, whereby the economic, social and environmental aspects are identified.
- The Department should devote additional resources and attention to non-car modes of transport, including public transport, but also walking and cycling.
- Urban sprawl has become a reality in Ireland and many new developments lacking in transport services have been created providing residents with no alternative to car usage. Accessibility to public transport should be an important criterion for land development, rather than the current situation where transport services attempt to follow development.
- Awareness should be raised among transport users of the environmental consequences of their choice of transport mode.



Left to right: Noel Casserly, Billy Murphy, Paschal Stephens, Laura Burke, Thomas Legge, Frank Convery and Peter Doran (QUB).

11. COMHAR SDC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Comhar SDC hosted the conference “Making it happen – towards a sustainable Ireland” in the Radisson SAS St. Helen’s Hotel, Stillorgan Road, Dublin. It addressed how to best achieve the direction of change drawing in the relevant aspects of the new Programme for Government and the then forthcoming revised NSDS. The objective of the conference was to facilitate an open discussion on how well Ireland is performing in relation to sustainability, and critically examine the policy drivers for the delivery of sustainable development across national government as well as at local and regional level. Experts in the particular sectors prepared briefing papers in advance and these provided a framework for the Conference discussion on each sector. The briefing papers addressed the following topics:

- Measuring sustainable development: the integration of environmental data into macroeconomic models – Enviro Centre
- Mobilising policy Instruments for sustainable development – Byrne O’Cleirigh Consultants
- Implementing policy across national government and from national to regional and local government – Muiris McCarthaigh, Institute of Public Administration

Government departments were strongly represented at the conference in terms of speakers and attendees. The conference contributed to understanding the options and issues relating to the implementation of the sustainable development dimensions of the government’s Agreed Programme 2007-12. Comhar SDC believes that economic growth is compatible with environmental and social advancement and therefore that sustainability must be a fundamental principle in the preparation and implementation of the new NDP.

12. SPONSORSHIP

Comhar SDC continued its programme of sponsorship for special sustainable development in the Tidy Towns, Young Scientist and the Young Environmentalist competitions.

Comhar occasionally sponsors events and publications which help to support key objectives in the Comhar work programme, particularly where such sponsorship promotes a better understanding of sustainable development amongst stakeholders and the general public.

12.1 YOUNG SCIENTIST & TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION

Comhar SDC sponsors 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 SDC and its purposes and also encouraging greater involvement/interest by young students in sustainable development issues. The winner Comhar SDC awards in 2007 went to Patrician College Finglas West, Dublin 11 for their project on the “Health Effects of Living Close to a Landfill”.

12.2 AWARD IN TIDY TOWNS COMPETITION

Since 2004, Comhar SDC has sponsored an 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 SDC’s Principles for Sustainable Development. The Comhar SDC sustainable development award was made to Kildare County Council for the County Offices in Naas.

12.3 YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST AWARD

The Awards are a unique initiative aimed at raising environmental awareness amongst young people whilst aiding personal development and fostering responsible citizenship. In 2007 the awards were held in the Mansion House. 30 projects were showcased. The Comhar Sustainable Development award was made to Scoil Carmel, Co Limerick. The overall Junior Young Environmentalist Awards 2007 went to students from St. Catherine’s College, Co. Armagh, with their project called “Green Christmas and Recycle Light”. The overall Senior Young Environmentalist Awards 2007 went to students from St. Mary’s Knockbeg College, Co. Carlow with their project “Go Wild – a study of native species and Biodiversity along the River Barrow”.

12.4 CONVERGENCE AT THE CULTIVATE CENTRE DUBLIN

Comhar SDC sponsored the following activities of Cultivate:

- Stakeholder workshop on the review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy in April 2007
- A seminar for stakeholders on the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development in April 2007
- A Directory of Education for Sustainable Development stakeholders in Ireland part of the Powerdown community project.

13. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF COMHAR SDC'S WORK

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

The EEAC annual conference was held in Evora, Portugal in October 2007 and focussed on *Energy Efficiency – Key Pillar for a Competitive, Secure and Sustainable Europe*. Comhar SDC Chairman Frank Convery sat on a panel at the Evora. The aim of the conference was to bring together stakeholders from European businesses, the EEAC member Councils, the European Commission and national public administration with an interest in energy efficiency. It provided the opportunity to analyse and discuss the implementation of the recent EU energy and climate policy and of its targets for 2020. Furthermore, the relatively high-energy intensity paradigm of Europe in the context of global energy sustainability and climate change mitigation was also addressed.

Comhar SDC contributed a background paper on vehicle efficiency to the transport session, which Thomas Legge chaired for Comhar SDC. Further information on the EEAC is available at www.eeac-net.org.

Noel Casserly represented Comhar SDC as part of the Irish delegation to the 15th Session of the Commission on the Sustainable Development (CSD) at UN headquarters in New York in May 2007. CSD 15 focused on policies and options to expedite the implementation of commitments in the areas of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change, as contained in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the Millennium Declaration.



Left to right: Paschal Stephens, Noel Casserly, Lisa Ryan and Frank Convery.

14. RESEARCH

Comhar SDC's policy analysis and recommendations are informed by evidence based research which is undertaken in-house or commissioned following calls for specific proposals. The following research was commissioned by Comhar SDC in 2007:

- *Cap and Share*: Comhar SDC commissioned consultants AEA Energy and Environment and Cambridge Econometrics to undertake research on Cap and Share as a policy instrument to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Irish residential and transport sectors which are not covered by the EU emissions trading scheme. This will be completed in 2008.
- *Measuring Ireland's Sustainability*: Comhar SDC commissioned Enviro Centre to undertake research on *Measuring sustainable development: the integration of environmental data into macroeconomic models* to inform proceedings at the 2007 Comhar Annual Conference.
- *Governance and Sustainability*: Comhar SDC commissioned Muiris MacCarthaigh, IPA, to prepare a briefing paper on *Implementing policy across national government and from national to local government* to inform proceedings at the 2007 Comhar SDC Annual Conference.
- *Policy Instruments*: Comhar SDC commissioned Byrne O'Cleirigh to prepare a briefing paper on *Mobilising policy instruments for sustainable development* to inform proceedings at the 2007 Comhar SDC Annual Conference.
- *Education for Sustainable Development*: Comhar SDC commissioned ECO UNESCO to prepare a briefing paper on education for sustainable development to inform the Comhar SDC input to the review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy.
- *Sustainable Consumption and Production*: Comhar SDC commissioned Dr. Peter Doran, Queen's University Belfast, to prepare a briefing paper on *Sustainable Consumption & Production – 'The Art of the State'* to inform the Comhar SDC input to the review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

In-house research was also undertaken and mainly used to write recommendations to government that are listed in the foreword and described in more detail in the thematic sections. The full text of the Comhar SDC recommendations and advice can be found on our website www.comharsdc.ie.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1 COMHAR SDC TERMS OF REFERENCE 2006-2008

- (1) The Terms of Reference of Comhar SDC 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. Comhar SDC 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 our 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) Comhar SDC may consider sustainable development issues on its own initiative or at the request of a Minister of the Government.
- (3) Comhar SDC 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, Comhar SDC will take account of the role and functions of other bodies in areas related to sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) such as the NESC, the NESF, the EPA and the Heritage Council to ensure complementarity.
- (5) Comhar SDC may be invited or designated by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to attend relevant international fora, including the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

- (6) Comhar SDC may invite Ministers, Public Officials, Comhar SDC members, and outside experts to make presentations and to assist us in our work. Comhar SDC may also constitute appropriate subsidiary, consultative fora to assist in our work.
- (7) Comhar SDC 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 Comhar SDC, and the Minister shall appoint no less than three of the nominees from each pillar to Comhar SDC. Where a nominated person is appointed to Comhar SDC, the second nominee from the same body will be designated as the alternate and may substitute for the member from time to time.
- (10) Comhar SDC 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 Comhar SDC 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 Comhar SDC.
- (13) Comhar SDC 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 COMHAR SDC MEMBERSHIP 2007

Chairman: Prof. Frank Convery

Pillar 1 – State/Public Sector

Noel Keyes⁴
The Heritage Council

Tony Larkin
County and City Managers' Association

Tom O'Mahony
Environmental Network of Government Departments

Laura Burke
Environmental Protection Agency

Cllr. Therese Ridge
General Council of County Councils

Pillar 2 – Economic Sectors

Niamh Hunt
Chambers of Commerce of Ireland

Donal Buckley⁴
Irish Business and Employers' Confederation

Liam Berney⁴
Irish Congress of Trades Unions

Emer Dunne
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association

Ruaidhrí Deasy
Irish Farmers' Association

Pillar 3 – Environmental NGOs

Elaine Nevin
ECO UNESCO

Aoife Cassidy
Keep Ireland Open

Pat Finnegan
EENGO⁵

Anja Murray⁴
EENGO⁵

Richard Douthwaite
EENGO⁵

Pillar 4 – Social/Community NGOs

Judy Dunne⁴
Consumers' Association of Ireland

Br. Kevin Codd⁴
Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI)

Ornagh Darcy
Irish Rural Dwellers Association

Matthew Seebach
National Youth Council of Ireland

Billy Murphy
PLANET

Pillar 5 – Professional/Academic Sector

Richard Moles⁴
Royal Irish Academy

Caitriona Maguire
EnviroCentre Belfast

Eithne Diver⁴
Council of Directors of the Institutes of Technology

Carmel Sheridan
Royal Dublin Society

Emer Colleran
Royal Irish Academy

⁴ Three year appointment 1 May 2007 - 30 April 2010. Donal Buckley, Brother Kevin Codd and Richard Moles served for the previous term and have been reappointed. The term of office of all other members (those not marked "4") is also three years due to expire on 31 December 2008.

⁵ Environmental NGO Core Funding Group comprising: Sustainable Ireland Co-operative, Bat Conservation Ireland, Friends of the Irish Environment, Irish Doctors' Environmental Association, Just Forests, Gluaiseacht, Irish Natural Forestry Foundation, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Coomhola Salmon Trust, Crann, Irish Seal Sanctuary, An Taisce, Grian, Conservation Volunteers Ireland, Birdwatch Ireland, Irish Seed Saver Association, Irish Wildlife Trust, Sustainable Projects Ireland, ECO UNESCO, Forest Friends, Coastwatch, Feasta, Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Voice, Friends of the Earth Ireland.

APPENDIX 3 COMHAR SDC WORK PROGRAMME 2006-2008

1. INTRODUCTION

Comhar Sustainable Development Council was established in 1999, as the National Sustainable Development Partnership, and completed its second term in May 2005. Comhar SDC's third term will run from January 2006 to December 2008.

This work programme covers period 2006-2008 and takes account of the outcomes of Comhar SDC's review session held in Kilkenny in April 2005 and the priority areas outlined in the Minister's address at the launch of Comhar SDC's third term on 24th January 2006.

Comhar SDC's terms of reference are to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, evaluate progress in this regard, assist in devising suitable mechanisms, advise on their implementation and contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards. These terms of reference provide a broad scope for Comhar SDC's work programme and allow a reasonable amount of discretion for Comhar SDC to design its own agenda. Comhar SDC may also be invited by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, or by any other Minister, to examine and report on relevant matters.

The work programme sets out the broad parameters with a degree of flexibility to allow for adjustment, if necessary, in the light of experience or to take account of new issues arising over the three-year period. The following criteria are particularly relevant in defining the 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

- 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 SDC will give careful consideration to the most appropriate vehicles to disseminate its message. In this regard, its work and outputs 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
- Sponsorship, conferences/seminars or other means to raise awareness.

Comhar SDC publishes its reports, opinions, and other products, using a range of relevant means for their dissemination, including electronic media. It also submits 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. COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 Objective

The objective is to engage effectively with key sectoral commercial and political interests and the general public so that there is widespread understanding of the issues involved, and how to make progress most effectively.

2.2 Key Elements

- **Annual Conference:** Focused on key sustainability challenges and the need to engage key stakeholders in devising appropriate policy responses and actions across the various sectors. This will involve key leaders in politics, community, environmental and commercial interests, informed by state of the art paper, and focus on future. The relevant state agencies and government departments will be involved.
- **Periodic Workshops:** These will address on an opportunistic basis emerging specialist issues.
- **Website:** Interesting, engaging and up-to-date on issues, options and links
- **Chairman's Weekly Commentary:** This will focus attention on the sustainability dimension of emerging issues.
- **Periodic Newsletter:** This biannual publication will synthesise developments and forthcoming events.
- **Sustainable Development Awards:** Annual event recognising exceptional achievement in sustainability.
- **Occasional studies and submissions:** These could encompass indicators, analysis of policy instruments, input to budget and Oireachtas committees.
- **Support for national sustainability events:** This would not be organised by Comhar SDC, but consistent with Comhar SDC's overall objectives.
- **Other activities,** where it is clear that there will be a substantial payoff to effort in promoting the concept and achieving the reality of sustainable development

2.3 Management and Delivery

- The Comhar SDC Secretariat will manage and support implementation of the programme.
- The Post Doctoral Fellow in Sustainable Development will provide for in-house research capability and support in the delivery of the programme
- International links and benchmarking to ensure that programme is implemented to highest international standard (e.g. having regard to the experience of other sustainable development councils participating on the EEAC network).

2.4 Annual Sustainable Development Conference and Workshops

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Annual Conference will meet over 2 days, and focus on the key sustainability challenges and identify priority policy measures and actions that would improve performance across the various sectors. It will be characterised by the following:

- Engagement with economic, social, environmental and policy stakeholders
- Involvement of key political leadership
- A brief summarising the current situation as regards sustainability performance and opportunities for action, prepared before the conference and circulated to delegates
- Mobilising latest research findings
- Focus on the future
- International expertise that will benchmark best international performance
- Linked to European Union activity and activity globally
- Free attendance by up to 50 delegates
- Identification of points of consensus
- Publication and dissemination of papers and key findings.

Workshops

The workshops will be organised from time to time to quickly address emerging of specialist issues where bringing together key stakeholders and experts could help clarify issues or identify a way forward. These will typically be:

- Of half or one day duration
- Mobilise key expertise and stakeholders
- Conclude with short and longer term choices and implications

2.5 Annual Sustainable Development Awards

It is important to recognise exceptional achievement in Sustainable Development by key economic, social and environmental actors. This will be achieved by making a number of awards annually which recognise exceptional performance and constitute best-practice models of sustainable development. The awards will be linked to the Annual Conference. The Comhar SDC membership will be invited to advise on the formulation of the awards scheme. It is envisaged that the process will involve:

- Identifying the criteria
- Identifying and selecting partners to co-sponsor
- Selecting judging panel
- Soliciting entries
- Evaluating entries
- Presenting the award
- Disseminating lessons and implications.

The opportunity for sourcing additional funding through joint sponsorship will be explored. The awardees will be recognised at an event associated with the Annual Conference.

2.6 Occasional Studies and Events

There will be need to commission occasional studies and events which support the delivery of Comhar SDC's work programme, for example:

- Supporting national sustainability focused events not organised by Comhar SDC
- Evaluating progress towards sustainability, addressed via indicators and otherwise.
- Analysing policy instruments and other mechanisms addressed to advancing sustainability objectives.
- Informing Comhar SDC policy advice to Government, e.g. advice to the Department of Finance on the annual budget, advice to Oireachtas Committees, etc.

2.7 Website and Communications Media

During the first year of Comhar SDC's third term, an evaluation of existing website and other communications media will be undertaken to determine the most effective and resource efficient means of developing Comhar SDC's communications strategy and performance

3. NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, was endorsed by Government in 1997, five years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the adoption of Agenda 21. A review⁶ of the NSDS was undertaken in 2002 in the run up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September of that year. The NSDS has also been developed and built upon through supporting and complementary policy documents,

6 Making Ireland's Development Sustainable: Review, Assessment and Future Action (2002).

such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the National Climate Change Strategy, the National Spatial Strategy and the National Biodiversity Plan.

As part of its new work programme for the period 2006 to 2008, Comhar SDC will prepare recommendations on the review and update of the NSDS. This is timely for a number of reasons; if a five-year review cycle is adhered to, an updated NSDS could be expected in 2007. The EU is committed to review its own sustainable development strategy (EU SDS) by mid 2006 and will take account of the need to strengthen links and promote greater coherence with national strategies. It is also timely because the next National Development Plan (2007-11) will establish medium term priorities for infrastructure and other investment; it is crucial that this portfolio be consistent with the tenets of sustainable development.

The priority issues in the current EU SDS are: climate change, public health, poverty & social exclusion, ageing society, management of natural resources, and mobility & transport. A Comhar SDC submission on the proposed revision of the EU SDS was forwarded to the Commission in October 2004. A revised NSDS should have regard to the priority issues in the new EU SDS and identify objectives and policy measures to help achieve these objectives.

A recent study⁷ of national sustainable development strategies undertaken by the network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC), in which Comhar SDC participated, can help inform Comhar SDC's analysis and recommendations.

Consideration could be given to engaging external expertise or consultancy to prepare a more detailed analysis of the implementation of the NSDS if this was considered helpful to informing Comhar SDC's deliberations and recommendations.

4. PRIORITY AREAS

- **Biodiversity:** The Interim Review of the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan⁸ commits to the establishment of a Biodiversity Forum, comprising a broad range of representatives reflecting the scope of the Plan. The earlier Comhar SDC report⁹ had recommended the setting up of representative stakeholder forum under the auspices of Comhar SDC. There were also recommendations on the prioritisation of targets and timescales for species and habitat protection and conservation, development of indicators to measure progress of conservation measures, and establishment of a Biodiversity Fund (€1 million per annum) to support local site conservation and management, and for the production of biodiversity awareness and educational material¹⁰.
- **Climate Change:** Comhar SDC should continue to bring a broad stakeholder perspective to the review and implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and the associated challenge of meeting Kyoto commitments and more ambitious EU targets for post-Kyoto period. Appropriate policy and programme measures are also needed to achieve greater energy efficiency and increased generation of electricity from renewable sources (the EU target is 13.2% electricity from renewable sources by 2010).

7 Sustaining Sustainability: A benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states (2005).

8 Published by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government on 4th November 2005.

9 *Comhar Recommendations on the Implementation and Review of the National Biodiversity Plan* – November 2004.

10 This Fund has now been established and will be administered by the Heritage Council.

- **Awareness, Education and Communicating Sustainable Development:** There is a significant challenge to promote sustainable development in a more accessible way. Work undertaken during the second term included collaboration with ENFO on a schools pilot project and a programme of awareness-raising amongst civil society organisations in the south-east. During its third term Comhar SDC will oversee the development of materials or tool-kits to take forward this work. This could also include the development of key messages and “Quality of Life” indicators based on Comhar’s Principles for Sustainable Development. Work undertaken in the UK on redefining prosperity¹¹ can provide a useful model here. The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which commenced in 2005, provides an opportunity for developing a framework for integrating sustainability into all levels of the formal education system. In 2005, Comhar SDC sponsored two stakeholder consultations¹² on the UN Decade for ESD at the Convergence Festival in Dublin and this can provide a context for taking this work forward.
- **Sustainable Communities:** During its second term Comhar SDC submitted recommendations to the Department on sustainable rural housing, and on the proposed reform of local government finance. Comhar SDC also gave consideration to processes and structures at local level which support local sustainability. There is an opportunity to bring forward policies and programmes to re-energise implementation of Local Agenda 21 and Comhar

SDC may wish to advise on this following the review of operation City and County Development Boards and other partnership structures.¹³

- **Sustainable Consumption and Production:** Specific commitments arise in the context of World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg) outcomes calling for a 10-year framework programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). There have been calls for the revised EU SDS and national strategies¹⁴ to address these targets more explicitly. The revised NSDS should provide a coherent strategic framework for SCP through a judicious policy mix of legally binding as well as economic and voluntary instruments, and education and information. A national policy statement on sustainable consumption and production could be integrated into a revised NSDS. A multi-sectoral approach is required with dialogue between stakeholders; Comhar SDC could play an important role in this.

5. MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY

At the review meeting of Comhar SDC held in April 2005 there was discussion on the need to establish targets and indicators for the priority sustainability issues. This will be particularly important in the context of a new National Development Plan (NDP) for the post-2006 period.

¹¹ Redefining Prosperity: resource productivity, economic growth and sustainable development – UK Sustainable Development Commission, 2003.

¹² Organised by the Sustainable Ireland Co-operative and ECO UNESCO in June and October 2005.

¹³ DOEHLG is undertaking a review of the operation of CDBs in 2005; UCC has received funding from the EPA’s R&D Programme to undertake a review the role of CDBs in advocating LA 21. Review of other structures such as Leader and City and County partnerships are also underway.

¹⁴ For example, the new UK SD Strategy published on 7th March 2005 commits to tackle damaging production and consumption patterns with emphasis on sustainable public procurement and improving environmental performance of products and increasing resource use efficiency. <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/uk-strategy-2005.htm>

The NESF and CSO have already done work¹⁵ on indicators. The CSO intends to annually update the data on *Measuring Ireland's Progress* and Comhar SDC could consider the adequacy of this data for measuring progress on the sustainability agenda. Comhar SDC's Principles for Sustainable Development could provide the appropriate framework and work done elsewhere in Europe provides a useful reference point, for example the UK¹⁶ and Finland. The EU¹⁷ is to publish a communication on sustainable development indicators in late 2005.

Elsewhere in Europe and the EU, efforts are also being made to further improve the policy-making process through the introduction of ex-ante sustainability assessment of major policies and programmes.

In Ireland, the Government has already introduced a system of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) for new regulatory and legislative proposals. The Department of the Taoiseach has published guidelines on the new RIA system, which aims to promote the quantification of impacts on society, marginalised groups, consumers, as well as quantification of the environmental costs, and the compliance cost to business.

Comhar SDC could engage with other agencies, such as EPA and NESF, and advise on research needs and pilot sustainable development assessment methodologies to build on Comhar's Principles for Sustainable Development as well as experience and best-practice elsewhere.

6. WORKING GROUPS

Many of the work programme objectives can be delivered through the mechanism of working groups. 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. Experience during the first two terms suggests that focusing on a few major tasks a year is the most efficient way of working with task-based working groups, rather than standing groups. During the first year of the third term it is proposed to establish the following working groups:

- Biodiversity in the light of the Government Decision on the Biodiversity Forum
- Awareness, Education and Communication of Sustainable Development
- Climate Change, and
- National Development Plan, National Sustainable Development Strategy and Indicators.

Other *ad-hoc* working groups may be established over the course of the third term; these would exist for the period of the task, and then disband. Potential benefits of this approach would include:

- A fixed duration commitment for members joining the group, which might help to keep them involved/active in the group
- The opportunity for members to participate in a number of working groups over Comhar SDC's term of office, without duplicating the time commitments involved. This might also increase the number of members contributing to each area of Comhar SDC's work
- Task-based, fixed term groups with clear work plans can be better supported/resourced.

¹⁵ In 2002, the NESF published a set of *National Progress Indicators for Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Development* and in March 2005, the CSO a report with social, economic and environmental data on *Measuring Ireland's Progress*.

¹⁶ The UK has published a new set of sustainable development indicators *Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket 2005* available at www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/indicators/

¹⁷ The Commission has already published a communication to members of the Commission – Feb 2005.

7. ANNUAL BUDGET

The overall projected budget for Comhar SDC's first year of its third term is estimated at €320,000 (excluding the staffing costs of the Comhar SDC Secretariat).

8. REVIEW AND ANNUAL REPORT

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.

Comhar SDC 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.





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